

YAOUNDE, AN URBANITY IN CRISIS: DEAD END AND HORIZONS

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Abstract

Many African cities suffer from a crisis of urbanity. Yaoundé is one of them. With fossilised incivilities and inadequate urban construction, the situation is far from ideal. The complex and multidimensional phenomenon of urbanisation in Africa has attracted the attention of academics from various disciplines. Historians Robert Nkili and André Tassou, geographer Bopda Athanase, and political scientist Owona Nguini are among those who have studied Yaoundé, a city torn between colonial survival and failed projection. The Complexity of Urban Issues shows that disciplinary barriers have broken down. The analysis postulates that Yaoundé's endemic urban crisis is the result of a complex interaction between colonial legacies, urban planning, and demographic pressures. By combining archival data, interviews and books, and taking an analytical, diachronic and interdisciplinary approach, this historical overview provides a diagnosis that remains as relevant today as when it was first published. In short, Yaoundé is sagging under the combined weight of the segregationist spatial policy implemented during foreign occupation and the lack of direction in post-independence political choices.

Key words: *Yaounde, urbanity, crisis, impasses, horizons.*

Introduction

The location of the showcase of Cameroonian institutions in Equatorial Africa is quite unique. Cities of the same size have typically developed on the coast, near old caravan trading centres or around traditional chiefdoms (Tamo Tatsieti, 1972: 24). On the other hand, Yaoundé owes its bucolic setting to the settlement of the 'German settlers' and consequently its foundation as a city. Located in the sub-equatorial zone, about 250 kilometres from the Atlantic coast (Grove, 1939: 136-137.) and on the edge of the vast southern forest, Yaoundé lies in the Mfoundi basin, which is oval-shaped and inclined slightly towards the south. To the north-west, it is dominated by a mountain range. Capital of Cameroon since 1921, this hilly city embodies both urban ambition and the persistent urban crises that affect many of the continent's metropolises. Marked by spatial segregation and relatively poor planning as a legacy of foreign occupation, the city of seven hills has developed in a way that has gradually replaced the projected order with urban anarchy. With its anarchic constructions, marshy areas and spontaneous neighbourhoods, Yaoundé is a city torn between rusticity and modernity. As a result, its imbalance is striking. What can explain the circularity of this urban disorganisation? This analysis revisits the history of Yaoundé's urban development by examining the

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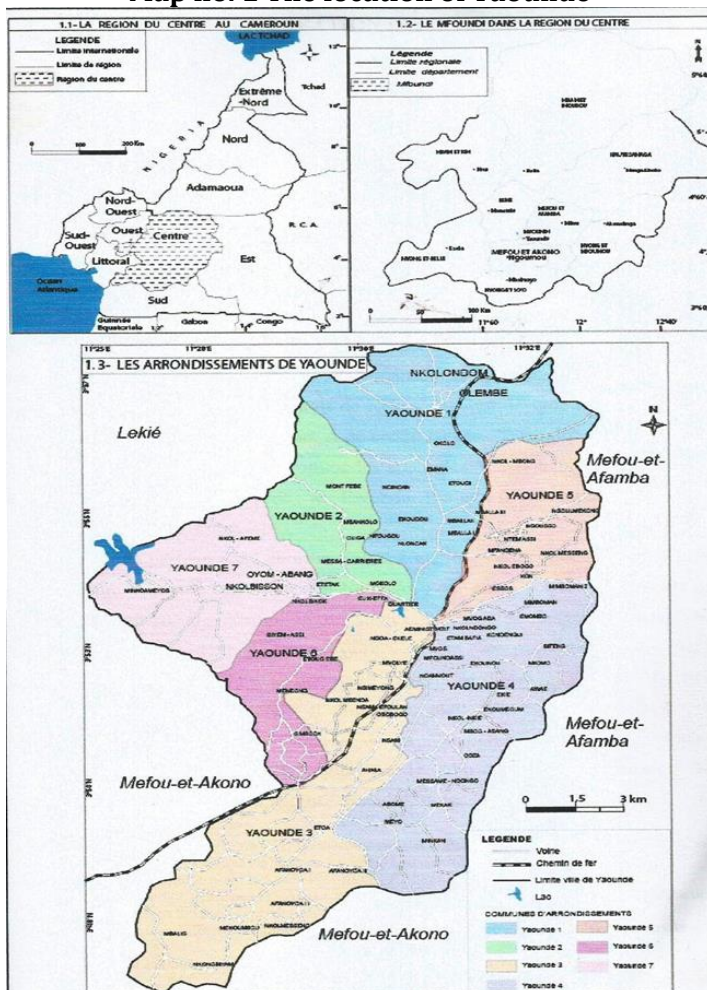
historical legacies, political decisions and mistakes that have shaped the city's urban landscape. It also suggests ways to improve urban governance and overcome the current crisis.

Yaounde between physical assets and colonial imprint: the chronicle of an urban identity

Yaoundé's compelling physical setting was a key factor in German explorers' decision to establish a foothold there and, for strategic reasons, make it the capital of Cameroon. However, the city's urban morphology has hindered its development. What exactly is the situation?

Is Yaoundé's physical setting an asset or a liability?

Map no. 1 The location of Yaounde



Source: Urban community from Yaoundé', 1990. Yaoundé is a booming city.
From Testa Presse, p. 5.

After being given the mission to explore the hinterland, Lieutenants Kund and Tappenbeck began their long journey from Kribi on 15 January 1888. They arrived in the village of Ewondo (Yaoundé) on 2 February, where they received a warm welcome from Esono Ela, the son of Fouda Ada of the Mvog-Ada clan². After establishing a presence in the area, they built a military station at Nkol-Atom. This military station was initially called 'Sono Station', a corruption of the name Esono, who provided the land. It then took the name "Yaoundé Station", and it is this military station which constitutes the embryo of the city of Yaoundé.

Yaoundé's rise to the status of the capital of Cameroon is mainly due to its attractive location. Its relatively pleasant climate and strategic location were key factors in convincing the occupiers to establish a city here. However, it is worth noting that Yaoundé is a hilly city. Its landscape is dotted with small inselbergs, including: Mount Eloundem (1,169 metres), Mount Mbankolo (1,096 metres), Mount Febe (1,077 metres) and Mount Messa (1,015 metres) (Abah, 1973: 15). The city's control of its hydrography is a consequence of this steep terrain. Indeed, the Mfoundi forms the central valley on which the city is built. During torrential rains, the city centre suffers the worst of the flooding (Tikeng Madonfoue, 2005: 19). For reasons that have as much to do with the prohibitive cost of quality urbanisation as anything else, the state has not been able to rise to the challenge.

Yaoundé's physical setting was not the only factor casting a shadow over its urbanity; foreign occupation also played a part. Evoking this idea brings to mind the hallmarks of spatial segregation, which were elaborated and implemented by the occupier.

The segregationist policy of space: a whiff of spatial apartheid

The policy of spatial segregation has added a place setting to the family table of urban life in crisis. It is a long-standing tradition to acknowledge that Yaoundé's urban landscape is characterised by Germanic influences and a Franco-British confluence. This spatial segregation has given the capital city a bipolar appearance. On the one hand, there was the 'Ongola', or the enclosure that materialised the European city, and on the other hand, there were the African villages that were gradually engulfed by the European city (Essono, 2016: 25).

² The information obtained on the reconstruction of the German route is not only the result of book and archival sources (Yaoundé National Archives). Through direct and semi-direct interviews with traditional authorities, local chiefs and patriarchs, we were able to gather a wealth of data. Naturally, we had to compromise the principles of historical research by critically analysing the sources and cross-checking the information gathered.

Ongola: a planning model with exclusive features

The German authorities created a European quarter for a number of reasons. By gaining a foothold on the plateaus, the Germans were able to secure several advantages, including a panoramic view, better ventilation and distance from the marshes and their negative consequences, such as the presence of mosquitoes, potential flooding and insecurity. But what sets the European city apart from the villages of Yaoundé? Let General Aymerich provide the answer: “On the plateau,” he writes, “European buildings rise up, crisscrossed in all directions by roads and avenues lined with trees” (Aymerich, 1933: 33). This vividly illustrates that the European city was characterised by a discernible structure. Urban planning was at its core. So it is hardly surprising that, at the end of the First World War, the German troops’ conqueror was left speechless. It is worth noting that the general public did not have access to the city. Africans and natives required a pass to enter.

Around Yaoundé Station, Tappenbeck had a palisade built for defence purposes. This was the first draft of the future city wall, the Ongola barrier³, to restore its local name, in accordance with the plan drawn up by Georg Zenker in 1892. The outline of this urban perimeter surrounds the north of the current National Museum. At the northern corner of the enclosure stands a small rectangular building that leads to the Ministry of Finance, where an old German cemetery can still be seen. The land ceded to the Germans extended from the southern corner of the National Museum (formerly the Presidential Palace) to the Star Building (Prime Minister’s Offices), passing the Linguistic Centre en route. To the east-northwest, it extends from the Star Building (Prime Minister’s Offices) to the Ministry of Finance, passing the former Statistics Directorate (Burgaud, 1955: 60-70). Guard posts were erected at the four corners. Made from upright bamboo poles firmly tied together, the stockade enclosed an area of about ten thousand square metres (10,000 m²)⁴. The contours of ‘Ongola’ can be seen in the agglomeration contained within the Mfoundi basin. To take over such an area, the Germans expelled the Mvog Ada from their land, which covered the current location of the Messa dispensary and extended to the bottom of the eponymous hill. This area is now known as the Mvog Ada district. Within this urban perimeter, the natives were *persona non grata*, except for domestic servants. This segregationist measure was reinforced by a German imperial decree dating from June 1896 (Burgaud, 1955: 62). Indeed, it stipulates that all the lands of Cameroon are declared Imperial Crown Lands (Essono, 2016: 55).

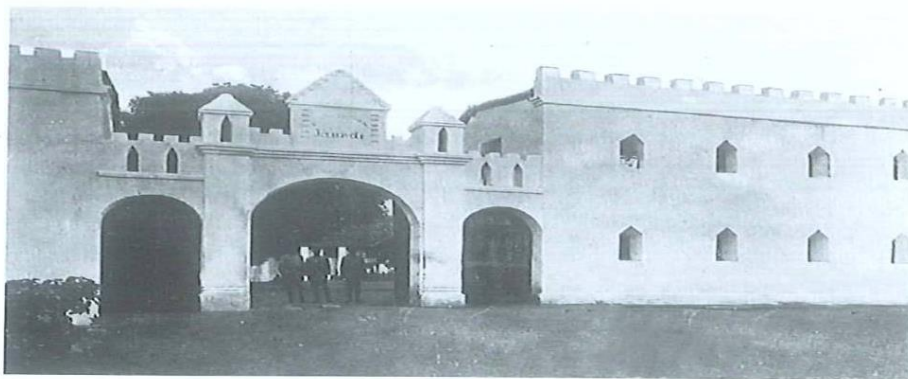
³ Interview with Evouna Marie Madeleine, 54 years old, Yaoundé, October 21, 2009

⁴ This spatial delimitation was carried out using the archives, particularly the German translations (TA) of the National Archives of Yaoundé (ANY), as well as a spatial analysis based on cartographic data, specifically the map drawn up by Georg Zenker in 1892.

Photo No. 1: Jaunde Station



Jaunde Station.
(Photo H. Dominik)



Jaunde Station. Le grand portail.

Source: Dominik, 2017, Kamerun, reissue by Ernst Siegfried Miller und sohn, p. 22.

This narrative acridly portrays the European city as being significantly structured. Urban planning is a key feature of the city. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that it left the German troops, who were defeated at the end of the First World War, on the back foot. It is worth noting that the general public had no access to the city. Africans and natives required a pass to enter (Essonno, 2016: 55).

African villages, the crucible of urban disorganization

In contrast, African villages developed amid a hubbub that was far removed from any urban discipline. It was as if a cloud of urban planning had settled over the European city. Here, urban planning lost its meaning. The villages of Yaounde are afflicted with poor ventilation and basic amenities.

Anarchic in appearance and rustic in configuration, the villages are unhygienic and overcrowded. Faced with such a situation, the occupiers showed a surge of indifference. Their political apathy left no doubt as to the extent to which development of the "colonies" was at the tail end of their partisan interests. Exploitation of the colonies was at the core of their intentions (Mbock, 2010: 16) ; development occupied an infinitesimal place in their concerns. It is worth remembering that African villages emerged due to the repression of "natives" outside the urban perimeter. In other words, many, if not most, of the villages in Yaoundé were formed spontaneously (Abah, 1973: 25). Also, anarchism was present since no planning had been developed. Also, there was an anarchic element since no planning had been developed. Even worse, the occupiers exacerbated tribal tensions when installing sociological components. Indeed, populations were settled according to their sociological proximity. This community bantustanisation was evident in Mvolyé, where the Ewondo natives were divided up, as were the "Haoussa" and the "Bamouns" at Briqueterie, the Bassa railway workers at Elig Belibi, the Bene and the Bulu at Ekounou, and the Eton-Manguissa at Nlongkak (Essonon, 2016:110) . Segregationist policy was not the only factor in Yaoundé's urban planning. As soon as independence was achieved, the question of the city's identity within the Cameroonian context arose.

The notion of the city: administrative criteria versus social realities

From the dawn of independence, the quest for an urban identity in the Cameroonian context was posed in acute terms. This resulted in a definitional ballet characterised by intermittent fluctuations. African cities were largely "colonial" cities, with infrastructures that served the interests of the occupier. Roads and railways were built to serve extraction centres. This is an open secret (Ndje Medja, 2013). Amidst the fervour of sovereignty following the attainment of independence, the new authorities became obsessed with dismantling the colonial legacy piece by piece. This has led to a unique definition of the notion of city. In the case of Cameroon in particular, improbable meanings have been grafted onto the word 'city'. Let us unpack a few of them.

In semantics, a city is defined as a human agglomeration exceeding a certain population size that generally carries out tertiary activities. In other words, the city is a concentrated area of activities and people organised in singularly complex forms. The concept of a city has evolved considerably. In 1960, the year of independence, any town with a population of over 3,500, a well-built continuous space, an administrative and military command post, and a secondary education establishment was considered a city (Ndje Medja, 2013: 18). However, in 1976, the first General Population and Housing Census (RGPH) conferred city status not only on any agglomeration of 5,000 inhabitants with a hospital, bus station and college, but also on any district or departmental

capital, regardless of population size or method of establishment (Tassou, 2013: 19). However, it seems that the State has got itself into a tangle. Indeed, many urban agglomerations, particularly secondary towns, had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants in 1976. Conversely, some villages had a population of 5,000 or more (Tassou, 2013:40). Also, the objectivity of these definitions remained marginal. Also, these definitions were not very objective. It is widely accepted that these administrative definitions contrasted with social realities. We do not intend to revisit the Byzantine jousts and distinctions of this magnitude, but this definition seemed to have little relevance. In any case, in the most accomplished sense of the term, the city's identity is shaped by its population size, urban facilities and social and spatial organisation. The city can present itself in multiple lights. Its presentation depends as much on the services it offers as on the role assigned to it within a country. Consequently, we can have cities with an economic vocation, such as Douala, and cities that act as capitals because they house the majority of institutions. Yaoundé falls into this last category. These structural and cyclical errors paved the way for urban expansion beyond rigid planning boundaries. Evidence of this can be seen in the proliferation of spontaneous housing neighbourhoods and the colonisation of risk areas.

The flourishing of spontaneous housing districts and the colonisation of land designated as *non-aedificandi* are the anatomy of uncontrolled expansion

The explosion of QHS and the settlement of populations in high-risk areas highlight the state's inability to control urbanisation. Both have influenced the expansion of the city's urban perimeter in their own way.

Spontaneous housing districts are a symptom of poor planning

The proliferation of informal settlements has, with some reservations, been a means of establishing urbanity in the city of seven hills in crisis. Indeed, there are two types of informal settlement: disorderly and orderly.

The majority of Yaoundé's old villages that were not annexed to the urban perimeter of the European city are among the disorderly QHS. These include Melen, Carrière, Etoa Meki and Messa. Ultimately, these neighbourhoods were neither planned nor designed, and have therefore abandoned the principles of urban planning. The bill was steep. The populations did not care about urban planning rules. Here, they became familiar with the long sob of the anarchist violin. This is the story of an urban shipwreck. Against all expectations, the state took action to address this chaotic situation.

In terms of ordered QHS, the following districts can be distinguished: the Bastos district, Mfandena, the Fouda district, Santa Barbara and Kuwait City. Construction of the Bastos district was integral to the establishment of the Jean Bastos factory. Here, we observe the development of easements and the supply of water and electricity that comply with the relevant standards. Bastos is a

residential district (Mboumbou, 2000:25) . It was home to high-ranking state officials, embassies and diplomatic missions. Regarding the Fouda neighbourhood, it is clear that its facade of normality largely depends on the rigour of André Fouda Omgba, the first Delegate of the Government of the Municipality of Yaoundé, who is also a native of the area. Fouda's life story is one of an architect of Yaoundé's urban planning. It is widely accepted that he played a significant role in ensuring that his village was not affected by the common urban issues found in other villages. This urban expansion continued surreptitiously through the colonisation of risky areas.

Photo No. 2: André Fouda in 1956



Source: SOPECAM photo service.

The colonization of hydromorphic zones poses an environmental and health challenge

The colonisation of non-aedificandi land, also known as marshes or *elobi*⁵, is reportedly an illegal enterprise. The Ntaba, Etam Bafia, Tsinga Elobi and Mokolo Elobi districts are among the areas listed as *non-aedificandi* lands (Eloundou Messi, 2004: 22). Caught between the hammer of legality and the anvil of their material vulnerability, impoverished social classes have gained a foothold in these areas, which are exposed to environmental and health risks

⁵ Elobi means swamp in the Ewondo language, the local language.

including landslides, subsidence, water table degradation, disruption to the hydrographic network and waterborne diseases (Report BUCREP, 2022). Clearly, the colonization of these hydromorphic zones brings with it a host of inconveniences. Clearly, colonizing these hydromorphic zones brings a host of inconveniences in its wake.

Over time, the occupation of these unsuitable areas has caused panic among the population. Before 1977, for example, only 1.05% of households were settled in Ntaba. From 1977 to 1983, this figure increased to 20% (Report BUCREP, 2022: 33). The speed of this occupation alarmed the authorities. The spiral of migratory flows towards the capital was intensifying. For migrants whose daily lives were dreary and destitute, Yaoundé seemed like a better place to be. However, once they arrived, they were unable to afford decent housing because many were living below the poverty line.

As a result, some of them resorted to occupying the at-risk areas. The state was fooled. It remained on the sidelines. A gradual decline ensued. This also reflects the city's inability to meet the demographic challenge, and therefore its inability to integrate the new inhabitants. At the rate things were going, the future of urban planning in these marshy areas was in jeopardy. Since anarchy is pernicious by nature, the state was forced to change direction. This shift in focus was accompanied by large-scale evictions. The colonization of hydromorphic areas hindered the urbanization of the capital city. So did the state's missteps.

Failures of urban governance: state negligence and citizen incivility

During the foreign occupation and the post-independence period, urban planning was plagued by two issues: inadequate planning and the administration's indecisiveness.

The mirage of imported urban planning models

Attempting to imitate the urban planning regulations in force in the metropolis has been a major failure. We have been careful not to copy the countervailing powers across the Channel in order to ensure the implementation of the urban planning code, inch by inch. Consequently, urban projects have largely been either disembodied or white elephants. The Master Plans for Urban Planning and Development (SDAU) were a flagship document in urban planning, but by the time they came into force, they were already obsolete, as was the case with the 1963 plan. As we know only too well, cities change faster than music. The constant changes to the relevant legislation and the delay in implementing decrees have rendered urban planning documents ineffective.

Furthermore, concepts such as the Land Use Coefficient (LUC) were adopted from the French urban planning code to measure land density.

However, the failure to implement the Legal Density Plan (LDP) renders this document unusable. With this scheme, we had substantive urban planning in theory. At best, it was the promise of a Potemkin city. Urban planning cannot be decreed with the stroke of a pen. This mimicry has been brought up short by reality. Most of the documents developed were, at best, mere lip service. However, the transposition of the metropolitan planning code is not solely responsible for Yaoundé's urban failings; the administration's shortcomings have also contributed to this situation.

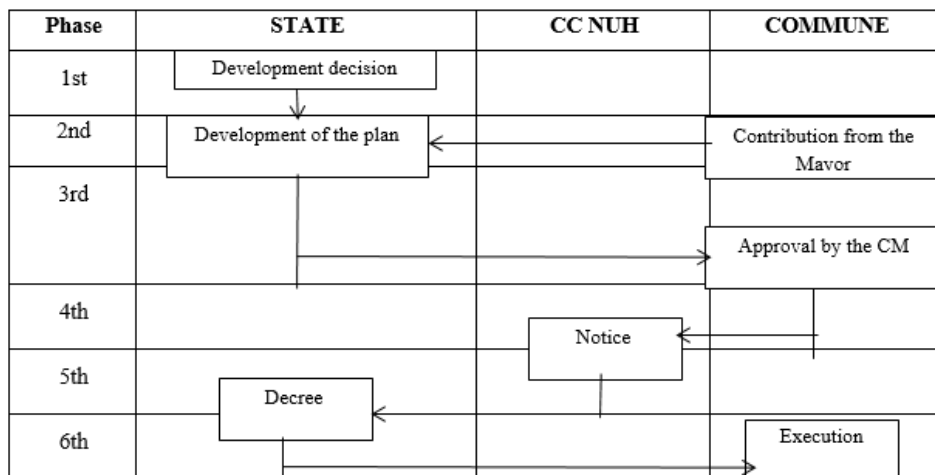
The administration's errors: conflicts of competence and acute centralism

The burdens of the State's functional mechanics refloated the sea serpent of urban anarchism. To sound the death knell for urban disorder, good coordination between urban stakeholders is required to counteract jurisdictional conflicts. The case of the former Ministry of Equipment, Housing and Land is emblematic of this. After this ministry split into the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Urban Planning and Housing, the National Consultative Commission for Urban Planning and Housing was weakened (Ndje Medja, 2013: 30). After this break-up, the commission was only able to hold one meeting, and the texts approved were never signed. Furthermore, despite being established on 18 November 1973, it was not until 1979 that its implementing texts were published. These were Decree No. 79 of 13 May 1979, which set out the rules relating to the creation of subdivisions (Ateba Noah, 2005: 50). In the meantime, the absence of regulatory provisions has created a legal vacuum that has led to chaos in this area. Based on this analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that administrative burdens have overwhelmed the state and generated a flood of inefficiencies. This has also been perfectly illustrated in the field of decentralization.

This process was firmly established through communal experience in the 1940s (Ateba Noah, 2005: 55). It came up against two things: the transfer of skills and the principle of single funds at the level of the Public Treasury (Owona Nguini, 2008: 54). It turns out that, after the collection of tax resources, their transfer to the municipalities was not in proportion to their expectations and needs. Following the collection of tax resources, it became clear that their transfer to municipalities was not proportionate to expectations and needs. This subsequently had a negative impact on local development projects.

Furthermore, the rigid centralism of the state hindered urban planning in Cameroon. Subordinating all decrees to the National Consultative Commission on Urban Planning and Housing, coupled with the absence of regulatory provisions, hindered the city's harmonious expansion (Guiffo, 200).

Table No. 1: Preparation of urban planning documents in Cameroon: skills and work



Source: A. Tientcheu Njiako, 2003, *Droits fonciers urbains au Cameroun*, Yaoundé, PUA, p. 274.

Analysis of this table shows that, of the six phases, the State is at the first level as the initiator of the decision to develop an urban planning plan. In the second phase, the plan is developed and submitted to the Mayor of the relevant municipality for assessment, and they provide input. The Municipal Council then approves the plan and submits it to the National Consultative Commission for Urban Planning and Housing (CCNUH), which issues an opinion in the fourth phase. Ultimately, the plan is transformed into a decree by the State in the fifth phase, and the Municipality executes the plan. Therefore, the State is involved in urban planning at both the beginning and end of the process. The various urban planning schemes were characterised by a tendency towards centralisation that ultimately marginalised local participation (Tassou, 2013:70). Consequently, this marginalisation has affected the State's operational mechanics since independence. This practice was entrenched during the development of urban planning documents at ministry level, independently of the opinion of local stakeholders, leading to disparities and a gap between theory and practice. This Jacobinism was reinforced by Presidential Ordinance No. 73/20 of 29 May 1973, which regulates urban planning in the United Republic of Cameroon. This has given rise to a range of anomalies, including uncontrolled development due to the lack of enforceable planning documents against third parties (Noah, 2005: 35). In light of this diagnosis, we can now outline some possible solutions.

Perspectives for optimized urban governance

The answers to improving urban governance range from strengthening decentralization and streamlining urban planning to making the various stakeholders more accountable.

Strengthening decentralization and citizen participation

A profound overhaul of urban policies is urgently needed. The introduction of decentralisation has breathed new life into the optimisation of Yaoundé's urbanisation. Admittedly, the state has moved slowly in this direction. However, the successful implementation of decentralization requires accountability, transparency, adherence to the rule of law, and the participation of local stakeholders (Tassou, 2013: 55). Decision-making centers must therefore transfer large proportions of their authority to local actors. Added to this is the transfer of skills and the participatory management of decentralized entities. This plea for participatory management and transparency at the local level goes hand in hand with the rationalization of planning policies.

Rationalization of planning and urban development

The state had established certain tools to promote the city's harmonious expansion. One example is the priority urban development zones (ZUP). This approach must be consolidated. ZUPs have undeniably progressed the construction of essential facilities within the coherent development of the outskirts (Guiffo, 2007:30). The restructuring of Yaoundé is inevitable; otherwise, there will be problems in the long term. This is because expropriations for public utility, and the associated compensation costs, become increasingly expensive over time.

In addition, urban planning documents must be compatible with the new SDAU, and Public Administrative Establishments (EPA) must comply with it. State bodies such as Société Immobilière du Cameroun (SIC), Mission de Développement et d'Equipement des Terres Rurales et Urbaines (MAETUR), Fonds Spécial d'Intervention Communale (FEICOM), Mission de Développement et de Gestion des Zones Industrielles (MAGZI) and Crédit Foncier du Cameroun (CFC) have revitalised the urbanisation of the capital city. Optimising these entities boosts urban planning. The SIC has focused on certain subdivisions: Messa, Nlongkak, Tsinga and Biyem Assi. It has also taken care of their renovation in the event of infrastructure deterioration. For greater efficiency, urban governance requires the responsibility of its various stakeholders, as well as meeting the environmental challenge.

The responsibility of stakeholders in the context of an ecological emergency

Cameroon missed the turning point in urban planning, but the state is not alone in its failings. The population cannot be absolved of responsibility it

takes two to tango. The population must therefore abandon the anarchic mindset that has become so entrenched. This collaborative effort helps to dissipate a climate of crisis and, in turn, wards off the spectre of disastrous urban governance. Indeed, the state has become caught up in a dizzying spiral of anarchy, with anarchists at the helm imposing their will. The state can no longer remain silent in the face of these violations. It must be proactive. The unintelligibility of laws and material vulnerability have served as an absolution for the idlest. Public authorities must popularize the legislative framework on the matter as necessary and remove it from a jargon-filled lexicon. Legislation must also be adapted to local circumstances to reduce urban incivility. The state must take a firm stance. It must no longer merely threaten offenders. Taking a tough stance is counterproductive if we don't want to descend into a lawless city. Performative measures must be taken to reverse the tide of urban anarchism.

Furthermore, the green gamble has been a missed opportunity. A city that adheres to standard practices can no longer avoid environmental challenges. Dirty alleys, a lack of green spaces, piles of rubbish and chrysanthemum-covered roads are the hallmarks of cities in crisis. The 1963 Master Plan and Urban Development Plan, which was never ratified, provided for the preservation of high-risk areas and green spaces. However, this policy was undermined by the proliferation of informal settlements and hydromorphic areas.

Without rose-tinted or opaque glasses, we can conclude that the situation in Yaoundé is bleak. It is therefore important not to allow this painful reality to become an unstoppable inevitability.

Conclusion

Moreover, we have conducted a meta-analysis of the urban crisis enveloping Yaoundé. What is this analysis called? In our urban semantics, the concept of a city is a cruise. We don't know where we're going! This stems from the difficulty of attaching a clear definition to it; therefore, its destination is shrouded in comatose vagueness. The Yaoundé start-up is in the same position as other downgraded, third-world cities. Upstream, "colonization" left its mark. It is indelible. Consider the segregationist spatial policy, the main consequence of which was two-speed urban development. The city center is relatively organised, while the outskirts are scarred by anarchy and gradually being annexed. The city's bipolar configuration also contained the seeds of future imbalance. The disorganised, spontaneous nature of housing neighbourhoods, coupled with the dizzying colonisation of at-risk areas, has become a key feature of urban incivility. Added to this chaotic arithmetic is the lack of depth and visibility in urban planning. Caught between never-approved SDAUs and the mimetic transposition of an abstract urban planning code, Yaoundé suffered from uncontrolled urban governance. Moreover, Yaoundé paid the price for

administrative errors. Its urban governance slid down the slope of inertia. Furthermore, jurisdictional crises and the late implementation of decrees rendered our legal arsenal in this area mere rhetoric. As a result, legal loopholes and incompetence became commonplace. Similarly, the rigid centralism of the state was evident in our urban architecture. It rendered local participation insignificant. Conversely, the advent of decentralization has given local interventions new momentum. This has boosted the city's improvement. Taking all of this into account, it has become imperative to rethink urban governance in light of local realities. It is important to reconcile planning with flexibility. Only an integrated approach that considers history, sociology and urban planning can create a new urbanity for Yaoundé that can address current challenges while anticipating future changes.

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