The new strategies of territorial approach in Africa

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ABSTRACT

The territorial dimensions of development have long been neglected in Africa. From the period of colonization to the independences, taking into account the spatial dimensions of development has played a minor part in the development of public policies. It took the fall of communism in 1989, the end of apartheid in 1994 and the emergence of democracy as a result in poor countries for new requirements to emerge based on the restructuring of traditional political spaces. There is currently in Africa a resurgence of a new geography illustrated by the shifting, varied and complex nature of development areas. Territories are being transformed yielding many dimensions of which two are particularly visible. Firstly a geo-economic dimension through three main movements:

- Improving the interconnection between coastal and Sahelian areas with the persistence of both the constraints of isolation related to recurring socio-political crises and the need for more enhanced complementarity through the various experiences of regional groupings;
- A rapid urbanization that radically transforms the urban-rural relationships and poses serious problems of urban management and people integration to a new culture that emerges from these cities;
- A large migration which leads more to imbalances, increases the pressures, reinforces depopulation of arid areas and overcrowded coastal regions.

Secondly, a political dimension which is reflected in the appearance of new forms of relationships between people and spaces as well as the demographic challenges it has with enormous access problems to basic resources (land, pasture, water, etc.). These problems henceforth generate several forms of territorial disparities resulting in crises and conflicts affecting several States of the continent.

Meanwhile, the institutional reforms devised to cope with these different transformations do not yet produce the expected results. These reforms seem to be poorly adapted to the present moment of changes and cause adverse reactions despite the needs for radical change expressed by the populations. Among these basic needs, we could mention four:

- The opening to the international market through positive globalization;
- A need for having legitimate State and Institutions. The post-colonial State is currently facing many problems and needs to be reformed. In this context, we come across three types of trends: decentralization of central government, restructuring of the exercise of power areas and promoting territorial organizations;
- A need for stronger local solidarity of the populations, longtime victims of the colonial partition. This need is expressed today through the development of several « border-countries » on the edge of two or more States. It is also expressed in decentralization with hope for the people to renew the social contract that binds them to their leaders;
- A need for the construction of regional political and economic entities more sustainable than the United-Nations inherited from colonization. Such a need is expressed through the concerns of regional integration. This is the result of a combination of the Pan-Africanist movement as an alternative to excessive balkanization of the continent and to changes currently affecting the world like the market integration induced by globalization.

These various trends both territorial and social constitute the new territorial strategy in Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

This work aims to analyze the different changes that affect territories of nation-states inherited from colonization in Africa. It aims to show how these territories are constructed under the various development issues they are constantly subjected to.

The concept of territory as used here is that of a space owned by a power. This one in the legal sense is consistent with the existence of an authority. This is altogether a legal, social, cultural and even emotional territory.

It is subject to continuous adjustments so that it can better meet development requirements. This development need appeared in Africa only after the colonies' independence. Formerly, the territories rather known under the name of colonies served as a framework for consumptions of the resources they contain in favor of the colonial powers.

So we can state that the territorial dimensions of development have long been neglected in Africa. Indeed, moving from colonization to nominal independence, taking into account the territorial dimension of development remained subordinate in developing public policies. This delay gave rise to many territorial inequalities.

It required the fall of communism in 1989, the end of apartheid in 1994 and the emergence of democracy as a result in poor countries for new needs of traditional political areas restructuring to start emerging. Africa is now witnessing the resurgence of a new territorial geography illustrated by the shifting, varied and complex nature of development areas. Territories undergo a transformation resulting in several dimensions, some of which will be discussed in this communication.

2. A GEO-ECONOMIC DIMENSION

This can be analyzed at various levels among which three will be taken into account.

2.1 A better linkage between the different geographical areas

These areas are characterized by several types of zonation imposed by climate. There are four main areas, the Sahara, the Sahel, the Sudan zone and the forest area. Each of these areas was in the past made of autonomous territories with varied and complementary economic productions.

The Sahara under the Arab-Berber influence served as a framework for intense trade relations between Africa, the Maghreb and the Mediterranean. Ultimate desert area, it is full of important mineral resources and has recently become the deployment area of the various jihadist movements currently operating in Africa.

The Sahel was the quintessential birthplace of brilliant civilizations and old political formations that made the glory of Africa, such as the Empire of Ghana, Mali Songhai, Kanem Bornu, etc., and each of these political formations was based on dynamic and diversified economic activities whose basis consisted of precious minerals, livestock, crafts and a fairly profitable trade with the Arab community on the one hand, and the coastal regions on the other.

The Sudanian area has gained prominence only after the disappearance of the Sahel political entities. It welcomed the various families of these empires that were able to use this middle part of Africa to restore small political entities between the 15th and the 19th century. Taking advantage of a favourable climate potential, this area is currently enjoying a thriving agricultural economy of which the basis was peanuts during colonization, cotton today with an associated grain production which benefits from the carry-over of cotton fertilizers to flourish. To all of these were added significant fruit and livestock activities.

The forest area is adjacent to the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. Brilliant local civilizations have emerged there such as Ilé-Ifè, Ibini (Nigeria), the Daxome (current Benin) and Ashanti (current Ghana), etc. These local civilizations have benefited from a significant trafficking activity during colonization (slave trade and trafficking of agricultural and commercial products). But the climatic advantages and the opening to the sea made today this area the main economic region of Africa.

European penetration from the 15th century completely destroyed complementarities between these four areas because of a predatory economy imposed by colonization. The incorporation of these different zones in the same colonial territories broke their zonal, complementary nature, in favour of a vertical economy for the profit of the colonized countries of the North.

This situation brought strong territorial inequalities between these four areas with the need for better linkage between coastal and Sahelian areas due to persistent constraints faced by landlocked Sahelo-Saharan areas. The emergence of jihadist movements in the Sahel-Saharan region today causes acute socio-political crises that aggravate territorial development introduced by colonization.

2.2 A rapid urbanization

This urbanization is in favor of the forest area which enjoys on the one hand significant mining and agricultural resources and benefits from the opening to the sea and the advanced development and significant capital accumulation as well. This area has the largest high-density regions of Africa such as Dakar, Lagos, Abidjan, Accra, Douala, Yaoundé, Luanda.

This has now resulted in a sharp coastlisation of Africa development, a source of significant territorial inequalities. These territorial inequalities generate enormous consequences like the demographic changeover of African populations in favor of these coastal areas. The new geography of Africa is a geographical imbalance that aggravates spatial inequalities for which alternative solutions should be considered from a strong development programme.

2.3 A massive inter-regional migration

Migration is an old and recurrent phenomenon of Humanity. It represents the basis from which the different socio-political entities are formed as well as the formation of the cultural-ethnic heritage of our planet.

Migration flows are now amplified by the phenomenon of globalization and by the different territorial inequalities that are observed worldwide. The development of means of transport, ICT and the mass-media has transformed the world into a vast global village. Youth, especially in poor countries, seeks to take advantage of this village going to regions that offer better development opportunities.

In Africa, the migration phenomenon is mainly based on the uneven development between coastal regions and those from the inside due to climate constraints on the one hand, and to better equipment of coastal areas on the other. It is also amplified by the insecurity in the Sahel-Saharan zone because of the various jihadist movements.

This migration carried out in favor of the coastal countries apart from the resulting demographic changeover, has become an embarrassment for coastal recipient countries with the risk of a periodic repatriation for which countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria remain famous.

From these three remarks on development areas, urbanization and migration in Africa, we can conclude that the geographical dimension, as the basis of this development, creates drastic disparities that bring with them territorial inequalities.

The second part of this work focused on the political dimension of these inequalities, will try to be more expressive by emphasizing the various forms of territorial restructuring taking place in Africa and their impact on territoriality.

3. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF TERRITORIAL TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

The democratization process of the State and society that begun in Africa since 1990 following the organization of sovereign national conferences, has brought to light the fragility of nation-states through their territories. This frailness occurs in several ways:

-   there is on the one hand, the States' difficulty in meeting the most basic expectations of their citizens including personal safety. This weakness leads to poor governance with several depreciative expressions like « Corrupt-States », « Customer-Nations », « Ethnic-States »[1] ;

-   secondly, there is the governance crisis, born of the acute social and political conflicts resulting in secessionist tendencies hither and thither;

-   there are also quite strong identity claims with the resurgence of tribalism increasingly sanctioned by puppet political formations of an ethnic nature;

-   finally there is the need for new development areas which are expressed both as a result of economic globalization and as a result of a better participation of the populations in different development processes.

These recent developments demonstrate the fragility of nation-states inherited from colonization and call for a reflection on the relevance of territorial strategies implemented so far. These strategies assure the proper functioning of these territories in connection with:

-   their sociocultural content, that is the ability to offer inhabitants the opportunities of a dynamic cultural development;

-   their collective recognition, that is the acceptance of the territory by its residents as a collective property from which it is possible to deal with its significant transformation;

-   their better adjustment as consequence of the influence of man on his environment.

These different questions require the need to consider new approaches that seek to go beyond the strict framework of the current nation-states to consider new territorial alternatives. Among these, there is the need to overhaul the African states inherited from colonization. This overhaul is needed to make reliable, sustainable and reassuring the current territorial entities. The nation-states inherited from colonization, to paraphrase Antoine Sawadogo, are in an ambivalent situation, both real and fictitious, formal and informal[2]. We must rebuild them from new territorial scales to better cope with the different problems that impede good control of current development conditions: the isolation, too long or poorly defined borders and the underdevelopment of basic infrastructure. The consequences of the excessive balkanization of the African continent, considered by the former Organization of African Unity as an «African specificity», prevent African States from controlling the flow needed for their territories management.

Indeed, the existence of disparate territories either through their surface areas, their populations or their resources, results in some uncertainty as manifested by a series of territorial disruptions such as:

-   the crisis of the State as a spatial entity;

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[1] About these various concepts, one can refer to the book by Antoine Sawadogo: Refounding the African State. Paris, Karthala, 2001.
[2] Sawadogo R. A: African States Transformations, in Igue J. and Schumacher S. (eds) For a better regional development approach in West Africa. Paris, OCDE, 2003. pp 47-51.

-   the crisis of legitimacy of these States by the populations;
-   a complex and exacerbated mobility of population;
-   a growing spatial differentiation within a single state.

The crisis of the state as a spatial entity is manifested in several ways:

-   through the lack of sufficient financial resources to operate. This leads to excessive debt, including the nonpayment, resulting in various structural adjustment programmes with their impacts on the functioning of the state institutions and above all the poor governance; and

-   through the low impact of the different institutional and economic reforms that have been set up within the framework of these various structural adjustment programmes. These reforms of which a purpose is to clean up the economic and social environment and to better involve people in decision-making and development processes, have not always worked properly. Rather, they are the cause of recurrent acute political crises. These crises which most of the time are built on tribal and religious issues, have become a permanent threat to the territorial control with the risk of fragmentation as is currently the case in Mali and Nigeria with the establishment of Azawad and the Islamic State. The scale of these territorial breakup attempts shows the limits of territoriality in Africa and its challenge as well.

The crisis of legitimacy of the States inherited from colonization is due to the inability of the latter to become a true nation by building a real national citizenship. Thus, people are still experiencing difficulty to identify themselves within the territories inherited from colonization. They therefore keep on prioritizing their ethnic and tribal affiliation. This situation is being aggravated by the political formations of a tribal nature and identity politics developed by such formations to better impress upon people. So, the democratization process in many African countries, far from serving the political awareness and the improvement of the debates related to the country upgrading, rather tends to compartmentalize States around issues of annuity power and to foster the emergence of insufficient and striated spaces.

As for the population mobility with diverse aspects (rural exodus, Fulani transhumance, forced migrations of refugees, international migrations, etc.), it attests the inability of national territories to fully play their role in relation to the safety of inhabitants. This population mobility limits the scope of boundaries as barriers to the extent that these boundaries are precisely the ones which become the attraction areas, either for security reasons or for economic motives. This migration which, in many cases, completely overwhelms indigenous peoples in its scope (example of Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon), is in line with the spatial restructuring of the people settlement which changes the forms of spatial organization and land use . This migration issue is so important in the undermining of the territorial logic of current States that it deserves to be debated separately.

The territory transformation resulting from the current crisis of the State and the magnitude of the population mobility create a growing spatial differentiation within the same country. This is manifested by the awareness of ethnic groups and the strengthening of their autonomy towards the central Government. In other words, we are now facing a form of national space fragmentation with a turning inwards of the various tribal units.

This dynamic leads to the creation of new territorial entities that become nowadays the solid footholds of political forces through multiple associations. To show the consequences of such a withdrawal from others, there is no need to raise the issue of tribalism as the greatest misfortune of Africa.

We're therefore increasingly witnessing a spatial differentiation that can be appreciated in several ways:

-   the extroversion spaces that are built around the so-called modern economy vectors, such as the vectors of rural modernization and mining whose dynamism and prosperity are based on a special relationship with the outside world;
-   urban areas which are sometimes *ex nihilo* creations from an administrative centre or from a mining exploitation;

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- exchange spaces are more structured around important trade flows sometimes over long distances. This is the case of the assembly markets already analyzed in other works.[3]

These different spaces reinforce the territorial fragmentation from divergent interests resulting in the lack of real centres around which the national space could be structured.

It is that territorial breakdown which gives a certain extent to the different forms of networks and migratory flows whose best way to properly cope with lies in new land management approaches.

This need for land planning as one of the best territorial strategies is also justified because of the new challenges Africa is faced with: the challenge of globalization, the fight against poverty and crises resulting from democratic governance.

These different challenges cause changes which are decisive for the future of Africa. From these challenges and changes, the development objectives are now defined around several territorial levels that are in the same vein new territorial strategies.

4. THE NEW TERRITORIAL APPROACHES

These new approaches are of several kinds, local dimension, border approach and the regional dimensions.

4.1 The local dimensions

The first dimension of territorial approaches is that of the promotion of the decentralized territorial units. This is the objective of creating community development territories. This creation is the « most advantageous way since it can allow the emergence of new decision and consensual management centres closer to the actors, harmonizing governance at local level, to reconcile divergent interests and transform multiple citizenships which coexist in « nationalisable » citizenship. Decentralization in this case becomes an attempt for State reconstruction in such a way that the local can serve the global. The local that is set up is then a new version of a combination of vertical networks between local elites and global elites, the latter running the local as required by the global»[4].

It is from the local level that people are aware of their geographical basis and their citizenship, and that they fully assume their various responsibilities. It is also in the local context that a consensual and participatory management is achieved.

Thus, the first importance of the local consists in creating a new alliance between national elites and local elites to forge ahead the development process.

The other challenge of the local is to shift the current governance mode while linking the management of public affairs to different geographical levels to ensure better regulation of relationships within society. Doing so would value the different forms of community vitality and would recreate the foundations of national pride among people scarred by the severe impacts of the corrupt and unpopular political systems. Without that pride, it will be difficult that people give as much of themselves to innovate and actively participate in the work of national construction.

The upgrading of the community framework may also enable the most dynamic socio-cultural groups and the best-organized ones to establish within the population a real competition on development issues.

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[3] Igue O.J., « Exchanges and development opportunities : case of West Africa », Works of Geography Institute of Reims, n° 83-84, 1993, pp. 19-39.
[4] Sawadogo R. A. : African States Transformations. op cit.

Overall, the development of the local level through decentralization, will enable to make a clean break with earlier practices that grant excessive powers to the central government.

It is based on the local level that we can hope to reconcile people with the promises of modernity in the context of a social contract that provides the foundation for a new citizenship within African States.

Finally, the construction of the local can be a springboard for discussions on cross-border cooperation and promotion of « border-countries» which are topical today in Africa.

4.2 The promotion of « border-countries »

It is through the promotion of « border-countries » which are the second territorial approach that we can create the genuine links of regional integration. Border areas that can be considered as true « border-countries » are quite numerous in West Africa. They are developed in two different contexts: between coastal and Sahelian countries in conjunction with the effects caused by agro-ecological complementarities on the one hand, and between Anglophone and Francophone countries, due to monetary and trade policy disparities on the other.

- The border areas between coastal and Sahelian countries have been developed in favour of the only geographical contrasts, countries open to the world, landlocked countries, countries with better climatic potential, drought-affected countries, etc. The best examples are the borders between Nigeria, Niger and Chad, between Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali, between Ghana and Burkina Faso, etc.

- Those between Anglophone and Francophone countries have emerged following the contrast of resources, markets and economic policies: the case of Senegal with Gambia, Ghana with Togo, or Benin with Nigeria, etc.

Many factors determine the emergence of these border regions among which we have successively:

- Structural factors which are of three types:

    - The historical roots of African States. From this point of view, we can say that trade which is one of the dynamic aspects of these border regions, and which are unlawful, as the independences appeared more assertive, and as differentiated customs and tariff arenas are created, represents legacies for historical relationships;

    - The differences in population settlement or in economic resources that allow a regional distribution of rents from the natural resources exploitation for those countries that possess them, to neighboring countries that are generally deprived and poor.

    - Differences in currency areas where one can meet political entities which are linked to relatively high or stable convertible currencies against those having most unstable autonomous currencies. The discount of the latter in relation to the first ones on the parallel trade markets, creates flows of a particularly speculative nature.

- Cyclical factors related to climate hazards, to socio-political crises and to armed or latent conflicts that became recurrent phenomena in Africa;

- Comparative advantages and complementarities between production areas. Unlike the discourse according to which Africans have nothing to exchange with each other, there are several forms of complementarities between countries producing cereals and countries producing tubers, on the one hand and between pastoral and agricultural areas on the other. Some trade patterns have been fed with these various potentials since the pre-colonial period, which resulted in the emergence of several regional markets, whose normal operation is being hampered by the economic and monetary

policy disparities, despite the existence of many official organizations responsible for managing the regional integration process;

- Comparative advantages are also influenced by natural resources inequalities and labor costs resulting in an organization of exchanges designed to circumvent obstacles such as stiffness or restriction of trade policies;

- The differences in economic policies which are another set of factors. They are marked by significant disparities in the protection levels of productive sectors and some States' domestic markets.

From these various factors, strong enough ethnic links are developed and marked by the will of the populations victims of colonial partition, to resist against this partition. These ethnic groups thus set up a system of social and economic regulation characterized by the intensity of the oscillating migrations and an exceptional development of trade.

4.3 The regional scales

These regional scales are both formal and informal. On the official level, there are 15 regional integration institutions[5] in Africa among which only five are recognized by the African Union: ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States), the AMU (Arab Maghreb Union), SADC (Southern African Development Communauty) and COMESA (Comon Market for Eastern and Southern African States).

These different regional integration structures have been devised to fight against the effects of excessive balkanization of Africa, to solve the regional inequality problems and to create a new spatial development opportunity.

The unofficial nature of the economic areas are little known to the public and to the economic decision-makers. They were born from cross-border trade and correspond to what could be called by integration through market. They are of four kinds :

- The East subspace, also called Nigeria's influence zone. This set includes Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin and Nigeria. The four countries are satellites of the great Nigeria. Integration factors are based on the development of cross-border trading networks whose radiation bases are in Nigeria: Hausa-Kanuri network, Ibo network and Yoruba network. The activities of these three networks are the ones that give this subspace a certain originality.

- The Centre subspace, also called the central corridor of West Africa: it includes Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso and eastern Mali. It is structured around two elements: livestock trade and populations migrations. Unfortunately this set is currently shaken by the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire with an attempt of restructuring new alliances more focused on Ghana and Togo.

- The West subspace known as Senegambia. It is the western part of West Africa, comprising Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania and the western part of Mali. Senegal acts as an epicenter of this group. Here, spatial structuring factors are based on the importance of Islam as cultural basis and on rice in feeding the populations. As in the case of the West subspace, exchange

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[5] These 15 regional integration structures are as follows: the Customs and Economic Union, the UDEAC, the South African Custom Union (SACU), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (EMCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Conference on Development and Coordination of Central Africa (CDCC), the Preference Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Southern African Development Communauty (SDC), the CEN-SAD (Economic Community of Sahel-Sahelian States), the Mano River Union, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States (COMESA), EAC (East African Community), IGAD (Intergovermental Authority of Development).

activities are organized from three major commercial networks at the regional level: The Manding network also called Dioula network, the Fulani and Moorish networks plus some Wolof. But only the Fulani act as facilitators of these networks. The bulk of regional trade is dominated by the re-export of rice, livestock trade, cola and fruit trade, complemented by some precious metals such as gold and diamond for which the city of Bamako remains the main hub.

- The coastal urban area of the Gulf of Guinea refers to the part existing between the city of Abidjan and Port-Harcourt in the Niger Delta (Nigeria). This wide coastal area of almost 1500 kilometers, is in the process of being developed by a chain of cities that will make the Gulf of Guinea the most urbanized region of sub-Saharan Africa.

These different forms of spatial structuring go hand in hand with several major territorial transformations:

- A renewal of the geographical mobility. This was long due to the geographical contrasts and development inequalities between coastal and Sahelian countries. It is now due to acute sociopolitical crises involving a massive movement of refugees and displaced populations.

- An amplification of the traffic between cities and countrysides. It was formerly the fact of the demographic transition and schooling. It is made worst today by the poor wealth movement inside the national space and the extroversion of the various means of production.

- An exceptional development of cities resulting in a new image of West African settlement. This urban growth is on the one hand, the result of the importance of migration flows derived from economic upheavals, from recurring sociopolitical crises and from the lot of refugees entailed by these crises.

Some countrysides are involved in a universe in crisis. The exceptional growth of cities carries with it a « revenge of the countrysides ». Indeed, for the cities to be fed, they need the countrysides to be organized. Food requirements of urban inhabitants gave a certain vitality to the countrysides. But the current assets of the rural world also seem to come from the promotion of some export sectors such as cotton which had a decisive impact on the production of food commodities from the back-effect of fertilizers accompanied by off-season arrangements, particularly in the Sahelian countries.

5. CONCLUSION

These reorganizations of the African geography map out a regional patchwork characterized by territories increasingly atomized, fragmented and sometimes also locked. This leads to contradictory trends: stronger links between cities and countrysides, emergence of new possibilities for initiatives in rural areas, and challenging the hierarchical relationships between different levels of territorial organization. These developments give rise to three types of territories as already explained, that is to say spaces on which it is urgent to build a new governance.

To sum up, the different changes of African territories alter the society's relationship to its living environment. Territorial dynamics have become more complex: proximity, remoteness, population and urban growth and the resulting densities represent henceforth heavy challenges for Africa development. The territories that result from these various situations involve an evolution of collective action modes.

Regional territories now go beyond the strict framework of nation-states to become the outgrowth of various actors whose actions cannot be reduced to public policy in the narrower sense of the word. Rather, this requires the invention of new means of operating and new forms of governance with the search for a new partnership between the different actors emerging either from local or community spaces.

In any event, these new territorial approaches require other strategies to be put in place such as those related to land management, to the consolidation of transport corridors and to the equipment of new service structures. They also require new concerted actions to better distribute the roles of the different

actors in these intervention frameworks which are: decentralized local authorities, the «border-countries», nation-states and the different community areas, whether these are formal or informal. In each of these areas, the need for concerted action becomes an emergency in order to better distribute the roles considering the requirements and the new development approaches.