

Urban Hunger

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Preface

Over the course of the twentieth century, world population increased fourfold, growing from 1.5 to 6 billion people. This unprecedented evolution coincided with major expansion in urban zones. The scope of the phenomenon and the ensuing feeling of helplessness give rise to numerous questions and concerns. Cities provide tremendous potential for employment, as well as sources of opportunity for the fulfillment of all types of desires and innovations. But cities also produce more and more outcasts, people marginalized from society who cling to survival by a fragile thread.

The endogenous development of cities has been accompanied by the spread of migratory phenomena. Motivated by “urban desire”, rural populations, who embody traditional cultural and religious values, have participated to a large extent in the growth of urban centers. Shantytown populations will grow by 100,000 people a day over the next thirty years.

This societal evolution in increasingly urban Southern countries has caused humanitarian organizations to shift their focus as they are solicited more and more frequently to meet the needs of disadvantaged, uprooted and oppressed urban populations.

At the outset, this relatively new phenomenon appears to be the result of the past thirty years of chaotic agricultural evolution and progressive development of armed conflict in cities.

From 1975 to 1980 low intensity conflicts, originating in poor, isolated rural regions, spread throughout the Third World. Ruthless repression and enlistment spurred the exodus of rural populations and kept migrants moving toward cities. Beirut, the main battleground of the war in Lebanon, has been an exception to this scenario. However, a major strategic change took place at the end of the 1980s when the Soviet world collapsed, troops of major world powers withdrew from peripheral conflicts, and a new phenomenon went unnoticed – urban conflicts became common. Kabul, Monrovia, Kigali, Baghdad and Sarajevo are representative of the new fields in which humanitarian organizations are called to take action.

The FAO states that “food security” is attained when everyone has economic, social and physical access to sufficient food to meet nutritional needs and food preferences. Underprivileged populations and crisis victims use a wide variety of methods to secure the means for resolving their food insecurity. Needy city dwellers survive despite extremely poor living conditions by collecting recyclable materials, illicit dealing of all kinds, small-scale businesses, developing domestic agriculture, seeking assistance and monetizing even the smallest services. Such populations usually find themselves “trapped” in districts devoid of all urban infrastructures, in the outer peripheral zones, or in unsanitary housing concealed in the very heart of urban centers.

As a consequence, urban hunger often takes on new appearances: children enlisted in gangs, people reduced to begging, substance addiction. All of these examples illustrate social problems that can now be found on every continent.

Poverty and food insecurity are undeniably related. They have a destructive effect on large segments of urban populations. Today, the outlines of a future full-blown “urban crisis” are coming into focus. In the meantime, urban hunger has given rise to entire generations of children suffering from slow physical and intellectual development and serious pathologies

associated with poverty. Because they have no access to schools or health care, they are doomed to a precarious existence. In many countries, the fate of an entire generation is said to have been sealed.

Unfortunately, cities are also places where all forms of inequality exist. In today's world of globalization and deregulation, a few "winners" in the globalization process make off with the spoils, leaving a few meager crumbs for the runners-up who trail far behind in the race. It is distressing to observe, for example, that both established and potential global cities take shape around a few neighborhoods presented as showcases to attract capital, while hunger gnaws away at most of the city's inhabitants.

The diversity of the existing problems and actors involved makes cities a complex environment for aid organizations. Such organizations examine the causes of urban hunger and look for ways of ensuring food security for the ever-increasing numbers of "urban poor". The question facing humanitarian organizations, like Action Against Hunger (ACF), is what where does their mission start and end concerning the issue of urban hunger?

Following a symposium on "The Urban Bomb", which was held in Paris in November 2004, the international Action Against Hunger network commissioned this study, based on bibliographical research and field work. In the first part of the book, we will make an admittedly over-simplified attempt at presenting the main issues and problems facing urban environments today. By examining several case studies, we will then look at the principal causes of urban hunger before giving an assessment of those causes and going on to conclude by suggesting ways of ensuring access to food for ever-increasing impoverished populations.

This publication represents an essential step in Action Against Hunger's commitment to improving its level of competence. This effort is part of a more general trend, characteristic of modern (and therefore urbanized) societies to attempt to manage risk and meet populations' needs as fully as possible. The more we learn, the more precautions we take, but we must be careful not to let these precautions hinder decision-making processes. For organizations, like Action Against Hunger, that devote part of their activity to emergency response this may seem contrary to the organizational needs of ensuring survival for populations in an emergency situation. However, the phase of operations following emergency relief efforts must not jeopardize the future. It should concentrate on integrating urban projects into the complex, opaque environment of cities.

Jean-Christophe Rufin, Chairman
Benoît Miribal, CEO

A close look at the urban phenomenon

Disparity between cities and types of urbanization

Significant disparities in urbanization

In everyday language, the term *city* is used very broadly, without any suggestion of the extraordinary diversity that it represents. Qualifiers generally refer to the size of an urbanized area. We talk about small cities, medium-sized cities, metropolises, ignoring other distinctions, including their often inconsistent degrees of urbanization and the fact that they are not homogeneous entities.

Any attempt at drawing up a typology of cities would be a simplistic portrait of an extremely varied and complex reality. However, for those working in urban environments, it is useful to have a key to help decipher and understand the plurality of cities and the various neighborhoods that constitute them. Spatial economics, which examines how certain spatial characteristics influence the behavior of economic agents (companies, households, public administrations), and sociology (Voyé & Remy, 1992) are useful fields of study for describing and understanding cities and how they function.

Understanding how leadership is structured and its impact on service management can clarify relations between neighborhood actors, and explain social and economic organization. Other aspects, such as means of exchange (bartering, monetization of social exchange and other trade-related services that were formerly part of household economies) can also be practical in defining coherent urban zones within a city.

By examining spatial organization, a more discerning typology of neighborhoods can be defined than that circumscribed by official administrative boundaries. Spatial organization includes housing density, the nature of relations with the hinterland¹, the degree of consolidation and age of urbanization, whether districts are organized around a single city center or multiple centers, the level of development and access to communication infrastructures, and planned vs. spontaneously developed neighborhoods. Obviously, there are no comprehensive and universal lists of the characteristics of urban areas, but it is important to note that, whatever their size, cities and neighborhoods can be more or less rural or urban. Thus, some rural zones, integrated in predominately urban areas, can be characterized by their urban quality. This is especially true in the most developed countries. Conversely, some urban and periurban contexts are more rural in their culture and social fabric.

Spontaneous urbanization vs. planned urbanization

Urbanization is known as spontaneous when it results from inhabitants' "urban need" and cities' inability to manage their own growth. In many developing countries, informal systems replace legal procedures to create land for city dwellers. Informal districts are generally situated on the outskirts of cities and are structured by people who refer to custom as a guideline for organization and management. However, the role of custom has been shrinking

¹ The rural areas surrounding a city where the direct influence of the urban area is felt. See also chapter I, *The importance of structuring rural and urban environments*.

² ACF-France, *La Bombe Urbaine*, symposium report, 2005.

steadily, overshadowed by the tendency to convert land into a market commodity and individualize it through legal land ownership (Goerg & Goerg-Akue, 2005).

Vernacular architecture is often underrated as “poor people’s construction”, but deserves to be recognized at its true value. When consolidated, *favelas*, slums and townships frequently demonstrate more urban know-how and understanding than certain architects did in the 1960s (Castro, 2005)². This is often clear when urban renewal projects are undertaken and meet resistance from inhabitants who would prefer to keep their neighborhoods as is.

The main “urban” problem in major cities is the structural inequality that separates the downtown area and the outer neighborhoods. Tremendous urban improvement projects are necessary to recreate social bonds, establish relations between the underprivileged populations and city government, and make all parts of the city attractive. Many solutions have been suggested to launch this massive undertaking. For one, offering services to inhabitants would provide citizens with rights in exchange for duties, and thus reestablish the status of citizen for those who have been excluded from the formal system. Another possibility would be to create “multiple city centers” (Castro, 2005) so that all inhabitants have access to the urban potential of metropolitan centers (architectural quality, diversified services, population mix, etc.).

Violence, crises and urban conflict – the difficulty of evaluating situations

Public administrations have proven themselves incapable of regulating the proliferation of “human establishments” occupied by destitute people who, in many cases, have recently settled in an urban environment that is new to them. This incompetence on the part of local governments causes various problems and draws cities and neighborhoods even further into the crisis. However, the urban crisis must be considered multiform (Pourtier, 2005)³ and complex, like the situations it encompasses.

In debating the subject, many people blame the structure of cities for urban problems. Issues concerning shantytowns in Southern countries or the “inhuman” housing developments in industrialized countries divert attention from the need to analyze the underlying social causes. For example, in many Northern countries, rioting and other forms of insurrection are seen as the consequences of poorly adapted urbanism models. But the effects of the industrial crisis on the lowest social strata, victims of discrimination and deprived of perspectives for the future, are rarely addressed (Roy, 2005). Social bonds deteriorate in any urban society that finds itself in a crisis situation. This process eventually makes violating the law acceptable, increases recourse to violence in public and private life, and leads people to high-risk behavior patterns which gradually drive individuals towards social annihilation.

In some of the so-called “emerging” Southern countries, industrial development is still capable of integrating young arrivals to the city. But in today’s world of globalization, capital and industry quickly move from one place to another, making that particular means of economic and social integration very vulnerable. In addition, the urban crisis in Northern countries clearly demonstrates that younger generations strive for access to knowledge, and to rewarding and respected professions, as opposed to their parents’ unskilled industrial jobs. That situation should not be underestimated. The challenge for societies is to satisfy young people’s “urban desire”, as well as their urge for “upward mobility”.

² ACF-France, *La Bombe Urbaine*, symposium report, 2005.

³ ACF-France, *La Bombe Urbaine*, symposium report, 2005.

Many countries with high urban growth rates, especially in Africa, will probably be forced to find development methods that differ from those used by the “Asian dragons”, if they want to evolve. These cities, once dependent on the redistribution of public funds, now pay the highest price for the austerity measures dictated to governments for the past twenty years. The middle classes have been wiped out and downtown urban areas suffer from a lack of productive economic activity. Such cities are incapable of satisfying the basic needs and desires of an ever-increasing urban population. City living has become a struggle for survival in which every form of informal activity proliferates, pushing city dwellers farther and farther away from their status of citizen. Young urban populations are cause for concern in those countries, more than anywhere else. The recent example in Cote d’Ivoire demonstrated how unemployed youth could produce battalions of militia and looters when faced with politicians who stir up the potentially explosive situation in cities. The current trend toward rejecting people and capital breaks down economic structures, as illustrated in Cote d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe. A similar phenomenon has recently begun in South Africa.

No matter what the context, the social and societal aspects of these crises reveal how violence can fill the vacuum left by incompetent governments. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, drug dealers run their business out of the *favelas* because the police do not go into those neighborhoods and cannot monitor the dealers’ activities. Through their own dysfunctions, cities can create situations in which law and order become the domain of factions and interest groups that are difficult to identify and often rivals. Operations to stabilize districts and reestablish order are complicated by the fact there are no identifiable factions with whom to negotiate agreements (one case in point is the situation in the underprivileged neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince). The sole purpose of these factions is to maintain and develop their underground economies. They do not hesitate involving local populations (often by paying them) in order to guarantee their own safety.

It is difficult to measure the depth and breadth of this kind of instability and the long-term implications it can have. Such situations blur the transition from crisis to urban conflict. Recent events, such as those that occurred in Madrid in 2004, and in Great Britain and France in 2005, clearly show that the fine line between crisis and conflict is getting progressively thinner. Public authorities struggle to come up with appropriate and adequate means of reestablishing order and dealing with the underlying causes of the problems.

Urban crises throughout the world share additional characteristics:

- the importance of information: information circulates broadly and international public opinion plays a significant role in the decisions made by governments. Local populations, whether they be far from the conflicts, instigators or victims can also influence all levels of decision-making. Such strategies are effective. The deadly terrorist attacks that occurred in Madrid on March 11, 2004 had decisive political consequences. Quite unexpectedly, they led to the downfall of the party in power which was sanctioned for backing U.S. policy in Iraq and sending Spanish troops⁴.

- asymmetrical balance of power between opposing forces: opposition is expressed through indirect modes of action (terrorist acts, guerilla warfare, rioting, insurrections). Unfortunately, local populations become involved and are victims of these confrontations.

- the central and strategic role of civilian populations: they are victims, but also provide food and protection during crises and urban conflicts.

⁴ Slogans such as “Iraqi bombs went off in Madrid” rang through the streets during massive protest marches before the Spanish election on March 14, 2004.

Nonetheless, while political and criminal violence can be endogenous and pervasive in cities, the scope of such violence is usually limited to territorial control, sometimes in only one or more districts. Urban violence is quickly countered by opposing movements. Contrary to rural areas, urban antagonism is neutralized fairly quickly and does not spread beyond a certain perimeter because perpetrators of violence and repressive police forces are in such close contact. In poverty-stricken environments, exclusively repressive policies do not contain the phenomenon, but rather, foster the creation of networks of autonomous groups in other cities, or even neighboring countries. Instigators of urban violence lack organization and structure, which explains why violent movements are sporadic and difficult to control. Urban crises can, however, develop an international dimension, the best illustration being the extremely violent gangs, known as Maras, who appeared in poor districts after the civil wars in Central America. Today, Maras are present from Panama to Canada.

Since urban crises and conflicts function according to similar *modus operandi*, the approaches to exploring possible solutions can also be similar. It is now clear from experience that the use of force and repression alone does not suffice to legitimize the gradual return to law and order following an urban crisis or conflict, either in the eyes of the urban populations concerned, or those of the general public. As for police and military forces, it is now generally accepted that the best strategy to follow is that of the French Marshall Lyautey when he was governing Morocco: “The fewer troops he had, the better he ensured order, with the greatest respect for Moroccan governance⁵”.

Governments, associations and humanitarian organizations, as well as economic, financial and cultural actors all have a decisive role to play in offering an alternative and reestablishing bonds with populations caught in the stranglehold of perpetrators of urban violence. Nonetheless, the globalization of organized crime and terrorist networks obviously limits any strategy aimed at reabsorbing violence at a local level.

<i>Global cities: Karachi, portrait of a global city cut adrift</i>

Karachi, in Pakistan, is a textbook example of a city with a dual identity. It is both a hub for finance and investment, and totally out of control. Karachi can be described as a global city because its economic resources (port, industry) play a central role at the crossroads between the Persian Gulf and Asia, but also because immigration from the entire region is swelling its population exponentially⁶. The first wave of immigration came when India was divided and Karachi took in the Muhajirs (Indian Muslims). Later, it met with demographic pressures and the challenge of integrating refugees from Afghanistan, Burma, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Radical Islamic networks have also established a foothold in Karachi, which brings added violence to the city and illustrates the active influence of transnational movements.

Because of housing shortages, transportation crises and ethnic conflict, Karachi has become an urban area composed of “ethnic enclaves and communal micro-territories” (Gayer 2004) confined and controlled by private militias. Karachi is now a center for exporting all sorts of illegal merchandise (heroin) and for criminal activity. Confrontation between Pashtuns and Muhajirs in the 1980s began when the Pashtuns took over Karachi’s transportation sector. The Pashtuns not only created a monopoly that laundered profits from their afghan heroin

⁵ ACF-France, *La Bombe Urbaine*, symposium report, 2005.

⁶ According to Laurent Gayer’s presentation at ACF-France, *La Bombe Urbaine*, symposium report, 2005.

trafficking, but deliberately perpetrated acts of violence against the Muhajirs in transportation-related incidents, setting off a chain of interethnic violence.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Muhajir and Jihadist movements developed and spread to the Western world, spurring conflicts between communities. Even from a distance, militants fight over control of the city. The diaspora associated with the struggles between factions confirms Karachi's importance and its role in the world.

Urbanization plans for Karachi were developed by foreign experts and did not take into account the socio-cultural characteristics specific to the city. Such faulty city planning can legitimately be condemned and blamed for the disaster. Attempts at moving underprivileged populations from the city center to outer districts, and wealthier groups' move to isolate themselves in residential neighborhoods have destroyed any potential for integration in the downtown area. Karachi was shattered and left fragmented. Populations were separated and isolated, political groups took up arms, and the State was unable to curb the "privatization" of violence. By the 1990s, the government was so weakened that exiled Muhajir leaders in London and Al Qaeda intellectual leaders began to govern the city from abroad. In an attempt to fill the gaps left by an incompetent government, civil society enterprises began to appear, often in the form of community associations. Although they have been beneficial on a neighborhood scale – for example, to repair sewer networks – they have also, unfortunately, contributed to further fragmentation of the urban context.

Failure on the part of government institutions has led to chaotic development in the city, accompanied by brutal repression intended to overcome widespread insecurity. Insecurity, however, grew increasingly severe. In the case of Karachi, globalization can be seen as both the origin and the cause of the problem, and has aggravated the uncontrollable character of the situation.

The case of Karachi illustrates the extent to which global cities develop their own particular means of channeling and fueling conflicts when no viable institutional framework is established. Globalization facilitates and even encourages the free, unregulated flow of people, goods and communication, which can all be used for extremely malevolent purposes by private or political groups. By definition, these movements, whether they be legal or illegal, avoid government control and thus contribute to the weakening of public authority. It is very difficult for a government whose authority has already been undermined to regain control of the various movements and transactions. Cities, which concentrate increased flows of people and goods, are left to their own devices, and are among the first victims of unregulated globalization.

Historical heritage and increasing urbanization

Superimposed colonial urban policies and post-colonial modernization

Behind the chaotic state of some cities lies decades, sometimes even centuries, of direct interventionism. For many years, urban models were the product of political determination to control social hierarchy. In many colonized regions, cities were the means by which colonial powers imported societal models (introduction of continental law, etc.) Consequentially, some cities are not rooted in the social fabric of the country and do not have the historical depth characteristic of cities on the Indian sub-continent, for example.

The objectives of colonization were to improve the economy through the construction of major infrastructures (ports, train stations, etc.) in order to structure urban areas and the colonies themselves. With the exception of certain regions in West Africa where many cities had been centers of trade long before colonization, almost all cities in sub-Saharan Africa were created through colonization to support political powers and act as administrative relays. Cities have a natural and a functional bond with the State. That relationship soon rendered many of them “dependent”, and their inhabitants economically dependent - more or less directly - on redistribution of State revenue. These cities attracted rural populations in search of modern lifestyles and change. Gradually, cities became young people’s favorite place of residence: an enormous percentage of the urban population - an average of 60% - are under 20 years old.

The imported societal model had spatial consequence on cities. Population density in cities has long been associated with certain problems, such as epidemics and violence. In the name of hygiene, cities were segregated. The colonists’ quarters functioned both as epicenters and as instruments of domination, in contrast with “indigenous” neighborhoods relegated to the outskirts of town. Thus cities were designed around a downtown area and traditionally laid out on a grid plan according to a model identical worldwide, while local populations were confined to traditional housing in peripheral zones.

That pattern changed in many Southern cities after countries became independent and policies began to favor functionalism⁷ and low-cost housing which was designed according to Western standards, with no adaptations to specific regional needs (excessively hot climates, high construction costs making the housing inaccessible for underprivileged populations, etc.). In response to the failure of imported housing models, governments made it their priority to control and contain the proliferation of spontaneous and disorganized neighborhoods. Backed by the World Bank, “sites & services” schemes became an important element in government policies starting in the 1970s. Such schemes were meant to provide land security, ensure access to basic infrastructures (roads, water) for urban populations, and allow people to build their own houses. Although these programs met with opposition from those who considered them an “official endorsement of shantytowns”, they did have the undeniable advantage of not uprooting inhabitants from their familiar surroundings and social networks, as is the case with today’s rehousing operations.

Austerity plans and their direct effects on cities

Beginning in the 1960s, the increasing debt of developing countries had a dramatic effect on the way they were governed due to mandatory compliance with the *Washington Consensus*. After the oil crisis in the 1970s, northern commercial banks, encumbered with excess petrodollars, would contribute to the debt burden by irresponsibly recycling the money into generous loans. This money did not necessarily finance development projects, and drove countries - especially those plagued by favoritism - into inextricable financial situations. When Ronald Reagan, in the United States, and Margaret Thatcher, in Great Britain, raised interest rates in the early 1980s to fight continuing inflation, indebted countries were irrevocably condemned to insolvency.

At the same time, revenue from raw materials plummeted, whether it be cocoa (in Cote d’Ivoire, for example) or oil (which dropped in 1986 and led to the Brazzaville war). The

⁷ Housing is a function which should be rationalized. It should not be considered an end in itself, and anything useless or unnecessary should be eliminated.

result was a funding freeze for public administrations and redistribution, commonly allocated through salaries and numerous other more or less formal channels.

In 1982, Mexico was the first country to declare itself unable to reimburse its debt. Moratoriums were not enough to solve the problem. Developing countries were forced to agree to implement “formulas” based on free trade and government restructuring. These measures were the brainchildren of the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) which reached a veritable consensus on the process necessary to reestablish monetary balance. The policies were broken down into two stages – the first was designed to stabilize countries’ financial situation and reduce their deficit; the second concerned the actual structural adjustments and consisted of restructuring governments by redefining the role of public authorities and national governments’ place within the international hierarchy. Free trade and export activities were encouraged. During this period, social issues included in cooperative development policies were relegated to the status of adjustment factors for the economic situation. Social programs no longer played a full-fledged role in development strategies, but were regarded as “humanitarian compensation methods”. This had disastrous consequences on cities, placing inhabitants in a position of dependency.

Programs developed through the structural adjustment policies lacked the regulation necessary to implement them and governments were discredited. The result was favoritism, organized crime, violence and exclusion. In the end, these policies and methods contributed more to destabilizing entire sections of the world, than to political liberation (Geet, 2002), and had direct and lasting effects on metropolises worldwide.

Urban areas confronted with structural adjustment policies and the economic crisis

Urban transformation in terms of social, political, economic and spatial reconstruction leads to a chain reaction of consequences in Northern and Southern cities alike.

The transformation begins when the middle classes become impoverished and lose their social position, abandoned by social structure and government authorities. Social and spatial segregation in cities then accelerates, undermining any resolutely constructive policies that could improve the situation in underprivileged neighborhoods. Little by little, cities abandon the concept of “urban identity” and the idea of building strong social cohesion, and move towards segregating neighborhoods. More and more inhabitants refuse redistribution of resources toward the poorest neighborhoods. The phenomenon has been analyzed in depth in the Los Angeles mega-metropolis⁸ and can be observed in nearly all cities today. “Nimbism⁹” is a form of individualism common in cities and characterized by certain inhabitants’ refusal to take collective interest into account. As a result, districts are cordoned off into gated communities, carefully protected townhouse complexes, and soon - who knows - fortified cities. Closed off to the poor and the homeless, these neighborhoods make for disheartening images of cities that oscillate between control-oriented societies and total abandonment. The withdrawal phenomenon can be observed at all levels. At the municipal level, any intended redistribution or community investment tends to vanish into thin air. Many city mayors prefer to focus on competing for investment in their regions, rather than work toward any sort of redistribution of funds, disregarding any vision of the metropolitan area as a whole.

⁸ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, 1990.

⁹ NIMBY is an acronym for “not in my backyard”.

Social cohesion models have evolved following new developments in international policy. Extensive analysis (Allou 2002) has revealed a number of trends, four of which stand out as being particularly relevant.

First, hierarchies and collective action have been restructured. Projects are now implemented by the actors concerned, who, themselves work within networks.

Second, the outlook on work has changed, and incites people to be self-employed.

Third, mercantile attitudes have contaminated all levels of social relations. A surreptitious shift transformed market economics into a commodity society, a signpost of instability and a dysfunctional economy.

Finally, certain actors have heightened their presence in underprivileged zones. Wide-ranging religious and esoterico-sectarian extremists are multiplying in zones that have been abandoned by the State and by mainstream ideological movements. They sell themselves as guarantors of security and/or respond to people's craving for simplistic, even totalitarian, concepts, even when it means aggravating the poverty-induced tendency to fall back on identity. As a result, political rights become less, rather than more, of a focus. Religious issues are not the only concerns that contribute to the increasing demands for identity recognition; ethnic issues are also involved. According to Emile Le Bris, cultural identity participates in a form of segregation that is viewed as a solution to discrimination". Given this context of coexistence, the spatial strategies developed are generally personal and individual because the State no longer develops collective strategies. When the State withdraws from its responsibilities, public services tend to fall apart as a direct result. Education is an essential driving force in social change, but is also one of the sectors most severely affected by the crisis.

In economic terms, the informal sector has replaced once prevalent civil service jobs. In Africa, where very few private investors offer jobs, informal activity has escalated at every strata of society. It develops from people's instinct for survival and adaptation when confronted with "ubiquitous urban poverty and the ruling regimes' inability to create environments capable of reducing that poverty" (Halfani 1997). This leads to a certain number of problems. In addition to generalized poverty and increasing instability, public domains are taken over by unconventional actors who carry out completely uncontrolled privatization operations in such fields as health care, water distribution, tax collection and children's education.

Since municipal institutions have proven themselves incapable of dealing with urban growth, many countries, like Cote d'Ivoire, have reacted by trying to encourage young graduates who can no longer find jobs in civil service to return to their home regions. In reality, few young people who have lived in the city move back to the country. Those who have moved back did not become farmers; they set up businesses, serving as interface between cities and rural regions. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, when people who can no longer afford to live in the city move to the outer suburbs, it is known as "exurbanization". They find plots of land big enough to practice subsistence farming, while continuing to enjoy the social and cultural advantages of the city. People who settle near urban areas express their "urban desire" which corresponds to an image of modernity. But the urban system based on the redistribution of resources no longer works for the rest of the population. It marginalizes high percentages of young people.

Migrants, especially refugees and people displaced by violence, are most severely affected and neglected by country governments. Their situation is paradoxical. They are victims of the ostracism of urbanites who blame them for all of the misfortunes and difficulties affecting their city. According to the psychologist Bronwyn Harris of the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, “foreign Africans are the scapegoats of shantytowns where they are held responsible for the lack of housing, high unemployment rate and high crime rate,” while the dynamics of their social networks often help them obtain access to certain urban resources faster (jobs, housing).

Migratory phenomena can also lead to positive social change: entire sectors of the urban economy often develop through migrants’ dynamism (FAO, *L’Urbanisation en Afrique et ses perspectives*).

Despite the breakdown of public services, the increasingly unstable economy, and individual and institutional withdrawal, urban populations continue to grow. Paradoxically, cities still offer a more favorable environment for people who aspire towards democracy and seek a modern lifestyle, disenfranchising themselves from the burdens and constraints of tradition. Cities, associated with a promise of social change, are still seen as the primary vehicle of development, and continue, for the time being, to attract new populations.

The imposed models and their applications

The evolution of city governing mechanisms in response to the urban crisis

In response to the apparent impotency of governments in the Southern hemisphere to meet the exponential needs of their cities and to assume their own financial crises, two main trends have emerged concerning the support given to populations and institutions.

At first, social “safety nets” were devised to compensate for rising unemployment rates caused by privatizations, lower international trade barriers and increasing competition. Various programs for needy individuals were set up locally, resulting in a juxtaposition of aid measures, with no coordination to ensure overall coherence.

Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, governing methods for cities were modified, setting new ground rules and rewriting the roles of urban actors. A program sponsored by the World Bank, the UNDP and UN-Habitat was designed to change the role of local administrations according to the still vague concept of “urban management”¹⁰ The Urban Management Program was launched on several continents (Africa, Latin America, Asia). Its goal was to help cities in developing countries improve their ability to meet objectives in terms of sustainable human development. (Today, these programs have been completed, and regional governance structures have taken over.) At the time, urban administrations were mere relays for central government decisions and had very little autonomy. The Urban Management Program incited them to implement more efficient administrative and economic systems. This meant rationalizing municipal public service management. However, starting in the 1990s, the approach was criticized for being too “top-down” and out of tune with the need for civil society involvement, and the concept of urban management evolved once more.

¹⁰ Richard Stern, “Faire de nécessité vertu: Du gouvernement local à la gouvernance locale et au-delà dans la gestion urbaine en Afrique” (“Turning necessity into virtue: From local government to local governance and beyond in the urban management of Africa”), in the symposium *Governing Cities of the South*, November 2004.

In response to the chronic instability caused by dysfunctional city governance, Agenda 21 was drawn up at the 1992 Conference of Rio, confirming and approving a new framework of intervention. It recommended that decentralized local authorities participate in the management of urban environments and that there be more cooperation between the private and public sectors. Agenda 21 is a plan of action for sustainable development at a regional level. The goal is to meet the needs of an entire population, paying special attention to environmental conservation, access to essential services for all and the development of sustainable economic activities. Backed by local authorities, the plan was developed and is implemented in cooperation with agents of community action, such as United Nations agencies, local populations, associations, NGOs, businesses, decentralized State organizations, etc.

This concept of regional responsibility stemmed from the ever-increasing number of actors involved in cities, the fragmentation of urban zones and the local authorities' inability to exercise control over their territories. It was readapted by the World Bank and promoted under the umbrella term *governance*. Urban management was introduced gradually to compensate for the void left by local authorities (Gombay, 1994), but the UNDP defined the concept more precisely in 1997: "Governance can be seen as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanics, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences." The idea underpinning urban governance is simple – pool the resources, expertise and projects of various actors present in cities to create new action-oriented partnerships based on shared responsibility (F. Merrien).

The objective of governance is to integrate all of the processes and institutions that govern citizens, as well as all of the interacting parties of civil society (informal networks, citizens' associations, public and private sectors of society who supply services). The initial purpose of "good governance" was to define and evaluate public administrations required to apply adjustment measures. Gradually, in the eyes of international organizations, it became proof of satisfactory performance and of the populations' acceptance.

A certain number of reforms and mechanisms were created to promote good governance, including decentralization, community participation in the project implementation, public-private partnerships, strategic planning, participative budgets, etc. Little by little, these elements of good governance became new requirements for aid applicants.

Urban governance can be seen as a framework, built over time, for cooperation and action plans, and designed to help all actors recognize their respective legitimacy and find common ground. Operational modes evolved in order to achieve sustainable redistribution of powers and rebuild a "social standard adapted to the dominant urban condition" (S. Jaglin). This reorientation followed the 1997-1998 worldwide financial crisis, triggered mainly by liberalization of financial markets which favored capital inflow and outflow for short-term speculative investment, caused the price of raw materials to drop and prompted the collapse of the Washington Consensus¹¹.

¹¹ See Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*

The first reorientations concern the development of flexible, modern means of negotiating and regulating. Often, this means finding ways of addressing the “numerous diverging interests that are expressed at various levels of society and areas involved¹²” It also means creating a new equilibrium when rules (written or unwritten) are no longer acceptable, and making it possible to apply legal rights when administrative institutions are no longer capable of doing so. In reality, regulation (whether implicit or defined by law and put into operation by *ad hoc* operators) is difficult to enforce in situations where social equilibrium is very fragile and where actors’ capabilities need extensive reinforcement. It is important to note that a certain number of prerequisites (high level of professionalism of local actors, municipalities, social actors; the existence of organized civil society and private sector, etc) are very difficult to verify in many cities.

Second, economic, social and cultural rights need to be upheld and extended in all aid strategies, according to the International Pact of 1966. Negotiated compromises, redistribution of powers (including recognizing the viewpoints of civil society) and concessions made on a local level should be integrated into national law, both in regulations and legislation, through the use of aid, projects and advocacy. For example, at the local level, this could mean devising a legal framework defining the division of responsibilities among the concerned parties, i.e. local and national institutions, States, municipalities, Northern and Southern NGOs, grassroots organizations, neighborhood leaders, multinational companies, major international cooperation institutions, etc. At the national or international level, the goal is to satisfy the basic needs of populations (access to health care, especially generic drugs, basic services, housing etc.) by encouraging progress in the areas of public policy and legislation.

In reality, because cities do not have the support they need to enhance actors’ capacities or to compensate for weakening social capital - often damaged by strong antagonism dividing societies and by extreme poverty - they are frequently forced to manage problems case by case (land problems, service supply problems, etc.) and deal with numerous parties. In such situations, they are forced to manage the juxtaposition of operations financed by outside investors, while no clear political perspectives are defined concerning development.

Urban services in an age of globalization

Privatizing services and setting up public-private partnerships (PPP) are among the most complex types of reform to carry out and the most demanding in terms of regulations. The propensity of States not to assume their role as regulator has often weakened municipalities vis-à-vis actors from the private sector. This phenomenon has increased because municipalities lack resources, forcing them to contract out urban services, much to their disadvantage. The extensive debate regarding reforms is not surprising given the dependency of urban populations on efficient urban services and the consequences when access to essential services is denied.

In the North as well as the South, State-owned companies have progressively opened to private capital, and to competition in response to their indebtedness and that of States, and the need to innovate and invest in the service sector.

¹² French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Governing Cities of the South*, PRUD (Urban Development Research Program), international symposium report, 2005.

Obstacles, however, do exist due to the all-encompassing nature of such reforms. The first concerns the very concept of public service, traditionally divided into two categories. On one hand, there are non-economic services in the public interest (or administrative public services). These are services for which there is no charge, such as police services, schools, justice, etc. On the other hand, there are economic services in the public interest, for which user fees are charged to the consumer (water, electricity, health care, etc.). However, these are not always State-run services and are not organized the same way in every country. Some services play a very symbolic role in society. Water distribution and sewage services are one example, due to the vital character of the commodity and the strategic nature of the service. Access to water is paramount to public health, food security and socio-economic development. Therefore, governments accord variable importance to keeping such services within the public sector, extending their access or reorganizing them.

In fact, focusing the debate on the pros and cons of privatization diverts attention away from the diversity of models and the true stakes involved in service coverage for developing cities (Budds & McGranahan 2003). In the field of water, two models are wrongly presented as references to justify contract delegation. On one hand is the delegation of management according to the French model – several systems coexist and spread financial risk differently among the actors. Assets are never sold to the private sector. Management is delegated principally through leases and concessions. Potable water and sewage services, for example, are often managed through leasing. The contracting public authorities remain responsible for investment, while private companies take care of operating costs and general maintenance. Under a concession system, still according to the French model, either a private company or a government-controlled entity (*régie publique*) takes on fee collection and, in exchange, assumes operating, maintenance and investment costs. Local public authorities are freed of all financial responsibility. Another variant of the concession system is that of direct local government control: a State-owned company functions according to public property regulations and is monitored by a democratically elected authority. It is responsible for operating, maintenance and investment costs.

On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon model is generally understood to be the sale of all assets and stock to a private actor who operates as an “independent regulator”. It is essential for the regulator to be independent in order to regulate competitive conditions, but it also deprives the company of the political legitimacy necessary to set prices that directly affect millions of consumers and shareholders. For the service users, accountability is more important than participation.

When ideological and partisan considerations are set aside, reality is much more complex. Many studies have shown that there is no standardization of a common model, but rather, diversity of practices and solutions at a local level. This highlights the importance that historical and political heritage, urban context and local determinants have on policies that are backed by major international organizations. In concrete terms, particularly composite and complex models (Prévôt-Schapira) have emerged in recent years, especially in developing countries. In the interest of pragmatism, and given the level of poverty and resistance from local populations, investors’ injunctions are rarely applied to the letter and have led to the development of new ways of delegating public services to the private sector.

The purpose of PPPs is to harness the potential advantages of the public and private models. There are many arguments for and against the private model. Partisans of the private system emphasize the competitive framework (disappearance of State-owned monopoly) and

improved management (rationalization of operating, marketing, administrative and financing costs). PPPs help meet the challenge of modernizing countries by improving public services while limiting public deficits; investment can be assumed by the private sector. At the Lisbon summit in 2000, for example, government leaders of the European Union decided to open the service sector to competition as a means of stimulating growth and lowering prices. In addition, jobs are supposed to be created by opening the market to new players, although layoffs due to restructuring State-owned companies must also be taken into consideration. Finally, in terms of urban governance, PPPs turn users into actors through the delegation of participative management procedures.

However, the private sector is accused of reproducing monopolistic situations. The current trend toward the formation of cartels between major national European energy corporations is a case in point. The fictitious nature of this so-called competition is especially true in fields which represent “natural monopolies”, i.e. where the cost of initial infrastructures is so high that it is obviously more efficient to call upon a single operator. This is the case for the distribution of water, gas and electricity, as well as roads and railroads, etc. Generally speaking, the world market is shared out between a few multinational companies, both State-owned and private, which means no competition comes into play to lower prices for consumers.

In underprivileged neighborhoods, access to services is not necessarily improved. For example, in the case of water services in developing countries, operators who manage standard conventional networks also try to reestablish their monopolies in neighborhoods where they are providers by contracting out the management of certain aspects of distribution to artisans and users’ groups, thus expropriating the informal economy. This is a temporary solution to improving access to water, but does not deal with inequalities in a two-tier system and does not work towards the necessary equilibrium between “solvent” populations and unemployed populations.

The private model is accused of exerting increasing pressure due to stockholders’ demands (meeting profit objectives in order to redistribute dividends). Critics also condemn privatization as a way for the public sector to rid itself of its assets in order to reduce or to reimburse its deficit, or to maximize revenue by choosing the highest-bidding company (or even by accepting bribes), knowing that the contractor will pass the cost of its acquisition on to its customers. Consequently, it is the users themselves who fund compensation to stockholders and/or pay off public debt. States sometimes choose to privatize in order to balance their accounts, rather than to improve efficiency. In such cases, the most financially sound companies are sold to make the operation as lucrative as possible.

Finally, PPPs are considered to be closed agreements that prevent governments from exercising their authority. If the private management company proves to be dysfunctional or unsatisfactory, it can be very difficult, sometimes impossible, to cancel the contract. The most common way companies dissuade the threat of contract cancellation is to sue for damages.

Nonetheless, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become an acceptable solution and well-adapted to certain situations as long as implementation is defined case by case through negotiation. Implementation mechanisms must create an equitable balance of powers between the government and the private sector. This can be reached through highly complex negotiations once the legitimacy of all stakeholders has been accepted. On one side, there is

the risk of too much government control, which blocks private initiative; and on the other, the risk of over-emphasis on profit and redistribution to shareholders, as well as on the principle of full cost recovery, which blocks access to services for underprivileged populations. When market forces are the only consideration, it is an accepted fact that the private sector favors service to zones that generate the greatest revenue margins. In many cities, this means the wealthiest downtown districts where marginal investment is minimal (central zones of cities are often the most densely populated). Conversely, the private sector neglects peripheral zones of cities where it is more costly to install network hook-ups (because of topography, distance from existing network, etc.) and areas generating lower revenue (poor neighborhoods). Private management contractors are also criticized for their unwillingness to undertake social projects such as extending water distribution networks to underprivileged zones. The same is true for applying cross-subsidy systems which help needy populations through the use of surtaxes applied to the city's wealthier classes.

To improve access to essential services in underprivileged neighborhoods, the government must not only make managerial and technical choices, but also demonstrate real political determination to choose the type of society it wants to support. Public services in developing countries are often in shambles, after years of inertia and poor management. They require such extensive investment that it is impossible to entrust them to the private sector if short-term profitability is the only concern. Unfortunately, the increasingly significant presence of investment funds in the service sector is incompatible with a quest for long-term financial balance. Only a few multinational enterprises have the capacity to ensure such equilibrium, but they are more and more hesitant to bear the financial risks involved.

Country-city relations and access to food in urban centers

The limitations of exclusive approaches

Although urban hunger is closely linked to the way cities are governed, the role of rural zones, often known as the "breadbaskets" of cities, or considered a source of capital, should not be neglected.

The breach between city and country is firmly established (Le Bris 2005) in a large part of the African continent. The harmonious and complementary relationship wherein rural revenues could contribute to stimulating industrial development is now over. During the colonial period, "proto-rural" society, with its partially itinerant form of agriculture, did not evolve into a rural economy with the human and material capital (land development, agricultural techniques, trade industry, etc.) that could be transferred to modern, urban activities. Nor did the process take place after independence in sub-Saharan Africa, and apparently it never will. Contrary to Asian and Latin American models, medium-sized African towns concentrate their region's activity and remain very dependent on their hinterlands for food supplies.

In fact, given the direct link between the two environments, it seems irrelevant to oppose them. The debate pitting "ruralists" against "pro-urbanites" seems as unproductive as that dividing antagonists on the privatization question, and does not take diversity of context into account. Nevertheless, the validity of certain arguments must be acknowledged.

According to one theory, based on the “urban bias”¹³, rural poverty exacerbates urban poverty because it encourages migration towards cities that are not capable of integrating new populations. Approximately 40% of today’s average urban growth is due to unbearable poverty in rural areas. This theory has been developed especially by those who believe in sustainable development and consider that today’s societies cannot be sustained unless rural zones once again become independent, and uncontrollable urban growth restrained.

According to these observers, massive investment in agriculture is necessary to finance structural measures that would fight rural poverty and avoid migration. For example, the International Fund for Agricultural Development recommends a combination of measures including standardized sales units, improved infrastructures interconnecting the countryside and the city, improved access to inputs, promoting export crops to meet urban demand, etc. The goal is to ensure equitable access to markets, financial services and flood-free land, and to support seed selection and improve water management (more efficient water pumping techniques, watershed management, etc.).

Conversely, a second theory claims that aid to cities can contribute to rural development. It also claims that giving priority to rural zones can be very unfair, especially because it suggests that the most underprivileged city dwellers are not only to be blamed for urban anarchy, but also bear responsibility for their own exclusion. The theory goes on to point out that unilateral support of rural environments is inefficient for a number of reasons including:

- the failure of “ruralist” policies and the doubts concerning their underlying logic.

Historically, food aid has always been sent to rural areas. It was generally accepted that helping the urban poor would increase rural exodus and that, in any case, there were relatively fewer poor city dwellers, and that they could benefit from public aid programs;

- the barrier between the rich and the poor, which goes beyond the city-country divide, as do the State’s social principles;

- greater inequality among urban residents than among rural residents.

Underprivileged urban populations are more vulnerable to economic crises and to the fluctuating prices of staple products.

Finally, cities produce and redistribute wealth which benefits rural areas. Therefore the significant role of urban economies in funding national budgets should be stressed.

The importance of structuring rural and urban environments

As we can clearly see, cities and countryside are interdependent. Creating a simple dichotomy based on static and exclusive policies in favor of either rural or urban zones is quite simply irrelevant. A city’s zone of influence varies depending on a number of factors.

Today, in many zones suffering from crises and underdevelopment, agricultural production is still earmarked for nearby cities. In these cases, interdependence between cities and hinterland is very strong. Mixed agriculture (sustenance and cash crops) and periurban agriculture can play an important economic role in the city (and vice versa). In addition, weaknesses and lack of structure in the food sector (lack of information and communication, insufficient inputs, disorganized markets, etc.) destroy some of the potential for economic development. Given the context, managing information and infrastructures (price knowledge, sales mediation, equipping markets and relieving their inherent congestion, etc.) is a key factor for integrating markets and ensuring the evolution of agricultural methods.

¹³ Michael Lipton, *Why Poor People Stay Poor: Urban Bias in World Development*, 1976.

However, in many regions, the zone of influence is not simply the surrounding vicinity. It is a discontinuous area, characterized by specialized regions (intensive revenue farming). This could be perceived as the combined effects of lower transportation and communication costs, increased access to inputs and water resources, etc. In reality, the phenomenon is also related to the existence of a structured rural economy and major, consolidated urban development. Urbanization causes changes in consumption models. As cities grow demographically and their level of urbanization progresses, supply and demand evolve. To begin with, basic food products are supplied to satisfy the needs of the majority of inhabitants, but eventually other, more specialized, products are introduced. These meet diverse demands of the various groups that make up the urban population (immigrants, wealthier classes, etc.).

Lowering trade barriers has modified the relationship between cities and rural areas. Food supply crosses regional and national borders with increasing frequency. More and more staple products from around the world flood markets in developing countries, while local products are neglected, thus contributing to the lethargic conduct of the local agricultural processing industry .

Urban and rural zones are therefore destined to be complementary. Food security is extremely dependent on a more dynamic, more diversified agricultural sector, which act as a lifeline between the two territories.

Urban agriculture, supply and food distribution systems in cities

Food supply and distribution systems (FSDS) define the way in which cities are supplied with food, and then transport and distribute that food to urban consumers. These systems, key to the urban-rural duality, consist of different branches, each with a distinct function (production, processing, sales and consumption) and operated by private and public actors who run the sales channels. The various stages can be described as follows:

- 1) *Production* depends on multiple factors (land quality and availability, access to information and communication, technical know-how, etc.). Distance from production sites is an essential element to understanding production channels in cities that continue to depend heavily on their hinterland. In cities, urban and periurban agriculture are the only job possibilities – besides small informal businesses – with entrance barriers low enough to be easily accessible.
- 2) *Processing* makes it possible to satisfy urban consumers' demands. When analyzing the processing stage, it is essential to differentiate between artisan processing and industrial processing, to consider intermediary companies' ability to assume the transformation of products (from purchase to distribution), to ensure the availability and quality of raw materials, as well as the compatibility of the processed product with the urban product model.
- 3) *Sales* depends on a series of service networks (transportation, storage, credit, market information, etc.). In cities, various food networks coexist, ranging from simple, informal stalls to major distribution structures, although one network is generally dominant. Like production, the sales sector plays a fundamental role in survival for many people because it is the only easily accessible job opportunity for the poorest populations. A family workforce and a small amount of initial capital are enough to establish a successful activity.

Urban markets play a key role in food security for populations. In addition to the official market places and merchants, markets teem with small informal vendors. This extended activity within public space is difficult for authorities to control because it reflects inhabitants' struggle against increasing poverty and for their own food security. Rationalizing these areas of transaction and integration is often a challenge for cities and their hinterland.

Markets are the economic centers of cities, and also represent possible places of refuge, integration, sociability and vendor training for rural workers or new arrivals to the city. Fluctuating populations that gravitate around markets find the means to survive through small skilled-trade and production activities. Women, children and young adults produce complementary revenues for their families, while going through various stages of a learning process which will allow them to move on to other, more respected kinds of commerce.

4) *Urban consumption* can be conceptualized as an “urban consumption model” by defining average consumer behavior (reasons for food purchases, quantity, quality, degree of processing, sales channels, etc.). This model is influenced by a macroeconomic framework via buying power and food pricing systems (dependent on demand, production potential, macroeconomic and sectorial policies, distribution costs, etc.). The socio-economic disparity between urban populations cannot be ignored. When characterizing the consumer behavior of various urban social classes, a distinction must be made between “potentially dangerous food practices” and meeting nutritional needs, which is made possible by smooth-running FSDSs.

In countries affected by catastrophes, where vulnerability¹⁴ is structural, urban supply and distribution systems are generally inefficient, disorganized and lacking dynamism. They are not responsive to transitional situations or to the changes inherent in a perpetually evolving environment.

Dysfunctions, such as the incapacity to guarantee cities a continuous supply of products (ensuring acceptable quantity and quality) at reasonable prices, lead to a rise in food prices, which puts a strain on inhabitants' purchasing power, and can even cause urban malnutrition. Underprivileged populations suffer the most from inefficient urban food markets, particularly because food is often the most costly item in their household budgets.

Positive effects on employment are generally counteracted by inflation resulting from an over-abundance of intermediary sales operations. Retail-wholesale traders and wholesalers benefit the most. In addition, supply networks are generally too rudimentary to mobilize actors who could conceivably finance operations and development, or provide information concerning techniques, production and organizational procedures to farmers.

These dysfunctions create numerous challenges for local authorities: greater involvement in periurban agriculture management (infrastructures, information campaigns, regulation aimed at minimizing health risks, etc.); facilitating neighborhood distribution for people who buy food on a day-to-day basis; coordination of public and private initiatives so that the abilities of

¹⁴ Vulnerability covers two aspects. The external aspect includes risks, shock and/or stress that an individual or family is exposed to. The internal aspect is the state of being defenseless, destitute and unable to deal with difficulties without suffering a loss. Vulnerability is not an absolute, but a relative phenomenon. It is inseparable from the phenomenon of shortage. That explains why the term *vulnerable* does not mean the same thing for everyone. The concept refers to a diversity of complex realities which cannot be reduced to a few operational variables without losing significance. The dynamics and multidimensional nature of the concept, along with its ecological, socio-cultural and politico-economic aspects, must be taken into account. See R. Chambers, “Vulnerability, Coping and Policy”.

both can be put to constructive use; and mediation between the central government and the private food sector (lobbying assistance for farmers' associations, etc.). These fields of responsibility are often unheard of, and few authorities are able to meet such challenges.

What does the future hold for cities?

The urban crisis continues, as do the resulting hunger and poverty, while concepts and theories fade away. The crisis is, above all, political.

The very notion of "good governance" is supposed to adapt to culture-specific needs, at least theoretically, and to develop in a way that invites populations to appropriate the manner in which they are governed. It remains to be seen whether or not urban governance can resolve the urban crisis.

The Urban Development Research Program, sponsored by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2001 and 2004, evaluated the situation and highlighted the fact that increased compromise in negotiations is necessary to improve regulations and redistribution (A. Osmont), even if that means "institutional fiddling" rather than truly constructive development policies for the future. Apparently, for investors, good governance has become synonymous with cities' "absorption capacity". Projects, particularly those involving infrastructures and equipment, require set rules and minimal organization to ensure management and sustainability. Those rules have yet to be invented....

Cities are finding themselves trapped in an increasingly competitive environment, where the limitations of highly-vaunted "recipes for success" are more and more obvious. Given this context, metropolises tend to focus their efforts on their city centers, balking at what they consider to be excessive transfers towards peripheral zones, often the poorest areas.

Several theories have been put forward as to the future of cities. A recent study, published in 2005 by the French Research Institute for Development (*Institut de Recherche pour le Développement*) foresees urban growth inferior to the UN's current predictions. Their analysis concludes that urban growth is already saturated in certain developing countries and, therefore, cannot continue. According to the author of the report (Bocquier 2005), the percentage of the population living in cities in 2030 will be 49.2%, not the 60.8% estimated by the UN. This trend reversal would be closely related to the completion of the urban transition process (the passage from rural to urban economy), and to the combined dysfunctions that compromise cities' integration capacities.

Others, on the contrary, believe that the persistent and irreversible globalization phenomenon means that cities are condemned to finding the means of accompanying their own growth. Any attempt to slow urban growth would be futile. Various more or less plausible scenarios have been proposed. The most optimistic ones suggest that a distinction should be made between urban crisis and evolving urban identity. According to this theory, we are not currently experiencing a deep-rooted crisis that is disrupting territorial definitions, but an evolutionary phase in urban economy induced by new waves of urban populations....

The pessimists believe that the future of cities will resemble Mike Davis's nightmare scenario¹⁵ – social collapse, municipal separatism, control by oligarchies that shape the city

¹⁵ *Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*, Vintage Books, 1999.

according to their needs, forsaken lower-middle classes at the mercy of gangs, a security-obsessed society, including bunkerization of the wealthier classes , a perpetual state of “low-intensity social war”, etc.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Kinshasa



The Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa

(plus other map, p. 34 of this file.)

Genealogy of a crisis

The current food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo, formerly Zaire) can be traced back thirty years to the destabilization of the Zairian macroeconomic framework. In fact, the standard of living in DR Congo began to decline back in the 1970s at which time instable institutions and organizations, lack of modernization in the production sector and the implementation of risky economic reforms (Zaireanization) led to profound structural economic imbalances. A drop in revenue from the production of raw materials (copper, cotton, etc.), essential to the Zairian economy, reinforced the economic slump and monetary crisis that accompanied it. Despite rigorous restrictions imposed through a structural adjustment program, Zaire's debt continued to grow, reaching 125% of GDP at the end of the 1980s. Little by little, the State stopped functioning. By neglecting entire sectors, including health, justice, security, etc., it engendered its own decline and loss of control over the country.

The 1990s were marked by a series of events and crises. From 1991 to 1993, rioting in Kinshasa and the resulting destruction and looting destroyed productive sectors of the economy (industry, agriculture) and led to the loss of many jobs. At the institutional level, relations were severed with the country's main financial backers (Belgium, France). Zaire, weakened by thirty years under Mobutu's power and the end of the Cold War, found itself completely without funds.

In response to the upheaval, Kinshasa began refocusing its relations by reinforcing exchange with adjacent provinces (Bas-Congo, Equateur, Bandundu) in order to obtain the resources necessary to supply the city. At an intra-urban scale, a similar withdrawal into self-sufficiency¹⁶ took place between suburban communities and their neighbors. This phenomenon is known as the "villagization" of the city.

In 1996, the Zairian crisis intensified. The Rwandan authorities (Tutsi), afraid that the Hutu refugees along the eastern border of Zaire (Kivu) would attack, launched a military operation

¹⁶ René Devisch, "La violence à Kinshasa, ou l'institution en négatif," in *Cahiers d'étude africaines*, #150-152, 1998.

against them. All of the refugee camps were evacuated. Some 600,000 refugees moved back to Rwanda, while 400,000 fled into Zaire.

At the same time, the Congolese rebel movement AFDL (*Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire*) was formed, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila. With support from Rwanda, Uganda and later, Angola, the AFDL moved in on Kinshasa. Their goal was to eliminate the Hutu refugees still present in Zaire and to overthrow President Mobutu. Hundreds of thousands of Hutu civilians found themselves at the mercy of armed groups and died unassisted. In May of 1997, Mobutu was overthrown and Kabila proclaimed himself president of the new Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 1998, former allies Rwanda and Uganda, turned on the first leader of the DR Congo. In August, the RCD (*Congolese Rally for Democracy*), a rebel group backed by Rwanda and Uganda, was formed. It proceeded to take over a large section of the eastern part of the country (Kivu), and began moving toward Kinshasa. This marked the beginning of a cruel and bloody war. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola sent troops to back Kabila. In May 1999, the rebel movement split and the Uganda-backed RCD-ML (*Congolese Rally for Democracy – Liberation Movement*) was formed. In July 1999, the six countries involved in the war signed a ceasefire and peace accords in Lusaka (Zambia). In reality, the agreements were never applied and the country remained divided in half, the West under Kabila's rule and the East controlled by rebels.

The situation stagnated until Kabila was assassinated in January 2001. His son Joseph Kabila succeeded him. He adopted open policies based on reconciliation under which a 5,500-member peacekeeping force, MONUC (*United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo*), ensured respect of the ceasefire. Since that time, Joseph Kabila has continued to stimulate economic recovery of Congo-Kinshasa, aided by the World Bank since June 2002.

On the political side, the relatively successful peace talks in Pretoria compensated for the failed inter-Congolese dialogue initiated in February 2002 in Sun City (South Africa). Joseph Kabila signed an initial peace accord with Rwanda in July 2002, then with Uganda in September 2002. In December, a global agreement was reached, marking the end of four years of war and dividing ruling power between Joseph Kabila and four vice-presidents from the opposition. The transition government took office in June 2003 and was given two years to lead the DR Congo towards free, democratic elections. This period of political transition together with the inherent uncertainty of a nascent democracy have left the country on stand-by for over two years. The elections were repeatedly postponed, making it very difficult for civilian actors (NGOs, social welfare groups, etc.) to establish their action plans.

For the time being, the informal economy has ensured the survival of the Congolese population. The transportation, food and timber sectors provide limited revenues to the underprivileged. In Kinshasa, 70% of today's estimated 6 to 8 million inhabitants live on less than US\$1 a day. The capital, politically and economically weakened, is incapable of redeploying its authority on a national scale. The country remains prey to instability and the pillaging of its resources.

The urban context of the greater Kinshasa area

The city of Kinshasa was founded in 1881 on site of an unloading point on the River Congo. The city developed largely through its role in the transportation of raw materials (wood, rubber, etc.) from the rest of the country, and later because of industrial processing plants established there. The economic appeal of the capital prompted rural inhabitants of all origins to join the exodus toward the city. Kinshasa provided a favorable environment for the integration of migrant populations (available land, numerous natural resources), and various cultures and ethnic groups intermixed in the metropolitan area. The majority of the incoming populations who contributed to the growth of the city were from Bas-Congo, Kivu and Bandundu. Today, the 6 to 8 million inhabitants live in a mosaic of over 150 districts spread concentrically around the original nucleus of the city and the harbor (see map p. XX).

As with many other African capitals, demographic expansion in the Congolese capital has reached a peak over the past few decades. Today, although the urban growth rate remains high (approximately 5% per year), some families, destabilized by the economic crisis, are moving back to their villages at the rate of 1% per year. However, this exodus does not begin to offset the number of new arrivals.

Political instability and lack of financial resources have made it impossible for state-run companies to keep up with urban growth. The outer periphery of Kinshasa has limited access to water and electricity, when it exists at all. Families often have no choice but to drink water that is contaminated at the source. This represents serious public health risks, especially during the rainy season. The situation is aggravated by difficult access to basic health services. Most health care establishments are dilapidated, under-equipped and unevenly distributed throughout the urban area. Access is therefore difficult both physically, because of distance, and financially, because more and more families are unable to pay for even the most basic health care.

Consequently, the metropolitan area of Kinshasa continues to center around the innermost zones (Gombe, Kingabwa, Lingawala and Kinshasa townships) since they are the ones providing adequate services to create and sustain economic activity. According to a study by ACF-USA, 80% of Kinshasa's business activity (stores, banks, industry, offices) is centered in this downtown area. Formal businesses are mostly run by expatriates from Lebanon and West Africa and constitute the main source of import products for local markets. However, nearly 80% of all business activity takes place in the informal sphere, outside the realm of official state control. Known as "*débrouillardise*" or resourcefulness, small-scale trade activities are carried out by "*chailleurs*" who work as peddlers or from small permanent stands. Certain districts teem with such activities, allowing survival of the poorest segment of the population who can barter for basic necessities. However, such trade activities often end in failure due to difficulties renewing their stock.

Despite the particularities and sometimes dangerous character of urban survival strategies, the downtown area is still the most favorable to trade activities that can improve household income, and has a definite influence on lifestyle. For example, a larger proportion of household income is spent on clothes and lodging than on food (50% in town, 72% in the outskirts). However, the current economic slump has modified the purely business character of the city center. More and more frequently, unclaimed parcels of land (public lands that are not used, strips of land along roads and railroad tracks) are being "squatted" in order to grow produce.

Towns on the outskirts of Kinshasa have long been arrival points and integration centers for migrants, as well as being home to a good part of the population native to the provinces of Bandundu, Bas-Congo and Kinshasa (made up of two ethnic groups, the Teke and the Umbu).

As the city grew, the potential for growing produce in periurban zones was quickly recognized. This is due partly to physical factors (fertile valleys formed by the depressions carved out by the river and its tributaries, rich in alluvia), but can be explained above all in terms of demographic economics. Urban growth generated an increase in the available workforce, vulnerable and therefore inexpensive.

Starting in the early 1970s, agricultural management programs were set up by specialized state and private organizations, as part of the “green revolution”. Periurban produce growers were among those to receive support from the CECOMAF (Fruit and Vegetable Trading Center), then from PASKAMIN (Aid Project for Kinshasa Produce Grower Associations)¹⁷. These programs enabled 8,000 produce-growers to form 12 cooperative centers. Annual production reached 30,000 tons, supplying one third of the city’s vegetable needs, before it came to a halt with the looting in 1991 and 1993. However, these programs also made the farmers extremely dependent on the means supplied to them (tools, seeds, etc.) The cooperatives created within the framework of these programs rarely survived the lack of organizational skills or the farmers’ input in the support strategy. The cooperatives saw the project mainly as a source of supplies. The repercussions, both technical (overly intensive crop rotation, increased use of pesticides, etc.) and organizational (land ownership problems, water management, etc.), made it impossible to develop a durable production system.

Today, land-ownership pressure makes it more and more difficult for new migrants to set up farming activities. New land concessions often relegate newcomers to unstable land and unprotected hillsides (terrain that is vulnerable to erosion, silt and flooding: in September 2005, flooding caused long-term damage to 10% of all farms).

Despite the existence of small urban centers with local markets selling some produce, urban agriculture remains cut off from the main supply and distribution systems. A lack of infrastructure (central produce markets, suitable roads, seed farms, etc.) accentuates the instability of the periurban agricultural system that has very little structure to begin with (no available market data for farmers, etc). Urban farmers must make long and costly trips into the city center in order to access city markets and production supplies. As a result, traditional agricultural production remains focused predominately on subsistence farming and risk minimization (limiting crops to leafy vegetables and sweet potatoes). Crops with short growing periods are favored in order to guarantee stable resources throughout the year (leafy vegetables can be cultivated all year long) and to limit technical risks (disease).

The structural problems involved in periurban agriculture do not guarantee sufficient household revenues to provide food security for families. However, social cohesion is much higher in periurban zones, and households in difficulty (due to family causes, etc.) get help through community solidarity (seeds, etc.) In addition, bartering enables families to enjoy more diversified meals.

With the exception of certain communities still driven by a strong farming tradition, an uncertain future constrains young people to abandon farming and move closer to the city

¹⁷ CECOMAF: *Centre de Commercialisation des Produits maraîchers et fruitier*; PASKAMIN: *Projet d'Appui aux Associations maraîchers de Kinshasa*

center where they hope to be integrated into the social and economic fabric of the capital. However, people living on the outskirts of town who are looking for a job (on the informal market and/or as a day laborer) are confronted with the same difficulties - geographic and relational isolation - endemic to these communities.

It is quite clear that the crisis in Kinshasa is deep-rooted, stemming from the city's lack of organization and structure. However, the poverty and food insecurity endured by a large majority of Kinshasa inhabitants is due to determining factors above and beyond the strictly macro-economic ones. As can be seen in the case of young migrants in search of a future in the city center, the consequences of the urban crisis interfere with the very foundations of society.

Socio-cultural change and crisis challenge food security for families in the Kinshasa metropolitan area

“Hospitals are full of children suffering from malnutrition; they are a horrible sight to see. Their skin is like a pig's hide. You never used to see that in Kinshasa. Now, because of the crisis, there are many of them.”

The local population and social welfare groups in Kinshasa all agree that malnutrition, especially acute malnutrition, is a relatively new phenomenon (1990s). Until recently, malnutrition only involved a limited number of families. Those affected were generally considered “social cases”, people who had been pulled down by the spiral of poverty (alcohol, joblessness, parental conflict, etc.) or, more rarely, victim of the hardships of integration, especially for migrants from rural zones.

The drop in buying power that occurred in the mid-1990s marked a turning point. The percentage of household budgets allocated to food rose from 62% in 1985 to 93% in 1991, while the nutritional value of meals continued to decline.

Given the situation's inherent difficulties, certain foods, such as cassava and bread, have become staple products for the entire population. Imbalanced diet and irregular meals, in conjunction with the uncertainty of the present situation, made progressive energy deficiencies and nutritional imbalance inevitable.

Today, malnutrition in the greater Kinshasa region is considered a complex phenomenon specific to the region and incomparable with the situation in the rest of the DR Congo. Kinshasa is at the outpost of the transition process, both socially and culturally. Aid organizations and local authorities are therefore faced with an economic and social crisis that is difficult to define.

A society caught between influence and resistance

Westernization and the influence of a commodity society on social relations are often condemned as the fundamental causes of numerous problems affecting Kinshasa.

Although not a direct consequence of the crisis, the most visible signs of Westernization lie in the importance attached to appearances and all things “official”. This model introduced by the colonial powers and perpetuated by Mobutu, is at the root of an identity crisis. The coexistence of different, even opposing, reference and organizational schemas led people to

imitate certain models without actually appropriating them. Only the most superficial aspects, exogenous in origin, were conveyed. Since individuals were judged in comparison to others, people had to “keep up with the Joneses” in order to guarantee their social existence, even when that meant neglecting certain basic needs in order to meet established standards. A drop in household income (lean season, crisis, etc.) always led to one budget cutback after another with school fees generally being the first to go, even before clothing.

At the same time, the traditional system, which measured a person’s power and superiority by their capacity to give, was consolidated and amplified by the colonial and post-colonial systems. Traditionally, those on the receiving end were honored, but aware of their inferior social status. Gifts were also a way of making new allies, and of consolidating alliances and good relationships between peers (although some people did take advantage of the system and used it as part of an enrichment strategy). This redistribution mechanism came to be condemned as a form of dependence and has changed considerably because of the crisis.

The increased instability of the standard of living in Kinshasa is a double-edged sword, demonstrating how a crisis can both stimulate change and reinforce traditional values. While Western influences can be felt among the population, especially young people (50% of the population of Kinshasa is under 15), there are two distinct trends in the capital, each reflected in a very different lifestyle.

- part of the population embraces Westernization and adaptation as representative of a modern lifestyle offering more individual freedom and escape from traditional rules. For example, unmarried couples live together more and more frequently, without taking into consideration the rules governing the ethnic group of origin. Cohabitation is seen as a way of escaping from the pressure and constraints of traditional collective living.

- a growing proportion of the population believes in maintaining Congolese culture and customs. “I still eat traditional food at home. But people here, especially now, no longer respect traditional customs. They eat anything. But at my house, that is out of the question. We will never eat things that are forbidden or unknown. I cannot eat chicken, duck, pork, any kind of fish. I don’t eat anything I’ve found here, nor do my children. Even if it is less expensive, we cannot eat it...”

Even when reference values defining family relationships are maintained, respect for traditional rules has become more and more flexible. The mother, like the extended family, is considered responsible for her children’s health and education. The ethnic group and its traditional ways are meant to govern relations within a family structure, especially in the case of conflict between biological parents, unofficial marriage or death. For example, a child goes to his paternal family in the case of patrilineal kinship, and to his maternal family in the case of matrilineal kinship. In matrilineal systems, the maternal uncle was traditionally considered responsible for his sister’s children and made decisions concerning them without necessarily consulting their biological father. The concepts of paternity and maternity went beyond their primary biological definitions. A child was not considered a descendent of a parental couple, but rather, descendant of a lineage. Belonging to a specific lineage meant that all members of a certain age group were the mothers and fathers of children of their sisters, brothers and cousins. All the children therefore saw themselves as brothers and sisters. Belonging to such a community provided solutions to certain problems. For example, in some villages, when a child had rickets, a traditional practitioner would tie a string around his or her hips, and all adults were expected to feed the child if he or she entered their compound. Women took care of boys under the age of 7, after which the men took over their education and initiation. All members of a community participated in education through

collective responsibility. But all of these rules have been disrupted, and family roles have been redefined according to a nuclear model.

Polygamy is another example. Traditionally, it was a symbol of a man's wealth and the importance of his lineage. The practice is less and less common, partly because the Church forbids it, and partly because of the cost it represents for the husband. The economic crisis incites men to abandon their wives, or to practice unofficial forms of polygamy, divesting women of any social or legal protection if their husbands leave them or die. It is not unusual for the husband's family to seize all of his possessions and leave a woman alone to ensure her own survival and that of her children.

The only initiative taken by the Congolese administration to stop the increase in social exclusion and poverty was the famous "Do whatever it takes to get by" pronounced by Mobutu in a speech in the early 1980s. He stated, "Young and old alike, we are all faced with the same reality – a difficult life, the everyday nightmare. What else can we do but refer to Article 15: Do whatever it takes to get by in Kinshasa." Giving free reign to all those affected by the crisis had consequences on the moralization of public life, and by so doing, the government added a societal aspect to the economic crisis.

Although Kinshasa is polarized around these two trends, the overall model of social cohesion has been seriously shaken by the crisis. The individual's rights and duties have become arbitrary, and legitimately so according to today's social models, be they traditional or modern, and it is the weakest members of society who suffer the consequences. Withdrawal and resignation in the face of difficulty have become widespread, replacing all redistribution processes. The most basic rules of hospitality and sharing, which once prevailed in the name of family relations, are now perceived as "parasitism".

Increasing social exclusion and breakdown of the mother-child relationship

Many preachers from revivalist churches (some said to be former civil servants from the Mobutu administration now turned to this lucrative activity) take advantage of the breakdown in society caused by social and cultural mutations. With increasing excessiveness, "survival of the fittest" is justified through the use of martyrdom and messiahism symbolism. Victims of misfortune are blamed for their own hardship, often accused of being possessed by the devil or evil spirits. Even when families do not really believe the prophecies, they sometimes use them to get out of a situation that has become unbearable.

The first victims of the breakdown of rules defining social ties were those who had very little power to defend their rights in the first place. Many of the victims are children, often rejected once the symptoms of malnutrition become visible, abandoned after the death of a parent or a family breakup. Women who want to live with another man or remarry sometimes abandon their children to their families if their new partners do not accept them. A similar situation can occur in the case of a man's remarriage. The new wife may not accept the former wife's children, who are therefore left to the husband's parents. A husband can force his new wife to take his children in, but she may give them less than favorable treatment. Children who are left with their grandparents often suffer from malnutrition because of the grandparents' own health problems or their difficulty in meeting the family's needs. This is especially true for poverty-stricken families. In addition, grandmothers are not necessarily able to properly care for infants and young children. Finally, some children, known as "*shagues*", are accused of sorcery. These children are considered dangerous and can be victims of abuse. Despite

efforts made by NGOs to educate preachers implicated in the spread of this sort of belief, these children suffer deep-rooted ostracism, reducing considerably their chances of being re-integrated into their families. Approximately fifty NGOs presently work on this problem and look after 5000 children at any given time. Thanks to the work of these associations, roughly half of the children are re-integrated into their family environment. Re-integration is successful in 70% of the cases. Estimated between 30,000 and 40,000 in Kinshasa, “street children” have truly become a social phenomenon.

In addition to the rationalized marginalization of children through esotero-sectarian methods, 75% of the children in the city do not go to school. When they leave school, children are introduced to life on the streets, where they work to meet their needs and those of their families. Street children work, eat and sleep in public places. According to WHO, at least 45% of those children are extremely vulnerable to high-risk behavior patterns such as drug use or exposure to infectious, nervous, pulmonary and hepatic disease. A study by the NGO Africare showed that 43.9% of the street children under the care of an organization said they had contracted a disease over the past three months.

Most street children are from the poorest and most socially destructured zones on the outskirts of town. They group together in the center of town and gather at major intersections and thoroughfares, and around the main markets (73% of the children recruited by the NGOs that are part of the REEJER (*Network of Educators working with Street Children and Youth*) were approached near major markets). They look for crumbs of “*cossettes*”¹⁹, and other forms of cassava or a few grains of corn that they sell or keep for their own consumption. Despite apparent isolation, social hierarchy exists. Influential leaders reign over gangs whose only common “values” are alcohol consumption, theft, etc.

Social exclusion as characterized by abandoned children (and women) is not the only symptom of an unstable society. The crisis has triggered less noticeable phenomena that effects the population in silent, but destructive ways. “Mothers leave the house around 5 a.m. to try to make a living, leaving nothing for the children. Even mothers with newborn infants soon abandon their babies to go sell some sort of product for a living. They leave tea, colored with a little milk, in a baby bottle to be fed to their babies while they are away. All this leads to malnutrition.”

Women used to be restricted to household duties, but for the past 10 years, they have assumed a great deal of responsibility for their families’ survival. Jobs in the food sector have become the main source of income for women. Low entry barriers in both production and selling have made them economic pillars for underprivileged families.

Since mothers are busy with marketplace activities, often far from their homes, their prolonged absence is almost inevitable if the families are to survive. Mothers leave home very early in the morning (5 a.m.) and come home late (6-9 p.m.), entrusting the youngest children to the oldest, who are unable to take care of them correctly. The consequences on health are numerous, especially for very young children (0-5 years old). Short term consequences include inadequate food intake, unequal distribution of food between the children, early weaning, lack of surveillance of young children’s health, loss of mother-child emotional ties, nutritional imbalance, caloric and vitamin deficiency, etc. In the long term, these deficiencies lead to slow development, as well as physical and mental scars.

¹⁹Processed cassava root, considered to be the least expensive source of calories.

In the greater Kinshasa region, the transmission of knowledge from mothers to daughters has been lost. This breakdown means individuals are hard put to find solutions, either individually, or within their social environment. Today, it is not uncommon to find girls who have no idea how to take care of a child. Frequently, young mothers do not even know that they should breastfeed their babies. These young girls have no “resource person” to turn to for advice. In general, parents have more and more trouble exercising authority over their children in order to guide their behavior. Neither the family nor educational systems can guide youth and keep them from going astray, steering them away from dangers, such as criminal activities.

The development of new curative and nutritional practices

The dysfunctions of the primary health care system (complicated administrative system, long admission process, mediocre quality of available care, high price of consultations and medication) has caused traditional healing techniques and sects to reappear and develop. “At our house, all the children are in good health, except for that cursed child. The human flesh that he ate in his sorcerer’s world has made his belly swell and his hair go straight. We must ask Papa Ntawu²⁰ to purge and deliver him.”

“God, Maker of Miracles” often becomes the only hope for a population devastated by the crisis. Many followers of religious movements, even the very poorest, do not hesitate to make large monetary contributions in the hopes of benefiting from “the grace of God” in return. This transfer of resources is accompanied by cultural practices which are meant to be therapeutic, but which can be very dangerous for people who are already weak (fasting, purging of undernourished children with potbellies in order to expel the evil spirits, etc.)

An urbanized area divided and polarized between distant employment opportunity neighborhoods

Saturation of the main employment opportunity neighborhoods

Social and cultural transformations function differently depending on geographic location and social standing. At first glance, one can distinguish a downtown area where cultural evolution leads to job opportunities that guarantee family unity (“a social and economic unit consisting of people who regularly live under the same roof and eat out of the same pan”²¹), and a poor peripheral zone, where isolation plays an important role in the destruction of social ties, including family bonds.

A certain number of indicators confirm the geographical inequalities that characterize the Kinshasa metropolitan area. For example, data concerning average monthly incomes, 30% higher in the inner-most zones, confirm the existence of a gap between the center and the peripheral zones. A comparative analysis of income composition shows that “urban” budgets are composed of more balanced contributions from family members (see Table 1). In the peripheral zones, the budget depends more on the mothers’ income (they contribute 70% of household budgets).

²⁰ Spiritual leader of a religious sect called “mpeve ya nlongo”.

²¹ According to L. Luzole, T. De Hert and S. Marysse.

	<i>Father</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Children and other active members</i>
<i>Central urban zones</i>	35%	45%	20%
<i>Peripheral zones</i>	25%	70%	5%

Table 1: Percentage of revenue contributed by various household members²²

In some outer townships, like Selembao and Kimbanseke, 85 to 90% of the population present multiple indicators of a high level of social and economic vulnerability (very poorly educated, unsanitary living conditions, high level of unemployment, poor productivity for agricultural enterprises, only one meal per day, etc.) Nutritional studies carried out by ACF-USA have confirmed the existence of a cleavage between the center of Kinshasa and the outer townships, as well as the close correlation between a particularly high level of malnutrition and the combination of multiple vulnerability factors. Table 2 gives a synthesis of these results.

	<i>Central zones</i>		<i>Peripheral zones</i>	
	<i>Kinshasa</i>	<i>Kingabwa</i>	<i>Kimbanseke</i>	<i>Selembao</i>
CHILDREN				
Total malnutrition	3.5 %	4.7 %	8.7 %	7.9 %
Severe malnutrition	0.5 %	0.6 %	2.9 %	2.7 %
Moderate malnutrition	3.0 %	4.1 %	5.8 %	5.2 %
MOTHERS				
Total malnutrition	2.8 %	4.7 %	11.5 %	7.4 %
Severe malnutrition	0.9 %	1.9 %	4.3 %	2.6 %
Moderate malnutrition	1.9 %	2.8 %	7.2 %	4.8 %

Table 2: Malnutrition rates in mothers and children in four zones under study.

However, these regional differences need to be qualified, and any attempt at a binary representation consisting of central and peripheral zones would be simplistic. On the one hand, in the center of the city and the adjacent areas, households are definitely more willing to take in other family members because they count on those additional family members to find some kind of informal activity to help increase household revenues. Therefore, families grow larger and larger to the point where living conditions in homes become very poor, sometimes even pathogenic. “My wife cannot stand my brothers and sisters from Kivu anymore. She says that our children no longer eat well since they came and invaded our home.” In addition to the poorest community members from the outer suburbs (youths, single women), many families who fled the war took refuge with other family members, thus increasing the number of mouths to feed. Families who are unable to pay urban rents are nonetheless attracted to the downtown area, which leads to extreme consequences (two- and three-room apartments housing up to thirty people, abandoned buildings being squatted).

In the town of Kinshasa, 80% of the land plots are home to an average of three to four families. These families help each other by sharing meals and services (taking care of children, etc.). But in fact, many families no longer share their resources with people who cannot participate financially toward household expenses (meals, rent, etc.). In the context of

²² ACF-USA statistics.

such instability, many newcomers, often from rural backgrounds and unaccustomed to urban life, vacillate between informal survival activities and life-threatening strategies (more and more women and children resort to prostitution as a means of obtaining a little food or insignificant sums of money).

On the other hand, in the peripheral zones, often far from the city center, especially in the south-east, communities with a strong farming tradition (families originally from the Bas-Congo region) have settled on arable land. In these sectors, community organization and solidarity have remained stronger than in the inner city. These communities are rural enclaves, both in their production systems and in their organization of social relations. They are also exclusive and completely closed to the integration of new migrants. In some outskirts of the urbanized area, where traditional models of community social cohesion have been damaged by poverty and the mix of populations, fishing and agricultural activities still function as safety nets, keeping extreme poverty in check.

Since access to the job market is clearly a strong integration factor and a guarantee of solidarity within communities and families, the increasing saturation of wealthy, attractive urban zones (center and peripheral farming zones) leads to marginalization mechanisms in the city as a whole. The neediest people are pushed towards intermediate zones situated between the center and the outer townships, neighborhoods which are not favorable to farming or small enterprise (in general, these are the zones where AFC-USA set up their feeding centers; [see map](#)). These zones are under-equipped and poverty is endemic, making any communication between the production poles in the peripheral zones and the consumer poles of the city center impossible.



(This map should be on the Kinshasa intro page.)

Adapting the food supply and distribution system

For many decades, food security in the Congolese capital depended mostly on neighboring regions. The agrarian system based on subsistence farming and cultural techniques (as well as minimized risk through multiple cropping) in Bas-Congo and Bandundu enabled these regions to provide the majority of Kinshasa's food supply. The transportation infrastructures delivering food to the capital consisted of four main axes – the Congo River, roads and railroad between Kinshasa and Bas-Congo, and the Bandundu road. Within the Kinshasa urban area, markets were organized according to two distinctions, geographical (central and peripheral markets) and economic (main and secondary markets)²³.

As urban growth evolved, the Bas-Congo region used its particularities (land constraints due to low soil fertility, strong regional and ethnic identity) as a unique basis from which to adjust its production to meet the needs of the city. Proximity to Kinshasa undoubtedly encouraged former urban dwellers to become involved in investment, as well as capitalistic and organizational management in Bas-Congo. This tendency originated partly during the “Zaireanization” period when there was a movement to return to cultural authenticity, return to the land and nationalize the economy. A dynamic village association network enabled local production to be sold effectively and put the region on the map as the “breadbasket of Kinshasa”.

As the population grew and people's buying power fell, the needs of Kinshasa households changed, unbalancing the regional food production and supply system. City dwellers increased their demand for high calorie foodstuffs like “*cossette*” and other forms of cassava, characteristically monotonous “crisis diets” that favor quantity over diversity. However, when people eat very little of such a diet, they do not absorb the minimum levels of calories and protein.

Starting in 1986, the cost of transportation rose sharply (because of the deteriorating state of the roads and the price of fuel) and signaled the start of a situation in which farmers became very dependent. At first, middlemen, young poorly-educated men known as the “*par colis*” or “parcel-carriers”, managed to take advantage of the economic crisis by buying and selling products from their own regions. They compensated for the increased cost of transportation by working with the scattered producers in certain regions. Larger quantities of products were bought at very low prices, allowing tradesmen to amortize truck rental costs by waiting for a full load before leaving the village.

The primary trade sector developed, became more structured and grew to be a new source of employment based on a new system of risk sharing between producers and tradesmen. The new organization made it possible to lower the cost of transactions (set sums paid to merchants covering all dues to authorities, drivers pay, small repairs, etc.) and to rationalize the management of the truck fleet. At the same time, since land transportation was becoming more and more rare and expensive, there was a considerable regain in river activity.

Despite the FSDS's (food supply and distribution system) capacity to adapt, the production of perishables (vegetables, manioc leaves) in Bas-Congo declined because of deteriorating access to transportation. As a result, there was a significant decrease in production in zones

²³ See Hillel Rapoport, *L'Approvisionnement vivrier de Kinshasa (Zaire)*.

situated more than 35 miles (60 kms) from Kinshasa, and a relative increase, with the help of support programs, in urban agricultural activity (horticulture) and periurban farming (leafy vegetables for home consumption). The organized food supply system gradually disappeared due to the unstable macro-economic situation and the lack of investment (infrastructures not maintained, fuel shortages and hard-to-find spare parts, inefficient judicial and financial systems).

After the 1991 and 1993 looting, thousands of jobs in the formal sector disappeared, and former factory employees were forced into the informal sector. Thus the informal sector came to replace the formal one throughout the metropolitan area, making selling networks more complicated and increasing the number of middlemen. Mostly women, known as “*mamans-manoeuvre*” or “operation mamas”, they rely on their proximity to small urban producers in the peripheral zones around the city and their knowledge of urban needs. They negotiate with wholesalers and farmers to buy merchandise that they sell at a profitable margin (around 20%). Because of the lack of information and urban market transparency (especially for vegetables), the difference in prices between the peripheral and central markets increased. At the same time, distribution margins (which were already 50% and 85% of the customer price²⁴) began to rise exponentially in the mid- to late-1980s, doubling between 1985 and 1988.

Despite various modifications in production and middleman distribution, steadily increasing unemployment and the overall deterioration of the food insecurity situation forced many families to set up small businesses in order to survive. Since entry barriers in the food sector are practically nonexistent (very little initial investment necessary), that segment of trade activity has expanded considerably.

However, this fragmentation of the distribution structure fed inflation. Since retailers sell only very small volumes, they are forced to impose high margins on each product in order to earn a minimal living (Goosens 1997). On the other hand, it allows micro-retailers to get back into the job market. In addition to bringing in a meager income, these small-scale enterprises meet a certain social need in that they allow people who risk exclusion to be integrated into a social group with easily accessible mutual assistance programs (collective savings systems such as *likelembe*, *muzuki*, etc) and fairly strong solidarity. There is very little competition between retailers. According to a study carried out by FAO, 97% of the retailers align product prices with those of their neighbors, and 60% come to mutual pricing agreements.

Consumer behavior also changes in response to inflation in retail and micro-retail sales. Whenever possible, they buy low-priced semi-wholesale food products and process them themselves. However, the poorest inhabitants do not have the means to follow this strategy and are forced to buy products in very small quantities at high prices (a quarter of a can of tomato paste, a few ounces of oil...).

The evolution of supply and demand in Kinshasa illustrates the supply and distribution systems' tremendous capacity to adapt in an urban market which channels all surrounding production regions. By restructuring the supply sectors, the system adapted and it was

²⁴ FAO statistics, “*Structure des prix des produits agricoles en provenance du Bas-Congo et du Bandundu sur les marchés de détail à Kinshasa en 1987, 1988 et 1989*”, in *Rôle des SADA dans la sécurité alimentaire de Kinshasa*.

possible, at first, to avoid an increase in price, although it put the small producers in more vulnerable positions.

Despite the development of urban agriculture, the urban market cannot compensate indefinitely for new transportation constraints and its own lack of organization without prices eventually being affected. Today, only about 15% of the food production of isolated and distant regions in the Bas-Congo and Bandundu provinces - some of which are major production zones - reach the urban markets of Kinshasa. Today, retail and consumer sectors are starting to adapt and restructure, launching a spiral of inflation and increasing consumers' vulnerability that much more.

The effects of humanitarian intervention

Sopeka and emerging social welfare groups in Kinshasa

After the crisis years of the 1990s, most investors gradually retracted from financing projects in the city and province of Kinshasa and concentrated more on the Rebel Side, in the east of the DR Congo. Today, three main families of nongovernmental players make up Kinshasa's institutional scene – institutions specialized in micro-finance, international humanitarian organizations (privately funded for the most part) and a multitude of local NGOs. All of these organizations are faced with what is commonly denounced as the general resignation of Kinshasa society. The most widespread forms of the phenomenon is the attitude known as *sopeka* (which could be translated as “buy for me”, “give me”, “give me a present”) and the dependence on compensation through humanitarian aid.

To fight this trend, awareness-raising campaigns are frequently launched to incite people to develop their own activities. In an attempt to break the circle of dependency, aid is frequently distributed accompanied by communication tools like the slogan *Sopeka, esili* (“*Sopeka* is over”), and cost recovery practices (although often only partial) are more and more common.

However, resignation is not the only characteristic which can be considered typical of the inhabitants of Kinshasa; they are also remarkably dynamic. For example, women's groups, especially in the outer suburbs have created numerous NGOs. As for assistance to street children, the most active NGOs grouped together in a network called REEJER (*Network of Educators working with Street Children and Youth*), created in 1998. With the exception of a few local organizations whose only purpose is to obtain funds opportunistically, many Congolese NGOs go to a lot of effort despite limited means. However, the lack of funds and knowledge compromises the official purpose and objectives of some structures, despite their good intentions. For example, many of the centers set up to care for children suffering from malnutrition are totally incapable of doing so effectively. They function more like food distribution centers, canteens for children (whereas religious networks such as the BDOM, the Salvation Army, the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa and Church of Christ have nutrition centers that cover large parts of the city). Meals consisting of local products (rice, fufu, vegetables, etc.) are distributed infrequently (once or twice a week, sometimes once every other week), and there are no pre-defined admission criteria. Children are admitted when they show visible signs of malnutrition, or, in some centers, simply when they are hungry.

Even in local organizations that possess the means to treat acute malnutrition, the personnel's lack of training and knowledge concerning the necessary care sometimes leads to

inappropriate treatments (overly frequent transfusions and infusions, contraindicated medicines such as diuretics or cardiac glycosides, etc.). Outreach and follow-up in children's homes are done by *mamas bongisas* ("remedy mamas"), volunteer workers who also promote parcel farming.

Children suffering from acute malnutrition receive ambulatory care; only those with associated pathologies are hospitalized. Unfortunately, the pediatric hospital wards that treat the associated illnesses do not generally take the children's malnutrition into account, and treatment is totally dissociated from any nutritional context.

Regardless of their officially stated fields of expertise, Congolese organizations can be divided into two groups, secular and religious. Each group has its own distinctive way of functioning. For example, in caring for street children, the religious organizations are very active, partly because of the regularity with which they are funded. However, the quality of the services they offer is compromised by their very limited accommodation capacity and by their policies which are geared more toward religious education than toward social and professional reintegration. Conversely, national secular organizations are forced to constantly adapt the nature and volume of their activities as a result of irregular funding. This difficulty prevents them from developing a planned approach or work methodologies for specific projects. When providing aid to children, these NGOs can also be very vulnerable from a legal point of view: they sometimes find themselves accused by unscrupulous parents demanding compensation on various accounts.

Restructuring the social fabric through stronger agricultural cooperative movements and associations

The work done by international humanitarian organizations has had direct and indirect effects on the social fabric of the capital. Beyond their stated purposes (food aid, nutrition, etc.) and aside from the aid they bring, many projects have created social meeting places that have spurred spontaneous networks of mutual aid and knowledge exchange among the target population. In addition, as part of a more voluntarist approach, international humanitarian organizations have played an important role in structuring civil society, while avoiding the pitfalls of purely technical and material support.

Starting in 2000, the American branch of the international organization Action Against Hunger made it their goal to renew the network of cooperatives developed by the CECOMAF program by addressing training and community management inadequacies that had been identified over time. Cooperative membership in relation to the total number of farmers jumped from 2.18% to 43.89%. The sudden craze for the cooperative ideal reflected a real interest on the part of new members, but many of them ignored or misunderstood what the project entailed, i.e. the duties and obligations involved in a cooperative movement (payment of shares, monthly membership dues, etc.). Thus, after the peak in membership at the on-start of the project, membership rates dropped back to a level coherent with the social and economic reality of the zones involved (around 5% of the farmers).

Nevertheless, some cooperatives - initially very inconsistent in terms of organization and social coherence - were injected with a fresh dynamic by the project whose impact went beyond enlarged membership. The project included distribution and sale of tools and agricultural inputs at preferential prices, census of farmers, training and assistance in organizing cooperatives. Some activities, including the sale of inputs and the technical

assistance of trained coordinators, became permanent projects. Respect for democratic process was established within the communities and enabled legitimate, democratically chosen leaders to come forward. This reinforced these communities' credibility, making them more attractive to new members. With the support of other NGOs, those communities were then able to manage more extensive projects to consolidate their development.

Improved income and reduced vulnerability

In addition to better community management, improved techniques (such as effective spacing and resizing of cultivated areas, rationalized use of agricultural inputs, use of insecticide plants, seed conservation and multiplication, etc.) and partially subsidized production had a series of direct and indirect effects²⁵.

As could be expected, the main effect of farming cooperative support was an increase in returns and quantity sold. Improved income for families was the direct result of increased farming intensity and production quality, along with decreased production costs. This new income led to a chain reaction that decreased the vulnerability of aid recipients:

- first, by reducing the food budget by about 30% (home consumption also increased in absolute terms, but decreased proportionally) and by improving access to health care and education (these items went up by 100% and 400% respectively in household budgets).

- second, by reintroducing contingency management in households and cooperatives. Over one third of the increased revenue was reinvested in order to stimulate and diversify production (introduction of off-season crops, input purchases, animal breeding development, etc.), while another third was put into savings.

Other social effects were experienced by people not directly involved in the project due to easier working conditions, the disappearance of sharecropping, a reinforced solidarity network, etc.

Moving towards the development of concerted intervention policies in urban and periurban environments

The challenge of highly diverse levels of vulnerability within communities

Despite the economic and social progress that has been made, food security aid programs, especially those involving agricultural rehabilitation, face difficulties in targeting the most vulnerable populations. Only 43% of the households benefiting from agricultural support programs were initially considered "vulnerable" or "moderately vulnerable". Vulnerable families are those who have been victims of disasters, live in extreme poverty or have land plots that are too small to farm (often "neo-rural" inhabitants - retired civil servants, bankrupt merchants, etc. - who had moved to the outskirts of the city in the hopes of finding new livelihoods through farming).

It is generally apparent that the effectiveness of programs is proportional to the initial number and diversity of vulnerability factors of the households and communities involved. For example, households with plots situated on high or low ground (therefore either exposed to water stress during the dry season, or constantly flooded) and large, extended families have trouble making the most of support given by aid programs. In fact, nuclear families, extended

²⁵ Action Against Hunger, Democratic Republic of Congo mission, *Evaluation du programme de sécurité alimentaire*, OFDA-Kinshasa, April 2002.

families and dwelling units often receive the same amount of aid. In the case of the ACF-USA food security project, large families consisting of over nine family members, or 16% of the recipients, did not receive sufficient aid. At a community level, the very limited social capital (especially in fishing communities) quickly counteracts the direct effects of projects.

Concretely, it is clear that increased income for farmers is closely related to the size of the plot they cultivate. Even when return is increased, agricultural revenues remain low for small agricultural enterprises (one third of an acre or less than 150²m) if the land was not very productive at the start. Additionally, providing improved seeds for a household lacking sufficient technical know-how does not have satisfactory results. Such improved seeds are designed to produce cash crops and exotic produce with high added value (eggplant, green beans, tomatoes, etc.). They are also meant to lessen the intensity and length of the lean period during the rainy season. However, those crops are not very pest-resistant, which makes farmers dependent on available fertilizers and, in the end, forces them to go back to traditional crops (sweet potatoes, amaranth, etc.).

NGOs and public institutions faced with the multiple facets of marginalization

The difficulty that NGOs have in effectively targeting the most vulnerable minorities in communities stems from a lack of knowledge and appropriate plans of action for a large part of the population. Since there is no public policy as such and the ministries and parapublic bodies are so weakened (no data available upon which to base operational structures), international humanitarian organizations must do extensive studies in order to better define the origins and dimensions of existing problems and to assist authorities in developing public policies adapted to the situation. Such studies are often difficult to carry out when urgent aid is necessary.

Nutrition is another field which has suffered from the neglect of State authorities. A multitude of agencies with neither the means nor the competence to effectively care for patients has proliferated in this regulatory no-man's-land, totally lacking in coordination. Competition has developed between the many agencies, especially the smallest Congolese childcare NGOs, as a result of the chaotic situation. Some centers do not hesitate distributing rations to families without the slightest consideration for any kind of admission or discharge criteria. It was not until 2002 that aid organizations themselves developed standardized, national protocols for patient care, defining rules for those agencies with very little competence in nutritional care. Although the protocols seem to have improved things in practice, public policy must nonetheless be continually revised and standards adapted to prevailing urban conditions, and sometimes tailored to the needs of specific populations. For example, a certain number of illnesses associated with malnutrition (such as HIV) are still not treated effectively because there is no specific policy. Tuberculosis is the only disease covered by a free national health care program, valid throughout the DR Congo. In addition, WFP distributes supplementary dry rations to patients in the care of competent NGOs.

The difficulty involved in caring for illness associated with malnutrition not only illustrates the public authorities' shortcomings, but also demonstrates the multiplicity of determining factors of urban hunger and the need to develop specific intervention strategies. This is especially obvious in the case of children under the care of Supplementary Feeding Centers (SFCs) that treat moderately undernourished patients. This type of treatment consists of distributing food supplements corresponding to the patients' physiological needs (Golden 1995). The supplements can be cooked food, known as "prepared rations" (one meal per day,

eaten under supervision) or uncooked food, known as “dry rations” (distributed to the family once a week or once every other week)²⁶. But unlike treatments in Therapeutic Feeding Centers (TFCs), where results are generally satisfactory because overall care is given to patients and mothers in hospitals, the SFCs in Kinshasa have an abnormally high dropout and relapse rate.

The socio-economic character of the Congolese capital (difficult access to services, distance from employment opportunities, deteriorated social ties) makes it difficult to ensure short-term care for children. Households with multiple vulnerability factors (single women, very low and irregular income, etc.) generally cannot offer their children regular care and follow-up at an SFC. It is frequent, for example, that flooding during the rainy season forces families in unstable situations to move out to regions that are often far from SFCs. However, most people who abandon SFC care do so for strictly financial reasons – inability to pay the cost recovery fees (even minimal), no means of transportation or means of paying for transportation to the SFCs, long waits for distribution (sometimes all day), the breadwinner being unable to stop looking for work (thus putting the rest of the family in danger), sudden drop in income forcing families to move, etc.

Moving beyond basic plan coordination

In order to assist individuals and families of Kinshasa who have become marginalized from society, a specific approach is necessary to help them overcome the physical constraints involved in reaching health care services. Such a plan would also allow them to break away from the isolation caused by the disintegration of social ties in the city (single women, street children etc.).

Individuals in difficulty tend to withdraw into themselves, which raises the question of access to information available to those people. Most mothers who bring their children to TFCs for care do so spontaneously, either because they have heard other mothers’ experiences, or they have simply heard of the existence of the centers through word of mouth. Some NGOs have therefore developed innovative communication strategies (slogans, messages conveyed by the media) and awareness programs (through cultural activities in health care centers or through neighborhood leaders).

ACF-USA has also adopted an active outreach program through which teams of ACF-USA workers and nutrition specialists visit homes in search of people needing treatment. However, the most complex problem to solve concerns the geographical distribution of social and health care facilities in a given region. Organizations with considerable funding can either set up a dense network of facilities in the hopes of covering the entire city, or concentrate on the heart of the neighborhoods where poverty and social disintegration (often also due to lack of means) are endemic.

However, it would be illusory to believe that nutrition centers alone, no matter how wide their coverage, could suffice in the treatment of malnutrition and avoid relapse patterns. Often, treatment in a nutrition center only temporarily curbs the process of social and economic marginalization affecting a large portion of households in Kinshasa.

²⁶ See Action Against Hunger – Claudine Prudhon, *La Malnutrition en situation de crise*, Karthala, 2001.

Development agencies must work together in addressing factors of vulnerability that cannot be dealt with alone. A simple partnership approach is not enough. They need to define and create a course of action for reintegration that would offer solutions on a progressive scale, personalized according to very diverse levels and sources of vulnerability. For this to be done, the government must be actively involved in order to accompany and regulate the work of local NGOs, thereby reinstating State authority.

This seems to be a considerable challenge given the difficulties facing the institutions and civil society in Kinshasa. However, it is the only way to move beyond the humanitarian tendency towards compensation, to professionalize local workers and agencies, and to make the social and institutional issues an integrating concept for aid. It is also essential to involve the very strategic university sector which has tremendous potential, but is too often sidelined when organizing cooperative activities. Universities are quality sources of human resources that are exploited very little by NGOs. University members (medical or economics students and professors, etc.) could participate in various phases of projects (economic feasibility studies, medical follow-up in SFCs, etc.). This would be a good solution for NGOs that have trouble facing the cost overrun resulting from the particularities of working in an urban environment. The benefit would be mutual, providing valuable experience for students and professors (professional experience, awareness of the students' social reality, means of perpetuating projects, etc.).

Improving market knowledge and structuring channels

Economic integration is, in many ways, considered to be the key to ending the downward spiral that marginalizes individuals from society. Unfortunately, the lack of information concerning potentially buoyant markets in the city (analysis of urban household consumption, sales network structure, etc.) deters the processes that can lead to social and economic insertion. As a result, beneficiaries of NGO programs designed to strengthen urban agriculture and other revenue-producing activities have trouble finding trade outlets. This often leads to discouragement, even apathy, on the part of the recipients, which moves them one step closer to giving up in the face of difficulty.

In order to avoid the dire consequences of this domino effect, ACF-USA began to take action by concerting with urban farming communities to define a strategy based on the quality of agro-pastoral production. The goal of the plan is to combat social exclusion by bringing small-scale farmers from the outskirts of the town into contact with the more well-off consumers of the inner city. Certain experiments going on now, such as the French NGO Agrisud International's current project, have shown that it is possible to systemize the process by creating "economic observatories" that support projects to restructure production and sales channels in the city. This is possible for the services sector, artisan production, agriculture, etc. The real product prices in the city center are plotted out for a wide sample of products at a given time, then circulated so that objective information is communicated to producers concerning the true market value of their products. They can then adjust their production if necessary. Among other things, this helps improve the transparency and effectiveness of local markets by financing more efficient infrastructures (covered markets, etc.).

Conclusion

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been in a transition period since December 2002. Joseph Kabila was reelected president in October 2006. The country must now succeed in

establishing the institutions necessary to restore State authority. Disastrous macro-economic indicators and financial dependence on outside investors (who fund 60% of the State budget) must be addressed. Clearly, a transparent and democratic supervisory system of the country's major mining resources (copper, cobalt) is the key to normalizing the country and attracting investment that will enable the government to carry out major projects and reestablish the country's production capacity. In this context, the role of international humanitarian organizations will be essential in monitoring the redistribution of wealth and certain desires to usurp the country's resources (the phenomenon will not disappear overnight). They will also serve as mediators between a still shaky civil society and the institutions yet to be created.

In Kinshasa, where poverty is so widespread (approximately 70% of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day), one of the first tasks will undoubtedly be to offer long-term perspectives through innovative projects that enable aid recipients to take charge of - or at least participate in - their own futures. In Kinshasa, where society oscillates between tradition and modernity, survival of the fittest and social exclusion are prevalent. These phenomena, characteristic of urban poverty, cannot be eradicated unless the underprivileged neighborhoods are given renewed access to neighborhoods that offer employment, services and institutions. The State authority must be sanctioned through democratic processes in order to define new rules and create new collective frameworks of action. That tie does not exist for the moment, although many driving forces are present in Kinshasa – state authorities, businesses, social welfare groups, NGOs and community associations, to name but a few, are the entities that must be mobilized, confronted, and concerted by cooperation organizations in order to understand their complimentary qualities and re-invent the rules for living in a collective society.

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Timeline

- 1940s Two major independence movements existed in the capital city of Leopoldville – the “Lower People” (Bas-Congo and Bandundu) who spoke Kikongo, and the “Upper People”, first from Equateur, then from all of the interior regions of the country.
- 1949 The association Abako (*Alliance de Bankongo*) was created. Joseph Kasavubu was president of the association which started as a cultural movement, before becoming political and federalist, then fighting for independence.
- 1957 Belgium believed in progressive transition towards independence. The colonial power organized the first municipal elections, limited to big cities. In Leopoldville, Abako triumphed over the Unitarian Patrice Lumumba.
- May 1960 Legislative and provincial elections revealed new splits and alliances (Abako cleavage) which resulted in a compromise. Joseph Kasavubu was elected president by Parlement, Lumumba became Prime Minister. Independence was proclaimed on June 30.
- 1961 Patrice Lumumba was assassinated in 1961. Kantanga and South Kasai, both of which had seceded after independence, were taken back. These events marked the beginning of the rise of Mobutu Sese Seko, who finally took power in 1965.
- 1965-1991 During his dictatorship, Mobutu dominated the country’s society, economics and above all its politics. Personality cult, poor state management, corruption at all levels of government and the country’s general economic and social decline led to popular discontent starting in 1980.
- 1991-1993 Looting in 1991 and 1993. Starting in 1993, the eastern part of the country suffered from an influx of Rwandan refugees.
- 1997 After seven months of fighting, Laurent-Désiré Kabila’s troops moved in from the east and took Kinshasa on May 17, ending Mobutu’s 32-year dictatorship. Under Kabila’s regime, there was no separation of powers, or multiple-party political system. Parliament was dissolved. The Congo’s internal situation under L.D. Kabila was characterized by economic crisis, hyperinflation, the collapse of law and order, corruption in all domains and the government’s functional incompetence.
- Since 1998 The Rwandan army, with support from Uganda and Burundi, occupied the eastern part of the country. Later, the conflict became international when Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad lent military support to the government. A de facto divide was

established between the zone controlled by the government and another controlled by the rebels.

January 2001

L.D. Kabila was assassinated. His son, Joseph, succeeded him.

December 2002

After a series of long, difficult negotiations, mediated by the South African president Thabo Mbeki, a “global and inclusive accord on transition in the RD Congo” was signed in Pretoria. According to the agreement, all parties concurred to coordinate actions and respect the compromise as a guideline over a two-year transition period. The agreement included stipulations concerning demilitarization and the establishment of a transition government, as well as the formation and designation of governmental bodies.

October 2006

Joseph Kabila was reelected president.

Haiti: Gonaïves

Urbanization in Haiti: causes and effects

Origins of the control system of Haitian territory

In the sixteenth century, the Spanish authorities first experimented with New World territorial organization in the western part of Hispaniola (later to become Haiti). This early colonial scheme did not include plans to enrich the island's central regions through a wealth distribution policy, but aimed solely at conveying products from plantations to the port. To



ensure the success of this plan and protect the territory from acts of piracy, several urban sites were constructed along the coast. From the start of colonization, urban power established dominance over rural populations, a situation that continued with independence in 1804, when the reins of state power were placed in the hands of the minority, westernized Creole elite.

In contrast to many South American countries, the rift between a Creole, urban power base, controlled by those born in the colony, and the large mass of African rural workers was not racial in nature²⁷. According to some scholars (G. Barthélemy, 2005), this “sham democracy” was manipulated to more fully establish power. The government represented the rejection of a system of domination which was, in fact, never abolished.

At the end of the nineteenth century, urban authorities took control of rural areas through an essentially repressive system. Rural police officers (also known as “section chiefs”), the “*Tontons Macoutes*” of Duvalière’s dictatorship (1957-1986), the “*attachés*” under Cedras (1991-1994) all perpetuated the use of parallel administrative organizations and institutions whose purpose was to short circuit any counter-authority outside the capital.



The subsequent system set up by Aristide is different in many ways, but still reflects a centralized power controlling the peripheral zones. Aristide understood urbanization’s impact on governing, and his system solicited support from the inhabitants of slums surrounding major cities. However, groups renamed *Organisations Populaires* (or OP) used brutal methods to handle the residents of the most impoverished neighborhoods, never espousing the pro-Aristide ideologies promoted by the central authorities. Acting more like mercenaries than trustworthy lieutenants, the “*chimères*” (members of the OP) were not a reliable popular political base for the State. Their

²⁷ Gérard Barthélemy, “*Haïti, l’ordre sous le chaos apparent*”, *Le Monde*, September 4, 2005

allegiance was purely monetary in nature. Aristide's inability to respond to the needs of the disadvantaged populations of Haiti's major cities would later hasten his downfall.

Organized looting of Haitian resources

State control mechanisms had always served the agenda of trade policies dictated by short-term profits. As of the nineteenth century, the leaders - free of colonial directives - perpetuated Haiti's traditional role as an outpost of worldwide economic trade. Systematic looting of the country's resources²⁸ had disastrous ecological effects, culminating in the destruction of the plantation economy and widespread deforestation. In fact, traders encouraged development of the timber industry in order to leave port with full holds, making it the island's second largest export product.

The national production structure suffered a dual setback. When substituting coffee for sugar cane, plantations were broken up and land parcels allotted to each citizen. This land distribution program had adverse effects. Soil conservation practices were virtually ignored, leading to massive soil erosion and the inevitable consequences (ravines, increased deforestation, flooding, rural exodus).

Following a period of little if any rural development, the beginning of the twentieth century was characterized by the expropriation of many farmers (the new Constitution enabled foreigners, called *blan*, to acquire lands and expel any occupants not in possession of land deeds) and by the beginning of the exodus of Haitians to foreign countries (the United States, Dominican Republic, etc.).

Another important early nineteenth century event affecting Haiti was the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine, named after the fifth president of the United States, elected in 1816 and reelected in 1820. In a speech to Congress on December 2, 1823, Monroe addressed the European powers directly, laying down what would become the base of American diplomacy. The substance of the speech was that since the United States had recognized the independence of the new Latin American republics the previous year, North America and South America were no longer open to European colonization. Moreover, the United States would consider any European intervention into the affairs of the American Continent as a threat to their security and peace. In the name of the Monroe doctrine, and after a series of interventions, the United States would put Haiti under its protection. Between 1915 and 1934, this occupation transformed the country in terms of infrastructure, land distribution and administration, but the downside of this modernization proved to be disastrous in many ways (exodus, etc.).

An agricultural policy without means or ambition

Later in the twentieth century, to compensate for the agricultural systems' many structural problems, the Duvalier regime established a commercial protection policy for agricultural products (customs barriers and a quota system for imported food, authorized only when domestic production was insufficient to meet the country's needs). Despite these protectionist measures, the lack of investment, demographic pressure, land insecurity and soil deterioration reduced agricultural production and prevented it from ensuring the Haitian people's food

²⁸ Jean-Marie Théodat, "Deux types de relations villes-campagnes au XIXe siècle: une géographie historique de l'île d'Haïti", in *Villes et Campagnes dans les Pays du Sud*, Karthala, 1999.

security. In fact, these shortages promoted the practice during this period of what was commonly called “contraband” (under-declaring at customs).

The fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 ended his political agenda and led to major economic reorientations, paving the way for liberalization policies influenced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank within the framework of loans for structural adjustment. Commercial liberalization did not produce the hoped-for effect, mainly because the farmers and the Haitian financing and sales networks proved unable to service the conversion over to specialized profit-making production. The country’s economic and climatic instability also drove a number of farmers to minimize the risk of lost harvests by diversifying food crops rather than opting for highly productive homogeneous growing methods. The State decided to compensate for the neglect of rural economies by setting up food regulations (aid requests, appeal to the international market) in response to shortages and price hikes. This unambitious food policy, based on the recorded needs of major urban centers, reflects in some ways the authorities’ continued focus on urban zones. Cities not only serve as support for a dominative government, but are also areas where extreme inequalities appear as dangerous sources of counter-authority. In 1991, the highest percentage of Port-au-Prince households were part of the consumer classes at either end of the spectrum: the strongest and weakest. Today, disadvantaged neighborhoods carry more political weight than ever. Many of them have become lawless zones, rife with illegal dealing controlled by armed gangs, where renewed State presence and access to citizen’s rights have become urgent imperatives.

Gonaives, a city at the heart of changes and crises

Gonaives, a city which declared its independence in 1804 – earning it the nickname of the “City of Independence” – illustrates perfectly the insurrectional potential of major Haitian cities. At the origin of the rebellions and dissension responsible for political change, this city played an important role in the downfall of the last decades’ major leaders, Jean-Claude Duvalier and Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The latest popular uprising occurred in September 2003 when Amyot Métayer, among the first Lavalassiens²⁹ and leader of the “historical” working class neighborhood of Raboteau, was assassinated for political reasons. This led to five months of demonstrations, murders and revenge in Gonaives. This uprising against the authorities in power was taken up by Port-au-Prince’s disadvantaged neighborhoods and drove the president Aristide into exile in 2004. A political crisis followed, responsible for the isolation of the city and a devastating economic slowdown. If this were not enough, on September 18, 2004, Hurricane Jeanne struck Gonaives and the whole northern region of Haiti.

The accumulation of three major vulnerability factors transformed the torrential rains into a widespread catastrophe. The first is the city’s topography. Gonaives is built on a coastal flood plain (the highest point of the old town is 2 meters above sea level) at the outlet of a run-off basin. Secondly, environmental destruction has been caused across the basin by uncontrolled and systematic deforestation and unchecked soil erosion, aggravating the run-off phenomenon. Finally, water evacuation infrastructures were under-equipped and poorly-maintained: clogged by debris and garbage (according to the *Cadre de Coopération Intérimaire*, only 30% of the garbage generated by the city of Gonaives is collected), the city’s main urban drainage systems were completely backed up and unable to drain the storm

²⁹ Political party then in power.

waters. The strong precipitation devastated nearby agricultural zones located near swollen rivers, leading to extensive human and material damage. Most crops were washed away, as was the fertile layer of topsoil on slopes and hillsides. Irrigation canals and many parcels of land suffered serious damage.

This disaster not only revealed many needs, it also highlighted the almost total inability of populations and authorities to manage this type of climatic event. No action was taken beforehand to protect civilian life, no warning or information given to limit the consequences of the disaster. The official count reached over 2000 dead, 2500 injured, tens of thousands of families with material damage and 5000 homes destroyed.

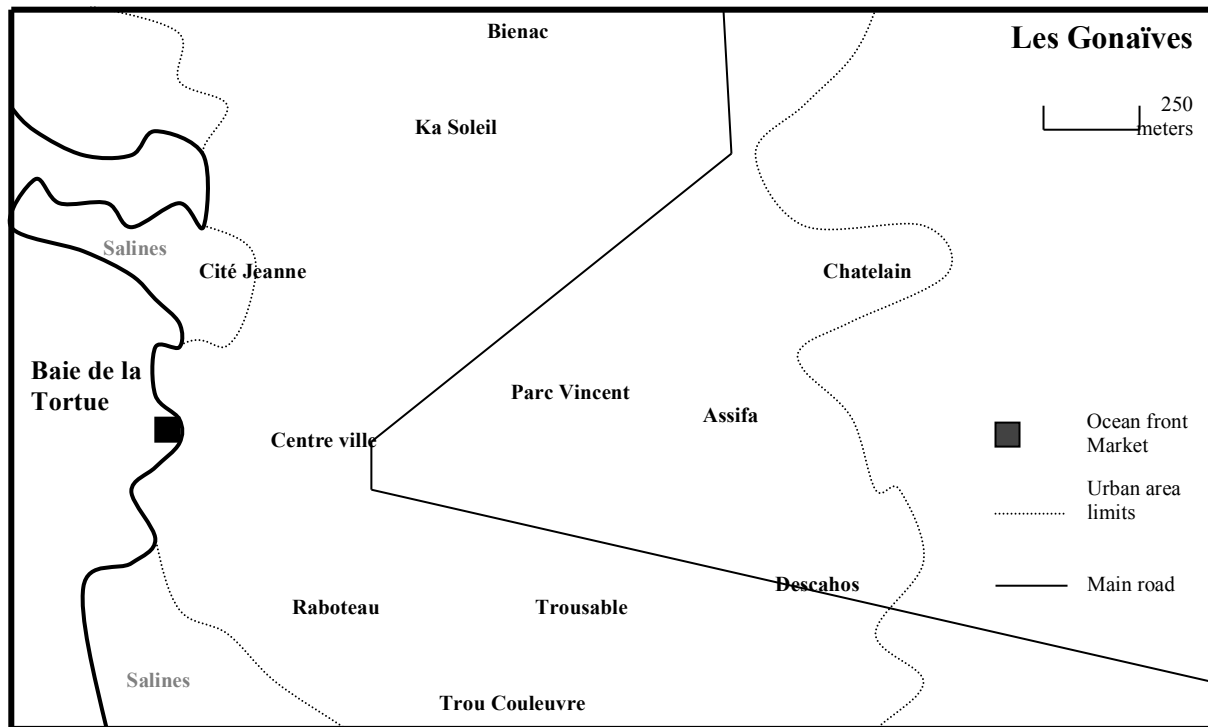
Haiti, already considered by some to be a “cemetery for cooperative projects”, was faced with the dual challenge, in a troubled political context, of political and physical reconstruction in the north-eastern part of the country.

The city of Gonaives.

A fast-changing image

After the initial focus on saving lives and checking the spread of epidemics, humanitarian organizations tackling the overwhelming task of reconstruction required a preliminary multi-faceted analysis of a complex territory.

Like many medium-sized cities in developing countries, Gonaives has experienced spectacular demographic growth over the past two decades. The combined effects of natural growth and increasing rural exodus has multiplied Gonaive’s population by four to reach about 200,000 inhabitants in 2004. In addition to the spontaneous creation of peripheral neighborhoods, urban growth has also transformed the economic and social organization and modified the relationship between this medium-sized city of the Artibonite *département* (administrative district) and its environment.



Schematically, the city can be divided into two relatively homogenous parts, depending on how and when they were settled. On one hand is the original downtown area, to the west and center of Gonaïves. Facing the sea, this part of the city houses most business and skilled trade activity. The main sources of revenue in this neighborhood come from professions responding to urban demand (masonry, fishing, teaching, tailoring, carpentry). The fact that households here have been settled for longer and are located near downtown job opportunities explains in part why the families have better access to regular sources of income, as shown in a 2005 ACF-France study. In this part of the town, small scale animal breeding is common, but considered more of a savings plan or investment than a way of meeting food needs (it is very rare that families kill one of their animals in order to eat it). These animals are a sort of insurance which can be sold should the family fall on hard times, enabling them to survive. Nevertheless, as very few families have yards or sheds to keep their animals, they let them wander the streets grazing for food among the garbage littering the ground and drinking water from puddles or wastewater evacuation canals.

The main push of urbanization over the last twenty years has occurred along the more eastern edge of the city. The new neighborhoods have been settled mainly by land appropriation through squatting and are beginning to encroach on the salt marshes (the neighborhoods of Trou Couleuvre or Cité Jeanne, formerly the “*Rue Egalité prolongée*” and renamed following the devastation caused by Hurricane Jeanne) and the hillsides on the north of the city (neighborhood of Bienac). Generally speaking, the most recent neighborhoods are not solidly constructed. The houses are made of daub or mixed materials such as wood, corrugated sheet metal and various recycled materials. In both areas, new arrivals suffer from a lack of infrastructures, leading to especially atrocious sanitary conditions. In the most recent neighborhoods, such as Trou Couleuvre or Cité Jeanne, barely 10% of inhabitants have access to latrines, against 60% in more established disadvantaged areas. These indiscriminate

groupings of semi-precarious shanties reflect the social and economic vulnerability of their inhabitants.

Due to their location on the edge of town, as well as the inhabitants' lack of familiarity with an urban lifestyle, these neighborhoods have specific socio-economic profiles, turned more to the surrounding farmlands (job opportunities in the Lower Artibonite rice growing triangle to the south and the Gonaïves plain to the north). About one fourth of urban-dwellers still have some land outside the city limits, reserved mainly for food crops (rice, eggplants, manioc, corn, peas, and less frequently pistachios and tomatoes as cash crops). This enables these small land owners to complete or improve their food security. On average, 50% of the crops are for their own consumption. They are also used for sale, trade and sharing with friends and family.

A complex social fabric

“*It is hard to imagine anything community-oriented in Gonaïves*”. Thoughts like these are often expressed by social and humanitarian workers, referring to the stigmatized individualism of the Haitians, which deserves, however, to be appreciated at its true value and put into perspective.

On one hand, individualism as a survival mechanism in situations of extreme poverty must be disassociated from the individualism that is one of the foundations of the Haitian republic, guaranteeing emancipation of the individual within a group. On the other hand, analysis of social practices reveals that support networks do exist, such as *sabordage* and *solde* (rotating credit system). Solidarity is still effective, even if it tends to be limited to a restricted circle of family and close friends. Studies carried out by ACF-France in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods confirm this solidarity. Findings show that over 75% of households provide mutual assistance – meals, small portions of crops, water, money – within their immediate circle (neighbors, family). This potential support must however be put into perspective, considering the extent of the poverty, families have only very limited resources share. Nevertheless, it represents a certain security in hard times, a safety net against total exclusion and destitution.

Within the chaos and seemingly weak social cohesion lie some forms of organization specific to each neighborhood, complex mosaics of social models that delay the return of State rules and institutions. These models can be applied to three types of neighborhoods:

The so-called “historical” neighborhoods (Raboteau, Descahos, Trou Sable) are lower class, disadvantaged neighborhoods, controlled by strong leaders whose families have lived there for generations, and who generally wield their power through fear and force. It is unusual for these neighborhood leaders to provide any space whatsoever for parallel organizational structures to be established (one result, for example, is the surprising absence of religious movements).

The neighborhoods on the edges of the downtown area, often unsanitary and settled by first generation immigrants, are even more lacking in social structure. In many cases, this situation has paved the way for various associations to be formed. This seemingly positive dynamic, however, can also reflect an exacerbated tendency of very restrictive groups to collect public resources or to create counter-authorities within the neighborhood.

The semi-urban neighborhoods created during the recent expansion of the city (*Trou Coulevre, Chatelain*) are often characterized by a “personalized” leadership (sometimes sponsored by religious movements). A nucleus of families forms the dominant social group.

These neighborhoods, former villages caught up in the tide of urbanization or zones attracting neo-urban dwellers, have retained a social organization and solidarity mechanisms similar to those in rural areas.

In addition to being a patchwork of various social models, the city continues to suffer the effects of strong antagonism between its two main “historical” neighborhoods: Raboteau in the west and Descahos in the east. Under Aristide, these two areas, among others, were paid cash in return for social peace. Illegal traffic was divided up along clearly drawn lines: Raboteau controlled the waterways and Descahos the land routes. Despite an alliance of convenience to overthrow Aristide, old animosities flared up quickly when looking for solutions to share the wealth. The violence that ensued is largely responsible for the sense of insecurity felt by Gonaive inhabitants. According to a study by ACF-France, 65% of the families surveyed feel insecure in their neighborhood (violence, gunfire, theft, rape)³⁰.

Gonaive’s influence on the country of Haiti.

Even though urban activities are underdeveloped and generally unspecialized (except trafficking...), the demographic weight of Gonaives enables the city to attract a human and material—mainly agricultural—flow from the entire Artibonite *département* and beyond (north-west and north). Despite the destruction of the central market and the slowdown in maritime activity in 2004, the two main bulk markets (Poteau and Estère, located about 10 kilometers north and 30 kilometers west of the city respectively), as well as the oceanfront market (in the town center), are important outlets for the rural areas. These sales infrastructures manage a large part of the region’s production, making the city and its surroundings highly interdependent. A telling sign of the city’s ability to attract a huge part of the country as a whole: the multitude of problems affecting Gonaives in no way discourages rural emigrants seeking to escape difficult living conditions and the perennial neglect of rural economies.

An analysis of migratory dynamics would not be complete without mentioning the rural individual’s strong resolve to distance themselves from traditional lifestyles and take advantage of certain services (education, access to sales networks, etc.). The majority of those seeking access to the advantages of an urban lifestyle are women and children. Conversely, men are more inclined to stay in the country, at least during peak periods of agricultural labor, sometimes accompanied by sons old enough to lend a hand. This desire to access both urban and rural advantages often splits families in half. The division of the family unit has become a common phenomenon (studies carried out by ACF have shown very high rates of single-parent families), heightened by increased polygamy in Haitian society, a practice called *ti menaj*.

Political crises and natural disasters: impact on urban services and living conditions

Origins of under-equipped and dysfunctional urban services.

The prevalence of trafficking, the unraveling of the social fabric, a lethargic local economy—all can trace their origins to the neglect of essential public services.

The extent of the current dysfunction of urban services can be traced back to the period of economic embargo in the early 1990s, which blocked importation of spare parts and materials

³⁰ ACF-France, *Etude Sécurité alimentaire aux Gonaives*, 2005.

needed to maintain infrastructures and launch new projects. The period of ineffective legislative and executive powers which followed did not improve the situation. The return of Aristide and the corrupt and populist management of the authorities dashed any remaining hope for improvement. The effects were threefold: revenue intake was blocked, urban public services executives were led to seek foreign exile, and any chance of accompanying the strong urban growth of the last decades was lost. For example, the public company in charge of water distribution, the National Potable Water Service (*Service National de l'Eau Potable*, or SNEP)³¹ is currently in an anemic situation. Its branches in the country's interior, the Decentralized SNEP Offices (*Bureaux Déconcentrés du SNEP*, or BDS), can no longer meet the country's needs. Water consumption is totally unregulated (water service is paid for by a monthly flat fee, encouraging wasteful practices), public financial resources are low, not to mention the poor quality of service provided by the operator (interrupted distribution, etc.). In Gonaïves, the BDS concentrates its meager means on providing access to a minimal number of individuals in neighborhoods where the water system functions correctly and the bills are paid.

Among the many vital urban services affecting inhabitant's living conditions, the potable water distribution and sewage sectors take on a strategic importance considering the high prevalence of water-borne diseases. A real nationwide problem (Haiti is the Latin American-Caribbean country with the lowest coverage rates), difficult access to potable water is responsible for the deaths of over 30,000 children under the age of 5 every year³².

Squalid living conditions

Looking at Haiti as a whole, Gonaïves appears to be the prime example of a nationwide "silent emergency" due to under-equipped and dysfunctional services³³. An unknown number of households - probably a substantial percentage - live in high-risk environments in slums. In an ACF-France study carried out in 2005, half of the parents surveyed considered their children to be unhealthy and two-thirds of them had a child who suffered from chronic diarrhea.

These sanitation problems affect older and more recent neighborhoods indiscriminately, however, the situation is singularly more complex for residents relegated to unsanitary sites (salt marshes). In addition to the difficulty of installing proper water distribution or wastewater systems (in the Cité Jeanne or Trou Coulevre neighborhoods, the water table is too close to the surface for latrines to be dug), these neighborhoods have become, by default, natural dumps. In fact, no city-run waste management system exists; this has led to dumping in the peripheral urban zones (ravines, oceanfront, salt marshes, hillsides, etc.). In other parts of the city, families pile their garbage in the street or burn it, but strong rains can wash most of this garbage into the canals and the city's other natural drainage sites which quickly become clogged. The resulting reservoirs of stagnant water become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other disease carriers, as well as posing flooding risks to the surrounding area.

In Gonaïves, water is abundant but can be lethal. The water tables, though continually renewed, remain the main source of public health risks. More than 80% of the city's poorest

³¹ SNEP is responsible outside of the capital, Port-au-Prince, which is covered by the CAMEP (*Centrale métropolitaine d'eau potable* or Metropolitan Potable Water Company).

³² *L'enfance en péril*, La situation des enfants dans le monde 2005, UNICEF.

³³ ACF, *Programmes eau, assainissement et hygiène, formalisation des stratégies opérationnelles et techniques et perspectives*, May 2005.

inhabitants drink untreated well water despite the prevalence of disease carriers. One explanation for this dangerous behavior is the lack of information and awareness campaigns, but the fact remains that the only water source in virtually every neighborhood is in the hands of private companies. A wide variety of distribution methods have emerged amidst the wreckage of public service (private wells whose water is often treated with purification tablets, truck delivery, resale from private tanks or water carriers, retail sale of purified water), but prices are up to 5 times higher than the public sector and therefore inaccessible to the large majority of residents³⁴.

Limited financial access to essential goods and services

Survival strategies reflect a private sector bereft of all rules and regulations, where the market forces of supply and demand have infiltrated all areas of city life.

Small-scale vending (also called *brase*) is a vital part of the poorest inhabitants' survival strategy (40% of households survive this way³⁵). Women generally carry out this activity in order to compensate for the irregular wages of the head of the family. The combined income of the various household members averages to about 170€/month/household³⁶. Small retail businesses are very frequent in the food sector, because they require little start up capital. While the widespread practice of extra retail intermediaries has a long history (established since the nineteenth century when *intermédiaires* (middlemen) were responsible for ensuring relations between merchants and played an important role in wholesale and semi-wholesale), it also has definite, logical consequences: Gonaïve residents almost unanimously consider that prices are too high.

Several other factors come into play as well. On one hand, in the food sector, the small volumes sold and the inability to stock fresh produce mean that a slight majority of small-scale retailers operate using just-in-time distribution. They directly supply other retailers located in the town center where prices are higher (according to a study by Oxfam, 51.55% of retailers buy goods from a supplier located at least 2 hours from their point of sale). On the other hand, the scattered points of sale and the often haphazard way markets are set up do not provide the necessary conditions for efficient economic exchange.

The political and climatic events of 2004 served to aggravate the structural dysfunctions of services and the urban marketplace. During this disastrous year, the problem of financial access to basic needs increased considerably, and for the long-term. Hurricane Jeanne left in its path blocked roads and a loss of all food reserves and crops that had been stocked in the agricultural zones, resulting in a shortage of available food in the area. The markets, however, managed to re-open quickly because the two main markets that supply the city (Poteau and Lestère) were only slightly affected by the storms, when at all. But if supply to markets was rapidly reinstated after the peak of the crisis, a great majority of merchants automatically raised prices on goods to compensate for their loss of revenue. The cross-referenced results of studies carried out by Oxfam demonstrate that virtually no merchants had recovered their pre-Jeanne levels of activity more than six months after the storm and, consequently, had raised their prices by 97.52%.³⁷ Other more general factors also

³⁴ CCI, Potable Water and Sanitation focus group, May 24, 2004.

³⁵ Data gathered by ACF-France, *Étude Sécurité Alimentaire aux Gonaïves*, 2005.

³⁶ Data gathered by ACF-France in the four neighborhoods considered the most vulnerable (Lower Raboteau, Lower Trou Sable, Cité Jeanne and Trou Couleuvre)

³⁷ ACF-France, *Étude Sécurité Alimentaire aux Gonaïves*, 2005

contributed to the price hike on market goods such as the economic recession, lack of access roads limiting commercial exchange, etc.

Adaptation strategies

To compensate for lower buying power and to satisfy their most basic needs, households have resorted to a wide variety of mechanisms of adaptation which are generally not viable:

Developing small-scale subsidiary activities (producing and selling coal, etc.).

Modifying eating habits: fewer daily meals, accelerated increase in the proportion of high-calorie foods replacing protein-rich foods. Food spending represents a substantial part of a disadvantaged household's budget (between 65 and 70% of revenue. Quantity takes precedence more than ever over nutritional diversity. Many people's only nourishment comes from small street vendors who generally cook "*riz-pois*" (rice and peas) and other fried foods. Easy and quick to cook, these products tend to include heavy doses of fats and salt in order to improve their taste. The consequences of such eating habits are major excesses of fats, and deficiencies in vitamins, animal proteins and other micro-nutrients.

Less spending on basic goods and services (potable water, hygiene products, etc.).

Decapitalization (sale of household goods: dishware, animals, etc.) and indebtedness. Small vendors were confronted with the impossibility of paying back their debts, and of taking out new loans. To start up again, they often resorted to a *ponya* (a loan with usury rates of nearly 20%) or family aid. People who had previously practiced other professions took up small-scale vending because they could no longer practice their former activity and had to earn money for daily expenses.

Often as a last resort, the migration of all or part of a household either to a major urban center or a foreign country is attempted in the hope (often vain) of finding a job.

Despite the absence of precise data, it is possible to correlate declining buying power with the rising rate of malnutrition due to deficiencies and/or excesses since 2004. The fact that a large part of the population has limited access to staple foods can be traced back to both the city's dysfunctions, to the recurring crises, and to the often dangerous strategies used by populations to get by. Post-Jeanne needs and those resulting from the city's own structural weaknesses are intertwined, complicating the task of humanitarian organizations immensely. Simply understanding the various levels of vulnerability (economic, structural) represents a major challenge. A review of the emergency and post-emergency aid provided will help clarify the various consecutive challenges to be assumed at the completion of disaster relief operations.

Review of the various complementary principles of emergency intervention

A rapid return to normal

Following Hurricane Jeanne, the rapid response of ACF-France and other organizations restored minimal access to drinking water and food, and contained the risk of epidemics throughout Gonaives. These emergency operations lasted through the end of January 2005. Aimed at providing temporary relief to the affected populations, they were based on classic intervention principles: food distribution, organizing neighborhood canteens, rehabilitating water sources, sinking new wells, distributing hygiene kits, etc. Most early relief efforts took the form of small-scale projects. Due to a lack of direction from the authorities, the NGOs operated according to self-defined priorities. ACF-France, in addition to providing direct aid

to the population, provided assistance to the SNEP in order to repair a well providing potable water for one part of the city.

Despite the extent of the disaster and the urgent needs that ensued, the city's unraveled social fabric increased the risks of misappropriation of aid and predatory acts by more or less organized groups (looting, voluntary degradation of infrastructures, etc.). To prevent these acts from disrupting aid distribution, the international humanitarian groups came up with two approaches:

- The first, adopted namely by ACF-France who had been active in Gonaives for 15 years, was to call on the better nature of local groups. However, their long-term presence with disadvantaged populations was not enough to enable emergency operations to run smoothly. At that point, ACF-France switched over to an operating method based on involving residents and enlisting their assistance in order to guarantee access to neighborhoods and security for the programs.
- The second, based on the distribution of aid according to strictly enforced rules, was overseen by the forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). This method tended to generate general distrust within the populations concerned, but enabled aid workers to access neighborhoods more quickly and ensure their security.

Though the underlying logic of these two operating modes may seem diametrically opposed, they are in fact complementary. On one hand, international aid organizations that had been active for many years and that wanted to continue their commitment to Gonaives in the medium-term were able to access populations under optimal conditions, focus on their beneficiaries and continue to elicit responsiveness in the populations. On the other hand, aid organizations who arrived in Gonaive after the disaster with the sole objective of intervening as quickly as possible could abstain from detailed analyses of the city's social and political context to operate according to their strict emergency relief mandate.

After the disaster, as soon as NGOs were effectively deployed, minimal access to food was rapidly restored. Nutritional studies carried out by ACF-France in eight city neighborhoods one month after the storm revealed a low rate of severe malnutrition. Markets were rapidly re-supplied and large quantities of food distributed. CARE began general distributions of weekly rations right after the storm and continued for 2 months, while food rations were distributed to targeted households for an additional four months. Rations include rice, peas, ground corn and oil, equivalent to an average of 1865 calories per day per person. The international humanitarian organization Oxfam also distributed food on the outskirts of the city. A number of organizations participated in a public health watch. The International Federation of the Red Cross, Doctors of the World and Doctors without Borders-Belgium set up a field hospital, supported health centers and small malnutrition care units. Strategies enabling families to adapt proliferated, relying heavily on donations from family and friends (according to a study by Oxfam of 400 households, the percentage of households dependent on donations after Jeanne, had increased by 156%, to reach 30% of all households).

Economic activities, prone to fluctuations and based on limited production capital, managed to be pieced back together despite the successive crises. Many households that had lost their means of production turned to other activities and means of subsistence, enabling them to exorcize the effects of the crisis. According to a study carried out three months after the disaster (Oxfam, January 2005), only 6% of households claim to have changed income levels since Jeanne. Even if these results should be weighted – especially taking into account

simultaneously accelerating price increases – they highlight the strong resilience of the city and its residents.

Another factor helps put the city's rapid post-storm recovery into perspective: Gonaive owes its comeback, in large part, to the fact that many households adopted harmful recovery strategies. One year after the disaster, an ACF-France study shows that 83% of households in the most poverty-stricken neighborhoods claim to be in debt.

The high potential of post-emergency aid projects

Following the emergency stage, international aid organizations who had extended their presence in the city became involved mainly in improving the city's sanitation. Latrines were dug and the city's main drainage canals were cleared to improve sanitary conditions and reduce vulnerability to climatic risks. Generally speaking, the projects implemented in the six months following Jeanne were inhibited by the durability of the projects' impact. This holds especially true for projects requiring neighborhood organization (constructing public water points, neighborhood canteens, etc.). In fact, in many neighborhoods few leaders enjoy legitimacy, sufficient tools, or a solid grasp of the multiple interests they would serve by managing equipment and services for collective use once the sponsoring NGOs have left. On the other hand, direct individual aid (namely emergency food distribution and Money for Work post-emergency projects) achieved more mixed results. For example, a study by ACF-France³⁸ carried out after the Money for Work program rehabilitating the city's canals showed an immediate positive impact of beneficiaries' revenues on their food and social situations and that of their entourage. Over half of the beneficiaries used their first pay to buy food, and over 80% of them enjoyed an improved food situation for the duration of the program. In addition, most of the beneficiaries (70%) enjoyed better family ambience (more affection, cheerfulness) during the program, despite the exhausting work conditions. Finally, most of the beneficiaries shared at least a small part of the revenue with people outside their home.

However, the impact of this program depended essentially on the initial vulnerability of the households concerned. Less vulnerable households were able to use the revenues earned to pay off some of their debts, pay school fees for their children and, to a lesser extent, purchase basic goods (direct food aid has similar effects in a highly monetized urban context: the money saved on food, representing about 70% of revenue, can be reinvested elsewhere). But the large majority of households live at such high levels of vulnerability that projects providing essentially food and/or financial aid have only a short-term impact. Most reverted to their initial food situation as soon as the canal rehabilitation program was over (only 20% of the beneficiaries managed to re-launch a productive activity using the salary earned by this work). One year after the disaster, many people have not engaged in any money-making activity and have still not paid off their debts, which increase monthly due to high interest rates.

Studies show that beneficiaries of this type of collective interest program (rehabilitating infrastructures, clearing canals, etc.) are generally highly satisfied. The term "collective interest" includes all parties involved in the project, in this case the beneficiaries being paid to clear the canals (as compared to "general interest" which transcends and alienates individual interests in order to aid the entire community). Nevertheless, the medium-term impact of these projects depends on the beneficiaries' initial vulnerability.

³⁸ Analysis of the results of impact studies on the Money for Work , Clearing the Canals program, Gonaïves, Isabelle Baret, November 2005.

The aim and interest of this type of project which rehabilitates the city's vital infrastructures goes beyond the economic recovery of a limited number of households. All residents enjoy a noticeably improved sanitary situation in neighborhoods where this type of project has been implemented (lower rates of fever and other illnesses during the rainy season, limited damage during a subsequent storm that hit the city in 2005, etc.). The study carried out by ACF-France even revealed that this program's beneficiaries declared themselves ready to work as volunteers in their neighborhood to ensure infrastructure maintenance. However, the facts reveal that these good intentions are not generally followed through, and indicate that other prerequisite conditions – to be analyzed later in the chapter– are essential for achieving the necessary level of neighborhood organization.

To sum up, whatever the sector of intervention, project scope depends mainly, at first, on the amount of effort deployed by the aid organizations and financial backers. Their potential leverage is felt mainly within the least vulnerable households. Plus, even the most effective projects aiming to improve living conditions cannot claim to cover all the needs of a city where virtually the entire population is highly vulnerable. Once the institutionalized financing comes to an end, the dire poverty of the majority of households and social destabilization act as powerful brakes on the continuity and smooth running of NGO-launched initiatives. Another aggravating factor is the failure of aid organizations to provide local and national institutions (State run or non-governmental) with the capacity to make their projects on-going. Despite the difficult context, the experience of cooperation in Haiti proves that international aid organizations enjoy a certain leeway enabling them to respond to the nutritional and food supply situation on a long-term basis through post-emergency projects.

Consolidating actions after the emergency stage

Reevaluating the population's needs.

Two years after the crises of 2004, a large majority of households still cannot meet their basic needs. The level of food security remains low and the population particularly vulnerable. Moving beyond an emergency stage proves to be relatively complex not only due to the extent of structural problems affecting the city, but the speed at which the population's needs evolve.

To better understand these evolutions and adapt aid, these needs have been measured and compared through studies and data collection. In Gonaïves, the studies carried out by ACF-France³⁹ at the end of the crisis reveal needs in terms of long-term services and infrastructures:

First, data analysis concerning hunger in the city reveals chronic malnutrition, which, it can be assumed, reflects structural problems.

Second, according to data collected, inhabitants' high demand for services and infrastructures, including maintenance and rehabilitation of road infrastructures, access to potable water, health and sanitation services and access to revenue, figure among the highest priorities.

In addition to identifying needs, international humanitarian organizations must face the difficult challenge of balancing short and medium-term commitment with the necessity of building long-term perspectives for the populations.

³⁹ Analysis of the results of impact studies on the Money for Work, Clearing the Canals program, Gonaïves, Isabelle Baret, November 2005

Measuring State and civil society involvement.

Urban services - vital cornerstones of the city - must be “reinvented” in order to be economically and technically viable. Whether they be aimed at addressing the problem of malnutrition, improved potable water or food access, they must take into account the needs and abilities of the neediest populations and the institutions that serve them. This viability is no easy task. Up until now, various initiatives to plan services and urban spaces have failed or have never been implemented at all, namely due to overly institutional approaches which did not bother to experiment, test viability and encourage the indispensable appropriation of the projects by the parties concerned (civil society, State institutions). To take a step in this direction, urban planning documents written up in 1997 with the support of UN agencies attempted to propose responses to the city’s rapid urbanization. However, up to now, policies and reference documents designed as a guideline for implementing urban services do not reflect the concrete needs and capacities of the populations and institutions.

This failure is due, in part, to the difficulties of adapting an approach to disadvantaged neighborhoods, but also to a dilemma faced by aid organizations: should projects be undertaken in cooperation with a government (and its affiliated companies) considered in many ways as being weak, corrupt and unstable, and if so, how? This delicate question, in the wake of Jeanne’s destruction, left aid organizations no other choice but to analyze the perspectives – uncertain at best – of the return to constitutional order. These include: the existence of legitimate authority: a transition government supported by the international community; elections scheduled to enable recovery of democratic legitimacy (elections postponed many times which only finally took place in February 2006) the existence of specific tools (strategic framework, decentralization and institutional reforms in progress). This holds especially true for the water and sewage sector, whose reform has received support from government agencies (Ministry of Public Works, Transportation and Communication) and private sources for over ten years.

The Inter-American Development Bank – one of Haiti’s main sources of funding since democracy was restored in 1994 – willingly supports the implementation of reforms. The water and sewage reform is in line with the goals of political and operational decentralization because it should enable towns to be involved in public services management. According to the 1987 constitution, article 87-4 states “decentralization must be accompanied by the decentralization of public services through delegation of authority and decompartmentalization of industry for the benefit of the departments.” Management of public land, education, health, water and sanitation are among the sectors decentralized on a municipal scale.

Aid organizations have interpreted these economic elements in various ways depending on their mandates:

some preferred consolidating the emergency phase for targeted populations and neighborhoods, involving the public authorities only peripherally. The danger of this approach, when these services proved to be viable, was that it encouraged neighborhood self-sufficiency, cutting them off from the rest of the city and heightening social instability; other aid organizations chose to accompany long-term institutional reconstruction and stimulate strong involvement of State and civil society, running the risk of enduring the unpredictable effects of the Haitian economic situation more directly.

This second operating mode, little developed by international humanitarian organizations to date, deserves further discussion. Using existing tools and methods developed during emergency relief as a starting point, and looking at the positive experiences of other participants, we will analyze how to arouse interest in actions that consolidate subsistence modes and tackle cities' structural problems, within the framework of these organizations' mandates.

Defining and elaborating new intervention principles and new participatory approaches

Capitalizing on the social dynamics generated by the creation of project support committees

During post-Jeanne relief efforts, international aid organizations opted mainly for a community-oriented participatory approach, organizing support committees responsible for ensuring that projects were implemented under the best possible conditions. Some of these aid groups went to great lengths to create neighborhood organizations and to make the concerned parties aware of the problems (namely sanitation) and responsible for solutions. Unfortunately, as we have seen, once the initial project came to an end, those concerned had trouble continuing the work on their own. Nevertheless, the chosen participatory approaches have had a series of impacts which are valuable within the framework of longer-term reconstruction projects.

First, the acquired methodological skills for project organization, awareness campaigns and human resources management are unanimously recognized by the committees responsible for delegating implementation of Action Against Hunger projects. The committees consider the training they received as reusable tools for managing other projects, so much so that they are eager to enrich this skill base in the future (committees have a strong desire to pursue this type of training in order to acquire the skills necessary for writing up and managing future projects).

Second, the populations recognize that "a new state of mind has been established, dialogue opened up between people and organizations who either do not know each other, or do not wish to work together, or cannot find the means to do so"⁴⁰. As we have seen, people also indicate that they are willing to volunteer for collective interest work which has proven its effectiveness. This is a new phenomenon and particularly noteworthy within the fragmented social context of Gonaives.

Community-oriented projects have enabled international aid organizations to better understand how neighborhoods operate and the powers at play. A combination of studies and mediation (meetings, information distributed via several types of media, individual surveys, etc.) help to establish a work base involving others and to grasp more fully the specific make-up of each neighborhood. These various social contributions lay solid foundations for reforming project support committees with wider responsibilities.

Employing proven intervention principles to redefine a community-oriented approach

In addition to capitalizing on emergency relief actions, the aid practices of other groups have been analyzed, namely those of the Research and Technical Exchange Group (or GRET) who have focused on the water situation. Since 1995, they have opted to support the creation of

⁴⁰ Excerpt from *Projet de cantines populaires pour les enfants de 6 mois à 5 ans*, final report, CECI-ACF

public policies for the implementation of pilot projects aiming to improve living conditions in Port-au-Prince slums. Similarly, new management methods were created in 2000 through negotiations with authorities, the SNEP and end-users in Haiti's two secondary cities, Aquin and Mirebalais. This approach teaches us important lessons about some valuable intervention principles.

The first is to motivate and mobilize populations by combining and capitalizing on several levels of "stimulations" (Levitt 2006). A project addressing a single need – however vital – is too limited to rally the various parties concerned. Even if a leader (legitimate in the eyes of the population) is morally compelled to take action concerning a vital service, two other types of motivation are needed to increase community involvement, transcending the deep antagonisms that often divide neighborhoods, and encouraging individuals to become active for the duration of a collective interest project ("collective interest" meaning a sum of subjective, individual concerns as opposed to "general interest" which remains an inappropriate concept in a society as fragmented as that of impoverished Haitian neighborhoods):

first, economic incentives: lower access costs to improved service, possibility of earning profits via community management, etc.

second, social incentives: more power attributed to administrators, access to citizens' rights for public service users.

The second important intervention principle consists of anticipating socio-economic and political conflicts which interfere with project implementation. If this is not done prior to the intervention, aid projects will have trouble getting off the ground (Braïlowsky 2000). This pre-project work should be considered an indispensable investment considering the stakes involved, and not a waste of time or postponement of the project's implementation.

One of the first steps for preparing a successful intervention is to identify the neighborhood's power structure. The advantages are threefold:

Consolidating the organization's understanding of various neighborhood leaders, who has legitimized their authority (according to them or to their "constituents"), and local antagonisms.

Maintains a certain neutrality: when the international aid organization first launches a program, it is not a "concerned party" and therefore enjoys the necessary latitude to defuse potential violence by initiating dialogue with as many people and organizations as possible. Accelerates the intervention stage and project appropriation by the populations who will benefit from it.

Finally, the third principle consists of demonstrating the project's merits and viability before pushing State and civil society to progressively take over via a scheduled handover during the project set-up stage. The work of the international aid organization in this first stage of the project is to stand in for public authorities: first, by representing the legal entity which oversees the investment operation and, second, by acting as service-provider for the design and work execution control missions, both technically (building infrastructures, writing up standards, financing agreements, etc.) and socially (event planning, awareness campaigns, feasibility study, etc.). State institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs, management committees) appropriate a project much more easily when they have participated in the development of the technical and social reference frames.

The methods used to put these various intervention principles into action are, above all, a question of each organization's own history and experience. However, , it seems important to detail the characteristics of two critical stages in the organization of urban services adapted to disadvantaged neighborhoods: creating support committees and rendering management committees autonomous

Using a project support structure to create maximum mobilization

To start with, the existing power structure in certain neighborhoods requires co-opting the various forces present in order to constitute a preliminary authority reflecting the social and local political reality as fully as possible. One of the objectives of this stage of the project is to mobilize actors and, above all, to avoid any groups from taking over the project, being careful not to isolate participants who could use their disruptive powers to thwart the project.

In order to initiate dialogue in socially difficult neighborhoods, characterized by violence and individualism, it is essential to develop specialized techniques. This difficult work of power-sharing mediation must not encroach on the political arena, but remain focused on a common goal: access to a need which the population has recognized as being vital. In addition to acquiring specific methods, this work requires a daily presence to initiate continual dialogue between opposing forces within a neighborhood.

Gonaives' many neighborhoods have very different existing social organizations, meaning the challenges are never the same. In neighborhoods dominated by strong – even authoritarian – leadership, the challenge will be to dissolve little by little the neighborhood “dictatorships”, whereas mediation techniques are better adapted to neighborhoods suffering from extreme social fragmentation.

This work of coordination and moderation should enable organizations to avoid certain stumbling blocks, namely that of folding under the pressure of urgent needs or favoring showy (but short-lived) actions – often encouraged by elected officials and the less economically vulnerable populations. Concerning this last point, the project support committees can help by analyzing the ability and willingness of end-users to pay for improved service. The goals of these discussions are to retain a certain number of technical choices and to involve project support committees in the work (site choice, worksite security, etc.). At the same time, producing rapid, concrete, and especially visible results – but not to the detriment of informed technical choices – provides strong stimulus for organizing support committees.

Legitimizing service management structures

Once the technical work is completed, a second stage must be implemented in response to substantially different challenges: defining and negotiating rules with the committees and end-users to eliminate sources of dysfunction. In an urban environment such as Gonaives, the needed infrastructures and unraveling of the social fabric require these services to function according to well-defined methods and rules accepted by all.

Different administrative structures exist to manage and regulate services. However, the social and economic reality of cities such as Gonaives often leads to delegating management to entities representing a collective body (consumer groups), rather than to private entities (who could be in the hands of organized crime). This also leads to lower prices and reinvesting the

operating excess of the service they manage into associated activities (training, etc.) for the benefit of the community.

Community management committees (or management systems) differ from support committees in so far as they not only coordinate and decide, but also utilize their service management skills and related local conflict resolution skills. Their success depends on several factors:

Democratic appointment (by the end-users) and operations (transparency, renewing membership, etc.) are absolutely essential.

Management transparency: accessibility and monitoring of activities and accounts are indispensable.

Contractual recognition by the public authorities, in order to legitimize the management committee and renew relations between the State and populations of disadvantaged neighborhoods.

By allowing committees to manage their services autonomously, dysfunctions can be detected in a timely manner. Some, related to poor practices, can be used as opportunities for providing training and awareness campaigns for beneficiary-users (hygiene, behavior, nutritional education, etc.). Dysfunctions relating to service management can serve as springboards for writing up - via adjustments and on a participatory basis - more specific rules. However, certain issues related to service regulation can be outside the realm of aid organizations' competence and need to be handled by other groups (i.e. development NGOs, etc.)

Reinforcing ties between Gonaives and the surrounding region

Working to transform cities also implies working towards the transformation of the countryside, and vice versa. This observation is particularly pertinent in the context of the Gonaives region, where a strong interdependence binds the city and its hinterland.

Among the many services which can be considered strategic, urban markets are very important links connecting the most impoverished urban and rural populations. First, these markets polarize the whole Artibonite *département* and beyond, enabling the region's small-scale growers to sell their products. Secondly, their social role enables city dwellers to purchase food at competitive prices and allows small rural growers, as well as urban micro-retailers, to be actively involved in the local economy with little investment (very low entry barriers and easily available start-up loans).

Rehabilitating the Gonaives region's business facilities and networks takes on additional importance considering the weak international competition for a certain number of foodstuffs (vegetables, etc.) enabling local growers to easily find a market for their goods.

However, the damage caused by Hurricane Jeanne revealed major structural problems in what was one of Haiti's main "breadbaskets", as well as the dangers they represent for the city. The water which regularly causes flooding in the city comes from run-off basins surrounding Gonaives. This water runs down the hillsides carrying in its wake part of the top layer of soil (erosion) and pours down the streets of Gonaives to finish in the sea. The city's drainage ditches can be maintained, and new ones eventually built, but it seems important to consider the problem at its source. By focusing work on the basins themselves, rain water infiltration

could be improved, slowing soil erosion. This would not only reduce flooding risks in Gonaives, but slow the loss of soil fertility experienced by area growers.

Nearly two years after the disaster, local growers still experience reduced rates of production (diminished by nearly 50%), highlighting the need to simultaneously boost local agriculture, optimize production tools (technical innovations, soil protections, etc.) and reinvest in rural zones.

Conclusion

“Haiti’s biggest problem is an empty stomach,” concluded a human rights expert during a 2006 visit to Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world. This alone, perhaps, can explain why this country’s last decades have been steeped in incertitude, misery and insecurity.

This situation is due to unchecked exploitation of natural resources for the benefit of those in power - oscillating between dictatorship and *bouyi vidé* democracy (sham democracy) - imprisoning Haiti in a highly vulnerable situation for two centuries.

The past two decades have not spared the country its share of disasters. The embargo of the 1990s, followed by political crises and natural disasters in 2004 completed the destabilization of Haiti. Literally everything must be reconstructed. The virtual absence of accumulation of capital in rural zones and the cities’ inability to offer basic services condemns their populations to catastrophic sanitary conditions, burdens household income, slows development in every sector and intimidates indispensable private and public investment. This situation has led to extremely low standards of living and endemic poverty among urban and rural populations alike.

It is common knowledge that hunger is, above all, a political problem. Henceforth, the goal of international aid organizations is to contribute to creating a system which enables everyone to enjoy equal rights and equal access to basic rights. The challenge consists not only in building infrastructures and creating jobs, but first and foremost in reinventing rules and restoring relationships between disadvantaged neighborhoods, the State and its administrations. These relations are strained by violence, distrust and repression, rendering the task still more complex. In this context, establishing public policies consistent with the needs and abilities of deprived populations is more important than ever. Pacifying the slums and recognizing each individual as a full-fledged citizen have become today’s major objectives. The new president Préval conveys these values to the disenfranchised rural and urban masses – the overwhelming majority of the population – but credibility depends on rapid visible results and political reconstruction. By reviving forms of democratic legitimacy and restoring dialogue between poverty-stricken populations and the State, these initiatives could actively participate in the creation of a more peaceful social contract.

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Timeline

1804	Independence was declared following a slave uprising. Saint-Dominique became Haiti.
1915 to 1934	Invasion by the Americans under the pretext of political instability. Mining operations and petroleum research.
1957	Duvalier (“Papa Doc”) took over the country. He soon created a reign of terror with his militia, the “ <i>tontons-macoutes</i> ”. Intellectuals and the upper classes fled the country. Brutal repression of opposition.
1971	Duvalier died and was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude. Only 19 years old, he proclaimed himself president for life. In an attempt to regain control, the militia grew from 30,000 to 300,000 men.
1986	Faced with a deteriorating situation and political movements financed from outside sources, Duvalier left power and exiled himself to France.
1986 to 1990	Unstable period, coup d’état, etc. Power was in the hands of the military.
December 1990	Democratic elections. A catholic priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was elected. As soon as he took office, he turned against the upper classes and tried to claim full powers, backed by the people.
September 1991	Coup d’état by Général Cedras. Father Aristide went into exile.
1992 to 1994	Period of embargo. The international community refused to recognize the <i>de facto</i> regime.
October 1994	Aristide, who had left the church, returned to the country, backed by the Americans.
1996	New elections brought René Préval to power despite Aristide’s bid for the presidency. The Americans refused to recognize him.
1997 to 1999	No government. Disagreement between the legislative and executive branches.
2001	Aristide returned to power.
2004	Aristide went into exile once again, and Hurricane Jeanne hit the country.
February 2006	René Préval, former president, previously allied with Aristide, was elected by universal suffrage.

Argentina: Buenos Aires

The origins of the Argentinean financial crisis

The city of Buenos Aires set itself apart from the rest of Argentina for many years because it was open to Unitarian (liberal and pro-centralized government) and European influences. In the 19th century, the capital and the conservative, federalist interior provinces engaged in nearly fifty years of fratricidal struggle.



Argentina became unified in 1880, ushering in five decades of prosperity. Despite occasional periods of turmoil, the country's growth was so spectacular that Eva Peron was in a position to pledge solidarity to Argentina's former colonial ruler, caught in the tangles of Franco's rule. Economic growth was accompanied by political development based on immigration and State institutions and services.

Buenos Aires, the economic and political heart of the country, grew very quickly, namely through the development of urban networks and services. In the middle of the 20th century, Buenos Aires was one of the most modern cities in the world. Over the decades, the urbanized areas spread semi-concentrically around the harbor on the Rio de la Plata and along the main transportation lines structuring the city (roads, railroad, river). The city fanned out into a second, then a third ring of suburbs. This expansion coincided with the consolidation of the federal district and the neighboring municipalities. Greater Buenos Aires now includes thirty municipalities, 12 million inhabitants and nearly 50% of the country's jobs in industry and services.



Today, at the start of the 21st century, Argentina, once on equal footing with the United States, has become engulfed in the worst social and economic crisis in its history. To understand the causes of the current situation, we must go back over a half a century and look at the political history of the country.

Background on the Argentinean debt

The Crash of 1929 had serious repercussions on Argentina. The resulting climate of political, social and economic upheaval set the stage for a long series of military takeovers. In 1943, after years of political instability, Colonel Juan Domingo Peron

led a military junta, overthrew President Ramírez and set his country on the path to democracy. In 1946 he was elected president of the Republic having addressed his election campaign to the most underprivileged working classes, the *descamisados* (“the shirtless”), promising land distribution, higher salaries, and State-funded medical coverage. His doctrine, known as “justicialism”, was a blend of repression, populism, devout Catholicism, determination to develop a welfare-state, reformism, neutrality, and nationalism. It cut across political lines from left to right.

After the Depression of the 1930s, the return of democracy launched a resolute desire for change in Buenos Aires and a few other major cities. Economic policy focused on developing national industry and aimed at replacing the usual imports with domestically produced products. The policies led to genuine development in Argentinean national industry and public services, improved the well-being of the working classes, a social welfare system, and free universal education. The result was a modern country boasting a totally nationalized and centralized economic system, but financially exhausted.

In 1955 a period of alternating military dictatorships and “limited democracy” began. At the same time, Argentina realized the importance of not marginalizing itself from the booming world trade scene and launched more open policies. However, the more Argentina became involved on the world market, the harder it was for the State to implement a competitive industrial policy.

Although only 3% to 4% of urban households were poverty-stricken before the 1970s (Altimir, 1996), the situation changed dramatically with the oil crisis. Northern countries continued to invest in Southern countries in an attempt to counteract their own crises. This, combined with misappropriation of loan money, plunged Argentina, once the richest country in South America, into uncontrollable over-indebtedness. Through the 1970s, Argentina financed its welfare state using surplus petrodollars borrowed from Northern banks. Despite successive budget cuts, debt in the private and public sectors increased further when the military junta put an end to democracy from 1976 to 1983. Military and police spending rose steadily, and capital flowed toward safer European and North American markets. The Argentinean “social elevator” broke down.

When democracy was reestablished, the Alfonsín administration inherited an unprecedented debt burden. In 1985, a budgetary austerity plan was put into place. External debt was restructured, and fiscal reforms introduced. But the debt remained unsustainably high, leading to rampant inflation (200% per month) and a sudden drop in production. Unemployment rose quickly, while incomes dropped and salary disparity widened considerably within professional categories. The crisis affected the poorest inhabitants most and, at the end of the 1980s, the suburban population of Buenos Aires expressed their discontent by looting supermarkets and collectively occupying land. The protagonists of these social struggles, whether they be prosaic or ideological, advocated a new political model emphasizing greater participation. They did not, however, succeed in curbing the tendency towards individualist withdrawal from society and growing social exclusion.

In May of 1989 Carlos Saul Menem was elected president. During his two terms, Menem, a follower of Peron, blindly followed the suggestions and incentives dictated by the Bretton Woods institutions. The Menem administration launched structural adjustment programs, opened free trade, deregulated and privatized. Its adherence to the Washington Consensus exceeded even its proponents’ expectations. Domingo Cavallo, Minister of Economy from

1991 to 1996, pegged the Argentinean peso to the American dollar in order to keep hyperinflation in check, stabilize money supply, and help the Argentinean peso resist the upheaval affecting neighboring countries.

These measures were intended to guarantee a safe climate for investment and to attract foreign capital and multinational companies within the framework of an excessive privatization policy. Between 1990 and 1995, nearly all State-owned public service companies, including telecommunications, air transportation, ports, oil production, steel, electricity, and water sectors, were sold for sometimes nominal sums, after having transferred the companies' debts to the State. Opening up to international investors even led to a shift in agricultural production, which abandoned staple products in favor of such food crops as soy beans.

Under Menem's government, democracy, already damaged by lobbyists, continued to deteriorate and control mechanisms designed to monitor the legality of government actions broke down. State riches were sold for rock bottom prices because officials received bribes in connection with each deal. Menem even went so far as to take advantage of the Balkan wars by selling arms to those countries after the U.N. had declared it illegal (but, of course, Argentina was not the only country to have done so...). Furthermore, the government often bought off its opponents in order to pass its excessive free-market laws. This combination of circumstances contributed to making the 1990s a period of moral crisis for Argentinean society.

Nevertheless, the system continued to stimulate and support economic growth until 1998. The IMF considered Argentina to be a "model student". It encouraged unrestrained confidence in international markets and allowed the debt to grow without addressing the core issues that created the budgetary imbalance. Although the situation seemed dynamic superficially, unemployment did not decline. Privatization led to numerous layoffs, new categories of people integrated the job market (young people and women), and, above all, workers needed "second jobs to compensate for the drop in revenue on a job market characterized by flexibility and the externalization of a large part of production and services."⁴¹ According to a study on the Argentinean National Statistics and Census Institute data base, minimum wage (in constant monetary units) went from 243.40 pesos in 1974 to 78.90 pesos in 1996.

The chain reaction caused by liberalization of financial markets

The Argentinean economic mirage dissipated quickly. After the financial crises that hit Russia and South-East Asia (which, in turn, had followed the Mexican "Tequila Effect"), the dollar strengthened due to its enhanced status as a safe currency. Short-term investment capital was abruptly withdrawn from Argentina. At the same time, the stronger dollar made Argentinean export products less competitive and Argentina lost ground on the world market. Economic activity went into a dramatic slump. Between June 2001 and June 2002, the gross domestic product dropped by 13.5%, with a record drop of 16.3% over the last six months. Living conditions of the working classes deteriorated sharply. External debt servicing peaked, and strained the peso-dollar convertibility even more. Argentinean debt reached catastrophic levels as the government continued to systematically rely on loans to finance the crisis.

⁴¹ Prévôt-Schapira, *Buenos Aires, entre fragmentation sociale et fragmentation spatiale*, 2002.

In 2001, the IMF granted \$39.7 billion in emergency aid, though not without conditions. Trapped by its commitments, the De la Rúa administration decided to privatize its entire retirement system and part of its tax collection service, and to deregulate State-funded medical coverage in an attempt to increase budget flexibility. As a result, 15 million Argentines lost all social protection. As for the education system, it suffered from severe budget cuts and lost all credibility. Young people abandoned the system, while scientists fled abroad.

The fixed exchange rate and the inability to control the budget forced the government to increase money supply in order to finance State deficit. Creditors' confidence waned, depleting the Argentinean Central Bank's currency reserves, and making parity between the peso and the dollar impossible. When the government announced a moratorium on external debt, investors began to panic. To avoid capital flight, cash withdrawals to private individuals were restricted through a system known as the *corralito* ("small enclosure"). Nevertheless, the crisis peaked at the end of the year. In December 2001, closely watched by international press, four days of rioting and deadly looting broke out, spurred by hunger and instigated by *punteros* (neighborhood political leaders) and a wide spectrum of populist groups. The situation compelled President Fernando de la Rúa to resign. The fixed exchange rate system was no longer viable. In early 2002, the return to a floating exchange rate system was announced by decree and the Argentinean peso underwent strong devaluation. The sudden depreciation caused the dollar-denominated external debt to skyrocket.

Public disclosure of hunger in Argentina

"It was like a war but without physical destruction; everything was annihilated," said one social worker in the Buenos Aires suburbs in July 2005. The effects of the financial crisis were brutal. The percentage of people living under the poverty line in Greater Buenos Aires rose from 35.4% in October 2001 to 54.3% in October 2002. The backbone of the economy, small and medium-sized businesses, disappeared, while the price of consumer goods rose by 42.8%. The core of the informal system, which was very dependent on cash flow and middle class workers, was also hard hit.

Photographs of children starving to death in the hospitals of the province of Tucuman forced the tragic reality on a nation that had, until then, denied the existence of malnutrition within its borders. Throughout the country children fainted in schools because they were hungry. Families relied on school lunches to provide their children with their one daily meal. In urban areas, some people resorted to new money-making resources, such as stealing copper telephone wires or the aluminum covers protecting electrical circuits on traffic lights to sell the metal.

The pedestrian streets of downtown Buenos Aires were transformed into open markets with makeshift stalls selling socks, lighters and colored pencils. In other neighborhoods, some stores closed permanently, while others barricaded their shops to keep out beggars looking for money or something to eat. Poor women sat outside grocery stores in wealthier neighborhoods, imploring every client to buy them some rice or *maté* (a sort of tea). Those who were not reduced to such extremes turned to bartering goods and services.

Nestor Kirchner, an icon of reformed Peronism, has been president since 2003. His goal is to turn the page on the Menem era. Despite the recovery of the Argentinean economy,

inequality between the poorest and wealthiest classes continues to grow⁴². According to the Argentinean National Institute for Economic Development, average incomes of people with jobs (whether they be formal or informal) are still below what they were at the start of the crisis (mostly because of inflation).

The multitude of *cartoneros* (impoverished populations who make their livings by collecting cardboard and other recyclable materials) who flock to the streets of the capital after dark attest to the Argentinean economy's inability to share the benefits of economic growth with the most destitute. Even before the dismantlement of the middle class during the 2001-2002 crisis, poverty had already begun to affect the formal sector. As early as 1996, the main breadwinners in 32% of poverty-stricken families (those who cannot afford the staple food basket) were salaried employees. After the crisis, that situation became an exception. Today, a large portion of the population relies on *changas* (day-to-day odd jobs) for survival. In some cases, though not the majority, social welfare programs also help. For another part of the population, especially single-parent households, creating small family businesses has become the only means of survival. Nearly one third of all loans accorded as part of the ACF-Spain support program went to families headed by single mothers. Small family businesses represent a variety of sectors such as domestic services, textiles, small shops, urban agriculture, bakeries, etc.

Decline of the middle and underprivileged classes, increased social and spatial segregation in the city

Like in many major Latin American cities, the number of "gated communities" is growing throughout the city of Buenos Aires. This compartmentalization into enclaves of rich populations and isolated impoverished zones, attests to a growing attitude of rejection vis-à-vis urban solidarity. For many experts, the economic crisis and the expanding role of a free-market economy have only aggravated the social and spatial fragmentation in the city. The gap between the Federal Capital district, the inner suburban zone, and the outer suburban zone (Arrossi 1996) has also widened. The polarization of urban space is "a phenomenon that affects a large part of the urban area, creating barriers between different neighborhoods, sometimes even between one block and another of a neighborhood, and disproving the classic representation of urban poverty where *villas miseria* ("ghettoized" shantytowns which appeared with waves of migration from the country's interior) were, and continue to be, designated as the sole problem in the eyes of many social policy decision-makers⁴³". In the Federal Capital district and the southern neighborhoods the *villa* population is decreasing, while poverty has spread to squats and the many hotels used as low-income housing for the most destitute populations. Many municipalities in the periurban areas on the outskirts of town, especially in the outer suburban zone, are "bedroom suburbs". The former middle class populations have become prisoners of their own neighborhoods. Transportation costs are high and the districts where people can find work or inquire about job opportunities are far away. In addition, the deterioration of subsidized public transportation and the rising cost of other forms of transportation (individually owned cars, buses) accentuate the distance from the center of town and the feeling of exclusion for many people.

The fragmentation of Buenos Aires is not only due to social and economic circumstances. It is also the result of opposing urban management policies in the mosaic of neighborhoods and municipalities that make up the metropolitan area. In some areas, large private companies

⁴² Ismael Bermú, "Crece la brecha entre ricos y pobres", in *Clarín*, July 2005.

⁴³ Prévôt-Schapira, *Buenos Aires, entre fragmentation sociale et fragmentation spatiale*, 2002.

undertake rehabilitation projects and development in neighborhoods where real estate investment is possible. Certain neighborhoods are efficiently managed by municipal workers and elected officials who are able to obtain considerable aid packages for the benefit of their constituents. Other zones, with limited budgetary and human resources, attempt to implement public policies. They seek help in this formidable task from NGOs and the Church, whereas civil society has reacted to the crisis by developing private initiatives through more dynamic and active local associations. Nonetheless, the poverty-stricken middle classes and the “traditional poor” vacillate between resignation and resentment for municipal administrations, accused of perpetrating the favoritism so common in Argentinean politics. The distinct political character of administrative systems in Greater Buenos Aires differs from the very professional nature of workers and elected officials responsible for local development in other, secondary Argentinean cities (some cities, like Rosario, possess all the indicators of “good governance” and attract the goodwill of international agencies in their regions).

The fragmentation of the metropolitan area undermines much-needed solidarity and the coherence of urban economic development. Isolationist reflexes have become established, especially in the Federal Capital district, which has chosen to preserve its image rather than rely on urban solidarity. In sum, the inexistence of a city-wide development policy and the lack of exchange within the metropolitan area holds the inhabitants of former “bedroom communities” hostage in an isolation which destroys all perspectives for the future.

The growing involvement of the private sector

The challenge of extending and improving basic services in Greater Buenos Aires

After the wave of liberalization and privatization, many municipal public service companies were sold off, in many cases after decades of insufficient maintenance and investment. Foreign multinationals (Electricité de France, Repsol-YPF, Suez Group, etc.) took over the management of primary infrastructures whose services generally covered only the Federal District and the inner suburban zone. Further out from the downtown area and its concentration of powers, the second and outer zones were rarely covered by the networks that structured the city. The outer municipalities are characterized by sparser, more individual housing (which requires more network investment⁴⁴ than denser, collective housing) and by often disastrous socio-economic indicators, neither of which encourages companies - private or public - to extend their networks.

Service in the peripheral zones was therefore delegated to small entities that manage independent services. Given the multiplicity of management systems, civil society paid very little attention to the deregulation process. This situation enabled urban services to be taken over by a multitude of private companies, with sometimes conflicting agendas, and not always with public interest at heart. Favoritism and extremely exclusive systems reinforced powerful local leaders’ roles in the management of public property. The underprivileged zones on the outskirts of the city suffer the most from the government’s decision to contract out to private companies. Inhabitants are trapped in their own neighborhoods where underemployment and unemployment are endemic.

⁴⁴ According to M.H. Zerah, (“The Buenos Aires Concession”, in WSP, 2001), extending water and wastewater systems out toward underprivileged peripheral zones would represent 15% of the agency’s investment, but only 1% of its revenue.

Clearly, urban services linking and structuring the entire metropolitan area constituted the surest means of restoring solidarity, as well as exchange between the job market zones and the underprivileged neighborhoods in this highly fragmented city. When the privatization process began it represented a way of financing a substantial investment policy and defining regulatory and revenue sharing mechanisms on a city-wide scale.

Privatization of service management – Water and wastewater services

Of all the privatizations in Buenos Aires, the operation concerning the State-owned water and sewage company was unquestionably the most highly publicized and controversial. In the following, we will refer to academic studies (Bonizec-Le Bris' thesis, in particular) to retrace a process which began in the 1990s and led to the largest water service concession in the world, becoming a model for the delegation of management.

The Obras Sanitarias de la Nacion (OSN) was the public entity that had been responsible for water utilities in Argentina since 1912. Its mission was to regulate water quality and monitor water resources for contamination according to established environmental standards. As a State-owned company, it came under the authority of the national government. The OSN included all provincial companies, municipal cooperatives and small private enterprises. It maintained a redistributive, egalitarian policy offering socially acceptable prices (unlimited consumption for a fixed fee per household) established through revenue sharing and cross-subsidizing. Prices were standardized in Argentina in 1937, after the Argentinean Treasury accepted to cover a large part of the investment costs.

Until the 1950s, the OSN functioned efficiently and effectively, but the combination of rapid urban growth and economic recession soon caused the State-owned company to lose ground. For over twenty years, State authorities adhered staunchly to their policy guaranteeing social and territorial equality and refused to admit that the company was in difficulty. The dictatorship in the 1970s officially recognized the crisis and began budget cuts which immediately affected service coverage in certain regions. Government administrations that followed were more and more reluctant to finance the OSN. They withdrew from their responsibilities by delegating water management to local governments in the provinces and only continued to manage water utilities in the Federal Capital district. Nonetheless, disastrous business management (overstaffing, favoritism) and lack of investment gradually pushed the State-owned company against the wall. In the outer zones where the rate of service coverage was the lowest (55% for water distribution and 35% for sewage connections), inhabitants who did not have an official hook-up were forced to turn to small alternative infrastructures.

During the era of Menem's triumphal administration and the supremacy of the policies defined by the Bretton Woods institutions, the dilemma concerning the fate of the State-owned company was quickly resolved. On the one hand, the accumulating structural dysfunctions

made the government want to get rid of the OSN rather than continue to fund a company that was incapable of meeting its responsibilities. On the other hand, Argentinean public opinion called for radical solutions to resolve the situation and did not object to the privatization process. The wealthy classes and needy classes alike accepted the privatization of the OSN in the hopes that their water bills would go down or that service would once again be efficient at socially acceptable prices. Thus, in 1992, following a procurement process, the Aguas Argentines SA consortium, led by the French water company Lyonnaise des Eaux (subsidiary of the Suez group), was granted a 30-year contract. The consortium includes Suez, Aguas de Barcelona, Anglian and Vivendi.

Despite the propensity of the government and public opinion to adopt a free-market system, privatizing potable water and sewage services poses a particular problem: how to manage a public service and set prices for a vital commodity which is neither a commercial product, nor a market to be administered according to traditional profitability criteria. Given the vital character of water, a legal framework was established to balance the profitability objectives of private enterprise with the requirements of a public service. It was based on a concept similar to the French notion of public service, with its characteristic equality of service, continuity, adaptability to technological evolution, etc.

The Argentinean Supreme Court created and validated a definition of a “fair profit” that a contractor should be allowed to clear. The court recognized that “the price set for a public service must be fair and reasonable.” However, the concept is subject to discrepancy since the methods of calculating ratios to determine the return on equity can easily be truncated and manipulated. Results can vary greatly depending on whether or not the calculation method takes into account factors such as debt financing (through investment or private funding), asset ownership, etc.

A framework defining the roles and responsibilities of each party within a public-private partnership was instituted as follows:

– the national government, as licensor, retains a central role through the Secretariat for Natural Resources and Human Environment. It maintains jurisdiction over regulations concerning the concession, regulatory procedures, and the definition of objectives for the concession. It also ensures monitoring and updating standards concerning water contamination;

– a regulatory authority, the ETOSS (Ente Tripartido de Obras y Servicios Sanitarios) was created under the aegis of the State and, more specifically, the Secretariat of Public Works. Its functions include ensuring service quality control, approving service prices and any rate change operations, overseeing that contract objectives are met by the contractor, gathering and distributing information provided by the contractor, approving investment plans, supporting the contractor in its relations with violators (industries, users, etc.), dealing with complaints from users, sanctioning breach of contract, etc. It can also request that the contractor be placed under the supervision of the public administration in the case of serious misconduct. This regulatory authority is governed by six administrators and funded through

a supplementary tax on water. It is relatively independent and enjoys nearly full financial autonomy.

A “complete contract” defined the duties and responsibilities for potable water and wastewater services assigned to the contractor, the Lyonnaise des Eaux (Suez Group), in very precise, comprehensive terms. It set strict goals in terms of service coverage, water resource retrieval and treatment, piping, distribution, and wholesale commercialization (to municipalities that have yet to adapt their infrastructures and user registers), and wastewater treatment.

As part of a “regulated zone” system, five-year investment plans were set, defining network extension and improvement, and taking into account user satisfaction. The regulated zone was broken down into three parts – a zone that was already covered, an expansion zone, and a so-called “residual zone” in which there was no Plan for Improvement and Expansion of Service (PMES). To meet objectives, the contractor was authorized to sub-contract to other utility networks (cooperatives, private companies) that had come into existence after the OSN became dysfunctional. The province of Buenos Aires and the “municipes” were assigned responsibility for draining rain water (and therefore floodwaters).

The institutional framework

More than ten years after the launch of public service privatization, the operation continues to fuel ideological battles and its data continues to be manipulated, making an objective review of the process difficult.

As for the institutional structure of the water and sewage concession, a number of factors soon undermined the regulatory authority’s legitimacy and operations, and led to adjustments (rate increases, etc.) not sanctioned by the original contract. The regulatory authority – despite the many prerogatives and means granted for preserving its autonomy – lacked the necessary key skills to assert its legitimacy. In fact, ETOSS was neither an application authority nor a licensor. This lack of authority had serious consequences, especially in a country like Argentina where the State had traditionally run the water sector. In addition, the regulatory framework was based on the Anglo-Saxon model, which calls for a strict and literal interpretation of the terms of contract. This rigidity was ill-suited to a country characterized by macro-economic instability and a culture of negotiating mutual agreements.

As the Argentinean crisis reached its peak, the power struggle between public authorities and the private company progressively turned in favor of the latter, namely in the form of guaranteed revenues. The contractor was given exceptional authorization to adjust rates in order to enable Aguas Argentines to reach economic-financial balance (this concept affirms that, “taking into account the stipulated conditions of efficiency, the rates for services rendered enable the contractor to recover all related costs including operations, investment and taxes, as well as a fixed compensation for the cost of capital, over the duration of the contract”).

Implications for service users

No review of the water management concession would be complete without looking at the contractor's results and the repercussions on user rates.

On the technical side, the primary and secondary networks were extended and rehabilitated, water quality was improved, and production capacity grew by 37%. Coverage rates greatly increased, even if they remain slightly below projections: in 2001, the rate of potable water coverage was 82%, against the contractual target of 84%, and 62% against 69% for sewage systems. Economic performance of the services (the difference between revenue and combined costs of operating, marketing, administration and financial operations, based on the concession's operating revenues) rose as soon as Aguas Argentinas took over, with sales management showing the strongest improvement.

Concerning rate increases, the supporting data has stirred much controversy due, in part, to dubious manipulation of numbers and accounting methods. In fact, major increases had been opportunistically announced in 1993, just before management was delegated to the contractor, clouding data interpretation. According to the Comisión de Renegociación de Contratos, an average water bill increased 65.02% between May 1, 1993 (date the contract went into effect) and January 1, 2002. Several mitigating factors can help explain this seemingly abrupt increase:

- *nationwide prices on consumer goods increased,*
- *annual investment was ten times higher than that of the OSN,*
- *new charges were added onto the water bill under the new contract (VAT, regulation financing tax, charges for financing network extension and renovation, etc.),*
- *real cost rates were practiced up until 1997, meaning that hook-up charges for new networks were billed exclusively to new users.*

According to a study covering the years 1996-2001 and measuring the redistribution of net profit, Aguas Argentinas enjoyed higher profits than other companies in comparable sectors in Argentina. However, these gains were not distributed unduly to the concession's shareholders; "the greater part of profits remained inside the company for investment purposes" (Bonizec-Le Bris). The Suez Group announced that 91% of its revenue over the period 1993-2001 (including services billed to clients, bank loans and capital investment) were reinvested for the benefit of the community and that 4% were paid out in dividends and management costs⁴⁵.

These are average figures, however, and are misleading because they conceal existing disparities. Increases mainly affected small consumers and newly connected households. The pendulum of public opinion soon swung back, abandoning its pro-privatization stance. Rate increases convinced a growing number of people to advocate a return to State control. Their main argument was that the management of a vital service, such as water distribution, should not be a profit-making venture.

Vulnerability due to the macro-economic framework and legislative reversals

⁴⁵ « Aguas argentinas respondió a los reclamos de Kirchner », in *Clarins*, October 12, 2005.

The year 2005 was an epilogue to three years of political struggle. The technical operator, Suez, decided to pull out after negotiations between Aguas Argentinas and the Argentinean government failed.

As new elections approached, battle lines were drawn on two fronts. First, in his efforts to distance himself from Menem's legacy and dealings with private interests, Nestor Kirchner refused to sanction the latest rate increase. Second, a demand was made for the clarification of responsibilities in investment policies.

In reality, the conflict stemmed from the fact that the Argentinean peso was no longer pegged to the U.S. dollar, and to the contractor's strong exposure to the international market. The devaluation of Argentinean currency by 70%, combined with a massive investment policy, plunged Aguas Argentinas into a serious crisis. External debt of over 500 million U.S. dollars was due mainly to loans taken out in dollars from foreign creditors to finance investments. To make matters worse, Aguas Argentinas had protected its interests by hedging against rising interest rates, but not rising exchange rates. The solution proposed by the contractor was to raise rates by around 40% - affecting mainly wealthier households and industry⁴⁶ - in order to reestablish the concession's economic-financial balance. In this dispute, Aguas Argentinas defended their actions by citing the measures set out in decree 1167, dating back to 1997, stating that any modification of dollar-peso parity would have immediate repercussions on service rates, without further negotiations. The non-compliance of this decree is at the root of the legal battle which led the operator to file a claim against the authorities at the World Bank's international arbitration tribunal, in 2003. The International Financial Society, a shareholder of the Aguas Argentinas consortium, is also part of this establishment.

The results

A debt burden left by decades of favoritism and under-investment cannot be eradicated in ten years by delegating management to the private sector, no matter how efficient the chosen company may be. The water consortium is a prime example of Argentina's over-enthusiasm for the privatization model. The objectives set for the contractor were totally unrealistic. In fact, despite the unstable macro-economic situation, Argentina demanded that the contractor immediately achieve results equal to what had been accomplished by the public authorities over an 80-year period in a more favorable context.

The fact that the private management model actually appeared capable of meeting this impossible challenge is representative of a period where liberalizing crusaders thought theirs was a foolproof recipe for success. The sense of failure felt by Argentinean civil society has made the return to a fully State-run model very tempting. However, this move would engender its own share of problems.

First, Aguas Argentinas' loan capacity has diminished considerably and the consequences of a devalued Argentinean peso (i.e. rate increases) cannot be put off indefinitely, and will inevitably be passed on to consumers. Second, since Suez announced its intentions to pull out in September 2005, the only likely candidates to inject capital into the company would be investment funds. These funds - mostly foreign - are governed by short-term profit goals and are generally incompatible with the concepts of general interest or solidarity. Not to mention

⁴⁶ *Le Monde*, September 10, 2005.

that only a limited number of multinationals are equipped to handle the technical and sales management of a network this size.

Aguas Argentinas is not the only service operator that has been sold (Telecom, Tresener and Edenor are others.) to investors, who are generally Argentinean. Santiago Urbiztondo, economist at FIEL, a pro-business organization, feels that “the government’s goal should be to place an Argentinean elite in control of essential public services which have, up until now, been run by foreign companies”. The challenge launched by the authorities is an audacious one because a new phase of instability and deregulation risks fueling a return to public management, with serious social consequences.

Responding to urban poverty and improving access to urban services

In Argentina’s ultra-urbanized context, the State and service operators have worked together to alleviate the social impact of privatizations. They have established economic principles in order to lower access barriers to services and have implemented some forty social programs with the help of through NGOs, CBOs (community based organizations) and administrations.

Pricing adjustments

By developing socially acceptable pricing policies, public service access is improved for underprivileged populations, while respecting the financial equilibrium required by creditors.

Two series of variables must be calculated to define a service’s level of accessibility:

- the *rate structure* can be redistributive when it integrates revenue sharing mechanisms and cross-subsidizing between affluent and disadvantaged users. When properly applied, it can be an important element of a policy aimed at lowering the threshold of service accessibility. Take the example of water service – price bases are calculated according to an assessment of several components (constructed area, non-constructed area, zonal coefficient, service volume, infrastructure and hook-up charges, contribution to financing the regulatory body, etc.). A redistributive rate structure has enabled the cost of extending the secondary water network to be paid for collectively by all users (and not just the new ones);
- *the rate level*, or pricing, is the variable which determines the amount of each of the components in the rate structure, allowing the operator and the contractor to meet set objectives, while protecting the most disadvantaged consumers.

Service operators were also directly involved in the implementation of social programs. A special offer encourages inhabitants of underprivileged neighborhoods to subscribe to the water service. They pay for initial hook-up in exchange for a substantial price reduction on the service for the duration of the concession. Programs, such as the Participatory Water Service or *Obras por Cuenta de Terceros* enable inhabitants to contract local workers or to carry out the work themselves, while the contractor takes on the role of project manager.

For less vulnerable populations, financing plans (5-year loans) or partially subsidized hook-up costs (Unit & Tax Compensation Agreement) can be granted by the public authorities.

Setting up a social safety net

On the advice of the Bretton Woods institutions, public funds from several ministries were used to launch a wide spectrum of social programs. These programs aim to promote reinsertion through:

Backing revenue producing activities. These programs include social loans (*Mano a la Obra*: the borrower must pay 20% of the sum back in kind to a community organization) and the development of micro-financing. The latter's interest rates of up to 50% annually can seem prohibitive, but this interest-generated revenue is earmarked for loan recipient training, pre-project feasibility studies, and handling the multitude of small cases managed by a micro-credit institution. Micro-credit is perceived as a useful measure, namely to ensure the survival of small-scale trade (for example, during hard times, when a product range needs extending, or to increase purchasing power by purchasing in bulk through cooperatives, which lowers costs by 40% - 50%) or to develop service-oriented activities.

Developing urban agriculture (Pro Huerta program). Initially promoted by the Argentinean public authorities as a stopgap measure to counter crisis impact, urban agriculture has gradually become an unquestionable tool. Not only does it improve food security (very often these projects aim to supply food using organic methods and to diversify households' nutritional intake), but it also helps families living in peripheral urban zones to escape the spiral of exclusion. Projects providing assistance for sustenance production should not, however, be confused with those promoting production intended for sale, designed as a means of social reinsertion.

Integrating informal activities into urban services. This experiment, announced as a social and employment policy, was designed to integrate the *cartoneros* into the collection system for companies. The role of the public authorities consists mainly of creating awareness and introducing legislation, such as Law 992 of January 29, 2003 which designated urban sanitation services as "public services" and integrated the recyclable-materials collectors (the previous law prohibited any "garbage theft"). The government then launched a campaign to encourage city-dwellers to sort their garbage and put the cardboard and paper into easily identifiable bags for the *cartoneros* (Bolsas Verdes program).

Establishing minimum standard of living welfare payments (Jefes y Jefas plan). Today, these payments offer a (fragile) safety net for the survival of a whole fringe of the population.

An inadequate social dimension in the responses provided to counter the crisis

Today, the implementation of these measures taken as a whole gets very mixed reviews. First of all, these programs have had no impact on unemployment. The generalization of a socially-oriented economy, perceived as a temporary solution to counter the effects of a passing crisis in the 1990s, now appears to be an increasingly disputed form of protection. This is especially true when it leads to "strong advances for informal employment, even within the formal sector, with a growing number of short-term contracts and bogus jobs" (Prévôt-Schapira). Given the economic recovery of the last few years, concessions made to the Ministry of Social Development to develop the informal sector encounter increasing resistance from the Ministry of the Economy, which doesn't appreciate what it considers to be illegal jobs. Measures related to the informal sector, such as micro-financing, are also brought into question. These programs can be considered an excellent alibi to avoid developing real social policies by presenting the private sector as a miracle cure for what ails the country.

In addition, grassroots organizations and social workers consider that social assistance programs providing direct compensation hinder individuals from working their way out of exclusion. Even the smallest subsidies can cause problems by overlapping professional income, short-term job development and welfare payments. Many aid groups and social workers considered the emergency measures created to alleviate the effects of the 2001-2002 crisis as the fatal blow to all their long-term efforts to discourage welfare dependence.

Finally, substantial inequalities between municipalities bring the very legitimacy of decentralized implementation of social programs into question. The proliferation of programs frequently poses problems during the implementation phase (superposition of financing, finding complementary measures). Complementarities do exist, however, between the various aid plans and programs available to municipalities and underprivileged populations. For example, the *Manos a la Obra* funds can serve to finance production infrastructures, while loans provided by municipal micro-credit programs can be used as operating capital and for procuring raw materials. Nevertheless, today, only the municipalities capable of making the most of their human resources and the involvement of the various actors (i.e. through participative budget, etc.) manage to use available measures to define coherent local development policies, optimize their benefits and, in turn, earn themselves the very profitable label of “good urban governance”.

Supporting CBOs and the emergence of social actors

New issues

As we have seen, urban poverty was already prevalent well before the latest crisis in 2001-2002. However, this last crisis affected both the disadvantaged populations and the middle classes, rendering each more vulnerable than before, albeit in different ways.

Within underprivileged populations, the dramatic cases of severe malnutrition brought to light in 2001-2002 revealed the persistence of real public health issues. After implementing emergency aid programs for children, ACF-Spain led a series of studies in 2003 which revealed the alarming prevalence of pathologies such as iron deficiency anemia⁴⁷ and obesity. The studies shed light on the socio-economic factors behind these illnesses, and especially the extent of their impact on learning abilities and children’s formal education⁴⁸. According to screening carried out after violent flooding in 2003 in the city of Santa Fe, up to 61.5% of all children under 2 years of age showed signs of anemia. In addition to assisting persons in danger, the work of Action Against Hunger enabled public authorities to assess the extent of the problem. This study reveals a hidden and insidious facet of urban poverty. While underprivileged families have access to enough food to satisfy their needs in terms of caloric intake, their diet is often unbalanced and causes serious nutritional deficiencies. More than ever, this highlights the necessity for improving food programs through awareness campaigns and adapting diet through local and national public institutions (since the 1930s, the Argentinean state has implemented a great many food programs).

⁴⁷ Insufficient hemoglobin rate due to a shortage of iron. This condition impacts growth and can cause mental and motor problems. Iron deficiencies have been classed by WHO as one of the ten most serious problems in the modern world.

⁴⁸ Cormick, Diaz, Gomez & Salse, “Prevalence of anaemia amongst young children in Argentina”, in *Field Exchange*, no. 26, November 2005.

For some members of the middle classes, this latest crisis marked the beginning of a process of exclusion. Assisting this type of population has its own inherent dangers. For victims of 2002, the painful experience of living on welfare, of being labeled as “poor”, can grow to the point of driving individuals to “drop out”: refusing any assistance, feeling humiliated, breaking off social ties, even becoming marginalized.

More generally, while the idea of being an Argentinean citizen remains closely tied to the status of homeowner-tax payer and the *casa propia*, decades of crisis have badly shaken the model of integration through employment. An unstable job market and urban violence have created an “every man for himself” attitude, increasing social exclusion. Therefore, rehabilitating the model of integration through employment and reclaiming public space in disadvantaged neighborhoods appear to be prerequisites to ending the exclusion of impoverished populations and to reviving social cohesion. ACF-Spain has set the same objectives through initiatives supporting community centers and projects backing urban agriculture.

From food assistance to insertion: the role of social assistance in defining ways and means

ACF-Spain, which contributed substantially to bringing the problem of “silent malnutrition” in children into the national spotlight, also provides direct aid to disadvantaged populations (e.g. iron supplement programs in the city of Santa Fe). To do so it focuses the majority of its efforts on implementing partnerships with local and national organizations. These efforts extend to creating synergies and to defining or improving various support measures.

When tackling the problem of exclusion, providing direct aid to impoverished communities is only one piece of the puzzle. It is just as important to help social agencies and municipalities imagine ways and means to reinsert excluded populations, and create local public policies to this effect. The most remarkable example in this area is certainly that of the municipality of Rosario (secondary city located about 125 miles [200 kilometers] from Buenos Aires) that has formed partnerships with many action plans and participants (CBOs, NGOs, national programs, etc.). Together, they have managed to define a strong public policy of social development.

Social assistance enables a progressive reinstatement of citizens’ rights and can be supported by international aid organizations on two levels. First, an individualized and pro-active approach can be used to evaluate the exclusion level of each individual and identify people living in near-total social isolation. This is indispensable because exclusion is a process which must be addressed by gradual and adapted responses (e.g. the problem of lost status for the new middle class poor), and also because people living on the margins of this type of situation live in a state of withdrawal requiring particular efforts.

The ways and means of reinsertion can be broken down as follows:

- neighborhood assistance, e.g. meal service, to approach the destitute, to bring people out of their own homes and to open dialogue with the homeless;
- awareness campaigns (skill building exercises) and food donations to encourage people to prepare their own meals;
- closer ties with beneficiaries, orienting them towards specialized structures (canteens, child care centers, etc.);

- projects providing information on aid structure and sustenance skills (vegetable gardens, small-scale livestock raising, etc.), as well as a certification course designed to teach valuable skills and rebuild participants' self-esteem;
- developing a production-oriented project (based on partial or full coverage of costs through micro-credit), or orienting individuals towards a professional sector. To start with, production focuses on products that pose no sanitary risks (vegetables, medicinal and aromatic herbs, bread, etc.) in order to facilitate the sales process;
- improving production and productivity (improved technologies, using appropriate technologies).

The second level of support is institutional and must contribute to creating a network connecting actors with available aid measures. In addition to screening actors, aid organizations must convince the authorities to develop a master listing of social program beneficiaries. This centralized information is essential to effectively coordinate aid measures. Through these actions, international aid organizations should be able to orient potential beneficiaries towards the structure or measure best suited to each individual's needs.

The other area where institutional support is needed is in the sphere of production and vending. Often the only path back to self-sufficiency, this sector must be expanded to occupy a larger part of the social economy. Some interesting initiatives have been taken in this direction. The most innovative and ambitious is based on the creation of certification procedures aimed mainly at helping vendors market their goods by setting up sanitary controls (epidemiology-surveillance, prophylaxis) and providing operating capital to cover marketing-related costs. This enables social economy producers (cooperatives and associations) to access formal markets (supermarkets, etc.). Initiatives providing support for the marketing phase, among others, are also becoming common practice. These include the creation of integrated networks (*Cadenas de Valores*) to facilitate wholesale and semi-wholesale operations, assistance in finding financing, organization of events to bring skilled independent workers and other private sectors together, equipment donations or loans, vocational training, inclusion on the municipal micro-enterprise listing, etc.

Economic insertion: individual versus collective approaches

In the strongly politicized context of Argentinean public life, initiatives designed to lower populations' vulnerability levels often carry heavy ideological baggage. On one hand, there are those that provide support to associations and cooperatives, and, on the other, those that back individual initiatives. These approaches are considered by many to have conflicting interests, but, in fact, they are complementary and each type is appropriate for distinct groups.

The first is a response to the emergence of popular collective organizations (often canteens) that tackle the hunger issue in disadvantaged neighborhoods. These initiatives, generally spontaneous, have sprung up all across Argentina during the worst of the crises, but are often short-lived. The Church has also financed the opening of popular canteens, especially through the Caritas network. ACF-Spain has tried to support certain of these fledgling community projects by helping them get organized (problem solving and decision making assistance, etc.), by equipping them (rehabilitating facilities, supplying kitchen equipment, etc.), by supplying food to canteens and by developing small in-house production units (woodworking shop, bakery, etc.).

However, it is unrealistic to think that these spontaneous community initiatives, created at the peak of the crises, can be sustained or transformed into agents of social development in underprivileged neighborhoods. According to ACF-Spain's experience in this area, project longevity depends on several factors:

- *type of organization*: while religious organizations offer efficient internal operating modes and more substantial financial means, their lack of political acumen and chosen approach (limited to fulfilling basic needs) exclude any possibility of partnership with civil society or social development. Nevertheless, parishes have strong potential in terms of coordination, channeling of institutional funds and structuring the CBO network;
- *existence of real leadership*: organizations are highly dependent on the small core of people who constitute and run them. The entire workload of project implementation generally falls on the shoulders of far too few people, who naturally struggle to simultaneously manage activities related to feeding, training and the creation of small production units. This hinders the learning process and workload organization (organization and division of labor is nonexistent). This "jack of all trades" method shunts whole sectors of production and sales-oriented processes to one side, especially those related to the marketing phase;
- *type of productive activities developed and the capacity of goods produced to access profitable markets*: too often, the production of neighborhood organizations does not find the right sales outlets (elevated production costs, quality issues, etc.). However, some of the more dynamic CBOs know how to position their products in growth markets and willingly implement a variety of tools to improve product sales (certification requests, invoicing, printing up handbills, marketing techniques, etc.);
- *setting up activities* which offer collective and individual benefits that are quickly tangible to all neighborhood inhabitants. In fact, getting a project "off the ground" can be as simple as offering activities accessible to all, or practicing profit-sharing, however infinitesimal, with active members;
- *Capacity of grassroots organizations to form a network* designed to exchange know-how, especially how to create partnerships with the education system, universities, and producer-buyer cooperatives.

The second type of approach, micro-financing individual initiatives, is developing and becoming more specialized. For example, several types of loans already exist, such as micro-loans with peer group guarantees, unsecured individual loans, conventional individual loans or financing in collaboration with communal banks that manage the loans themselves. Despite the social vocation of this type of measure, only a small minority of the so-called "vulnerable" population benefit from these loans. Very few families from the "very vulnerable" category – those who frequent canteens (25 out of 400 during the Action Against Hunger project) - have taken advantage of the micro-credit programs. There are two explanations for this. First, many people are not entrepreneurs at heart, but hope one day to recover the status they enjoyed for most of their working life, that of a salaried worker. Second, micro-financing appears best adapted to individuals who already have sufficient social and economic means to access this type of offer and make the most of it. In fact, although designed exclusively to finance individual enterprises, these loans must be co-opted by peer groups to receive approval. A survey of 25 micro-businesses⁴⁹ shows that very few of these structures reached levels of consolidation enabling them to increase capital and/or

⁴⁹ Universidad nacional de General Sarmient, Instituto del Conurbano, *Efectos del microcrédito en el desarrollo de proyectos productivos y en la reproducción de las unidades domésticas.*

employ personnel. In the vast majority of cases, the role of the micro-credit system is reduced to that of domestic assistance where money injected into household budgets serves to make daily survival less of a struggle.

It appears that loan approval is still all too often based on the social control of aid groups and not enough on pre-approval feasibility studies (market studies, taking into account micro-entrepreneurs' experience and household structures, etc.). In addition, loan system financing plans never sufficiently take into account the contingencies (family events, etc.) that regularly prevent households from meeting payment schedules.

More generally, the system set up by public institutions needs to expand its line of financial products and related services (vocational training, etc.). For the moment, plans for diversifying loan measures include the development of micro-leasing and the creation of purchasing and resale groups. However, to effectively remedy the extreme fragmentation and low productivity of micro-businesses, public policies should probably generalize the all-too-seldom-used initiatives of building producer-retailer networks and providing marketing support (certification, etc.).

Conclusion

At first glance, Buenos Aires could serve as the symbolic figure of a nation sacrificed at the altar of a free market economy, suffering as a result from ever-widening socio-economic gaps within its populations, isolationism and the segregation of certain neighborhoods. However, even a decade of rampant neo-liberal economics and generalized corruption could not completely negate the legacy left by decades of welfare state governance.

A first sign is the State's involvement in the regulation of certain strategic urban services, such as water. Although the power struggle often turned in favor of the rare (western) multinationals capable of managing these services, Kirchner's latest political orientations show that the State is ready to reclaim its traditional prerogatives. In the name of a "financial and economic emergency" (in the words of Law 25.561 signed January 6, 2002), the State abruptly terminated all commitments or guarantees previously granted to public service operators.

Another sign is that the increasing number of social programs – often implemented according to geographic sector and offering compensation – ensured government presence in virtually every city neighborhood. Contrary to many South American metropolitan areas, the social breakdown and the spread of lawless zones controlled by organized crime remain in check. However, more than six years after institutional policies were implemented, they suffer from flagrant inertia. Argentina is the victim of layer upon layer of aid measures and has trouble imposing decentralization as a priority. The consequences are well known: aid measures are not accessible enough to the neediest people; the public is increasingly dependent on public assistance; trial solutions are not tested at the local level; understanding of aid efficiency is insufficient; etc.

Although the responsibility of international financial organizations cannot be denied, the Argentinean financial crisis was caused mainly by State operating modes and national governance. It is important to remember that there were six military coups-d'état between 1930 and 1983, and that during that time Argentina experienced 22 years of military rule, 13 years of "Peronist" government and 19 years under "limited democracy" (Waissman 1999).

For some authors (Tedesco 2002), the Alfonsín and Menem governments' incompetent handling of the difficult post-dictatorship legacy (debt issues, concentration of power in the hands of the executive branch to the detriment of the legislative and judiciary) triggered the State's loss of legitimacy and its corollary: increasing debt, corruption, absence of values at every level of society, division of political parties, etc.

A very limited number of cities, Rosario being the prime example, are capable of optimizing their skills and mobilizing cooperation between the various agencies and organizations working towards eradicating hunger and poverty in their region. Rosario's success story illustrates what is expected by all international organizations: good urban governance. The number of aid groups who turn towards this municipality – which is far from being one of the poorest places on the planet – proves that the concept of governance is much more than an ideological marker or empty words. In fact, good urban governance has become an essential tool for soliciting creditors. It is now synonymous with a region's "absorption capacity" to attract aid programs and projects that are coherent with local development policy.

This governance crisis in no way calls into question the country's substantial abilities or the confidence Argentina evokes vis-à-vis economic players, as witnessed in the rapid return to growth which followed the crash of 2001-2002. However, it seems that each new crisis tends to exclude a few more people from access to essential services, increasing the percentage of the population held hostage in the informal sector.

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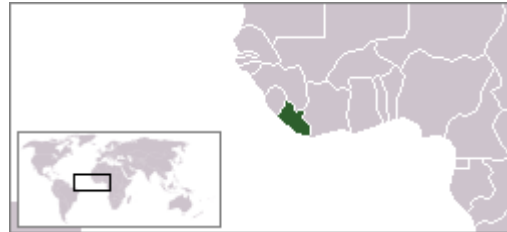
Timeline

- 1810** "May Revolution" against the Spanish Crown. The wars of independence began.
- 1816** Official declaration of independence during the Tucuman Congress, held in the province of the same name.
- 1916** Hipólito Yrigoyen, member of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR or Radical Party) was the first Argentinean president elected by universal suffrage.
- 1930** Military coup d'état, led by conservatives allied with the army, under the command of General José Félix Uriburu.
- 1946** Juan Domingo Perón was elected president of the Argentinean Republic and applied populist measures, backed by his wife María Eva Duarte, otherwise known as Evita.
- 1955** Perón was overthrown by a military coup d'état and did not return to the country until 1973, when he returned to power.
- 1966** Coup d'état, followed by the government of the military junta.
- 1972** The country plunged into a wave of violence with strikes, student demonstrations and terrorist acts. This situation led to a new economic crisis.
- 1973** Perón was recalled and elected president. When he died in 1974, his third wife, María Estela Martínez (Isabel) succeeded him and governed until 1976.
- 1975** Terrorist activities by left-wing and right-wing extremists caused the death of more than 700 people.
- 1976** Following a military coup d'état, Jorge Rafael Videla took over the country. He disbanded congress and established martial law.
- 1982** The Falkland Islands were occupied by force. They were recovered by Great Britain after a short war.
- 1983** Raúl Alfonsín became the first democratically elected president after the dictatorship.
- 1986** The first integration treaties, designed to lower customs barriers between Latin American countries, were signed.
- 1989** Hyper-inflation reached record levels (up to 200% in one month). In May, the Peronist candidate Carlos Saúl Menem won the elections.
- 1991** The Asunción treaty was signed, launching the Mercosur (common market of South America).

- 1992** Diplomatic relations were restored with Great Britain.
- 1995** Carlos Saúl Menem was re-elected president of the Republic.
- 1999** The head of the UCR, Fernando de la Rúa, was elected president.
- 2000** Public spending was suspended until 2005 at the request of the International Monetary Fund. The chief of staff and vice-president resigned.
- Nov. 2000** A 36-hour national strike was organized by various unions.
- 2001** Minister of Finance José Luis Machinea resigned, and was replaced by Ricardo López Murphy.
- 2001** An adjustment program implemented substantial reductions in public spending. Resignation of López Murphy. Domingo Cavallo, the new Minister of Finance, obtained special powers that enabled him to govern by decree.
- Oct. 2001** Legislative elections. De la Rúa was forced to govern with the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in the hands of the opposition.
- 2001** The *corralito* (“small enclosure”) system was established to limit withdrawals from individual bank accounts. Caps were placed on civil servant pensions and salaries. A national strike was called by the CGT. De la Rúa announced a state of emergency before resigning. Adolfo Rodríguez Saá was called on to replace the head of state. He announced the suspension of payments on external debt and the creation of the Argentino, a new currency which never came into being. Rodríguez Saá resigned.
- 2002** Congress named Eduardo Duhalde as the new president. Devaluation of the peso.
- May 2003** Nestor Kirchner (Peronist) was elected president.
- Oct. 2005** Kirchner’s position was strengthened by legislative and senatorial elections.

Liberia: Monrovia

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Liberia in West Africa

Historical context

While the West African coast has been inhabited since the first millennium B.C., the modern history of Liberia began in the mid-fifteenth century when the Portuguese explored the coast and set up trading posts there. Trade activities then evolved into the slave trade starting in the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the emancipation of slaves and the period known in the United States as the “era of good feelings” led to the founding of the country as we know it.

Philanthropic organizations, namely the American Colonization Society, followed the recommendations of James Monroe (fifth president of the United States) who advocated sending slaves back to Africa. Starting in 1822, the ACS helped several thousand former slaves from the United States settle along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, on Cape Mesurado at the mouth of the Saint Paul River. The emigrants founded Monrovia, named in honor of the president, and decided to call their new country Liberia. They drew up a Constitution, based on the American Constitution, and in 1847 Liberia became the first independent republic in Africa. Robert was elected to be its first president, and governed until 1856.



Census suffrage was established, making voter eligibility dependent on income.

This arrangement enabled Americo-Liberians (4% of the population) to dominate the country politically for a century, which they did while reproducing their former masters' behavior, including how they dressed and the style of their houses. Worse, they imposed forced labor on the indigenous peoples who constituted the overwhelming majority of the country's population. Little by little, the Americo-Liberians' power spread towards the interior of the

country, but they did not actually take control of the land and interior populations until the 1940s.

In 1926, the Liberian government granted a concession to the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company to plant nearly one million acres (400,000 hectares) of rubber trees. Rubber production quickly became the main economic activity in the country, but this new-found prosperity was largely the result of forced labor. In 1943, soon after he was elected, President Tubman tried to get in the good graces of the indigenous Liberians by granting them the right to vote, thus making his mark on the history of the country. He defined and put into place an ambitious universal schooling program, improved economic development throughout the country and launched a plan to improve infrastructures.

Liberia became a one-party state, ruled by Tubman's True Whig Party. Prosperity began in the 1960s due to concessions granted to international companies (especially American and German) to exploit iron ore. Tubman died in 1971 and was succeeded by his vice-president, William Tolbert. Tolbert distanced Liberian policy from the United States in order to take part more fully in the community of independent African states. He focused on improving the country's economic situation, pursuing initiatives of the early 1970s. The result was an ever-widening gap between the wealthy Americo-Liberian minority and the Afro-Liberian majority, who were the first victims of the economic crisis. The Afro-Liberians took their revenge in the 1980 coup d'état. Tragic tribal wars followed, leaving Liberia ruined and its government institutions in collapse.

An increase in the price of rice was responsible for the first riots and acts of repression, plunging Liberia into a long period of instability. On April 12, 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, of the Krahn tribe, took over the country in a brutal coup d'état. The sudden change of power was followed by a blood bath. President Tolbert was disemboweled and his closest advisors publicly executed. The bloody memory of this event was a permanent stain on the Doe regime. The takeover marked the end of Americo-Liberian minority control and its temporary disappearance from the political scene.

Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe named himself General and became Chairman of the People's Redemption Council. He suspended the Constitution, suppressed political freedom and gave himself absolute power. The regime was clearly characterized by corruption and systematic violation of human rights. The diplomatic and economic atmosphere remained tense (strained relations with the United States, unemployment, inflation). Opposition to the regime grew increasingly stronger, instigated and led by Charles Taylor, an American-schooled economist, and his party the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The revolt began in the Mount Nimba region and quickly spread throughout the country, meeting no real opposition from the army whose only reaction was to retaliate against civilians. However, when the insurgents reached Monrovia, they were faced with a 1000-member faction led by Prince Johnson, one of Taylor's principal lieutenants, who had created his own movement, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

Although Prince Johnson had assassinated Samuel Doe in September 1990, Taylor's forces, who controlled 90% of the country by then, repeatedly failed to take Monrovia. By this time, the capital had been secured by ECOMOG, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) includes the eight countries of the West African CFA Franc zone, plus Cap Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It was established to promote cooperation and development in all economic sectors, to

abolish trade restrictions, to eliminate barriers that limit free movement of people, goods and services, and to harmonize regional policies.

As Taylor failed to take Monrovia, the country began to sink into a long period of instability punctuated by negotiations and interspersed with renewed fighting of varying intensity. Between 1990 and 1996, at least seven rival factions confronted one another in one of the most atrocious civil wars the African continent has ever known. The conflict ended in August 1996, after killing some 250,000 people and displacing one fourth of the population.

The Liberian capital was a ghost town, plundered by combatants, when its destiny shifted for the first time in May 1996. ECOMOG took the city once again and ECOWAS managed to dictate the organization of general elections and the disarmament of factions. In July, 1997, Charles Taylor, leader of the NPFL, was elected president with 75% of the votes. Western countries placed their trust in the Liberian president, despite the horrors of the civil war he had initiated. They felt that Taylor was the only person able to impose order in a country recovering from a war fought mainly over the control of natural resources (forests, diamonds).

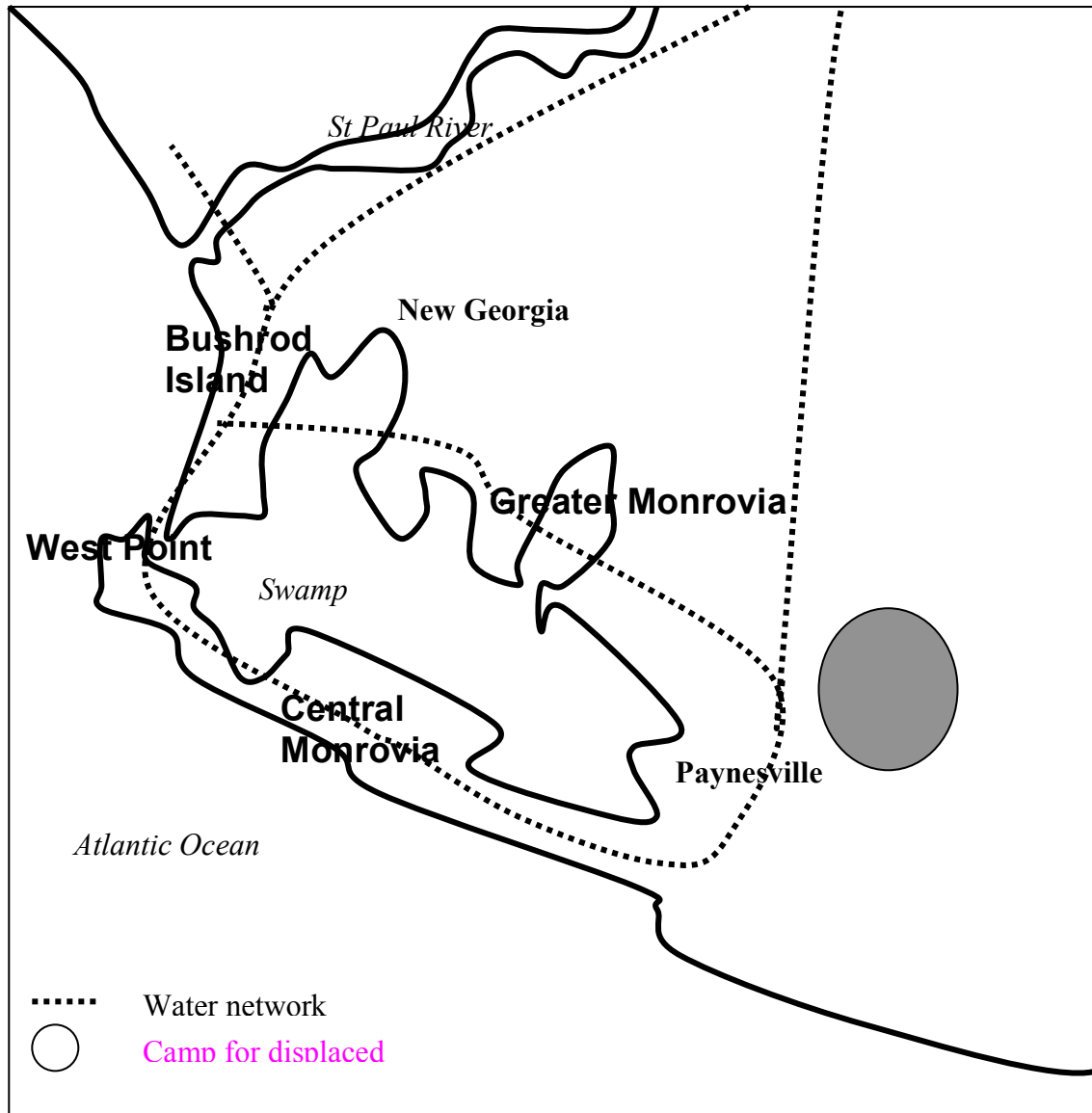
The ECOMOG withdrew in 1998, and Charles Taylor took office. He continued his boundless exploitation of the country's natural resources, using part of the profits to finance war activities. In January 2001, the U.N. accused the Liberian president of fueling the conflict in Sierra Leone (also devastated by a war between 1991 and 2002) by trading arms and diamonds with the rebels (Smilie 2000, Outram 1999). The U.N. imposed sanctions on Liberia in order to force Taylor to break relations with the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The conflict raged on in the sub-region.

An alliance between the LURD rebel movement (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy), backed by Guinea, and MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia), backed by Cote d'Ivoire, allowed the two groups to control two thirds of the country in 2003. Despite the ceasefire signed on June 18, 2003, the two movements lay siege to Monrovia in June and July of that year. A series of attacks, as well as pressure from the international community forced Charles Taylor into exile in Nigeria on August 11, 2003, paving the way for transition. The government signed a peace accord with the two rebel movements (LURD and MODEL) on August 18, agreeing to form a transition government. Power sharing was negotiated between the rival factions in order to distribute revenue from the harbor, the airport and the meager taxes collected (only 75 companies paid their taxes). In October 2003, the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) was created, and the new president, Guy de Bryant, was inaugurated to lead the transition government until elections in 2005. Life quickly resumed. Thousands of young people rented carts for \$0.30 a day from the vendors union and became peddlers of bush meat, Chinese watches, used socks, chili pepper, canned sardines, etc. There was no malnutrition, in contrast to the situation in Mogadishu, Somalia.

At the end of 2004, the three factions involved in the war, LURD, MODEL and Taylor's forces, were officially demobilized. At the end of 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president in the first national elections since the peace accords were signed in 2003. The new president's goal was to gain the international community's confidence in order to attract massive aid and investments, and in the hopes of getting the 3-billion-dollar debt cancelled. She promised to reestablish access to water and electricity in the capital within "one hundred and fifty days", making that one of the priorities of her term. After much reluctance, Ms Johnson-Sirleaf recognized the importance of the complex budgetary supervision procedure – the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program - which had been imposed

on her predecessor by American and European partners. This acceptance, along with the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled after that of South Africa, were seen as evidence of her firm desire for normalization and the reestablishment of trust.

Note: text block on map needs to be enlarged to show entire text – “Camp for displaced persons”



An urban environment of great diversity

It is difficult to estimate the population of Monrovia because the last census of the capital dates back to 1984 (Brown & Tsikisayi 2004). Estimated at 412,000 inhabitants at the time, the population has grown steadily since. Throughout the war, people fleeing the conflict developed new neighborhoods and camps for displaced persons around the city limits. Those districts have now become part of Monrovia. In 2003, an estimated 300,000 people had found refuge in the capital (Briant *et al.* 2003). Although many displaced families can be considered as having their own living quarters, they are forced to squat abandoned buildings in the inner districts in order to survive. The latest population estimates, including displaced persons, vary between 1,300,000 (Mensah 2004) and 1,500,000 (IRIN 2005).

The population of Monrovia can be divided into four zones which are relatively homogenous in terms of socio-economic profiles and the way they were settled. The first, the western part of Bushrod Island, is home to most of the city's industrial activities, as well as its most densely populated disadvantaged neighborhoods. West Point, another impoverished neighborhood south of the Bushrod Island peninsula, is characterized by squats and fishing activities. This old township, now in the process of being consolidated, remains vulnerable in many ways, including in its lack of basic utilities.

The contrast between population groups is most extreme in Central Monrovia. Both a business district and the administrative center of the capital, this zone also includes impoverished neighborhoods in the north, along the edge of an extensive swampy area.

Greater Monrovia includes the three municipalities adjacent to the capital (New Georgia, Gardnersville and Paynesville). All three have become urbanized along the main roads encircling the swamp. Although the population density in these zones is generally much lower than in the city of Monrovia, some neighborhoods, like Gorbachop Market, are very densely populated because of their proximity to bulk markets, their geographic location and the existence of displaced persons' camps. They are very vulnerable to dangers such as cholera, not only because of their population density, but also because they are under-equipped in infrastructures and in water and sanitation services. Not only is the situation a perfect illustration of the sanitary risks to which a great many Monroviaans are exposed daily, but it must be factored into the equation of a fragile socio-economic environment.

No rigorous study has been done recently on the living conditions of Monroviaan families, but some recent works (Browne, Tsikisayi 2004) underscore these households' very low standard of living. Approximately 50% live below the poverty line, set at US\$40 per month. The war also weakened social and family ties, leaving a great many orphans on their own in the streets of Monrovia. In addition, mother-child relationships have deteriorated considerably due to the economic crisis and the armed conflict (many children were born following rapes, women often rejected by their families, prostitution has developed). Solidarity mechanisms do not play the role that they should in urban zones, especially in the capital's center, where they are practically nonexistent.

Nonetheless, according to a Greater Monrovia nutritional study carried out by ACF-France between March and December 2004, the rate of acute malnutrition remains low (0.5%) and quite similar between displaced urban populations and resident populations. Even so, approximately 1,500 children in the urbanized area require treatment.

In addition to the fact that the problem is widespread geographically, NGOs must take into account a multitude of causes, some of which require long-term attention. The most critical are:

- poor health care – like in many cities, women are away from home working all day, have insufficient childcare knowledge (breast feeding, weaning, etc.) and compensate for the lack of access to modern medicine by excessive belief in traditional practices;
- the psychological problems of some mothers.

In terms of operational solutions, the situation requires considerable means and creative problem-solving from NGOs. Cooperation must be established between feeding centers and city health care units. Solutions need to be both specific (at-home treatments, psychosocial approach, etc.) and traditional (therapeutic feeding centers, supplementary feeding centers, etc.). More generally, the absence of data concerning the capital makes implementing projects all the more complicated.

The new administration wants to get the reconstruction process underway as quickly as possible in order to stabilize the country and neutralize the harmful potential of former warlords. The challenge of establishing sustainable and equitable reconstruction which involves citizens in decision-making is up against a lack of simple and essential information – What are the resources of underprivileged families? What are the needs of the population? How is social structure organized in various parts of the capital? If the new administration attempts to prove its legitimacy indiscriminately through showy - but short-lived - projects, it will run the risk of a top-down reconstruction process which will be unsuitable and therefore inaccessible, not taking into account the economic and social reality of the capital, especially vis-à-vis the poorest inhabitants.

Access to water – a social and urban problem

The new president's priority goal of reestablishing access to potable water for the capital is commendable given the sanitary conditions and the prevalence of water-borne diseases in the city. However, neighborhood distribution is not the only issue involved in restoring Monrovia's water service. As suggested above, the difficulty lies not so much in rehabilitating the existing water distribution network and extending it to new neighborhoods, as in defining a system that will be viable economically and technically, and which meets the needs and financial constraints of the various districts.

One of the objectives is to use the project as a means of introducing a public service in districts which are currently totally isolated from the State. Water supply is a means for the State to "reinvent" itself, using new forms of organization to reconnect with the populations in impoverished neighborhoods. For Kpakolo and Smith (2004), rehabilitating the water distribution network in the city is a way of reintroducing rights and governance in the Liberian capital.

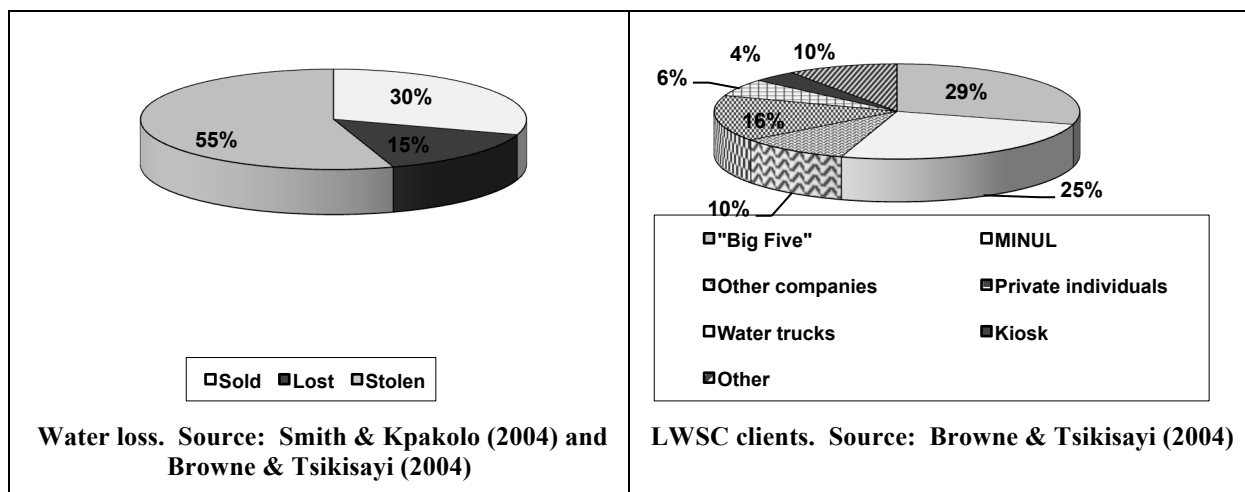
The current public water distribution and wastewater systems are totally obsolete, both technically and managerially. The system dates back to 1954 when the distribution system was built. This network is supplied by a water treatment plant upstream on the Saint Paul River, which flows into the sea north of the capital. The 125 mile-long (200 kilometer-long) primary and secondary network could potentially supply all of Monrovia and a large part of Greater Monrovia (Smith & Kpakolo 2004) if damage from the war, lack of personnel, and numerous illegal hook-ups had not bled the public service dry. The treatment plant was

designed according to a feasibility study done by WHO and financed by U.S. Aid (in 1968) and the World Bank (1982), which allowed it to double its capacity to 16MGD. Today, the plant is only able to supply 15% of Monrovia’s water through various distribution systems (private connections, kiosk sales and water tank trucks).

The sewer system also dates to 1954, but the water treatment capacity rapidly diminished until, during the war, it finally stopped functioning entirely. According to a study carried out in 1999, this centralized system is in such bad condition that it is doubtful any rehabilitation remains possible.

Prices for the water distribution service were set high in order to counteract the consequences of major losses. The distribution company, the LWSC, is highly indebted and very weakened by the devaluation of the Liberian dollar. Most of its revenue comes from subsidies and from invoicing the five main private companies in the city (the “Big Five” – USTC Soft Drink, the Monrovia harbor authority, The Brewery, the American embassy and Mercy Ship) and UNMIL, which together make up 50% of their sales (fig. 1).

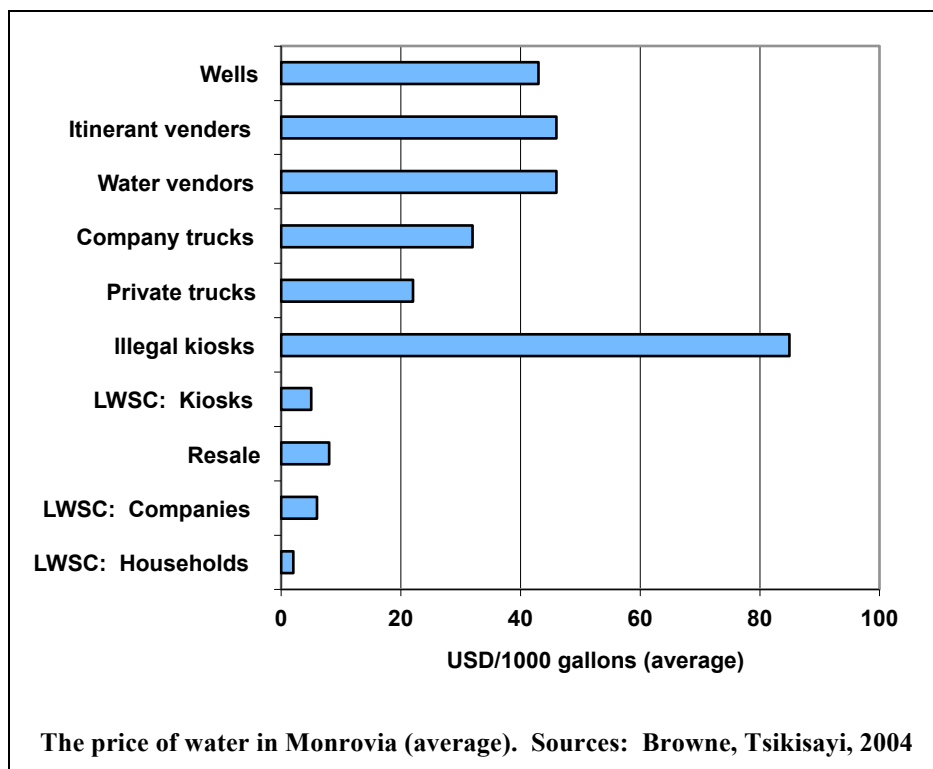
Until 1990, the water produced was of good quality, according to World Health Organization standards. Today, the quality still seems good, but because of various distribution problems, the condition of some of the water deteriorates by the time it reaches consumers. First of all, insufficient pressure and numerous interruptions, whether they be daily or sporadic, make the service vulnerable to surface water contamination (distribution is limited to Bushrod Island). Service is sometimes cut off for up to two weeks because the state-owned company LWSC lacks either the funds or the fuel necessary to run the generators at the treatment plant. Secondly, 55% to 60% of the production is “lost” in the network (Smith & Kpakolo 2004) (fig. 2). Illegal connections are frequent. Stolen water is sold in appalling sanitary conditions, often at very high prices (an average of 20 times higher than the cost of an individual connection).



Because of the serious dysfunctions in the state-owned services, city dwellers look to other supply sources. The main water source for Monrovia residents is wells, 90% of which are private. Some 3,500 wells supply water to 20% to 50% of the population, depending on the neighborhood. The quality of the water from the wells depends greatly on how they are

equipped (pumps, etc.) but, in general, they are highly vulnerable to contamination. Rainwater, constantly available and abundant, is also a significant source of water, but the system's potential is limited by individuals' storage capacity and the inadequate number of roofs equipped to collect rainwater.

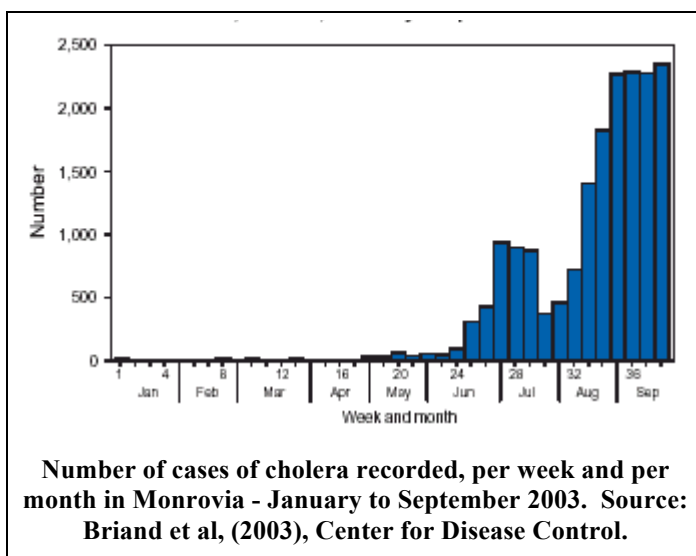
Like in other urban situations, the private sector has proven to be extremely dynamic in compensating for the inadequacy of the state-owned services. In fact, the private sector has become, quite simply, a means of survival for the local population. The state-owned company LWSC may charge markedly lower prices than the private sector, but its low levels of service performance, as revealed in a comparative study by ACF-France, prevent it from being a viable option for the majority of the city. Water pumped illegally from the state network and sold by middlemen at 20 times the official price keeps the average price of water very high (fig. 3).



The financial accessibility of water varies greatly from one district of the city to another. People living in the most densely populated districts of the city suffer the most from the dysfunctions of the state-run service. Despite heavy precipitation (approximately 200 inches per year), ground water is often difficult to access (rocky substratum) or of poor quality. The scarcity of water, the high demand, and the growing prevalence of a monetized economy in the city center create a context in which inhabitants must pay to draw water from private wells. The price varies considerably according to rainfall (the dry season is from December to March), reaching around 10 Liberian dollars during the rainy season, and 5 Liberian dollars during the dry season. On the other hand, well water in periurban zones is generally free, but the wells are further apart. This means users often have long distances to walk and/or long waiting lines (Oxfam 2005). According to a study involving 1,500 people, the average distance from home to water source is 8 minutes, although in some cases that distance is much greater.

The abundance of water in Monrovia is both an advantage and a source of vulnerability due to numerous sources of contamination. The high price of drinking water is an indicator both of its scarcity, and of the high demand, but also of the urban population's awareness of the problem (with the exception of children, youth and displaced families). The wealthiest households in urban zones often buy bottled mineral water, and in periurban zones, everyone knows which wells are the "safest".

According to a study in Greater Monrovia by the international aid organization Oxfam, the prevalence of diarrheal disease, such as cholera, and skin disease is due to poor water quality. The last major cholera epidemic occurred between June and September 2003, while Monrovia was under siege. Nearly 17,000 cases were officially recorded (Briand *et al.* 2003) (fig. 4). Generally, epidemics reach a high point at the beginning and the end of each rainy season. In 2005, between 700 and 800 cases were recorded by Doctors Without Borders-Belgium.



In addition to drainage problems, especially around the swamp in the heart of the city, and the lack of solid waste treatment, human excrement is one of the most important sources of pollution (Kpakolo & Smith 2004). Analysis of residents' behavior shows a relatively good level of awareness of the contamination problem. Urban residents, sometimes among the poorest, are willing to pay to use public toilets (up to 5 Liberian dollars per use).

The reaction of humanitarian organizations and the international community

Supplying populations with potable water and preventing sanitary risks has been high on the list of priorities since the 1950s when major international organizations (WHO, World Bank, etc.) sponsored a series of aid programs

The crises of recent years caused no shift in the paradigm. Since the beginning of the war, nongovernmental organizations, like ACF-France, have concentrated a large part of their efforts in Monrovia on access to clean water and wastewater systems that, in turn, prevents and limits epidemics (especially cholera). As for the rest, Monrovia residents' survival has been dependent on the city's capacity to maintain supply levels and on the dynamic business sense of the local inhabitants.

Because of recurring instability in Liberia and the whole sub-region, aid programs were not always able to implement sustainable public service projects during the conflict. Even the European Development Fund (EDF), backed by the German agency GTZ in its determination to boost the state-owned LWSC's capacity, was forced to implement methods similar to those used by humanitarian organizations in emergency situations.

The centralized water distribution network received particular attention because of its potential role in water-borne epidemics. From 1990 to 2003, the state-owned water authority received US\$16 million in subsidies to ensure its basic role in water production and distribution, wastewater infrastructure maintenance, etc. (Kpakolo & Smith 2004). Starting at the end of the 1990s, aid organizations generally decided that aid to LWSC should be limited to emergency-type interventions until the situation returned to an acceptable level of stability. Although, the LWSC personnel was extremely motivated and showed a lot of "professional curiosity" before the war (Perry 1988), the tendency to depend on aid grew. Geoscience, the company operating the EDF project, frequently preferred to contract work out to expatriates (experts and low-level skilled workers) rather than actively involving and employing personnel of the state-run company. The program illustrated how difficult it is to support a centralized state-run system in a country lacking law and order and devoid of monitoring systems.

Aid programs, in fact, conferred very limited benefit on the poor inhabitants of the city while illegal middlemen took full advantage. The middlemen took advantage of both the incompetence of the State and of the impoverished population's inability to save up enough money to pay a monthly service bill. In reality, it is much easier for a poor family to pay the equivalent of US\$0.10 every day for water, than to scrape together the equivalent of US\$3 at the end of the month for an individual hook-up to the public system.

However, aid based on substitution principles no longer seems appropriate now that the city has become fairly stable. In 2005, ACF-France carried out a series of interviews with personnel of the state-owned LWSC and found they were clearly exasperated with the "compensation" cooperative programs. Employees did not consider the programs to be adapted to the evolution of the Liberian situation, or to be viable either technically or managerially.

However, the European Development Fund did introduce a new course in 2004 when it launched a series of feasibility studies in view of restructuring the state-owned company and defining sustainable management systems for water distribution. At first, it was decided to privatize the state-owned company according to the Anglo-Saxon business model. Quite understandably, no private investors showed any interest in buying a company that was totally bankrupt, in an extremely poor country, highly vulnerable to serious instability. Consequently, the plan evolved into a market economy strategy for potable water distribution. The idea was to subsidize the rehabilitation of the main water production and distribution systems (potable water production plant, sinking new wells or managing new water sources, and primary distribution infrastructures). The EDF has contributed subsidies totaling US\$3 million for those operations since 2005. Once the production and primary distribution network is operational, then water distribution management for each of the city districts could be allocated to private contractors. Private companies would be responsible for financing secondary infrastructures and for adapting the means of distribution (kiosks, individual connections, etc.) according to the local inhabitants' needs and means.

At first glance, that management option would appear to offer several advantages:

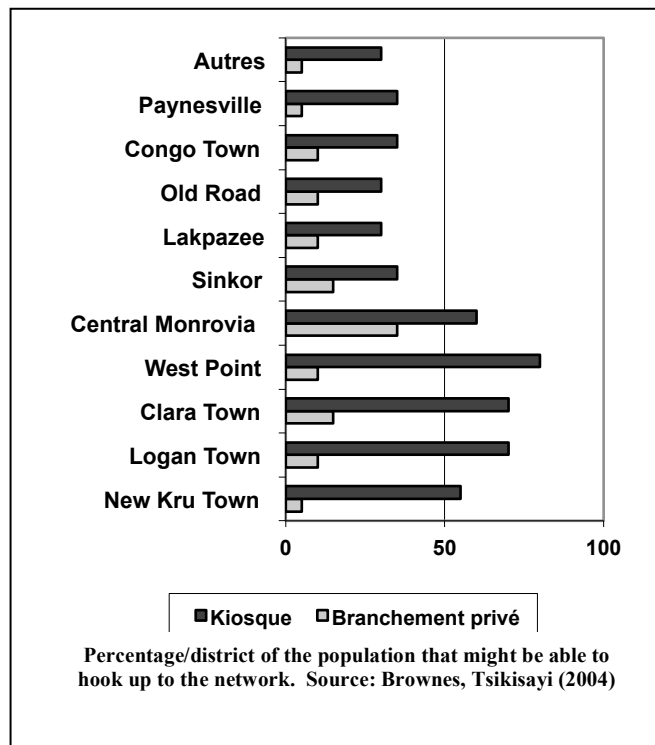
- first, it would allow a state-owned company and, therefore, the State itself to renew its presence in the various neighborhoods of the capital. The LWSC would maintain important prerogatives: it would control water production and be involved in setting distribution regulations for operators.

- second, by delegating the service to multiple operators each company would be free to adapt water distribution to the complex social and economic geography of the city and its neighboring municipalities.

- third, by making private operators responsible for investments to develop secondary networks, the heavily indebted state-owned company could hold its deficit in check.

However, the feasibility of the reform remains uncertain for several reasons. First, it appears that the majority of the population would not be able to afford to pay for potable water from private companies, no matter what the means of distribution (kiosks or individual hook-ups).

A study carried out in 2004 (Brown & Tsikisayi) showed that the central districts and the densely populated Bushrod Island would be the only economically viable zones in the entire city for private companies (fig. 5). Since private service companies would bear all investment costs, they would need to have long-term contracts and guarantees to avoid passing major investment costs on to consumers over a short period of time. This would raise water prices, financially excluding a large part of the population.



Second, price regulation and service quality guidelines have yet to be defined. A regulatory authority's ability to acquire full legitimacy depends entirely on the political reconstruction of the country and the reestablishment of a legally constituted State. The city will have to attract potential private investors (as well as international creditors), set up consumer committees to manage the partnership with investors, and accord the LWSC enough authority to impose respect for citizens' rights to quality drinking water at socially acceptable prices. Given the complexity of the context, finding a solution will undoubtedly require diverse experimentation, along with constant analysis of small-scale experiments carried out in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and consolidation of the rights and duties of the population within an institutional framework.

The potential roles of international aid organizations are quite similar to those described in the study on Haiti and the city of Gonaives. It is unnecessary to explain the principles that were described in detail earlier, however, it is important to remember that international aid groups will play a fundamental role in developing new types of management for services that meet the population's basic needs.

Conclusion

Water and environmental sanitation appear to be the priorities for international aid organizations such as ACF. The situation in Monrovia is paradoxical: surrounded by water, it is unable to meet its own potable water needs. Because drinking water is scarce, it is expensive and represents a major item in household budgets of the neediest families. Given the context, access to water is extremely unequal and, as is often the case, the poorest people pay the highest prices.

The situation will not improve simply by recruiting private operators to renovate and manage the secondary and tertiary distribution networks. In order to meet the goal of universal and equitable access to water, stakeholders must be made aware of their respective responsibilities. Aid organizations will undoubtedly play an important role in meeting these goals by testing innovative ways of ensuring water distribution, supporting local water management organizations, and integrating illegal water vendors into the formal distribution system.

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Timeline

Starting in 1461	The Portuguese explored the coast and set up trading posts from which they exported Guinea pepper (grains of paradise) and gold, before moving into the slave trade. ⁵¹
17 th century	Slave trade
1816	The American Colonization Society was founded. The goal of this philanthropic society was to help victims of the slave trade return to Africa. An initial attempt at settling freed American slaves in Sierra Leone failed.
1821	The ACS acquired land on Cap Mesurado, on the Saint Paul River estuary, from local chiefs. The city, built by the first freed slaves to settle, was named Monrovia in honor of James Monroe, fifth president of the United States. Other independent colonies were founded along the coast, despite mounting opposition from indigenous populations who felt excluded.
July 1847	A constitution based on that of the United States was written, and Liberia became an independent republic. Roberts, the first president, governed until 1856. Census suffrage was established, allowing the Americo-Liberians to dominate the country politically for a century. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Americo-Liberians extended their influence to the interior of the country. Their territorial demands were contested not only by the indigenous populations, but also by European countries.
1892-1911	Pressure from the United States led to a series of accords with France and Great Britain defining the country's borders as they stand today. Despite the new borders, the Americo-Liberians did not actively take control of the lands and peoples of the interior of the country until the 1940s. Loans from the United States and Great Britain allowed the new country to overcome financial difficulties.
1926	The Liberian government granted a concession to the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company to plant nearly one million acres (400,000 hectares) of rubber trees. Rubber production quickly became the main economic activity in the country, but prosperity was due largely to forced labor imposed by the Americo-Liberians on the indigenous populations.
1936	The new administration made forced labor illegal, but the indigenous populations were still denied the right to vote and were treated like second class citizens.
1945	Tubman, elected in 1943, tried to get in the good graces of the indigenous Liberians by granting them the right to vote. He defined

⁵¹ Information from the site www.africa-onweb.com

- and put in place an ambitious universal schooling program, improved economic development throughout the country and launched a plan to improve infrastructures.
- 1958 A law was passed making racial discrimination illegal.
- 1960 Liberia officially became a one-party state governed by the True Whig Party. The period was one of prosperity as a consequence of concessions granted to international companies (especially American and German) to exploit iron ore. Tubman's 20-year rule left its mark on the country's history.
- 1971 When Tubman died in 1971, his vice-president, William Tolbert, succeeded him. Tolbert distanced Liberian policy from the United States in order to take part more fully in the community of independent African states. He focused on improving the country's economic situation, pursuing initiatives of the early 1970s. The result was an ever-widening gap between the wealthy Americo-Liberian minority and the Afro-Liberian majority, who were the first victims of the economic crisis.
- 1979 An increase in the price of rice caused rioting. Several hundred people were killed in the repression that followed.
- 1980 Tolbert's adversaries, encouraged by authorization accorded to opposition parties, tried to overthrow him. Their leader, Gabriel B. Matthews, was arrested along with a dozen other insurgents.
- April 12, 1980 Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe (a member of the Krahn tribe) took over the country in a brutal coup d'état. The sudden change of power was followed by a blood bath. The takeover marked the end of the Americo-Liberian minority control and its temporary disappearance from the political scene. Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe named himself General and became Chairman of the People's Redemption Council. He suspended the Constitution, suppressed political freedom, and gave himself absolute power. However, opposition to the regime grew increasingly stronger, instigated and led by Charles Taylor, who was supported by his mother's ethnic community, the Gio. By the end of 1990, Charles Taylor controlled 90% of the country, but not the capital.
- September 1990 Samuel Doe was assassinated by Prince Johnson's followers.
- 1992 Taylor's forces launched new attacks in an attempt to take the capital. He lost the second battle of Monrovia, and the NPLF began to lose power as it faced opposition from both ECOMOG and numerous new emerging factions led by warlords, who assumed power over certain parts of the country. One of those factions was ULIMO, which split into two groups, one led by Alhaji Kromah, and the other by Roosevelt Johnson.

- May 28, 1996 ECOMOG took control of Monrovia, a ghost town plundered by combatants. The Economic Community of West African States managed to dictate the organization of general elections and the disarmament of factions. In reality, the voluntary disarmament only involved one third of the armed militia. The factions became political parties and integrated the electoral process. They were not enthusiastic participants, but had become aware that civil war had led the country to a deadly stalemate.
- July 19, 1997 Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was elected president with 75% of the votes in an election described as “free and transparent on the whole”. The description casts some doubt as to the validity of the results, despite the presence of numerous neutral observers who had been rushed in by international organizations. Western countries placed their trust in the Liberian president, despite the horrors of the civil war he had initiated. Western leaders felt that Taylor was the only person able to impose order in a country recovering from a war fought mainly over the control of natural resources (forests, diamonds). However, the country’s wounds healed very slowly. Thousands of children had been used as combatants and had to be reintegrated into society. In addition, 200,000 people were dead and one quarter of the population had been displaced or become refugees.
- Starting in 2003 After Charles Taylor left in 2003, a political transition was organized, under close supervision of the U.N. On November 23, 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the final round of the presidential election with 59.4% of the votes, against 40.6% for George Weah. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first democratically elected woman president of an African country. She was inaugurated on January 16, 2006.

Conclusion

This conclusion uses the examples presented in this book as a springboard to review food security access for underprivileged and excluded urban inhabitants. Only by taking a quick look at the sometimes distant origins of the urban crisis, can we bring back into perspective the best ways to implement humanitarian projects.

The evolution of the macro-economic framework and its importance in urban zones

After World War II, commercial trade became a peacekeeping concept. Starting in the early 1980s, under the impetus of Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan, the system evolved into the very basis of economic and social development. From that point on, market economy and its “invisible hand” of self-regulation were raised to the status of universal development principles. (“There is no alternative,” said Ms Thatcher.) When Soviet communism collapsed, the economic model thrived, cash flow became unregulated, and national economies became even more vulnerable within the global economic framework.

A series of financial and political crises followed. However, as we have seen in the examples discussed in this book, these crises were already deeply rooted in many countries and cannot be attributed solely to macro-economic policy. In many countries, faulty democratic systems (corrupt executive power, no checks and balances through legislative and judicial branches, despotism, etc.) allowed governments to misallocate “revenue” from major international institutions, instead of using it to remedy disastrous financial situations. A lack of regulations not only left an opening for private interests (often foreign) but also led to the pillage of natural, human and financial resources in numerous Southern countries. The disintegration of state governments, and the accompanying corruption, organized crime and violence, all facilitated by today’s increased flow of merchandise, people, capital and information, have left a powder trail across the entire planet, affecting urban centers with particular severity. Serving both as inspiration and vehicle for new policies, these cities have proven to be extremely vulnerable to macro-economic policies which have had a major impact on urban food security and malnutrition (IFPRI 2000).

In many cities, the weakening of the State and the intermixing of populations has made the codes that once structured society and solidarity obsolete. Flexible relations with traditional rules, as described in Kinshasa, reflects the situation of many urban societies. Despite the increasing importance placed on identity, social structures, especially in cities, are no longer characterized by ties based on solidarity which define values for the individual and the group. The rights and duties of each member of the community are often defined arbitrarily for the benefit of the strongest members. Today, major urban areas everywhere are stricken by the absence of commonly accepted rules, the spread of dangerous behavior, and the relegation of certain individuals to the status of social outcasts.

The diversity of today’s behavior models offers greater autonomy to individuals. In modern society, that autonomy is often condemned as individualism, and is especially prevalent in urban societies. Although the phenomenon can be dangerous to societies, it is also a dynamic factor in the construction of a new society. Freedom and solidarity are not mutually exclusive if the accepted rules have been defined collectively.

However, governments have been incapable of creating collective frameworks that take advantage of individualism to meet the challenges of urbanization. On the contrary, in dysfunctional market economies, money-based exchanges interfere with all aspects of social interaction.

Living in the outskirts of the world

Urban areas in unstable countries and the impoverished outskirts of cities are excluded from the global economic system based on free exchange and defined by a few major power centers. Such underprivileged zones have suffered greatly from the unregulated market economy imposed upon them and from being shunned by private investment (which is supposed to compensate for insufficient public investment).

Since private companies are not interested, a de facto privatization takes place in most of these regions when the informal system takes over. The informal sector naturally sets up shop amidst the ruins of the public service sector, taking over the most profitable services (water distribution, transportation, etc.). Besides the poor quality of services provided, prices soar, reducing the already low buying power of the poorest inhabitants of the cities. In a great many countries, the poor pay higher prices than the rich for services of very inferior quality. At the same time, entire sectors of the economy and urban public services have been completely neglected (and thousands of civil servants' jobs eliminated). Some services, considered essential (wastewater systems, etc.), have completely deserted cities and outlying neighborhoods because they are not considered profitable enough, or would require too much involvement from civil society for them to be viable and autonomous.

The combination of these dysfunctions leaves urban populations exposed to an extremely pathogenic environment (nervous disorders, infectious, pulmonary and hepatic diseases). Such populations generally have very limited physical and financial access to quality health care and social services. Almost 75% of all city children do not go to school; their learning experiences revolve around street life and its many dangers.

Urban households often find themselves pushed further and further towards the outskirts of town which leaves them with very limited access to the job market, even for day jobs in the informal sector. They live too far out of town, transportation is too expensive, job opportunities (market districts, etc.) are too difficult to get to. The situation confines them to very precarious situations in which the entire family is forced to work. Stable income is essential and often preferred to occasional high-income opportunities.

Women generally show a great capacity to adapt to urban professions, often in the service sector. They contribute considerably to household budgets. However, there is a negative impact on their children's health and education due to the long distances they must travel to find work. Mothers leave younger children with older siblings who, unfortunately, are not capable of feeding them adequately or monitoring their health. Urban women breast feed their babies an average of 2 to 3 months less than rural mothers. Like in Kinshasa, transmission of knowledge from mothers to daughters has been lost.

To compensate for their low income, urban families tend to favor quantity over diversity in their diets. The principal consequences of severe malnutrition in children are slow development (both psychomotor and intellectual) and behavioral problems in school-aged children and adolescents. Visible signs of obesity can mask serious nutritional deficiencies.

Rapid developments

Humanitarian agencies have recently started to focus on the issues involved in urbanization. This awareness coincides with new ways of defining development policies, reference points for all those involved in aid operations once emergency situations have been resolved.

Increasingly numerous crises, especially the global financial crisis of 1997-1998, led to a change in direction, symbolized by the collapse of the Washington Consensus. Globalization, usually viewed strictly as a free market economy, has been blamed for those crises. The initial response was to oppose concepts of “total market control” and “total State control”, according to a Manichean scheme. It is now commonly agreed that the State occupies an essential role, as a regulatory body responsible for reconciling needs for efficiency and social justice. In today’s world, governments can no longer work alone to meet the enormous needs created by urban expansion. This is especially true for governments that are in a state of collapse, heavily in debt and plundered of their most precious natural and human resources.

The challenge now facing governments and local authorities alike is to assert their legitimacy and define new rules, in consultation with civil society, public authorities and the private sector. By working together, they can establish better governance and make countries attractive to investors (creditors, etc.) needed to improve living conditions in urban areas, especially in underprivileged neighborhoods. However, as illustrated in the case of Monrovia’s difficulties delegating potable water distribution to private companies, the challenge is a formidable one.

It is now up to NGOs to find ways of integrating the newly-defined standards into their *modus operandi*, and of acquiring the means and methods to lend more weight to social and institutional issues, civil society involvement and support for institutions. If these objectives are not met, the gap between humanitarian concepts of substitution and the requirements of “good urban governance” could widen. Perpetuating such distortions would be dangerous: local populations become dependent on aid, development programs are delayed and social breakdown continues unchecked.

The consequences for international aid organizations

Aid organizations, like Action Against Hunger, play a fundamental role in meeting the needs of urban populations starved by conflict, natural disasters and economic crises. They are also an important influence in the evolution of policies and procedures.

First of all, the four examples presented in this book clearly show how important it is to react quickly in times of crises and in response to the changing needs of urban populations. Humanitarian organizations remain true to their purpose of caring for people, feeding them and providing them with drinking water, offering psychological support and reestablishing means for survival. However, many survival strategies lead to a rapid evolution in urban populations’ needs once the initial shock of a crisis situation has passed. NGOs must adapt to those changes.

Whenever the prospects of a return to “normal” exist, humanitarian workers need to focus their attention on those people whose needs are a question of survival. Preventing social exclusion is a long-term process rarely compatible with the missions of international aid

organizations dedicated to emergency and post-emergency operations. This being so, NGOs can use their specific fields of competence to contribute to the reintegration process of populations in need, particularly through personalized follow-up.

It is also the responsibility of international aid organizations to bring the many problems involved with hunger (street children, anemia, etc.) to the attention of governments, thereby participating in defining pertinent public policy.

In addition, because urban inequality is very pronounced, aid agencies must be mobilized to help modify the means of resource distribution and ensure the respect of individual's rights. In order to adequately meet the needs of the most destitute members of a community, as well as to reestablish communication between underprivileged neighborhoods and public authorities, the organizational abilities of grassroots organizations and intermediary parties must be developed and confirmed. Only then can we reach the goal of creating social and technical references through concrete projects (potable water and wastewater infrastructures, health care units, etc.), and of testing the viability of these references before adapting and implementing them on a larger scale.

Humanitarian organizations are not meant to be development agencies. Their role, in situations where renewed stability appears likely, is to infuse projects with the social and institutional aspects, often overlooked in the fight against poverty. The challenge is to define methods which will not jeopardize long-term objectives, but will, on the contrary, pave the way and accompany them. In order to do so, organizations must develop new ways of operating which take into account the specific characteristics of cities (individualism, social breakdown, etc.). Collective action must be organized through umbrella projects covering a wide range of subjective interests on several levels (economic, social, etc.). Solutions must be found to prevent urban society from marginalizing its underprivileged populations.