

INDUSTRIES: REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CASE OF THE TOWN OF YAOUNDÉ IN CAMEROON

SECTORUL INDUSTRIAL: DEZVOLTARE REGIONALĂ ȘI LOCALĂ. CAZUL ORAȘULUI YAOUNDÉ, CAMERUN

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Abstract: In economic geography, the attractiveness of a country lies in its ability, at a given time, to attract various economic activities and production factors (business, labor, entrepreneurs, capital, etc.). It is in this context that industries are a factor of attraction of the town of Yaoundé since Cameroon attained independence in January 1960 with its territorial consequences. Since the beginning of the 2000s marked by a rebound in economic growth in Cameroon, the implantation of industries in this space increased contributing to an increase in the commuter relationships between Yaoundé and its hinterlands on account of the jobs created. This results in the reduction in the spatial, economic, territorial and administrative limits of Yaoundé whose influence now extends to near and distant peripheries. This study analyzes the role of industries as attractive factors of Yaoundé and resulting territorial dynamics at the local and regional level. Literature review, simple observation, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were used as tools for collecting data in this study.

Key-words: *industrial activity, regional development; local development, territorial dynamics; peripheral localities*

Cuvinte-cheie: *activitate industrială, dezvoltare regională, dezvoltare locală, dinamică teritorială, localități periferice*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Cameroon, the town of Yaoundé is the second industrial pole of the country with about 18% of industrial locations after Douala (52%), (INS, 2013). Since the beginning of the decade 2000, industrial location increased in Yaoundé. Today, industries found in this space employ about 8349 permanent workers as such contributing to economic growth and territorial dynamics of this town (EAI, 2013). Here, industrial activities integrate the town in a territorial dynamics characterized by reciprocal movements of labour force and the active population between the town and its surrounding territory. This situation has consequences on local and regional development. This work tries to circumscribe the place of industries in Yaoundé that is

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their role on the territorial dynamics of development in the sub-regional just as in the local scale.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. A diversified and fast growing industrial activity

This study covers the town of Yaoundé (Fig. 1). Created in 1889 from a small village in the deep forest of south Cameroon by the German colonial administration, this town was raised to a political capital in 1922 (Mveng, 1983). Found between Latitude 30°48' and 30°51' to the North and longitude 11°31' and 11°35' East, on a mountainous and very rugged site, Yaoundé today spans over a surface area of 30 000 hectares according to the Yaoundé urban council (CUY, 2009). Administratively, Yaoundé is an urban council subdivided since 2007 into seven subdivisions of unequal surface areas and population sizes. The subdivision with the largest surface area is the 4th and the one with the smallest surface area is the 3rd. The urban perimeters of Yaoundé harbour a great number of quarters with the most prominent of them being Bastos, Biyem-Assi, Mendong, Ngoussou, Santa Barbara, Koweit City, Tsinga, the Lake among the richest and Essos, Mokolo, Mvog-Mbi, Mvog-Ada, Nlongkak, Melen and Nkolmesseng among the populous.

After the town of Douala, Yaoundé stands as the second industrial centre of Cameroon just after its attainment of independence in 1960. Right up to the end of the 1980s, this fact remained the same (Touna, 2009). However, the economic crises and the structural adjustment programme, whose negative effects were so evident on the operations of industries since 1987, practically affected this sector. In effect, in 1987, these factors (economic crisis and SAP) influenced the industrial policy of Cameroon in general and the location of industries in Yaoundé in particular. During the years of the economic crisis, the number of industrial enterprises located in Yaoundé dropped from 187 to 83, according to data from the ministry in charge of industries in Cameroon. At the same time, jobs generated by the industries in Yaoundé reduced by 84.3%, as declared by the same source. Since the beginning of the decade 2000, we witness an increase in the number of industrial enterprises in Yaoundé. The number of industrial units thus increased from 87 in 1995 to 117 as from 2000 (EAI, 2008). The number of industrial enterprises and jobs generated has since been increasing in Yaoundé. This situation is, however, evident in all sectors of activity (Table no. 1).

It is presently estimated that the town of Yaoundé accounts from close to 117 industrial establishments having more than 20 workers according to sources from the Chamber of commerce, Mines and industries of Cameroon (CCMIC) and the ministry in charge of industries (2008).

In the whole, seven sectors of activity make up for the industrial activities in Yaoundé in 2014. The food industry leads in the number of industries located in Yaoundé with 81 establishments. It is seconded by the wood industry with 14 establishments and the polygraphic industry with 8 establishments. At the bottom of the classification are found building and public works with 7 establishments,

chemical industries with 5 establishments as well as textile and styling and pharmaceutical industries with 1 establishment each.

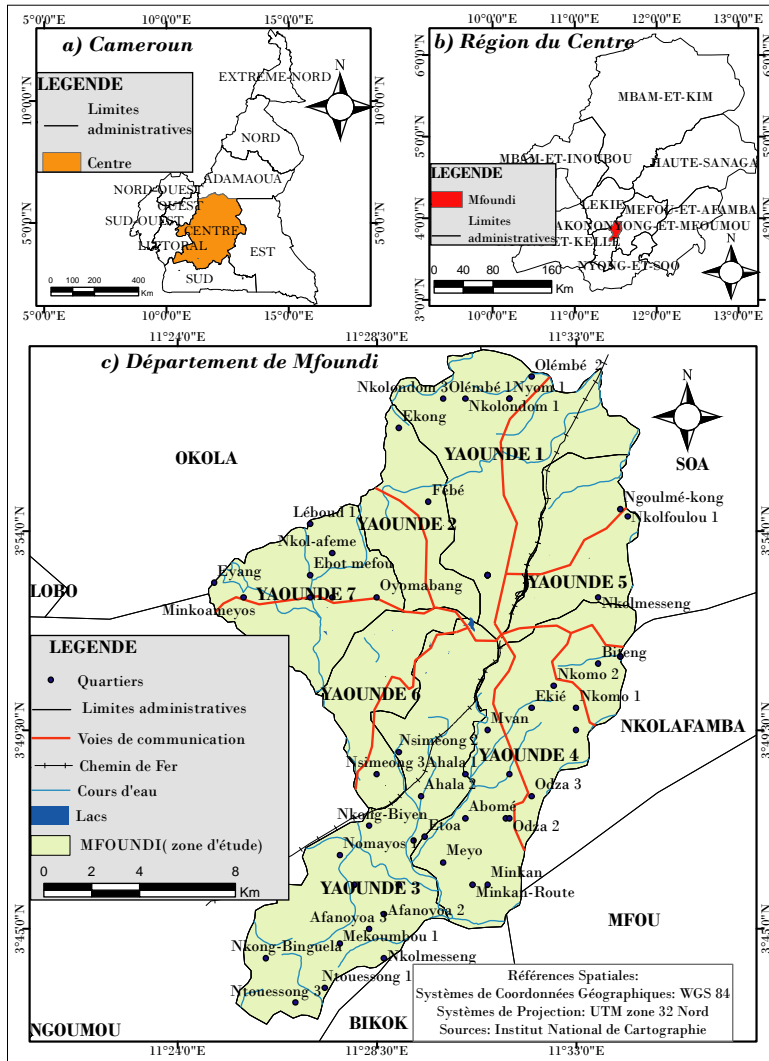


Fig. 1. Location of study area

In terms of workers, the food industry equally leads with 3,104 paid workers. It is followed by the wood and public works sectors with 1,746 and 1,570 paid workers, respectively. In this classification, the pharmaceutical industry employs the least with only 208 paid workers all belonging to the only industry located in Yaoundé. In the whole, a new configuration of the industrial landscape has been observed since the year 2000. This landscape is characterised by the presence of several industrial enterprises of varied sizes and diverse natures. These enterprises locate in the old industrial location zones of Yaoundé found in quarters such as Mvan, Nsam,

Nkoldongo, Kondengui, Mimboman etc. In this context, these industrial locations have visible consequences on the spatial, human and economic aspects. It is, however, observed that in the industrial sector, investors of the town of Yaoundé have the tendency to locate in those areas where they can operate freely (Mouaffo, 1958).

Table no. 1. Distribution industries in Yaoundé by sector of activity and number of workers in January 2013

Sector of activity	Total workers	Number of industries
Food industries	3,104	81
Wood industries	1,746	14
Chemical industries	779	5
Textile and styling	303	1
Polygraphist industries	639	8
Building and public works	1,570	7
Pharmaceutical industries	208	1
Total	8,349	117

(Data source: Field Survey, 2013-2014; INS, 2012)

2.2. Numerous consequences of industrial activities on local and regional development in Yaoundé

Since the beginning of the year 2000, industrial activity forms an integral part of the economy of the town of Yaoundé. Succinctly, the industry is part of the factors that contribute to the activities of the active population in Yaoundé. The permanent increase in the number of industrial activities in this town is accompanied by socioeconomic opportunities susceptible to propel social, human and spatial development at the local and regional scales (NIS, MINPLADAT 2009, and BEAC 2012). This development makes industrial activities an important link in the reduction territorial limits of the town of Yaoundé thanks to the diversified mix of economic and spatial relations produced.

2.3. A perceptible influence of development at the local scale

The location of industries is followed by diverse transformations and development in a given space. These locations attract labour force from outside the territory of the enterprise concerned. In Yaoundé, this fact is observable at the local scale. Field surveys reveal the presence of several industrial enterprises of different sizes that are occupying the territory of Yaoundé today (Table 1). These industries employ a labour force estimated at 8349 persons (EAI, 2012; Ndzie Souga 2007). However, the industrial establishments of Yaoundé are largely found within the food industry sector. Apart from the Cameroon Breweries, (458 workers), and SOFAVINC (279 workers), food industries in Yaoundé are mainly medium size enterprises with the number of workers varying between 20 and 100. These enterprises account for close to 60% of the total number of industries located in Yaoundé (EAI, 2012). They are located in all the structured and unstructured quarters of the urban area including the

spontaneously inhabited areas. Their presence in these areas is always a fortune locally speaking. It permits the population, most often having a low purchasing power, to easily and regularly acquire diverse food products. Generally, it develops around industries with activities that generate revenue such as informal small scale businesses and supplies of all nature. Through these small scale businesses, several families can thus take care of their needs by escaping from poverty, existing poverty, begging and social exclusion.

Medium size industries attached to modern industries that are found in all the other branches of industry counted in Yaoundé have a permanent number of workers that is more than 100 persons. These industries employ an active population that comes from all the social strata of the town of Yaoundé and surroundings. This labour force is also an advantage in the local development of the town of Yaoundé. Coming from different horizons, the labour force that works in the industries of the urban and suburban space is the reason behind the varied ethnic mixture that ends up making Yaoundé a veritable “Cameroon in miniature”. The harmonious work relations and peace within the industrial enterprise are actually a reflection of national unity often attached to by the government. New spaces of the town of Yaoundé are increasingly being solicited for the location of modern medium size industries and for residential areas of the labour force. This situation often goes generally with diverse developments and especially multiple equipments whose combination end up modifying the physical and economic landscape of the town in the local and human framework.

While bringing significant solutions to social life, urban management or in the creation of jobs, industrial activity and its development are the source of economic growth at the local level. In effect, populations originating from different regions of Cameroon and even from abroad are integrating in the economic life of this space as permanent workers in these industries. The localisation site of industries in Yaoundé contributes to the growth and to the spatial influence of this town through increases in the movement of labour force leading to residential mobility from one part of the town to the other. The immediate consequence is the change in places of residence thanks to opportunities offered by some urban territories in Yaoundé. The industry is increasingly confirming itself as a factor of attraction and as an essential element of the territorial dynamism of this town, which immediately include the immediate and distant peripheries with a multidimensional development observable at the regional scale.

2.4. Rapid spatial and socioeconomic development at the regional scale

The studied settlements, considered quarters or peripheral zones are all located around the urban space of the town of Yaoundé. These are places that are in contact with the rural world or in some cases with neighbouring towns whose influence by the metropolis that is Yaoundé in their daily atmosphere and evolution is unquestionable (Ndock, 2009).

The spatial distribution of industrial units in the town of Yaoundé shows that their location extends right to the near, average and far peripheries. Such location influences the choice of place of residence of the labour force who can be motivated by

economic reasons at the moment of choosing a place of residence. It thus becomes evident that permanent mobility of industrial workers is one of the manifestations of this spatial and socioeconomic expansion of the town of Yaoundé. Increasingly, several people working in the industries of this town reside in localities found outside the urban perimeters, which leads to the territorial and administrative dynamism of the town of Yaoundé (Table no. 2).

Table no. 2: Distribution of employment in some peripheral zones of Yaoundé based on distances estimated in the field

Locality	Estimated distance in km from Yaoundé	Number of workers
Okola	40	39
Obala	40	71
Zamengoé	14	28
Leboudi	17	55
Nkomyada	5	18
Mfou	30	151
Nkometou	25	27
Nsimalen	18	35
Soa	14	129
Mbankomo	23	51
Mbalmayo	45	93
Ngalan	6	24
Simbock	6	39
Oyack	5	27
Nkolfoulou	16	79
Nkolnkoumou	7	22
Ongot	20	15
Lebot	22	20
Ebang	15	23
Mimetala	21	42
Afan oyoa	14	38
Efok	48	23
Oveng	23	11
Akak	18	19
Total	-	1079

(Data source: Field survey, 2013-2014)

The results of a survey of 1079 workers in industries in Yaoundé bring out the place of the periphery in the choice of place of residence by industrial workers in the town. A total of 24 localities countered representing four administrative units outside the Mfoundi division in which Yaoundé is found (Fig. 2). This labour force comes from all sectors of activity and from all professional categories. They are men and

women who voluntarily or otherwise live in the near suburbs of the urban perimeters. Each morning they try to brave the distance that separates them from their places of residence and their job sites thus contributing to the interrelation between job site and place of residence. The immediate consequence of this situation is increase in the number of movements and the amelioration of living conditions of the populations through the diffusion of urban style of life into the neighbouring rural areas. At this rate, about 1.9 on 10 industrial workers live in areas found at more than 40km of their job site in Yaoundé in 2013.

Of a total of 8349 permanent industrial workers in Yaoundé, 1079 live in quarters and other neighbouring localities of this town. There is, however, divergence in opinion over the motivations to the choice of place of residence. This motivation varies depending on the situation based on size of the industry, sector of activity and the position occupied in the enterprise. In effect all these people working both in medium size and modern industries found in Yaoundé choose their place of residence based on their pay package or ethnic and social origins.

In this distribution, the following divisions are represented. The Nyong and So'o which is the farthest from the town of Yaoundé represent 18.83%, the Mefou and Akono 17.51%, The Mefou and Afamba 40.03% and the Lekie with 23.63%.

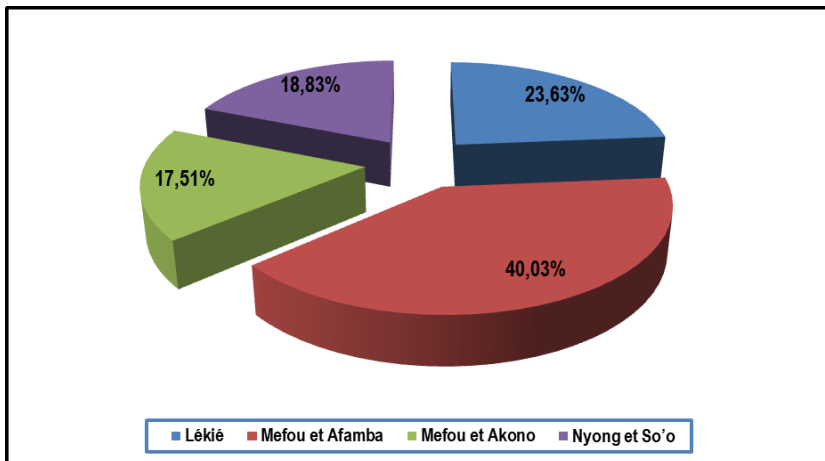


Fig. 2 Proportion of industrial workers by administrative units around Yaoundé in 2014

(Data source: Field survey 2013-2014)

If the actual limits of the Lekie, be it in the socioeconomic or spatial aspects, with Yaoundé are often hard to see in the West of the town, it should be noted that the presence of the Nyong and So'o division in this distribution is explained by the mutual attraction of population between Yaoundé and the town of Mbalmayo. It should equally be noted that some wood industries located in Yaoundé have their branches in the town of Mbalmayo. This is the case of Wembe bois, Calafas and several saw mills specialised in wood mechanic works.

The Mefou and Akono and the Mefou and Afamba are administrative units long reputed for practicing at least in words land costs. As such, for decades now these administrative units found around the town of Yaoundé are under land stress from populations originating from all parts of the country. It goes the same for economic activities especially industries. As such, the creation of the University of Yaoundé II within it in the town of Soa is just increasing this pressure on land in the Mefou and Afamba with a worrisome continuous increase in population.

Beyond these localities, the remaining peripheral industrial labour force to Yaoundé comes from localities as much diversified as distant from the town of Yaoundé as shown on table 2. This proves the fact that all these peripheral zones are recruitment basin of these industries. Several localities of the Centre Region are in varied proportions experiencing this tendency. Of the 10 administrative divisions that make up the centre, about 5 are involved in the residential mobility of the industrial labour of Yaoundé. This situation is explained by the increasing influence of the town of Yaoundé not only on its surroundings but also on the administrative units around it.

Otherwise, the population living in the peripheries of Yaoundé and working in industries in this town benefit from relatively agreeable transportation conditions due to the fluid communication between the town and its immediate environs. All these administrative units indicated are linked to Yaoundé by quality road network. Some industrial workers of Yaoundé (49%) live in these localities as landlords as the cost of land is generally low compared to the ones in the urban centre. In other case also (17%), they are either parental residences or areas of birth for these several individuals whose preceding generations often observed the growth of the town of Yaoundé since attainment of independence. There are, however, among these several people (34%) in situations of tenancy.

The distribution of peripheral labour force in the industries of Yaoundé brings out time constraints linked to the distance between place of residence and the urban centre as well as the job site. The need for profitability and economising income for future investments are most of the elements that play a non negligible role in the analyses of this reality. It does not forbid that undoubtedly there is also an increasing distortion in time and space with rapid consequences that are felt in the socioeconomic life. This is equally an adaptation form for the industrial workers of Yaoundé to the evolution constant variables of employment and transport in the urban and suburban spaces.

A profound examination of the peripheral labour force brings out the influence of Yaoundé on the Lekie, Mefou and Afamba, Mefou and Akono and even Nyong and So'o divisions (Fig. 2). Even the surface area of Yaoundé estimated at 300.000 square kilometres (Kengne, Bopda, 2000), is increasingly less seen on the field due to the migration of labour from one zone to the other. These migrations concern mostly the out movement of the active population as well as their entry into the town for industrial labour. It is important to mention the developments and the road and material equipments that come with industrial activities at the regional level. In return, in different proportions, the distance from the urban centre in relation to its peripheries is possibly dependable on the professional category occupied by an individual. In effect,

the executives are among those who desire the towns and surrounding environs for their residence thus modifying the rural architecture. These executives and other intermediary workers mainly live in neighbouring towns such as Mbalmayo, Obala, Mfou, Mbankomo, Soa, etc. They, therefore, commute each morning to their job sites and back in the evening using public or private transportation means.

Apart from these professions whose revenues are susceptible to ameliorate the purchasing power of actors and their household conditions, several industrial workers of Yaoundé chose to live closer to the job sites. When any of these live in one of the peripheral localities surveyed in this work, their reasons for choice of residence are many. Some of them are people whose birth villages have been integrated into the urban space due to growth and rapid spatial influence of the town. For this group of workers are found among others drivers, labourers or distributors of ordinary products in food industries, storekeepers and watchmen. They are concentrated in localities like Biteng, Nkometou, Mbankomo, Soa and Nkolfoulu where several industries have set up their establishments.

The amount of industrial labour force that sustains the phenomenon of labour migration between this town and its near and distant environs is much and diversified (Table no. 2). Generally these migrants are mostly involved in the public works, wood works as well as in chemical industries. Industries in this sector often require vast expanses of space. In these conditions, they locate in peripheral localities close to the town. This is what makes evident the reciprocal movement of industrial labour force between the town and its peripheries.

Globally, movement of industrial workers between the urban space and peripheral localities of Yaoundé is highest for administrative units such as Mefou and Akono and Lekie divisions at 40% and 23.63%, respectively. On the contrary, they are equal between Mefou and Afamba and Yaoundé (17.51%). This situation is explained by the fact that most of the industries requiring vast land are located in these administrative units. This is the case of Wembé bois and SOFAMAG located at Nkolfoulou and Soa, respectively in the Mefou and Afamba division. For the other administrative units, the industrial establishments located in the urban space attract a quasi totality of their actors living in these divisions. However, there exist alternating movements of industrial workers here and there between the city centre and localities in the peripheries. This situation profits transportation actors and those of the informal sector through the creation of small income generating activities around industrial establishments. The industrial labour force residing in peripheral quarters is made up of 60% of them originating from there. However, several people (40%) originating from other geographical zones of the national territory had succeeded in acquiring land in these localities to build a house.

Wholesomely, the industries identified in urban and suburban spaces of Yaoundé play a direct and indirect role in the regional and local development of this town since the beginning of the 2000 decade. This role touches on the physical, spatial and human aspects of the urban and suburban spaces. They are expressed in terms of family ties, proximity of origin and relations allowing for the mobilisation of resources for the benefit of individuals or groups living in town as well as in the rural area. This

is an exchange and complementary role in the access to different resources (social, economic, symbolic) and the social reproduction strategy of population groups whose consequences are reflected in regional and local development. Here the mobility of industrial actors is not limited only at the transfer of individuals between the town and surrounding localities. It contributes in modifying the social hierarchy in the space through the means used by each industrial actor to access resources especially land. In certain cases, it is observed that a portion of industrial jobs requiring less qualified labour is located in the rural space (peripheral localities) where land is cheap. This in effect is a new type of link characterised by exchanges whose impact increase the closest ranks between the town and the rural areas that industries in Yaoundé are trying to reconstitute.

III. CONCLUSIONS

In Yaoundé, industries are located in urban and suburban spaces. This permits this activity to contribute to the spatial expansion of the town in the Centre Region where its influence reaches out to the surrounding administrative units. Today, the dynamics and territorial attractiveness of Yaoundé are not still shown in a town taken hostage by rural exodus and alternating migration of labour force. The reciprocal movement of actors who are promoters and industrial workers bring out the economic and rational possibilities that reduce territorial limits between the town of Yaoundé and its countryside. This territorial occupation of Yaoundé by industries impacts on the mobility of labour force and the services provided by these industries. This is what undoubtedly expresses the interdependent functioning of territorial solidarity and the organisation of space at the local and regional levels. These last years have produced an interaction dynamics between the town of Yaoundé and its hinterlands. This dynamics is observable in the reinforcement of residential mobility linked to work, diversification in the forms of activities, the emergence of environmental worries, as well as the interference in the urban and rural frontiers brought about by suburbanisation, on development at the local and regional scales.

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