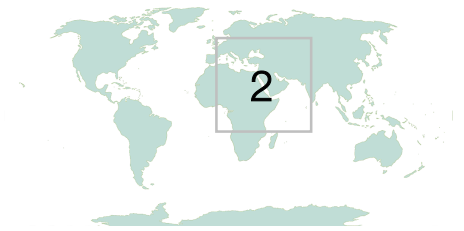


IN-Between Metropolitan Strategies Programme
Interview #2| Cotonou/Abomey-Calavi/Sèmè-Podij,
Benin



Within the context of the activities of the Community of Competence on Metropolisation¹, INTA and Deltametropool Association joined forces to design the programme In-between Metropolitan Strategies pursuing earlier discussions and exchanges on metropolitan strategies ongoing in a worldwide spectrum.

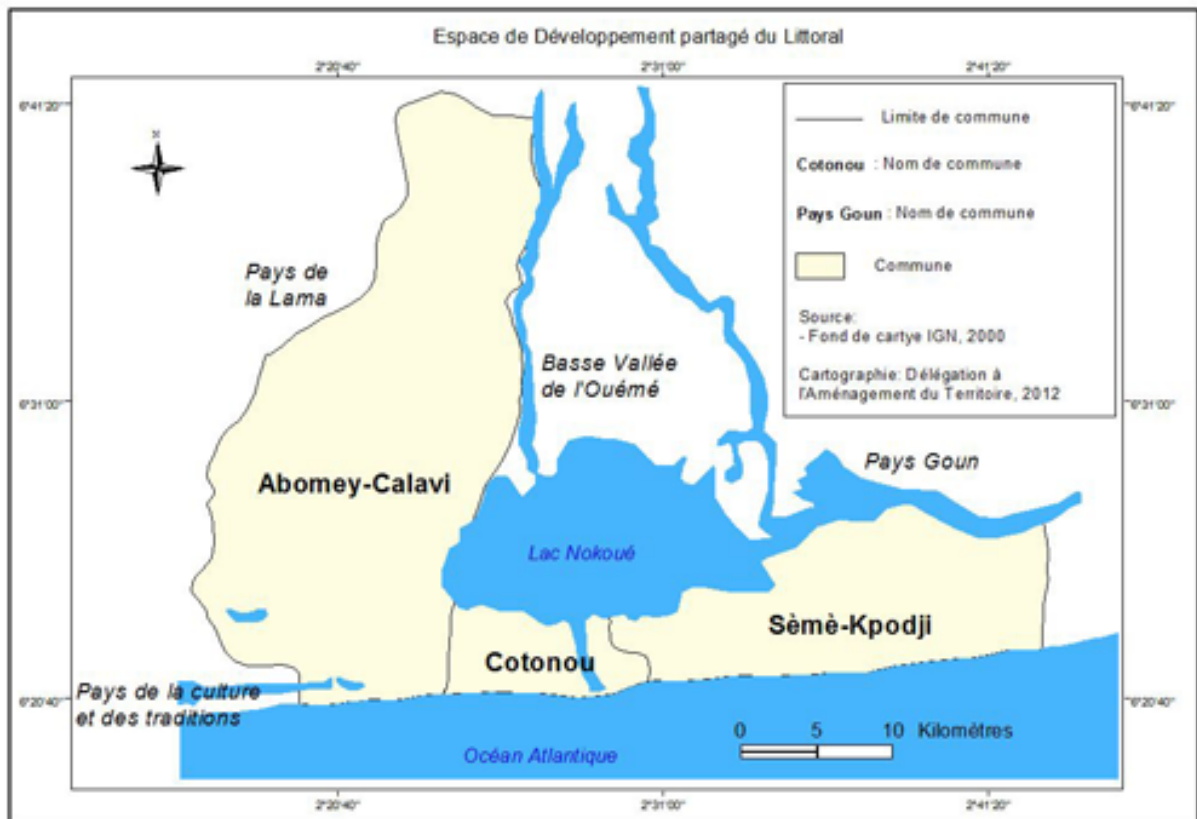
During the first phase, a series of interviews have been realised to several metropolitan cases covering various themes: the scale of the metropolitan area, the governance and cooperation, new forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments, the innovative economical sectors within the metropolitan area and how to develop the metropolis sustainably.

Cotonou/Abomey-Calavi/Sèmè-Podij, Benin

Interview with M. Séverin Nsia, Directeur, Delegate for the Territorial Planning Ministry for the Decentralisation DAT/MDGLAAT

1. The metropolitan area

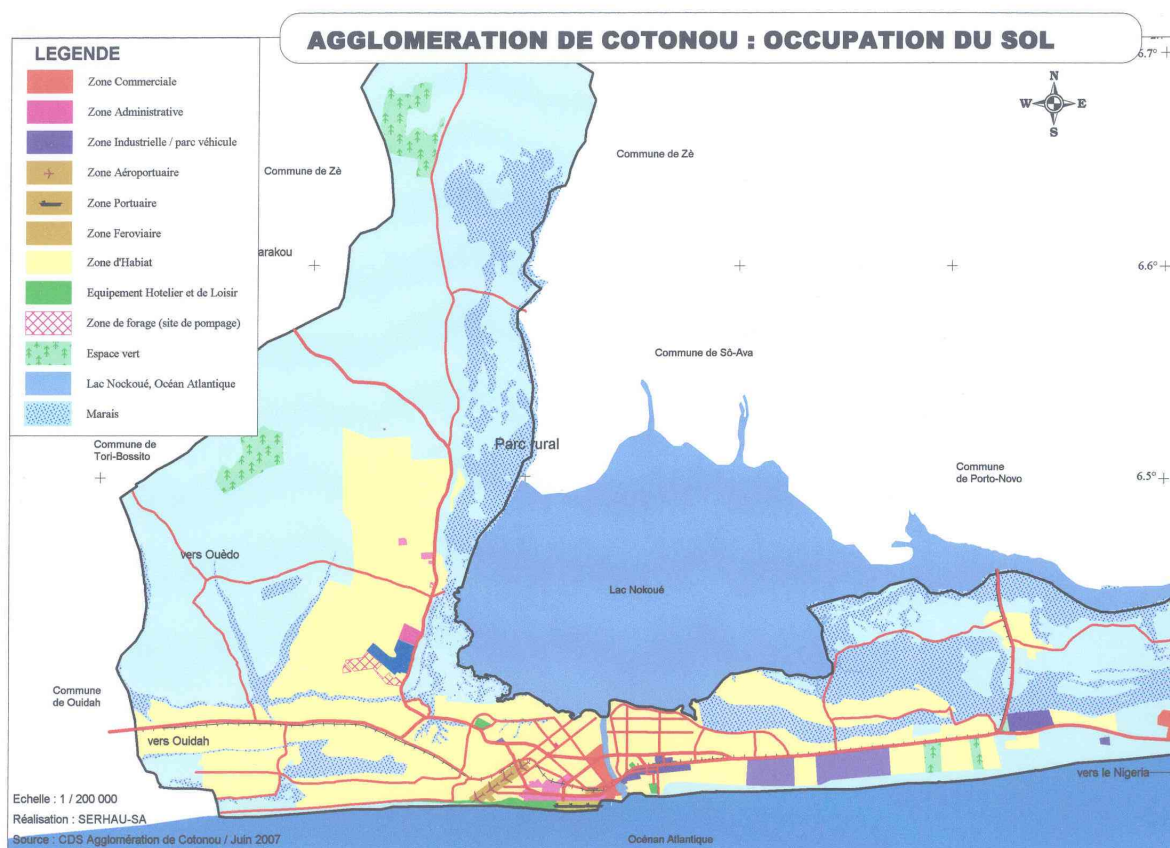
How extensive is the metropolitan area?



¹ <http://www.inta-aijn.org/en/communities-of-competence/metropolisation/metropolisation-home>

Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi and Sèmè-Podji are three cities forming a metropolis named Coastal Development Territory (Territoire de développement du Littoral). This territory covers 836 km² with a population of 1.100.000 inhabitants (according to the RGPH 2002²) representing 16% of the national population. Cotonou occupies a central position (not only in geographical terms – enclosed between Abomey-Calavi (West) and Sèmè-Podji (East) – but also as regards urban density (economic and political centre) and urban atmosphere, despite the fact that it is the smallest in terms of surface.

In a listing of West African cities, Cotonou ranks as a metropolis with national influence³ only in relation to its demographic size and the functions/services provided to the population.



On which values and identity the metropolitan builds its strategy?

A first element is **Complementarity**. It is a matter of fact that the three municipalities joined together around a common programme. In terms of values, **Solidarity, cooperation together with consensus and participation play a significant role**. The **environmental protection and urban mobility** are the elements around which this cooperation is built.

² National Institute for Statistics and Analysis

³ They normally have a population between 1 and 2 millions inhabitants. They do not host relevant international functions. The result is that those cities generate a moderate level of migration. These feed almost exclusively rural exodus. However some of these cities, such Cotonou, Conakry and Douala Lome benefit because of their port and transit, significant emigration from abroad. Lagos, Accra, Abidjan, Dakar, Ouagadougou, Libreville and Yaounde are regional and international cities. - PDM Program Planning. Identification of Territorial Impacts of NEPAD and West Africa and Central Africa. Final report. July 2007.

What makes your metropolitan area internationally attractive?

The metropolitan attractiveness is polarised by the international market of Dantokpa and by the autonomous harbour that supplies the hinterland as well as Nigeria.

2. Governance & Cooperation

Is there a form of metropolitan strategy in place and which policies does it entail? Which stakeholders are involved and what is their role and responsibility in this metropolitan strategy?

How are the different territorial levels associated to the metropolitan governance?

Since 2009, with the support of Cities Alliance (UN), a metropolitan Committee has been set up (whose governing Board is run by the different municipal representatives). Together with a technical unit they are responsible for the metropolitan planning and development of the Coastal territory.

The inter-communal and the communal levels are interconnected to make possible the metropolitan governance.

The actors involved in the construction of the metropolitan strategy are thus the municipalities, the State, the stakeholders and the population.

In 2009 the metropolitan area adopted a strategic document defining the following sectors of action:

- √ Axe I: put into place and organise an inter-communal governance system;
- √ Axe II: contribute to create a competitive local environment to enhance economic development
- √ Axe III: draw a coherent and balanced spatial, economic and social metropolitan plan. Ensure the protection of the environment in the development and implementation of the metropolitan policies
- √ Axe IV: develop a system to provide efficient public service and ensure effective service delivery.

Urban mobility can offer a good example to illustrate this point: the municipality of Cotonou set up its public transport system. But suddenly the Municipality realised that this service was not effective while covering only the municipality of Cotonou as a consistent part of the working people live in the municipalities around Cotonou (mainly in Abomey-Calavi and Sèmè-Podji). This brought up quite recently to open a discussion at the inter-communal level on the possibility to move this competence at the metropolitan level improving transport system connections within the metropolitan area.

- √ Axe V: create housing development opportunities and improve existing housing quality.
- √ Axe VI: fight against poverty as a priority for the metropolitan development

To give more examples, at present, water supply is managed by Sèmè-Podji, while the cemetery for the metropolitan area is based in Abomey-Calavi. Cooperation and infrastructural coordination are really the basic essentials to further develop and improve the metropolitan process under construction.

How is the cooperation between different territorial levels maintained in the planning process, which is increasingly subject to a rapid changing economic, social and technological environment?

In Benin there is just one level of decentralisation that is represented by the municipality (77) with their local communal plans. At the regional level Territorial Communities Committees have been recently created (CCT - *Conseil des collectivités territoriales*) associative structures that integrate the multi-levels governance (regional, national, local).

3. New forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments

What are the key development projects (flagships, major infrastructure, social or cultural equipment, etc.) and programs (information, incentives, investments), of your metropolitan strategy?

All those interventions that cannot be managed only on a limited local level are managed at the metropolitan level such as:

- Establishing an institutional and organizational vehicle for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the urban development strategy
- Improved administrative and technical management capacity of local actors
- Promotion of income-generating activities for vulnerable groups
- Improvement of the land tenure in poor areas
- Construction of two economic poles
- Improved system of storm water drainage
- Improved road infrastructure
- implementation of an integrated urban transport system
- building of an integrated waste management system
- Improved conditions of basic sanitation in slums
- Improved water supply and energy
- Improved health coverage in poor neighbourhoods
- Pilot rehabilitation of three slums in the metropolitan area

How is the dialogue carried between the specific ambitions of local key projects and the ambition of the metropolitan territory?

There is permanent dialogue between the local representatives from the three municipalities in order to conceive and achieve the whole metropolitan project (mainly through infrastructural projects to develop **urban transport, urban services and sustainable development**).

4. Innovative economical sectors

Is the regional level competitive enough in a globalized economic and innovation-led system? Would clusters remove the obstacles created by the vertical organisation of public policy?

The development strategy of the agglomeration of Cotonou foresees the creation of economic poles the niches sectors with better comparative advantages. Thus, it is envisaged the creation of an international vegetables market at Seme-Podji and the creation at Abomey of a second market similar to that of Dantokpa.

Always in the context of positioning the agglomeration as a regional metropolis, the city will have to host (as approved by the UEMOA (West African Economic and Monetary Union):

- a bilingual university
- a transnational coach station
- an international and specialised hospital
- headquarters for sub-regional cooperation

Moreover, within the framework of a partnership with the State, the question of the proximity with Lagos should be given particular attention because Nigeria represents a high potential for business development due to its large market (125 millions of inhabitants, 60% of

consumers in West Africa, 50% of regional GDP of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), over 48% of the industrial and manufacturing sectors).

5. Sustainable development

On which key themes and policies is your metropolitan strategy set upon?

The development vision of the metropolis, based on the **inter-communal cooperation, integrates the different communal visions:**

"in 2025, the metropolis will be managed with an inter-communal approach for an harmonious urbanization, economic development and social equity, and playing a role at the national and subregional levels for the benefit of all the inhabitants of Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi and Sèmè Podji ".

How do these themes and policies overcome the short-term instability of any long-term vision and deliver a performing and resilient territorial development?

Along the vision of its development, it is recommended that the metropolis adopt a proactive stance with a regional ambition⁴. The sub-regional debate implies an "**international policy**" (to be defined) and a "**local diplomacy**" (**local capacity building in support of the action / influence of mayors at the sub-regional level**); the State support remaining necessary on these issues.

To reach this goal of becoming a regional metropolis, the agglomeration in particular and Benin in general should strengthen their economic relations with neighbouring countries including Nigeria. Aiming at the Nigerian market, the metropolis sees primarily the city of Lagos that is its nearest town.

⁴ *Au regard du positionnement souhaitable, elle possède déjà des fonctions d'échelle sous régionale, mais devra rechercher à consolider son rôle en se dotant par exemple des fonctions supplémentaires suivantes : Université bilingue, École professionnelle inter-Etat, Siège d'organisme d'intégration sous régionale, Siège d'organisation d'opérateurs économiques transfrontaliers, Siège de projet d'initiative communautaire, Un second Hôpital de référence doublé d'un Centre des grandes endémies/*

In terms of desirable positioning, the metropolitan area already has functions of sub-regional level, but seeking to consolidate its rôle, it should in acquire additional features such as: bilingual university, inter-state Professional schools, sub-regional inter-cooperation organizations' Headquarters, cross-border traders' organisations, Head of Community Initiative projects, a second hospital in collaboration with a major endemic centre.