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Planning versus reality: building ‘native’ housing estates in Lomé and Douala, late nineteenth century till 1940

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Planning versus reality: building ‘native’ housing estates in Lomé and Douala, late nineteenth century till 1940

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ABSTRACT

This article critically compares the planning and production of ‘native’ housing estates in Douala and Lomé up to the Second World War, for which academic interest has been minimal. Although these two cities had been inhabited by local ethnic groups for much longer, both became the object of German planning initiatives as of the late nineteenth century. Around 1910, this resulted in the introduction of public housing for African citizens as a serious issue, for which the planning and design in both cities departed from similar urban-colonial visions, while interacting and conflicting what would prove to be resilient, pre-existing actors. A main reason why German ‘native’ housing projects were hardly realized until 1918 and would undergo important (trans)mutations while built under the French administration. Using a comparative ANT-inspired analysis, attention is paid to the untangling of relevant actors and actor-networks; to the nuancing of presumed ruptures between successive (in this cases German and French) colonial systems; and to the friction between (urban) planning and built realities. This article is part of an ongoing research into concepts, models and realities that figure in Sub-Saharan African urban transformations since the early twentieth century, more specifically those related to ‘native’ housing production.

KEYWORDS

Douala/Cameroon; Lomé/Togo; transmutation; twentieth-century urban history; comparative ANT-inspired analysis; ‘native’ housing estates

As part of a PhD investigation (Hybrid Artefacts), this article critically compares a series of public ‘native’ housing estates planned and/or produced in Douala and Lomé. It aims to compare and identify the variety of actors that have determined these estates’ transmutations (1) and (2) to compare the models and typologies applied in Douala’s and Lomé’s ‘native’ housing estates up to the start of the Second World War. Unlike in Douala, public planning and realization of ‘native’ housing estates was basically non-existent in Lomé after 1940; Lomé’s residents themselves invested in housing via the principle of self-construction and private land subdivisions.1 Public housing estates are defined here as (sub)urban residential areas that were planned by the (city) government, which also provided the urban design plan and prescribed the typologies and the material elaboration of the future dwellings. Typically, the government would realize a basic infrastructure of streets, squares and facilities as well as a precise plot division on which residents – once they had bought one – were then allowed to build their own houses according to certain publicly defined building rules.

Like other Sub-Saharan cities, as of the late-nineteenth century, the coastal cities Douala and Lomé became the object of planning initiatives that would eventually result in the introduction
of public housing for African citizens as a serious issue around 1910. Besides a typical social-spatial, if not racial zoning underlying most colonial urban extension plans since the early twentieth century, the lay-out and form of those ‘native’ housing estates were inspired by foreign (European) urban models and dwelling typologies, which – in situ – would be adapted to- and/or merge with local practices. Such transmutations would most clearly take shape at the level of the urban designs, which would end up as a fusions of (for example) international garden suburb exercises and local circumstances. Besides, the prescribed housing typologies would often be influenced by local ones (compound house, rectangular floor plan, vegetable garden, veranda), whereas the – scarce – architectural details would mirror vernacular forms of expression (decorated entrance gates). As a result, the built estates can best be typified as unique hybrids, making them a special part of architecture and urban history. Houses in the new estates would be built up of locally produced brick, clay stone, wood and raffia, among others.

As a matter of fact, Douala and Lomé had been inhabited by local ethnic groups for much longer, meaning that German-, temporary British-, and later French colonial administration had to consider long-standing ‘native’ residency as well as established socio-spatial patterns and dwelling customs. This relates to the fact that, in practice, public initiatives for ‘native’ housing estates would meet with various degrees of resistance, i.e. opposition from local residents but also from – non human – often pre-existing elements like land rights, landscape conditions and dwelling rituals.

At least until the Second World War, Douala and Lomé used an urbanization model based on suburban development. This meant that both cities planned and (in Douala’s case partly) realized a series of residential areas at close distance of the existing urban centres. These suburban housing estates were meant to contain dwellings suited to the ‘standards of native life’ and public services (schools, churches, shops, recreation/community centre) for support of self-sufficiency and community building. These features mirror international town planning practices in the domain of (social) housing.

Despite their potential contribution to what we might call a more inclusive architecture history, public ‘native’ housing production in cities like Douala and Lomé have received minimal attention. If research exists, it tends to take a social-ethnic, political, juristic and/or economic perspective, not a spatial one. For instance, well-known urban studies such as those by René Gouellain (Douala. Ville et Histoire, 1976), Jacques Souliou (1993), Ralph Austen (1996) and Andreas Eckert (1999) on Douala and the ones by Yves Marguerat and Nicoué Garyibor (2011) on Lomé, do not deal with ‘native’ estates as imagined artefacts or as built forms; even Hege’s study on German colonial planning, published in Nunes-Silva’s Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa (2015), which discusses Lomé’s and, in detail, Douala’s early twentieth century urban proposals, does not go into the two cities ‘native’ estate plans and/or housing typologies. More generally speaking, academic interest in such ‘minor’ architecture seems rare. An exception regarding Douala is the analysis of the – unofficial – ‘strangers’ quarter New Bell by historian Lynn Schler, which concentrates on the quarter’s public life, daily practices and inner workings. It does not however provide a detailed

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2 Lagae, Colonial Today; Beeckmans, Making the African City; Bigon and Katz, Garden Cities; Nunes-Silva, Urban Planning.
3 Harris and Meyers, “Hybrid Housing”; Harris, “From Trusteeship to development”; Çelik, Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations.
6 Hege, “The German Variation,” 165–79.
spatial analysis of the physical surroundings, as the latter only functions as a setting or background for New Bells’ historically-grown, socio-cultural mechanisms. Urban historical attention for government-planned ‘native’ housing in Lomé and Douala remains limited; most works having been produced between the 1970s and 1990s, with Gayibor’s re-edition (2011) as one of the few exceptions.8

This article hopes to at least partially fill this knowledge hiatus by (1) focussing on transmutation, that is the transfer and modification/hybridization of foreign urban models, dwelling typologies and their merge with the vernacular local, and by (2) taking the estates themselves, i.e. their original urban lay-outs and house designs, as the starting point for the actor-network analysis that is central to our research method.

Transmutations unravelled via actor-network analysis

Meant as a refinement and adaptation of Bourriaud’s ‘mutation’ (The Radicant, 2009), in our research the term transmutation covers the transfer and local transformation of (global) models, typologies and dwelling forms under the influence of actors of all kind (pre-existing, socio-spatial, political, economic, cultural etcetera). It assumes that the housing estates at stake in this research are both part- and result of larger actor-networks. The prefix ‘trans’ has been added to refer to a constant moving of actors through time and space, and to their solidification in (temporarily completed) locally-bound artefacts, in this case Douala’s and Lomé’s ‘native’ housing estates.9

As such, transmutation calls for the recognition and identification of the myriad of actors, mechanisms and networks behind processes such as those involved in the production of ‘native’ estates in Douala and Lomé. It builds on historical scholarships produced since the 1990s, of which those of Nasr and Vollait (2003), Lagae and Avermaete (2010) and Healey and Upton (2010) are but three examples. These are studies that decidedly focus on the analysis of diffusion patterns, professional networking and the dissemination of models and doctrines from- and to Europe.10 Their emphasis on local actor-mediations, on how – during the twentieth century, i.e. during and after colonialism – spaces and settlements patterns in (African, Asian, Mediterranean) cities were generated via negotiation and antagonism between foreign and local experts, have set forth innovative theoretical and methodological frameworks, which yielded stimulating findings.11

However, most scholarship referred to here, did not engage with social or sociological theory. And although sociology’s Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) or ANT-related methods are not unheard of in urban and regional planning studies and have recently been put forward as helpful tools for urban history, few scholars have attempted to fit it within an architecture historical framework, even less so when dealing with the transfer of urban models and dwellings concepts.12 Therefore, works like those of Beeckmans’ Making the African City. Dakar, Dar-es-Salaam, Kinshasa 1920–1980 (2014) and Stanek’s Architecture in Global Socialism (2020) are all the more important.

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7Schler, “Ambiguous Spaces”; Schler, “Bridewealth”; Schler, “History, the Nation-State.”
9Bourriaud, The Radicant.
10Lagae and Avermaete, L’Afrique c’est chic; Healey and Upton, Crossing Borders; Nasr and Vollait, Urbanism: Export or Imported?; Stanek, Architecture in Global Socialism.
11See, for example, Nasr and Vollait, Urbanism: Export or Imported?, xv; Beeckmans, Making the African City.
The first introduced oral sourcing as an unmissable method and included actors outside the institutional milieu, while Stanek presented ‘worldmaking’ as a concept to interweave diverse historical narratives and to critically compare multiple, sometimes contradictory projects.  

The here presented research is based on the ANT-method and the concept of translation as introduced by sociologists like Bruno Latour and Micheal Callon. It assumes that global, local, human and non-human, pre-existing and current actors should connect, continuously negotiate, and, often in the case of non-human actors, transform to result in singular (and temporary) material outcomes. It emphasizes the constantly changing and adapted composition of actor-networks and that actors’ significance lies in how these interrelate, collaborate and antagonize each other, in other words how they compose a network.

By fitting ANT into an architecture historical framework, our method further equalizes human and non-human actors, and assigns them both agency, i.e. the activity, the ability to act or not act, to resist or not resist and to provoke ideas and/or other actor-actions. Applied to the theme of our research, this means that we consider locally based ethnic groups, architects/planners, citizens or policy makers (human actors), and urban plans, maps, land rights, dwelling customs or housing typologies (non-human actors) equally capable of resisting and mutating external urban concepts or dwelling forms and of prompting the latter’s merging with local practices. From this follows the observation that a limited actor-power (institutional, ethnic, personal) does not automatically result in a minor role in the respective networks; a fact that has been proven in other historical studies into colonial urbanism, of which geographer Brenda Yeoh’s *Contesting Space* (1996) is an outstanding example.

Our research acknowledges that actors operating in larger actor-networks should be considered as micro-networks/-entities in themselves, bringing personal or professional expertise and experiences and, in our case, (local) urban and architectural knowledge and imaginings. Although difficult to track down, these ‘bagages’ – as Beeckmans calls them – must have played a significant role, to the extent that they generated forms of transmutation that decidedly influenced the larger network’s final outcomes, i.e. the (conceptualized) housing estates in question.

Furthermore, and as proven by the above-mentioned scholarships as well as our own research, human actors in such networks may have an individual or a collective character. The latter are referred to here as ‘actor-groups’, an adaptation of Myers’ *Verandahs of power* concept, which links space production and individual actors to organized human power and -influence. Local Public Works departments or ethnic groups like the Duala kings in Douala and the Afro-Brazilian families in Lomé are some of the examples figuring in this research.

For both cities, the findings of the actor-network analysis resulted in an actor-diagram (see Figures 1 and 2) which will be explained below.

**Comparing Douala and Lomé**

Our choice to compare Douala and Lomé flows from the before-mentioned research hiatus, and from the desire to not solely focus on obvious differences and similarities between former British...
and French colonial cities. Another determinant factor in the selection of cities was the fact that their political significance, economic role (ports, trade centres), population, size and the timing of their public 'native' housing policies should correspond to those of Nairobi, the former capital.

**Figure 1.** Actor-diagram Douala, 1884–1940. Source: made by co-author Pauline Maartje Bezemer.

**Figure 2.** Actor-diagram Lomé, 1884–1940. Source: made by co-author Pauline Maartje Bezemer.
of British colonial East Africa (later Kenya Colony), which was researched in an earlier stage.\textsuperscript{17} Since 1897, Lomé was the coastal capital of the German Togoland protectorate since 1897, which became known as Togo in 1902. Douala functioned as German Kamerun’s capital and main port since 1884, but had to surrender its capital status to Buea (originally spelled Gbea) in 1902. It remained the colony’s most important economic hub though, both under German- and later British-/French colonial rule. In fact, both cities were of high economic importance and like Nairobi functioned as intersections of rail, road, air- and, in the cases of Douala and Lomé, of boat traffic. The planning and production of the first ‘native’ housing estates in both Douala and Lomé started around 1910, when in Nairobi one of the earlier lower-railway workers’ housing estates, known as Coolies Landhies (ca. 1900), was rebuilt preserving original landhie-bachelor barrack-typology and renamed Muthurwa.\textsuperscript{18}

In this article, timeframes serve to facilitate the meant comparison, and to ensure that the actor network analysis does not become an endless mapping exercise.\textsuperscript{19} They correspond to the subsequent colonial rules of Douala and Lomé: the German- (1884–1914) and the temporary British- and the later French colonial periods (1914–1940). In Lomé, the French period officially started in 1922 under a Leagues of Nations (LON) mandate, the one in Douala in 1916 when Britain and France agreed on a provisional partition of Kamerun.\textsuperscript{20} As a matter of fact, urban planning practices following the First World War only really resumed after 1922, when the LON officially gave France a mandate over the former German protectorates.

The comparative research presented here is supported by the before-mentioned actor-diagrams, intended as complementary to the written text and graphically representing the main actors and actor-groups involved in the production of ‘native’ housing estates in Lomé and Douala, including (among others) pre-existing actors (land rights, ethnic groups, building- and dwelling customs) and actors of the period at stake (urban plans, design proposals, governmental agencies, foreign – also colonial – housing and dwelling concepts, sanitary reports, ‘native’ citizens). In the diagram, each neighbourhood is represented by a standard icon in the form of an abstracted housing type (one family, bachelor etc.); specific urban designs and architectural forms are not graphically represented for the sake of its readability. The use of colour labels helps visualizing the groupings of individual actors and actor-groups visibly into various categories (town planning models/concepts, institutional, ethnic and so further, as listed in the legendas) and allows for a quicker actor-interpretation and -comparison. Black (dotted) lines represent actor-connections. There is no specific reading direction of the diagrams.

The diagrams serve as a ‘road maps’ or study aids, to complement the text and to help the reader to better navigate the complex and dynamic network of actors that determined the conceptualization and production of Douala’s and Lomé’s public ‘native’ housing estates up to 1940.

The findings presented in the text and actor-diagrams present a reliable reconstruction of a first period in Lomé’s and Douala’s ‘native’ housing. It is based on the consultation of five European archives (Bodleian Libraries in Oxford, British Library in London, Archives Nationales in Paris, Archives Nationales d’Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence and the Bundesarchiv in Berlin), various university libraries, the African Study Centre in Leiden, and of other crucial archives that allow

\textsuperscript{17}Martin and Bezemer, “The Concept and Planning.”
\textsuperscript{18}Apoh and Lundt, German and Its West African Colonies, 99; Gracey, Report by Colonel T. Gracey, 13.
\textsuperscript{19}Latour, Reassembling the Social.
digital access to colonial documents. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing political riots in Cameroun (2019–2020) our intention to supplement this material with (incidentally scarce) material from local archives on site and fieldwork in Lomé/Togo and Douala/Cameroun could not be fulfilled. One of the possible consequences might be that no cartographical material has been found of Douala dating before 1913.

The first section of this article will trace and compare the actors involved in the production of New Akwa New Bell ‘city’ and New Deido (1910–1914) in Douala and Lomé’s Adoboukomé estate (1910s) in Lomé, while the second one will do so for Akwa II estate (1930s) in Douala and Hana-koupé estate (1929–1934) in Lomé. An overarching analysis and short research reflection follow in the epilogue.

The pre-First World War outset

In both Douala and Lomé existing grid-plans and a vernacular compound typology set the tone for the housing of non-European (including ‘native’) citizens up to 1940 at least.

The grid typology had been applied since pre-colonial times, and was traditionally composed of privately-owned back-to-back lots. At the end of the nineteenth century, these lots were built up with two-storied apartment blocks or traditional multi-family compounds. The latter functioned as single building complexes, each made up of three to four rectangular or quadrangular huts and characterized by an open interior space (‘eboko’ in Duala) used for family gatherings, laundry drying, gardening, and cooking. Most importantly, this ‘native’ typology has been (re)applied, mutated and transformed (transmutation) in both Douala and Lomé as part of the public ‘native’ housing practices until 1940. Before describing these estates in detail, a more general analysis will serve to situate them within their material, sociocultural and political context, and to identify the actors at play therein.

Like other German colonial towns, Douala started as a trading post, stretched along the banks of the Wouri and Mbopi rivers. Its four pre-colonial settlements – Akwa, Deido, Bell, Hickory Town (later Bonaberi) – were inhabited by a mixture of European officers, European traders and merchants, European Baptist Missionaries and of Africans, predominantly Duala. In fact, it was the Duala kings Bell, Dido and Akwa with whom the Germans had made the 1884 protection treaty creating Kamerun protectorate and Kamerunstadt (later to become Douala). A treaty that not only (re)confirmed the prominent (socio-economic) status of the different Duala elites within a new colonial-societal hierarchy but which also provided a statutory recognition of their land rights, stating that officially-recognized African ‘native’ property could not be forcibly taken from its, in Douala’s case, Duala owners (see Figures 1 and 2), it was only via such protection treaties (including those of Togo, German East Africa, German West Africa) that the Germany could lay claims to African territory during the so-called scramble for Africa-Berlin conference in 1884–1885.

From the start of colonization (1884), the lands on which Douala’s precolonial settlements – commonly referred to as ‘villages’ by European colonizers – stood were the officially-recognized property of ethnic groups like the Duala chiefs (an important and persistent actor throughout the colonial period). However, where other German protectorates like Togo (later Togoland)

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22Reimer, Genereller Entwurf (map, 1914); Ordnance Survey Office, Plan of Lomé GSGS 2457 (map 1909); Domaine Urbanisme (map, 1929); Marguerat and Roux, Trésors caches du vieux Lomé, 44.


24Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 73, 93, 98; Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 409; Kuhn, “Anlage A. Die Sanierung von Duala.”

recognized ethnic land rights to so-called waste (or un-used) lands, Kamerun did not. 26 Kamerun’s Kronland act (1896) officialized that all lands not effectively occupied by the chiefs and their customary communities, or those which had been given by the Germans in freehold interest, belonged to the German Empire.27 In Togo, the new German-ethnic land regulations helped to prevent European land speculations; in the 1896 cadastre of Lomé, for instance, German officers registered a hundred-and-seventy-one plots and 2.084 inhabitants of which only thirty-one were European.28 In the Kamerun protectorate, on the other hand, which was being developed more for the benefits of its European/German entrepreneurs than for the African population, the new German-ethnic land framework supported and secured the legality of German plantations owners to tenure land predominantly around the later Kamerun capital Buea (1902) instead. It further freed up land for Europeans throughout the protectorate.29 Both in Kamerun and in Togo, either official permission and/or documentary evidence had to be presented to establish private land-ownership.

Apart from these ethnic land right regulations, another actor that ensured ‘native’ Duala-influence on the government and administration of Douala town was the lack of funds from the German Reichstag, since the beginning of colonization. Because of this, and although German colonial officers supposedly preferred the French-rule system which excluded local ‘natives’ authorities in colonial administration, they were obliged to give ‘native’ chiefs and other traditional-local authorities a wider range of power to govern the protectorate. In Douala, for instance, individuals from the Bell-Duala, Awka-Duala and Deido-Duala groups were given the responsibility of tax collecting among non-Europeans, a fact that illustrates their role (actors) as middlemen functionaries in the lower ranks of Kamerun’s colonial administration.30 Furthermore, when important (‘native’) policy was under consideration local, German administrators would ask the Duala chieftains for their advice; sources show that Douala’s German Bezirksamtmannen (district officers) constantly consulted King Bell and the chiefs of the Duala-Bell family on ‘native’ policy matters. In addition, German administration hired (mostly Duala) Africans as police, nurses, soldiers, couriers, secretaries and as interpreters.31 That the Duala had to act as middle-men was also a consequence of Douala’s low European population, which never amounted to a few thousands; in 1902, Douala counted 358 Europeans against 15.400 Farbige (coloured citizens).32 Europeans dwelling amongst Africans was common in African cities with a pre-existing settlement history, but generally and gradually disappeared after the introduction of an ethnic-spatial separated administrative district, in Douala’s case, the Joss plateau (see Figure 3).33 Like elsewhere, German Government after having purchased a plot of land from the ‘native’ Bell-Duala (1885) on Bell plateau, quickly set about realizing such a government district (later Joss plateau). Around 1900, the Joss plateau contained all services necessary for self-sufficient residence for civil servants. It housed schools, a depot store, pier, hangar, chancellor’s office and secretariat, a governor’s palace, custom offices, (colonial troops, police) barracks with an iron corrugated saltbox roof, hospitals, tile workshops, extra stores, and custom officers-, servant- and artisans houses.34 Eventually, extra

26 Posser and Roger, Britain and Germany in Africa, 468–70; Full, Fünfzig Jahre Togo, 124–5.
31 Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 213–14.
32 Zentrale Wasserversorgung; Le Vine, The Cameroons, 51; Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 75–6; Elate, “African Urban History,” 58.
33 Fiskalische Grundstücke und gebäude in Duala; Acquah, Accra Survey, 23.
34 Goueallain, “Douala,” 125, 460; Soulillou, Douala, 22–33.
amenities were implemented on Bell’s Bali Höhe (the Bali Heights), a site adjacent to the Joss plateau, which included, among others, a Rennbahn (racecourse) such as the one found in Nairobi and a Versuchs- or Gemüsegarten (a vegetable- and fruit garden) for recreation, exercise and health purposes. Most importantly though, Joss plateau’s siting and natural barriers like Mpobi river and the mangrove forest to the south-east guaranteed the convenient separation from the nearby ‘native’ Duala-Bonanjo clan and from the rest of Douala, i.e. the pre-colonial, African-dominated ‘villages’. That such a kind of spatial separation was expected by European settlers is proven, among other things, by the travel accounts of temporary (German) Douala-settler Marie P. Thorbecke (Auf der Savanne, 1914). Upon settling in Douala in 1911, Thorbecke found the still-existing interspersions of modern European houses and clusters of low, half-decayed African huts held together by poles and brown mats in Douala’s Bell and Akwa, the European part of the city, surprising and disturbing to say the least. In fact, according to her, it took away from the modern urban image of Douala, which was considered a European colonial city after all.

Besides ethnic considerations, the German preference for residential separation also sprung from Douala’s ‘notorious climate’. Supposedly the town’s tropical climate and its warm, damp mangrove forests caused the presence of tsetse flies and malaria-carrying mosquitoes and led to many deaths among both Europeans and non-Europeans. As such and coinciding with the recommendations of international medical experts, German Government believed that breezier, higher-located locations like Joss Plateau’s together with a physical separation from African settlements would minimize health risks for Europeans. Similar considerations played a role in Lomé/Togo, where in the same period a German administrative district was created west of Lomé’s

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35Bezirksamtmann Duala, Bebauungsplanes der Jossplatte (1913); Gouellain, Douala, 125; Bezirksamtmann Duala, Krönlandserklärung auf der Jossplatte; Einsprüche gegen den Bebauungsplan der Jossplatte (1913); Errichtung einer landeskulturstelle in den Deutschen Kolonien.
36Gouellain, Douala, 125; Goerg, “From Hill Station (Freetown) to Downtown Conakry (First Ward).”
37Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 103, 106.
town centre. The idea being that by having Europeans living separately from non-Europeans, they would be less confronted with African’s (un)hygienic habits and unwillingness to destroy tsetse and malaria mosquitoes-infested stagnant pools and puddles.

Everyday life practice proved less manageable though. Like in other African colonial towns at the time and despite government and health expert recommendations, not all Europeans lived on Joss Plateau. Some, mostly traders and merchants, continued to live in Akwa ‘village’ or re-settled nearby Joss plateau in Bell’s Bonapriso quarter. There, they continued the practice of living amidst the ‘native’ Bell-Duala and the Duala-Bonanjo clans and, since the early 1890s, amidst so-called Fremden-Eingeborenen, i.e. African strangers and/or migrant workers.39

Following the construction of the new port at Joss plateau and the subsequent increase of economic activity, Douala town and its population grew considerably at the end of the nineteenth century; an increase that continued even after governor Jesko von Puttkamer had removed Kamerun’s administrative centre from swampy Douala to drier Buea, situated some forty miles west, on the eastern slopes of what is now called Mount Cameroun (1902). During that period, the ‘native’ Haussa emigrated in large numbers from Kamerun’s interior to Douala, followed by as many Fremden-Eingeborenen from nearby colonies and protectorates like Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Dahomey and Togoland. Settling in Douala’s existing ‘villages’ and leasing from Duala landlords or living in employees’ accommodations, most Fremden-Eingeborenen became employees of commerce houses and the colonial administration, though some were also brought as soldiers and as forced labourers.40 The result being that Douala, specifically Akwa and Bell ‘villages’, faced an ever urgent housing problem and resulting health issues such as the lack of house ventilation, insufficient natural light entry, absence of adequate drainage and cramped living spaces.41 First and foremost though, this steady increase of Europeans and of African strangers, caused increasing tensions between Douala’s inhabitants. Most noticeable in Akwa and Bell, these did not directly result from proximity issues though as one might expect, but from the ‘speculative practices of [Duala] landlords and [their resulting] out-of-control rents’.42 Not only did the Duala citizens suddenly increase rents of estranged lands used by private individuals and commerce houses, but also the Duala governance of non-Duala Africans was experienced as harsh and oppressive by Douala’s African strangers and migrant workers.43 It was in this setting that the German administration introduced its first plan to spatially and functionally reorganize Douala (1902–1910).

Having an official land monopoly, the Duala naturally seized their chance to earn considerable rental incomes and substantial property sell-prices. With Douala’s trade and economic growth, the Europeans, who coveted the waterfront locations to whom the Duala had strong connections, seemed certainly willing to purchase parcels at higher prices hoping for a speculative resale later. German colonial administration, on the other hand, which needed the exact same Duala-land for public purposes took swift steps to prevent such speculation; starting by proposing the expropriation of the Duala-owned lands along the river banks.44 According to German administration, this was the only way (1) to do away with the tensions between the town’s inhabitants; and to (2) realize functional, more viable residential areas with improved infrastructure as Duala

39Fiskalische Grundstücke und gebaude in Duala; Goerg, “From Hill Station (Freetown).”
41Zentrale Wasserversorgung; Le Vine, The Cameroons, 51; Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 75–6; Elate, “African Urban History,” 58.
44Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 1884–1914, 408.
citizens could not be convinced or compelled to relinquish land for the benefit of urban improvement (waterworks, sewerage).

Meanwhile, the German administrators were supposedly interested in improving the health of Douala’s Europeans. Adhering to the internationally-spread tropical health discourse, and as already applied in the building of the administrative district on the Joss Plateau, German government wished to locate Europeans along Douala’s riverbanks where the risk of tropical diseases was relatively low. Under the guidance of bezirksamtmann Eduard von Brauchitsch (1900–1908), German administration therefore proposed a purely European occupation of the well-ventilated, more healthy river banks, with Joss Plateau (the German administrative centre) and Bonapriso on one bank and Hickory Town on the other. Meaning that the remaining parts of the town could be used and inhabited by Duala citizens and other Africans. Incidentally, this urban plan (1902) followed the recommendations of the head of Germany’s Colonial Medical Services and of Cameroon’s Medical Secretary, dr. Hans Ziemann. Some years before, at the International Medical Congress in Paris (1900), Ziemann had already propagated that European houses needed proper house-ventilation, something that only a coastal -, mountain – or river breeze could provide. He further argued that, seen the difficulty to get Africans to observe obvious (tropical) health rules including avoiding street rubbish, spatial separation of Europeans and non-Europeans was the only logical strategy to improve a town’s (e.g. its European residents’) health.

However, while German Administration managed to expropriate some of the designated plots in Hickory Town (1906–1910) and in Bell (those situated on Joss Plateau and in Bonapriso, 1902), it failed to do so in Akwa and in other parts of Bell. Here, Duala-citizens obstructed the expropriation of their lands and properties, foremost because of the foreseen loss of their socio-economic status as land monopolists. To compensate for this non-implementation, German administration applied ad hoc sanitary measures. The latter included the demolition and removal of dilapidated African dwellings in Akwa and Bell and prohibition of the construction of ‘native’ huts within designated ‘white’ zones without a building permit. Also, for the mental health benefit of European inhabitants, during the night silence should prevail meaning that the traditional beating of drums at night was now strictly forbidden. First and foremost though, the effect of the non-realization of Douala’s first urban plan was that Duala-groups and migrant workers continued to dwell in Akwa and Bell alongside Europeans, till at least 1909; an occurrence that increased the tensions between Europeans, Duala and other Africans in such a way that one year later, it was – once again – one of the main reasons for the German administration to draft a new, second urban plan, this time under the guidance of district officer Hermann Röhm (1908?–1914). The making of this plan was further spurred by the growing need for more houses for Germans/Europeans since Bonaberi (former Hickory Town) was reaching its residential capacity.

Like before, the new German plan envisaged the expropriation of Duala lands, this time in Akwa, Bell and Deido. Furthermore, and continuing the established status quo, it was justified by health arguments which, by now, were officialized in the reports of medical secretaries dr. Hans Ziemann (Belehrungen für Europäer an Tropischen Orten ohne Arzt. Für Kamerun, 1910) and dr. Philalethes Kuhn (Die Sanierung Dualas, 1914). Unlike before though, the plan imagined Douala as city

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46Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 73, 93.
47Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 73, 93, 98; Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 409.
48Fiskalische Grundstücke.
50”Teil A,” 3271–2.
51Bezirksamtmann Duala, Denkschrift über das enteignungsverfahren.
consisting of a separate European ‘city’ and four African ‘cities’, separated from each other by a protective barrier or hygienic belt of vacant land, referred to as a Freie Zone (Free Zone) (see Figures 3 and 4).

In his report, Kuhn implied that replicating the Brazzaville’s urban plan – consisting of a European city and a ‘native’ city (‘native’ housing zones) – and its proposed sanitary belt (French Congo, 1908–1909), was according to ‘modern tropical hygiene’ of the time (see Figure 5).52 Apparently, the French-Congolese plan had made a clean, soothing impression on him just the year before, more so than the (non-realized) sanitary barrier that had been envisioned for the German colonial city Dar-es-Salaam (1906).53 Most hygienic barriers projected on African cities after 1900 were transmutations of the internationally recommended segregation zone of a minimum 800 metres wide zone, though local colonial sanitary services also advocated widths ranging from 300 yards (274 metres) to 400 and 500 metres.54 Health experts assumed that the malaria mosquito could not transverse such a distance. However, and due to lack of public funds or or because of

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52 Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 409; Dietrich Reimer, Genereller Entwurf (map, 1914); Anonymous, Übersichsskizze für die Neuanlagen bei Duala; Kuhn, “Anlage A. Die Sanierung von Duala,” 3364.
53 Service des Travaux Publics de la Colonie, Plan de la Ville de Brazzaville (map, 1925); Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 98–9; Kuhn, “Anlage A. Die Sanierung von Duala” (prob. 1914), 3364–66.
scenic or location-based restrictions, most administrations adjusted the hygienic belt to a length of three- to six- to eight hundred metres, while other barriers, as was the case in in Nairobi (Kenya), in Accra (Gold Coast) and in Lomé (Togo), simply coincided with a road, a lagoon or a strip of ‘waste land’. Though Kuhn acknowledged that a complete separation of Europeans and non-Europeans would be impossible in Douala since African labour (couriers, craftsmen etc.) would continue to be necessary in the European city, he did believe that the additional instalment of sewers and drinking water pipes in the ‘native’ ‘city’ would offer Africans a more hygienic life than in the old, mixed-up Douala ‘villages’; something that would improve the health of Douala as a whole. Also, and echoing colonial reports from 1913, it seems that Kuhn hoped, and assumed, that the improved sewerage- and drinking water systems would motivate ‘natives’ to abandon their supposedly unhygienic habits.

Interestingly, Kuhn’s report also propagated the sanitary belt as responding to a colonial-typical, prevalent notion suggesting that separating ‘native’ areas from the European ones would better guarantee the preservation of ‘native’ cultural habits and dwelling practices, as well as of European life and culture. He reasoned that in the ‘native’ city (‘native’ housing zones) Africans would be less disturbed in their doings such as using drums. Along the same line, Kuhn believed that public housing in the ‘native’ city, specifically those for the wealthier Duala-citizens, should be based on the traditional-Duala floor plan which generally consisted of two or three rooms (a pre-existing actor). Indeed, according to Kuhn the development of a colonial ‘indigenous’ style, a ‘Stil der Negerhauser’, inspired by local-African building practices would be the next worthy task for German colonial architects.

In line with Kuhn’s recommendations, though subdividing his one ‘native’ city into four ‘native’ ‘cities’ (which might be defined as a transmutation), Douala’s administration produced the before-mentioned second urban plan (1910–1914). The latter intended to reserve the river banks free for the housing of (in this case) approximately 309 Europeans and to relocate 20.000 Duala and African strangers/migrant workers from the city proper (Bell, Akwa and Deido) to four designated African ‘cities’ arranged around a kilometre-wide hygienic belt (see Figure 4). The latter – New Bell city (Neue-Bellstadt), New Akwa (Neu-Akwa), New Deido (Neu-Deido) and African strangers city (Fremden-Eingeborenenstadt) – were projected more inland, on notorious swampy land; a fact that German administration explained by arguing that although those areas were not fit to house Europeans because of their malaria-related health risks, they could at least be made suitable for the housing of Africans.

That, like elsewhere, the proposed barrier was also a political matter is proven, among others, by the original proposal for the necessary expropriation of Duala-land, which states that a separation zone (besides health reasons) was needed to avoid or at least delay the British colonial ‘error’ of social and political equality between Europeans and ‘natives’. Interesting though, during meetings between German officials and Douala’s ‘white’ elite on December 1912, European businessmen

55Patterson, “Health in Urban Ghana: The Case of Accra 1900–1940,” 252; Quayson, Oxford Street, Accra, 78; Intelligence Division War Office. Akra and Neighbourhood (map); Martin and Bezemer, “The Concept and Planning,” 6–9; Hege, “The German Variation”; Anonymous, Plan de la Ville de Brazzaville (map, 1925); Coquery-Vidrovitch, “From Residential Segregation.”
56Neill, Networks in Tropical Medicine, 73, 93, 98; Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 409; Kuhn, “Anlage A. Die Sanierung von Duala” (prob. 1914), 3364–6.
57Bezirkssamtmann Duala, Denkschrift über das enteignungsverfahren.
58Ibid.
59Dietrich Reimer, Genereller Entwurf map, 1914; Übersichtskizze für die Neuanlagen bei Duala (map); Austen, “Duala versus Germans,” 481; Prosser and Roger Louis, Britain and Germany in Africa, 471.
questioned if the sanitary advantages of such a barrier were worth the inconveniences of employee-worker-client separation. Moreover and only two years later, Douala’s chief government doctor (possibly Heinrich Werner, 1914) assumed that the proposed ethnic-spatial separation, and therefore the whole plan, made no sense on medical grounds. It is perhaps because of these objections that Douala’s officials decided against an actual unbuilt zone, and proposed to use the barrier instead for facilities like a cemetery, parade ground (*Vorschlag Exerzierplatz*) and a radio station (*Funkenplatz*); facilities that were, as far as we know, not included in Brazzaville’s barrier, which had so far inspired the design of the second German plan.

Regarding the proposed four ‘native’ ‘cities’, it seems that up to the First World War planning intention was predominantly on New Bell; it had the most detailed and best considered lay-out plan in the 1914 plan map known as *Genereller Entwurf* (see Figure 4). Planning documents reveal that New Bell had initially been planned in two parts, one along the barrier and one another further inward, before being combined at the end of 1913, beginning of 1914.

According to the before-mentioned 1914 drawn plan, the individual housing plots in New Akwa, New Deido and strangers city were meant to be laid out as a grid consisting of widely-spaced, angled street, which delineate back-to-back housing plots. Only New Bell was to have a clear-cut

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61Reimer, *Genereller Entwurf* (map); Übersichskizze für die Neuanlagen bei Duala (map); anonymous, Plan de la Ville de Brazzaville (map, 1925); Hege, “The German Variation,” 175.
64Anonymous, Übersichskizze für die Neuanlagen bei Duala (map, 1913); Reimer, *Genereller Entwurf* (map, 1914); Anonymous, Cameroun – carte allemande de Douala (map 1914).
(in this case) semi-circular shape, framed by the natural courses of rivers and brooks. On the plan, its lay-out is characterized by a monumental central square from which axial roads radiate in all directions; a compositional element reminiscent of international garden suburb design as exercised in Germany, France and the United Kingdom, among others, and – in more or less mutated form – outside Europe too.\(^\text{65}\) In addition, New-Bell’s road system, with a total length of eleven kilometre, was seemingly planned to physically separate different traffic forms; the radial roads would lead through-traffic to the main square, where the market is situated, while secondary roads would lead to housing areas and to what (on the plan) seem facilities (schools, churches etc) for future residents (black squares on the plan, see Figure 4).

Although all four ‘native’ ‘cities’ were planned to function separately from Douala proper, the 1914 plan only shows central markets in New Bell and in New Akwa. An African hospital (Eingeborenen hospital) and a district office police department (Polizeiabteilung des bezirksamts) were projected east of New Bell.\(^\text{66}\)

Regarding public housing, fifty hectares in New Bell were set aside approximately five hundred dwellings for the rehousing of fourteen-hundred Duala and non-Duala citizens who still lived in Bell ‘village’ and were mostly working in the administrative and trade sectors. Other Africans were expected to claim open land and to build their own ‘huts’.\(^\text{67}\) Though not confirmed, we assume that the dwellings meant for rehousing were planned with a traditional Duala rectangular floor plan as dictated by Kuhn (1914).

To entice Duala-citizens to relocate voluntarily as stipulated by the 1884 protection treaty (a pre-existing actor), German government decided to offer them a certain cash amount in the early 1910s; reasoning that they would certainly welcome some extra money for the improvement of their lifestyles now that they would be provided with housing in newly planned ‘native’ ‘cities’. To reassure the Duala of their land- and property rights in the future ‘native’ ‘cities’, German government also decided on a new land registry, one set up by government draftsmen from the capital Buea.\(^\text{68}\)

Despite these offerings and arrangements, a majority of Duala resisted the proposed land expropriations as they had done before. They understood that they would lose their power over the non-Duala African community and their land monopoly as the Germans planned to divide the land in the new ‘native’ ‘cities’ equally among Duala and non-Duala citizens. To proceed with the spatial redevelopment of Douala, German administration felt therefore forced to legitimize the Duala-land expropriation via the development of a new land policy (1911). For the Duala, who despite official promises of non-interference had already lost their trade-monopoly in Douala, this policy was something of a last straw.\(^\text{69}\) As a result, they doubled their resistance, including by submitting a petition to the German Parliament in the same year. Notably and although land expropriations did go ahead, the Duala nevertheless managed to effectively disrupt and delay Douala’s second town proposal.\(^\text{70}\) By 1914, only New Bell city (Neue-Bellstadt), had (partially) been realized, meaning that only part of the planned houses was realized and that New Akwa, New Deido and strangers city remained unconstructed.

Significantly though, the houses built in New Bell re-applied Duala building practices as found in original Bell. Most consisted of a one-storied dwelling, covered with a gabled roof, having a

\(^{65}\)Stern et al., Paradise Planned.
\(^{66}\)Schler, The Strangers of New Bell, 24.
\(^{67}\)Schler, “History, the Nation-State,” 97.
\(^{68}\)Gouellain, Douala, 133, 136.
\(^{69}\)Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 408–9; Prosser and Roger Louis, Britain and Germany in Africa, 471.
\(^{70}\)Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, 206; “Die Enteignung der Duala” (April, 1914), 262; Proteste der Duala-Hauptlinge.
rectangular floor plan that contained two- or three rooms and an exterior veranda. For the Duala, the veranda running alongside the length of the dwelling was an important element, traditionally serving as a dining room or outdoor living room for family gatherings and meetings. Finally, and although not confirmed (so far), the planned-for building materials likely included raffia mats, clad metal sheets and half-timbering such as the governor’s regulations required for the servants’ quarters and rooms in the European city (see Figure 4).

It seems that only Douala’s African strangers/migrant workers did not mind their relocation. They in fact viewed it as an opportunity to escape the suppressive Duala-control (administrative, jurisdictional) that they were experiencing in Douala’s original ‘villages’. Most of them relocated as soon as the first plots in New Bell became available for occupation in 1911–1912, not minding that the estate was still uncompleted and indeed would remain so throughout and even after the First World War. As a matter of fact, New Bell would transform into an informalized estate, being the first location where African migrants workers would settle upon arriving in Douala. Meaning that on the longer-term New Bell’s dwellings would be constructed according to a wide range of practices (see Figure 4); an exercise that has endured until this day.

Like Douala, at the start of colonization (1884), Lomé town was a trading post stretched out along the water, in this case along the Gulf Of Guinea; one which a British colonial officer of the time described as a one-kilometre row of houses facing the sea, containing seven ‘well-built’ factories, shops, warehouses and many metres of straw huts belonging to small ‘native’ traders. The town consisted of Lomé proper (today referred to as Centre Ancien) made up from the quartiers (quarters) Angokomé, Kokétimé, Agbadouhou and Adwalato, and of the ‘villages’ Kodjoviakopé and Klove the west of Lomé proper and the Bé and Ablogamé ‘villages’ to the east of Lomé proper and separated from the latter by waste lands; waste lands that would slowly be built upon in the following years (see Figure 6). Moreover, since 1889, the whole of Lomé would surrounded by Ewe/Afro-Brazilian-owned oil palm and coconut plantations; plantations that in combination with the existing lagoon would block town extensions further inland till at least 1928 and the Second World War respectively (see Figures 6 and 7).

Similar to Douala’s Akwa and Bell ‘villages’, Lomé was racially mixed from the start, with Europeans and Africans like the Ewe, Gur-speaking tribes and Hausa inhabiting ‘cheerfully’ painted two-storey houses and rounded, thatched African huts. As with the Duala in Douala, the lands on which Lomé stood were the officially recognized property of both Europeans and non-Europeans, with most lands belonging to the Ewe/Afro-Brazilian families. The Germans/Europeans tended to settle in Lomé proper for trade, renting housing from the Ewe/Afro-Brazilian elite. The Kodjoviakopé, Klove, Bé and Ablogamé ‘villages’, on the other hand, mostly accommodated ‘natives’ living in compounds, the dwellings of which were made of woven grass mats and covered with straw roofs. Like in Douala, each compound housed a multiple family while open courtyard was used for family gatherings, cooking, laundry drying, cultivation and gardening. Plots were organized by means of a grid-plan, in a back-to-back typology and separated from each other by fences.

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72"Der Gouverneur, Anlage 34," 3365–6; Der Kaiserliche Gouverneur, Anlage 35, 3366.
73Schler, “Ambiguous Spaces”; Schler, “History, the Nation-State.”
74Prosser and Roger Louis, Britain and Germany in Africa, 471.
77Maguerat, Dynamique Urbaine, 42–3; Hege, “The German Variation,” 172.
of woven grass (later predominantly plastered brick walls). As in Douala, Lomé’s European population would never be high; in 1908, it was 139 Europeans against 6,196 non-Europeans. Consequently, and as in the Protectorate of Kamerun, Togo’s German administration was forced to employ Africans, in Lomé predominantly Ewe/Afro-Brazilians, as middle-men, functionaries who worked as police men, nurses, soldiers, couriers, secretaries and interpreters; a fact that enhanced the socio-economic status of the Ewe/Afro-Brazilians in Lomé even more. Thanks to its seaside location and the low malaria risk and easy drainable sandy soil in Lomé fewer German funds were needed for sanitation measures than in Douala. Still, the colonial administration considered Lomé proper a problematic part of the city because of its closely built huts and apartments, which did not allow for enough daylight entrance or natural ventilation, and which led to dirty, unhealthy public streets.

When an 1890-fire burned down at least three quarters of the buildings and huts in Lomé proper, German administration (under Lomé’s first [German] city administrator Richard Kuäs) immediately seized their chance to significantly improve on its tightly knit street grid and to make a first start with spatially separating Europeans from Africans and other non-Europeans. For that purpose, along the Western edge of Lomé proper, two axes were cut through the original grid, one leading north-west (in the direction of the Misa höhe below the railway tracks; see Figure 6) and one leading north-east (in the direction of Atakpamé; see Figure 6). Their intersection at the area’s main square and main market street (Markt Strasse) being located close at the coast line, which, in turn, became (and is still) bordered on each side by merchant counters.79 According

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to plan these roads started to function as demarcation lines of a hygienic barrier of sorts, with European work- and trade houses concentrated west – and ‘native’ trade east of the ‘Misa Höhe axe’.

Consequently, the co-habitation of Europeans and Africans in Lomé proper changed too. As in Douala, German government had purchased a piece of land of 25,000 square metres, located west of Lomé proper, with the aim to realize an administrative centre west of the hygienic barrier and to allow segregated accommodation for German/Europeans; some years later, the Deutsche Kolonialzeitung (1901) would describe the meant piece of land as ‘out of town’ and as ‘a nice, great place’.80

Rivalling Lomé proper in size but equipped with a more spacious and airier lay-out, the realized administrative district symbolized the seat of German power in Togoland, containing a Governor’s House, administrative offices and, some years later, a sick-barrack and a customs office.81 In terms of housing, German administration eventually realized a dozen two-storied officers housing blocks meant for four German officers each between Avenue Sarakawa and the sea.82 In fact, during the years of official German control (1884–1916), and in contrast to Kamerun and German Southwest

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81 Ordnance Survey Office, Plan of Lomé GSGS 2457 (map, 1909); “Togo” (Oct. 1902), 412.
82 Marguerat, Lomé, 15–21; Sebald, Die Deutsche Kolonie Togo 1884–1914, 121.
Africa, Togoland’s European population never exceeded 350 in total. The European two-storied factories and warehouses surrounded by wooden verandas and that were also built in the administrative district, offered accommodation on the second- and shops on the ground floors. These, like the officers’ housing, would become surrounded by ornamental and vegetable gardens and overshadowed by palms and other high foliage.

Meanwhile, German administration also looked towards improving Lomé’s infrastructure. In fact, the realization of the administrative centre kicked of a period of planning ‘heydays’ in Lomé. Starting in 1900, the city’s Public Works set about realizing a pier to provide Lomé with a safe landing for oversea ships and began constructing a railway line to Aného for the transportation of goods to- and from the pier to other parts of Togoland. A Versuchsgärten (1907–08) and a European hospital to replace the sick barrack (1909) followed, along with the installation of (new) water works and a sewerage system in Lomé proper. In the same period, government surveyors were further called in to finish Lomé’s street rectification; a work begun by Kaiserlicher Kommissar (imperial commissioner) Eugen von Zimmerer (1888–1889) and briefly continued under city administrator dr. Richard Küas (1889–1894) until the 1890-fire. In line with Von Zimmerer’s and Küas previous efforts, the surveyors realized Hamburgerstrasse (today’s Rue de Commerce) and Zechstrasse (today’s Avenue de la Liberation), extended the streets running parallel to the beach and had these streets paved with laterite. The surveyors also came up with the plan of a German typical ring street (Ringstrasse, 1905) that would take another five years to implement (see Figures 6 and 7). Planned to surround the administrative centre and Lomé proper, this ring street offered a convenient barrier between the European administrative district and the ‘native’ Kodjoviakopé village at the same time. Finally, to gain a firmer grip on Lomé’s building practices and built environment, governor Zech auf Neuhofer (1905–1910) issued a building code, only permitted building materials suited to prevent fire hazards, and introduced building permits; until the 1960s, the whole town was built with clay from the quarries as recommended by Zech auf Neuhofer.

However, while the Germans had a firm grip on Lomé town by 1909–1910, specifically the area east and west of the town centre, Lomé’s African population felt itself more and more constricted in Lomé proper. A problem grown more troublesome since the parcelling of land continued to increase, and which signalled an acute shortage of free settlement space in Lomé proper for trade/commerce and residences. To remedy this, Lomé’s officials decided to build a new market place for African traders and to realize a first, public housing estate, quartier Adoboukomé, north of Lomé proper. Though other estates (Beniglato and Aguiakomé) would come to realize a place for African traders and to realize a market place for African traders and to realize a first, public housing estate, quartier Adoboukomé, north of Lomé proper. However, as the heydays of Adidasomé and Ablogamé were further called in to finish Lomé’s street rectification; a work begun by Kaiserlicher Kommissar (imperial commissioner) Eugen von Zimmerer (1888–1889) and briefly continued under city administrator dr. Richard Küas (1889–1894) until the 1890-fire. In line with Von Zimmerer’s and Küas previous efforts, the surveyors realized Hamburgerstrasse (today’s Rue de Commerce) and Zechstrasse (today’s Avenue de la Liberation), extended the streets running parallel to the beach and had these streets paved with laterite. The surveyors also came up with the plan of a German typical ring street (Ringstrasse, 1905) that would take another five years to implement (see Figures 6 and 7). Planned to surround the administrative centre and Lomé proper, this ring street offered a convenient barrier between the European administrative district and the ‘native’ Kodjoviakopé village at the same time. Finally, to gain a firmer grip on Lomé’s building practices and built environment, governor Zech auf Neuhofer (1905–1910) issued a building code, only permitted building materials suited to prevent fire hazards, and introduced building permits; until the 1960s, the whole town was built with clay from the quarries as recommended by Zech auf Neuhofer.

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84 Ibid., 178; Gervais-Lambony, “Lomé,” 48; Boochs, Deutsche Kolonien in Africa, 68.
87 Ordnance Survey Office. Plan of Lomé, GSGS 2457 (map, 1909); “Le plan d’urbanisme de Lomé” (1948).
89 Marguerat, Lomé, 28, 25; Küas, Togo-Erinnerungen, 147.
90 Sebald, Die Deutsche Kolonie Togo 1884–1914, 118.
91 Küas, Togo-Erinnerungen, 70.
from Togo and the surrounding colonies, but also because the existing Haussa Lager (camp, also referred to as a Zongo), located southwest of Lomé, had to be moved due to the ongoing construction on the pier. The camp was to be rebuilt at a location adjacent to the then-realized ring road, close to Adoboukomé’s current Central Post Office and some distance away from the Haussa market. Up to today, Lomé residents still refer to this part of Adoboukomé as a Zongo, i.e. a settlement of Hausa speaking traders, even though in the 1970s most Haussa would eventually move out of Adoboukomé to an area along today’s Boulevard du 13 Janvier. In the following years, the Zongo gave way to two bank buildings, and to a plot of vacant land (today’s BCTI, BIDC, BIA).

Adoboukomé’s lay-out was planned to be characterized by radial roads, three of which fanned out from a central square, the Neumarkt (New Market); a design element that reminds of the composition in Douala’s original plan for New Bell. At the New market square the estate residents were supposed to trade and to do their daily shopping, without having to enter Lomé proper. Moreover, they could enrol in courses given at the estate’s Fortbildung Schule (continuation school). Adoboukomé’s round-about – at the northern point of the central axis – together with its radial roads connected the ring road directly to the New Market, suggesting that an attempt to separate through- and destination traffic was made. As visible in Figures 6 and 7, this planned lay-out was realized.

Following Lomé’s building traditions, German officers further chose to delineate Adoboukomé’s housing plots by means of a grid based on back-to-back plots, on which residents could build their own dwellings once they bought a housing plot. Over time, the compound proved the predominant and most realized dwelling typology consisting – in the case of Adoboukomé of a series of one-room dwellings on a rectangular floor plan, surrounded by a plastered, brick wall conform Zech’s auf Neuhofen’s building code. Following the latter, most residents traded the traditional grass mats for more permanent, less flammable materials like corrugated-iron roofing sheets and dry clay bricks for the compound- and dwelling walls. The walls were further individualized by worked out gate-like entrances that interrupted the continuing compound-walls along the street facades (see Figure 8); the gate’s individual characteristics referring to tribal practices and customs; a pre-colonial, architectural tradition that would prove a persistent locally-bound actor in Lomé’s colonial housing as it would not only be reapplied to the compound-housing of the German-planned Beniglato and Aguiakomé estates (1910s-1920s), located west of the town centre, but also to the post-First World War compounds like those in Hanoukopé estate (1929–1934).

Post-First World War practice

The start of the First World War affected all Sub-Saharan African colonies and protectorates. In Kamerun and Togo, this involved a temporary British regime during 1914–1916 and 1914–1922 respectively, followed by French colonial rule under LON-mandate. Moreover, like other Sub-Saharan cities, Lomé and Douala saw a significant increase of population following the First

93Pellow, Landlords and Lodgers, 1.
94Marguerat, Population, migrations, urbanisation au Togo, 48–50; Amegee, Les problemes d’amenagement de la ville de Lomé, 47.
96Anonymous, Ville de Lomé (map 1931).
97Schler, “History, the Nation-State,” 97.
99Maguerat, Dynamique Urbaine, 42–3; Martin and Bezemer, Fieldwork Lomé; Umar, “The Practice of Hausa.”

The ‘native’ elites in both Lomé and Douala also regained much of their former status after the war. In fact, in Lomé, the British retracted the German restrictions on ‘native’ trade and abolished the hated practices of physically punishing black trespasses. As such, Lomé’s Afro-Brazilian elite began to regain the influence that had severely been reduced under German rule. Under the French, their renewed status would not only remain intact, but was even extended. As early as 1922, commissioner A.F. Bonnecarrère (1922–1931) installed a Conseil des Notables; a consultative body composed of notable citizens, which included, among others, the heads of the Ewe/Afro-Brazilian families, and which advised the French on matters such as public works and taxation.101

Like the Germans before, the French wanted to further develop Douala as early as possible, arguing that a new territorial organization of the city was urgent because of a persistent actor, i.e. the tensions between Europeans and non-Europeans which had risen again; this time primarily caused by the city’s high-residential density. Duala residents who had previously been re-located to New Bell, had taken advantage of the war and its political transitions to move back to their formerly expropriated lands in Bell’s Bali quarter, occupying the official (now French) crown lands which they refused to vacate, a fact that the Bali-Duala would put forward in their refusal to cash the German sums paid for their expropriated lands.102 In addition, the number of African strangers had increased considerably in the late 1910s and early 1920s; most of them had settled in Bell and in lesser numbers in Akwa and Deido.

Taking note from the German-Duala conflict, however, the French decided to consult the Duala chiefs and kings not only about the maintenance and regulation of the ‘native’ quarters but also about the changes they wished to make in Bell’s Bali-quarter. To reclaim some of Bell’s Bali quarter, the French proposed a spatial separation of Europeans and Africans via an extension of Joss Plateau along the Wouri river, and to subdivide Bell’s Bali quarter in a Duala and a European part. Except for the European zone, which extended from Joss plateau in a northward direction along the Wouri river, Akwa and Deido were to be exempted from the proposed reorganization. The French concurrently promised to not expropriate any property in Akwa or Deido, except for very urgent public

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100Gouellain, Douala, 156; Gervais-Lambony, Lomé, 53.
101Amos, “Afro-Brazilians,” 305.
102Ibid., 159, 206, 212–13, 226–9.
purposes. In Bell’s Bali quarter, they conditioned the Duala to uphold French hygienic regulations and to construct and maintain their buildings according to French approved models. To achieve this, the Duala would receive financial support to modernize their existing buildings. Non-Duala, i.e. African strangers/migrant workers, were to be relocated to New Bell. Though the objective of the Bali mission was, in practice, to realize the quarter’s subdivision, the end goal was to come to an agreement on German expropriation as well as on the modernization of Lomé. The French colonizers reasoned that once they had obtained the subdivision of Bali and an agreement with the Duala, the latter could no longer prevent the modernization or ‘Europeanization’ of the quarter and the city. Much to the delight of the French administration, the Duala would eventually make use of their land title deeds and land tenure to set themselves up as real-estate owners and agents in the 1930s, ready to rent or sell land and property in Bell’s Bali quarter.

In the same period, the French further focussed on de-densifying Akwa and Deido and began relocating Akwa-Duala and African strangers/migrant workers from these ‘villages’ to New Bell (1935–36), and to the later Akwa II estate (1937–38) which will be discussed below. Sitting in the centre of Douala, Cameroons’ Health Service (Service d’Hygiène) worried about the too dense population of Akwa ‘village’, which according to them was too closely-built up with sordid huts. Supposedly, the negligence of Akwa had already resulted in the alarming appearance of numerous rats. To safeguard the health of the neighbouring quarters and ‘villages’, the French therefore opted to take stricter measures. They issued a decree on 1 October 1937 officializing that Akwa along with Bonanjo, Bali and parts of New Bell was to be reserved for ‘modern housing’, with no construction permitted in non-durable materials and no fields or livestock allowed on individual housing plots. The Africans who could not modernize their property were given the option to relocate to new areas of the city set aside for ‘native’ settlement, i.e. New Bell and the new Akwa II estate (1937–1938). To compensate the house construction costs, the meant African residents could apply for financial compensation. As for the land, it would remain the property of the former occupants who could either sell it or, when possible, rent it out and raise money to construct new buildings according to the new standards. Either way, the inhabitants were given a year to build as the precepts of hygiene required it or to move and relocate. Via these measures, the French hoped that during the year 1938 Akwa’s so-called sordidness would disappear. Interesting and although Akwa’s notables (the Duala-Akwa king and his subchiefs) expected some protests from Akwa-Duala ‘villages’ residents against the proposed land-expropriations, there was hardly any citizens-resistance. Most of them moved from their traditional lands on schedule; a significant contrast with the Bell-Duala case during German colonial rule (1910s). Consequently, only a few original huts remained in Akwa ‘villages’ at the end of the 1930s, ones that had been modified according to French-recommendations.

103Gouellain, Douala, 159, 206, 212–21, 224–9, 242.
105Gouellain, New Bell-Douala, 30, 39; Rapport Annuel. L’administration sous mandante du terroir du Cameroun (1938), 52, 186.
106Rapport Annuel. L’administration sous mandante du terroir du Cameroun (1937), 94.
107Gouellain, Douala, 230–2; “Où il est à nouveau question de la ségrégation d’Akwa” (April, 1938).
108Rapport Annuel. L’administration sous mandante du terroir du Cameroun (1938), 45, 90, 94; “Hygiène à Douala” (Feb. 4, 1939); “On ne Lutte Pas Assez Contre les Taudis au Cameroun” (Feb. 7, 1939).
110Les Progrès de l’Hygiène Urbaine a Douala” (Jan. 15, 1939).
The name of the new Akwa II estate suggests that the French envisioned some sort of continuation of the original Akwa ‘village’, emphasizing the Duala-clan predominantly settling there, and of the German-planned Neu-Akwa (1914) too. This assumption is supported by Akwa II’s location which hardly differs from its German predecessor, except that it is closer to the river bank because of the absence of the German-proposed Free Zone. Intended to be a ‘village modèle’ (model village), French officials had accounted a budget of 30,000 francs for Akwa II. Like in the German-planned New Bell, they intended to take care of the subdivision of the building plots and of necessary infrastructure (roads, water- and sewerage) to ensure the site’s viability but left house construction to the individual plot owners.

Akwa II estate was made up of Ngodi quartier and parts of current Yabassi, wherein French officials attempted to group the relocated Akwa-Duala by means of the French typical-colonial legal concept of ‘lotissement’, the attribution of plots based on future residents’ ethnicity and financial capacities, and by means of a simple subdivision. A grid plan – one very similar to that of the German-planned Neu-Akwa – was to subdivide the area into 492 building plots organized around three road axes and that converge on the current Boulevard de l’Unité. However, and likely to keep building costs low, no market or other amenities were planned; in fact, the estate’s first (Greek Orthodox) church only appears on town survey maps from the 1960s.

In the four decades that followed, Akwa II supposedly shaped itself into a ‘village’-like estate that kept the initial grid intact. Dwellings, predominantly one-storey rectangular huts, were scattered loosely under the trees with no barriers or fences between them, and everyone knew each other. Apparently, it would take till the end of the 1970s before the estate exchanged its dirt roads for asphalted ones and that residents also began to build new houses and modernized their dwellings with more permanent materials (cement blocks, iron-corrugated or aluminium roofing sheets).

Like in Douala, the French started to modernize and transform Lomé in the late 1920s. Under governor Bonnecarrère (1922–1931), they started with the renaming of streets, the public auctioning of German seized goods, the electrification of the town (1926–27), the installation of a new pumping station (Caccavelli) and the construction of new administrative buildings and a wharf (1926–28). The improvement of the city’s drinking water supply followed; especially, Le Conseil d’hygiène (the Hygiene Council) wanted to ensure that contamination of Lomé’s drinking water by all kinds of dirt and sand remained limited.

Meanwhile, the transformation of Adoboukomé’s New Market (renamed Place des Fêtes) into a French-typical urban garden-square under the guidance of the administrateur-maire Henri Fréau (1933–35), whose name it would bore soon after, illustrates a growing interest into health related issues. In practice, this meant that the square became surrounded by a parapet, was planted with various types of trees, bordered by public benches, with a covered band stand in the centre of it.
The Henri Fréau Garden was recently modified and renamed Anani Santos square as part of a semi-private urban rehabilitation programme.\footnote{“La renaissance de Fréau Jardin” (March 18, 2011).} Although having seriously addressed the urban quality of Lomé, the French lamented the fact that the Germans had divided the city into a European and a ‘native’ town at either side of the railway. The no-man’s land (coinciding with the hygienic barrier in between and around the railway tracks) had since given free rein for caused dust and smoke that was blown towards the ‘native’ town, i.e. Lomé proper and the surrounding quartier; a problem that the French would not solve till after 1940.\footnote{“Le Plan d’Urbanisme” (Dec. 16, 1948); “Exposition d’urbanisme” (Sept. 3, 1947).}

Simultaneously, with Lomé’s swiftly growing population the quartiers (quarters) delineated by the city’s ring road became quickly being populated. Without much public intervention, the plots were quickly built up at a rapid pace with private houses, often in the form of one- or two-storied quadrangular brick dwellings, having four-pitched roofs (sometimes with two-stepped gables) and a perimeter palm- or plastered brick fence/wall.\footnote{Marguerat, Lomé, 29.} Consequently, the French had to consider developing the lands beyond the ring road. This initially led to the decision of Lomé’s administration to remove the former German, publicly owned horse-racing field, situated north of the ring street in order to realize Hanakoupé estate (1928–1934), supposedly meant for Lomé’s cadre moyens (middle management staff). It would be the only public ‘native’ housing estate beyond the ring street.

Like in Adoboukomé, potential residents were expected to purchase a plot and build their own house in Hanakoupé, preferable constructed from local (brick-like) stone that could then be plastered in all sorts of colours. As Hanoukopé was intended to house cadre moyens, it is likely that its housing lots, which measured approximately 625 square metres, were first offered for purchase to cadre moyens before being privately sold via public sales.\footnote{“Avis de Mise en Adjudication” (Dec. 27, 1948); Pétitions concernant Le Togo sous Administration Française (Feb 25, 1955), 2; “Domaines. Attribution définitive de lots” (Dec. 1, 1931), 680.}

Surrounded by Afro-Brazilian owned plantations, and delineated by the lagoon, Hanoukopé’s lay-out reapplied Lomé’s typical grid plan with back-to-back lots. It was characterized by a square public space (today’s Place du 30 Novembre) cut out of the grid pattern; a design element reminiscent of centuries old international town planning practices. The square was realized, but is hardly traceable anymore, as parts of it have been appropriated by adjacent residents and used for informal building extension and small trade. Amenities in Hanoukopé, such as churches and a pharmacy, would only be realized after the Second World War.

As was the case in Lomé proper at the time, houses in Hanakoupé had a predominantly rectangular or quadrangular shape, one or two-stories, flat and gable roofs and a plastered brick wall with the traditional, individualized gate-like entrances.\footnote{Martin and Bezemer, Fieldwork Lomé.} By 1945, most of Hanoukopé’s plots had been sold, leading to a fifty percent plot occupancy within ten years.\footnote{Marguerat, Dynamique Urbaine, 44.} Today, Hanoukopé’s plots have all been built upon. They have densified and been informalized over time, but residents have left the original grid lay-out largely intact.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{La renaissance de Fréau Jardin” (March 18, 2011).}
\item \footnote{Le Plan d’Urbanisme” (Dec. 16, 1948); “Exposition d’urbanisme” (Sept. 3, 1947).}
\item \footnote{Marguerat, Lomé, 29.}
\item \footnote{“Urbanisme” in: Les Annales coloniales (April 12, 1928); Ordnance Survey Office, Plan of Lomé GSGS 2457 (map 1909); Marguerat and Roux, Trésors cache du vieux Lomé, 44; Marguerat, Lomé, 27; Anonymous, Lomé (map 1929); Anonymous, “Domaines” (Dec. 16, 1948); Marguerat, Dynamique Urbaine, 88; Gayibor, Histoire des Togolais, 250–2.}
\item \footnote{“Avis de Mise en Adjudication” (Dec. 27, 1948); Pétitions concernant Le Togo sous Administration Française (Feb 25, 1955), 2; “Domaines. Attribution définitive de lots” (Dec. 1, 1931), 680.}
\item \footnote{Martin and Bezemer, Fieldwork Lomé.}
\item \footnote{Marguerat, Dynamique Urbaine, 44.}
\end{itemize}
Epilogue

The here presented research set out to critically compare plans, models and typologies applied in the production of the first public 'native' housing endeavours in Lomé and Douala between the late nineteenth century and the start of the Second World War. It assumes that the hybrid character of the (not always realized) estates can be understood as the result of a transmutation process, i.e. the mutual adjustment, transformation and/or mutation of urban concepts, building modes and dwelling practices of global and local kind. To gain insight and make connections between the (human and non-human) actors working therein, an ANT-based analysis model serves as our main research method, while at the same time leading to a presentation of findings in both text and graphic diagrams. Deriving from Sociology, ANT has been adapted to the architectural-historical perspective of the research presented here. This means that the emphasis is on the design dimension and that actors may coincide with, for example, architects, urban design plans, housing typologies, architecture elements, surveyors and maps.

Though similar actors and actor-groups played roles in Douala and Lomé, their characters and connections differed. For instance, influential actors like (insufficiently) available government funds, officialized ethnic land rights, application of the pre-colonial grid lay-out, of vernacular compound typologies and the first introduction of building codes and permits all resulted from German government policy, as the 'lotissement' concept, the limited public intervention, the application of urban parks and other facilities were part of the subsequent French administration. Moreover, in Douala, German- and later French government both felt that the city’s sitting on swampy lands and adjacent to mangrove forests necessitated spatial separation of Europeans and non-Europeans and, in the case of the German Douala, the introduction of a Free Zone and semi-serviced ‘native’ ‘cities’. Though the Germans reapplied such spatial separation in Lomé, they first introduced a no-men’s land using the railway track, which the later French administration lamented and which, in turn, was followed by the construction of a ring road that would effectively separate the European administrative district and the ‘native’ Kodjoviakopé village. Only in Douala did ethnic groups actively resist German-, and later French urban plans.

Both under German- and French rule, once plots had been subdivided and allocated, plot-owners took over and started constructing their dwelling, which in Douala would root in local dwelling practices including a rectangular floor plan and a traditional veranda, and be built up of locally produced brick, clay stone, wood and raffia. In Lomé, the traditional compound typology would be inserted in the colonial housing practices, whereas personalized gate-like entrances proved a persistent actor too, as was the use of local brick and clay stone plastered in all sorts of colours.

Finally, the here presented research entailed at least two research observations for the sake of the current PhD-project Hybrid Artefacts: actors identified. Public ‘native’ dwelling estates in Sub Sahara Africa, a forgotten aspect of twentieth century urban Architecture (University of Groningen, 2017–2022). A first one concerns visualization of findings through actor-diagrams. We believe that producing an even more abstracted actor-diagram, one decisively rooted in the prevailing socio-logical network visualities (with less text and dots, triangles representing actors and actor-groups), might prove more useful for other urban-related disciplines (sociology, urban/cultural geography, design-related ones). The second observation is related to the presentation of background data on individual actors, micro-networks/-entities in themselves, and which could be greatly enhanced. Though not possible here due to the specific magazine-style and the observation that adding this to the written text would greatly disrupt the texts flow, the professional and personal experiences of individual actors will be included in the larger PhD-project’s footnotes and only commented on in the written text when necessary.
Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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