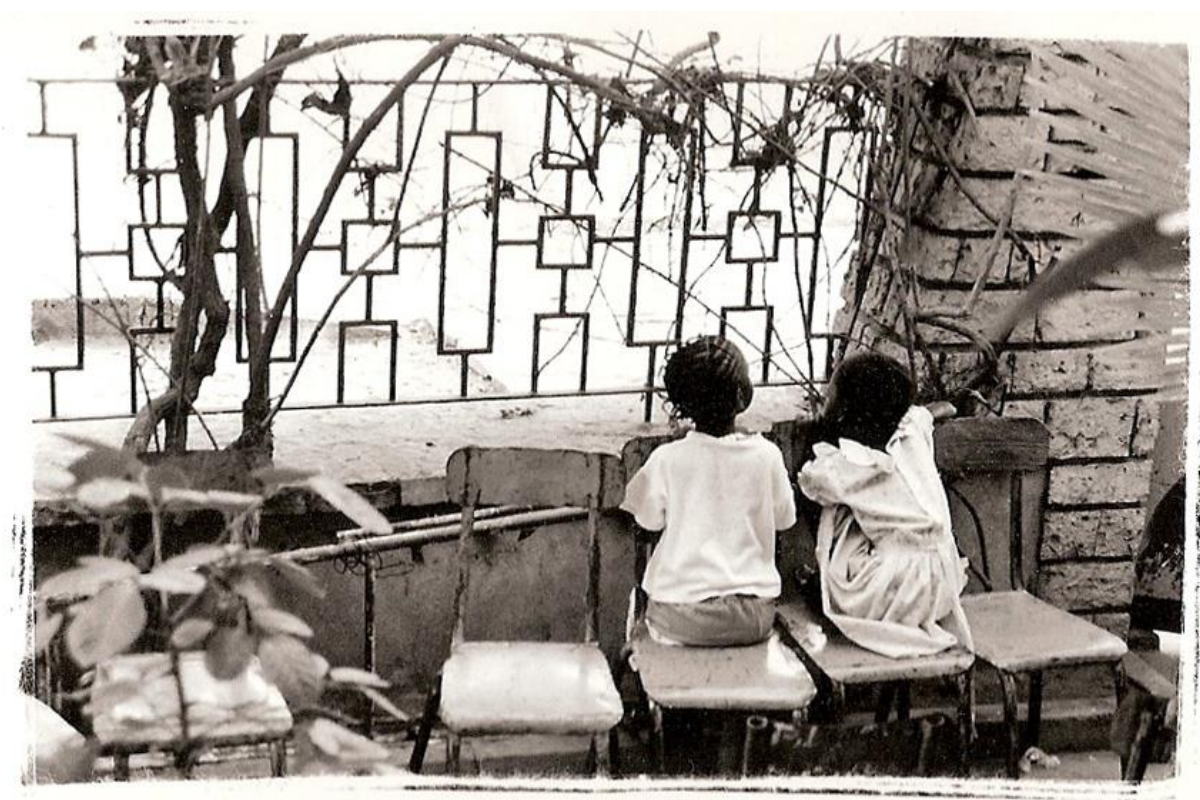


Towards trust' places.

Seminar: "*Methods for social participation in territorial planning*"
Curaçao 2012



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Two stories...

Two African stories about women, men and children who decided to live today while inviting tomorrow. These two endless stories reveal practices to guide those who are wondering about the layout of living places.

You will first come with me to Morocco, to a village in the Atlas Mountains where the villagers' mobilization has enabled the State and citizens to come closer. We will eventually go to Mali and visit the achievements of the Amadou Hampâté Bâ Centre and of the inhabitants of the Missira neighborhood – real bare-footed town planners.

Last but not least, these stories – real struggles for dignity – lead us on ways of developing partnership methods for a concerted evolution of human settlements.

Morocco: Rural NGOs in the Upper Atlas and social capital

“The news on the radio only mentions those jobless youths who steal or commit crime. Those who carry out projects are never mentioned in reports. Here we live in poverty but solidarity still exists”.

Aunt Aïcha from Aït-Iktel village¹.

This quotation by an old woman from the the village I'm going to talk about could epitomize two of the stakes we are here for: condemnation of the poor and lack of recognition of extra-institutional dynamics.

The following story springs from a failure of the free-market model². It all started with the Péchiney factory's closure in *Argentières*, France, in 1986. Some workers from south Morocco were made redundant and prompted to go back to their native country. Where capitalism fails projects may start³: a first NGO called *Migrations and Development* was created in France and was to lead to the creation of about forty others. This association worked in order to encourage emigrants to invest their redundancy payments in consistent collective projects in their native regions. At the same time, in the eighties, South Morocco suffered from unprecedented drought, which obliged many villagers – particularly the young – to emigrate and compelled others to organize real daily expeditions to go and fetch water sometimes as far as fifteen kilometers away. In Aït-Iktel, at a meeting of the *Jema'a*, the traditional village assembly, inhabitants decided to ask the emigrants for help so as to try and solve the problem of water

¹ Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003.(Translation F.Levy)

² Besides, as we shall see later, all the initiatives mentioned here have all in common to be answers to the failure of the dominant model.

³ Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003. (Translation F.Levy)

supply. The emigrants readily accepted and raised funds to build a water supply point at the Tighremt spring. The whole village enthusiastically participated in carrying out the project but the manual pump broke down after only a week-use because of bad management. The Jema'a met the next day, organized the pump mending and entrusted women – traditionally in charge of fetching water – with managing the water point. As a result each family was entitled to a few water jugs a day⁴. Even if the realization of the project solved the problem only to a certain extent, its success triggered a real village dynamics particularly as far as women were concerned⁵. This first initiative is thus rooted in a traditional institution in the rural society in the Atlas Mountains: the Jema'a, a tribal village assembly which enabled villagers to get organized without the help of the State. But as it had no legal status it was not recognized as an institutional actor by decision-makers. So an association needed to be created in order to continue the improvement projects of the living environment in Ait-Iktel village. Its creation was made possible thanks to the Moroccan State's democratic opening from the nineties onwards. The young manage the administrative side while the emigrants provide funds, convey new visions, liaise between the community and its partners and work as mediators between the sometimes conflicting community members.⁶ The structure of this association is inspired by the Jema'a's but does not replace it. On the one hand the Jema'a is part and parcel of all the projects as soon as they are conceived and on the other hand the association operates according to the Jema'a's principles, i.e. information sharing and consensual decision-making after sometimes fierce debates and long negotiations. Any decision is taken unanimously. **No exclusion of any kind must be brought about by any action or project whatsoever.**⁷ In ten years this association has managed to improve people's living environment considerably thanks to socioeconomic projects while maintaining their natural environment and cultural identity. Drinkable water was the first stake; the project has made it possible for all to have enough water, to eradicate some childhood diseases and for women and girls to save invaluable time and numerous efforts. The implementation of self-sufficient electric networks has made it possible for all homes to be supplied with electricity and greatly reduce their wood consumption, have access to the media – radio, television and the Internet – and reassert people's self-value; now they have the feeling of being "like everyone else". The building and equipping of a local health centre has enabled to eradicate young mothers' mortality, vaccinate all the children and their mothers and make family planning become normal practice. The end of wood and water fetching has made it possible to send to school 100% (per cent) of the children under twenty. The implementation of an information and training centre has enabled to organize public awareness sessions in various fields and give professional training to girls and women. The building of an irrigation canal has enabled to double the irrigated area and the summer harvests during the dry season, introduce new, more yielding crops and increase families' wages of about 350 DAM a month thanks to the

⁴ Aznag Khalid, *Le pouvoir de se rêver différemment*, Revue Quart Monde, N°210 - La crise, entre abîme et renaissance- Année 2009-Revue Quart Monde-document.php?id=3395(Translation F.Levy)

⁵ Amahane Ali, *le village des Aït-Iktel*, published the 12th of november 2009 on www.ABHATOO.net.ma(Translation F.Levy)

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⁷ Aznag Khalid, *Le pouvoir de se rêver différemment*, Revue Quart Monde, N°210 - La crise, entre abîme et renaissance- Année 2009-Revue Quart Monde-document.php?id=3395(Translation F.Levy)

*creation of a milk-selling cooperative*⁸. In 2001 the association was awarded the Aga Khan prize for architecture for its involvement in the protection of the local environment. That same year it also won the Mohammed V Foundation prize which is awarded for efforts made as regards education, particularly girls' education.⁹

The extraordinary success of the project is mainly due to the multiplicity of partnerships that has enabled the emergence of complementary experiences and skills around a clear project: the improvement of the villagers' living environment starting from the landscape – the landscape taken in its spatial but also cultural and identitary dimension. And people's much-vaunted participation, though being a key driving force behind the success of those actions, is actually a mere part in the process. Four key-factors may be identified: first and foremost, the projects' **organization** is of the same importance as their material realization. Secondly the implementation or recognition of individual or institutional **actors** – with no exclusion of any kind – seems to guarantee the choices' soundness and the projects' durability. Thirdly, at various scales, a genuine **spirit of the place** has been created thanks to the consolidation and renewal of a local identity experienced in harmony, which can be influential. Last but not least the projects' **costs** are far smaller than those of standard development projects while the projects are qualitatively better.

Let's resume those four keys:

“The way of doing things is even more important than what is done.”¹⁰

In Aït-Iktel the union of the traditional social capital – the *Jema'a* – and the opening to modernity – with associations – has enabled villagers to get out of their survival plight while enhancing ancestral solidarity without falling into the charity trap. Paradoxically enough the village's former situation with its lack of facilities and the lack or inefficiency of the State's services has been an asset insofar as it has enabled the villagers to go on running affairs traditionally while relying on ancestral democratic institutions. There being tools and traditions of a fair and efficient running of public affairs, the association has been successful and a dialogue between the citizens and the State has been furthered while most institutions that were partners in the project were unknown to the inhabitants. The association network that has been created guarantees rooting in modernity, which is an absolute necessity. The association *Migrations and Development* founded in France by redundant Moroccan workers brings new skills into the project. It lays down three conditions: the village community must create a local association, the project must concern all the community members and the beneficiaries must contribute up to 40% of the costs. As to the village association *Aït-Iktel Development*, it has

⁸ Amahane Ali, *le village des Aït-Iktel*, published the 12th of november 2009 on www.ABHATOO.net.ma (Translation F.Levy)

⁹ Aznag Khalid, *Le pouvoir de se rêver différemment*, *Revue Quart Monde*, N°210 - La crise, entre abîme et renaissance- Année 2009-*Revue Quart Monde*-document.php?id=3395 (Translation F.Levy)

¹⁰ Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003. (Translation F.Levy)

implemented two major assets: on the one hand a **steady approach in its institutional creation** and on the other hand **the working method**. The association's written status and its actions are inspired by the *Jema'a's* traditional principles but don't replace it. It is not about modernizing the *Jema'a*, which keeps functioning traditionally, but about *recomposing and rebalancing the community's internal forces towards women, young people and emigrants*¹¹. The association liaises between the legally non-recognized traditional institution and the partner institutions in demand of legal representation, and offers all actors without exception a time and space for debate and expression, openness in the choice and running of projects and the guarantee of investing local cultural values. The local association's second asset lies in the methodology implemented in partnership or fusion with the *Jema'a* and the French association according to the stages of the project. This way of working makes it possible for the three bodies to play their parts. First of all the *Jema'a* and the local association helped by the French one meet and define their priorities and a long-term action plan. In Aït-Iktel priority was first given to infrastructures – water, roads and electricity –, then to income-yielding projects and lastly to education. Each project must fit into those predefined priorities. First the *Jema'a* meets, conveys its idea, its relevance and restraints, and opens the debate in order to reach a unanimously approved consensus. Then the association starts the project, looks for partners and integrates villagers' participation, which can be in kind, work or money. As soon as they get the money the two associations unite to determine the terms and conditions to start the work and elect a committee in charge of overseeing its implementation. It is imperative that the local skills and workforce be used. Lastly, before the inauguration, the details of management and the working regulations must be laid down, and a final report written.

The actors and “the land taking its revenge”

“One of the reasons for the success of associations in the poorest rural areas in Morocco is the public spirit of native intellectuals who, like Ali Amahane in Aï-Iktel, come back to their native villages to offer their experience to people who thus become self-confident again. Becoming self-confident again gives one the power of dreaming oneself differently and inventing a new identity for oneself¹².” This is a quotation by Fatema Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, about the Aït-Iktel experience. This dimension is indeed determining as we shall see later with the project of the Missira neighbourhood in Bamako. Ali Amahane, a Moroccan anthropologist campaigning for the promotion of NGOs in Morocco, was one of the mainstays of the project in Aït-Iktel, where he was born. He took part in the creation of the association *Migrations and Development* in France and of the *Ghoujdamas' sociocultural Association*¹³ and energetically promoted that initiative. But actors are also ordinary people who become extraordinary because of their will and involvement. I'm thinking here of

¹¹ Amahane Ali, *le village des Aït-Iktel*, published the 12th of november 2009 on www.ABHATOO.net.ma (Translation F.Levy)

¹² Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003. (Translation F.Levy)

¹³ Read about it : *Mutations sociales dans le Haut-Atlas, les Ghoujdama*, Ali Amahane, collection *Méditerranée-Sud*, éditions de la maison des sciences de l'Homme, Paris – Editions La Porte, Rabat 1998.

Lahoussaine Jamal¹⁴, a trade-unionist and worker at *Péchiney-France* who created the association *Migrations and Development* after being made redundant. No sooner had the plant closed down than he managed to convince his Moroccan co-workers willing to return to their roots to invest in collective projects rather than in costly individual ones with no impact on village communities. From being simple people these actors become subjects exerting an influence over their destiny and that of their relatives and show the actual possibilities of individual initiatives. Once things are under way, the magic of partnerships works and thanks to the creation of associations, these individual initiatives make it possible for anyone to become real actors in a project and the creators and authors of their own lives, which is absolutely necessary to invent a contemporary dignity associated to a cultural identity combining tradition and modernity. In that case the dignity springing from the territory, particularly from its social and cultural aspects, can be considered to be an actual *revenge of the territory*.¹⁵

The spirit of place.¹⁶

We've seen that both the traditional social capital and the opening to modernity through the integration of young people, women and emigrants into the reflection process enable to promote a "spirit of places", in other words, a beneficial influence of the community that goes far beyond the village's physical borders. But it's also within the very fabric of the place that this spirit is imprinted, through the updating of an identity-creating constructive culture and through the relationship to the landscape. Because they are willing to activate local workforce and skills, the projects guarantee a certain soundness of the architectural gesture and because they integrate the constructive experience of migrants, a certain modernity. Traditionally, in Morocco, the master mason - called the *Mâalem* - designs buildings according to the rule book. Thus the buildings' proportions correspond to the lengths of wood available to build the flat roof, local materials are perfectly adapted to the climate and harmoniously fit into the landscape, and installations are decided within the community. This constructive local culture guarantees the durability of the installations, the techniques being mastered by the community and the realizations working as real identity catalysts. The migrants' technical contribution - electricity, plumbing, reinforced concrete - breathes a certain modernity and enables to respond to the community's priorities. The evolution towards more comfort enables villagers to feel fully citizens, to be *like everyone else*.

The landscape itself is also an actor in the project and not only a support. Let's take the example of the water tower: a water tower had been built by the State on one of the hills with no effort to make it fit into the landscape. Not only was that installation technically faulty - it lacked thermic inertia, had a complex mechanism, defects... - but it was also not maintained. This installation being considered unsightly by the villagers and realized without preliminary

¹⁴ Read about it the biography of Lahoussaine Jamal : Bourron Yves, *Jamal, la revanche du territoire*- Editions Publisud-Paris 2011.

¹⁵ Bourron Yves, *Jamal, la revanche du territoire*- Editions Publisud-Paris 2011.

¹⁶ Guillebaud Jean-Claude, *L'esprit du lieu*, collection *Arléa-Poche*, éditions Arléa, Paris 2002.

consultations, the project could not work as an identity symbol. Consequently it quickly fell into disuse. Conversely, the water tanks made by the association use the soil's natural declivity, ensuring thus both thermic inertia and harmonious fitting into the landscape. Although they are made of coated cement blocks, their lines fit perfectly into the neighboring hills' pattern. Their maintenance is easy and guaranteed by its being owned by the community. As to post hydrants, their forms are reminiscent of traditional fountains. The association is in a position to oppose any project involving facades made of cement blocks and thus keeps the village's local character. The irrigation canal epitomizes the combination of various skills; indeed, it resumes an old route that was abandoned two centuries earlier because of its never-ending maintenance. So it's a case of restoration. But the reinforced concrete technique endows it with a contemporary geometrical aspect and easy maintenance. This harmonious modern touch participates in the creation of the *spirit of places*. A whole range of instances could support this view; the informal school concept is one of them. The choice was made to restore an existing building that was given by the villagers; consequently children are still immersed in their culture. Education is based on systematic enhancing of the local environment and the teachers coming from nearby villages give classes in Berber and teach Arabic. Last but not least the timetable has been adapted so that children keep on taking an active part in the village's life. Nothing has been conceived by predetermined plans. Each project is conceived according to what should be the basis of all architectural projects: the possibilities offered by the place and the budget.

How much does it cost?

The general concept of any project is defined by the poorest people's capacity to pay. For instance the cost of the self-sufficient electric network installation was calculated so that the price did not exceed the cost of one candle a day – candles being formerly used for lighting. When the association asked the national electricity department to define an electrification strategy, the cost was estimated at 5000 DAM per family to create one supply point in the village. For 5740 DAM per family the association managed to equip all the houses, supply each family with a meter-cutout and low-energy bulbs, and install street lighting.¹⁷ Moreover the community owns the network and has created a job for its maintenance that was offered to a young engineer native of the village who had been unemployed since he had ended his studies. *If you ask Mahjoub how things started to get moving again for him, he will tell you that it was because someone trusted him. "That day I became a new man. I agree to have a ridiculously low income in comparison with what engineers earn. But the trust and respect that the village gives me every single day is priceless. I've made it because people have put their trust in me"*¹⁸. Lastly the construction costs only need comparing¹⁹: in Morocco the average price is 25000 DAM/m² while in Aït-Iktel the

¹⁷ Figures from the record made by the Association *Aït-Iktel Développement* to obtain the Aga Khan Award for Architecture : http://www.akdn.org/architecture/pdf/2348_Mor.pdf

¹⁸ Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003. (Translation F.Levy)

¹⁹ Source : *Association Migrations et développement* - <http://www.migdev.org/>

project's cost 1300 DAM/m² and 1,600 DAM/m² for the school.²⁰ Those low costs may be explained by several factors: first the participation of the villagers who can contribute in kind, money or work – besides a work bank has been created where people's skills are listed; three days a year each and everyone offers their services to the community – but also the very operation of the projects which are not profit-seeking but quality-seeking and environment-friendly.

Mali : “Self, neighbours and neighborhood”

Let's go now to sub-Saharan Africa, to the capital of Mali: Bamako, a sprawling city of three million inhabitants.²¹ Here the story starts with an individual initiative: in 2000 Aminata Traoré, an anti-globalization activist and the founder of the African social forum, settled in the popular neighborhood of Missira, near the town centre. As everywhere else in the capital the streets were made of beaten earth, the sewers blocked and mosquito-ridden, social relationships tense and the town council was failing to take responsibility. Without asking for authorization Aminata Traoré, who was thinking of opening a little hotel, decided to take things in hand and with a few friends' help and her own money, had the section of street n°8 going past her house paved. The consequent disappearance of dust, mud, sewage, mosquitoes and flies prompted a group of neighboring heads of families to come and ask Aminata Traoré to help them continue the paving of the street. It sparked off the project “Self, neighbors and neighborhood” supported by the association Yeelen and the Amadou Hampâté Bâ Centre that were subsequently created. *“Transform our environment through wise and cheap micro-realizations mastered by the inhabitants: such is the prime aim of the Misira initiative “Self, neighbors and neighborhood”. In less than two years, from 2002 to 2004, through training activities, gutter cleaning-out, street paving and tree planting, this socially aware initiative has considerably improved the living conditions of the people in Missira, their self-image and their practices and behaviors as regards hygiene. Using a workforce mainly composed of young people – boys and girls – has added strength to this initiative.”*²² Aminata Traoré explains her approach as follows: *“We have succeeded in having 350,000 m² paved. We used to be two associations and we are now federating sixty. As a psychosociologist, I started from the human being issue and the so-called human settlements, the relationship to oneself in a given environment, the issue of landmarks and local dynamics in order to find one's way in development initiatives or be excluded from them.”*²³ This local action

²⁰ 100 DAM = 10 €

²¹ The dilapidated states of the town's infrastructures (streets, sewers, waste, and pollution) as well as the condemnation of people's poverty are typical of many African towns.

²² Text from the booklet of the FAMAPE (Federation of Malian associations for sanitation and environmental protection) www.famape.org

²³ Aminata Traoré, interview at hôtel Djenné, Bamako, Mali, on December 2009, the 22th.

clearly shows that each living place – be it a house, a hamlet, a village or a town – can become a place for responsibility, creativity and sharing. This unique project, set in a continent under the attack of western predation and structural adjustment policies dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, encourages each and everyone not to adapt to a free-market system that is on its last legs but to rethink and reinvent the world by living responsibly and convivially. And it's in that sense that these experiences are unsuspected pools of creativity, spaces for reflection, creation and action, seeds of new civilizations that embrace the whole contemporary world and its stakes by inventing dignified and conscious everyday lives. This initiative is presently spreading to other neighborhoods despite the opposition of the administration which sees in it the emergence of opposing forces that are far more effective and that throw it back the image of its own incompetence and the corruption that is blighting it.

I will not analyze here the numerous common points between the Missira neighborhood and Aït-Iktel village in Morocco, which are the importance of the public involvement of both individual and collective actors, the low cost of the realizations in comparison with standard development projects and the emergence of a *spirit of places* due to using local workforce and materials available on the spot. Despite those analogies Missira's urban situation is very different from Aït-Iktel's as the neighborhood's physical space cannot be superposed to its inhabitants' relational space. Because of its dimension, speed and forms, the city spreads out everyday lives and cultural dynamics beyond the physical proximity of the street or the neighborhood, thus making it difficult to create shared living spaces. The State, which should contribute to the emergence of places of dignity, is missing and does not play its role of inventor and manager of public spaces. Abandoned by its institutional actors and its inhabitants and left to its own devices, the city has become no more than a frayed, worn-out fabric urgently patched up without any vision or project whatsoever. Acting under constraint and trapped by the structural adjustment policies imposed by international backers, the State tends to turn towards even more space fragmentation, promulgating new business areas projects that are costly but manage to bring in World Bank funds. As to civil society, it is often exploited by the State, political parties or donors as it depends on external funding. Besides, international backers have encouraged the emergence of the civil society so as to control local authorities. As a result there has been a proliferation of associations which are often devoid of visions and convictions, can seldom analyze stakes or suggest alternatives and often think up activities likely to please donors without necessarily responding to the inhabitants' demands. The inhabitants often live in survival conditions, they are withdrawn into their concessions and use the town as if they were smart hunter-gatherers feeling no responsibility for their direct environment.

The invention of the town

The main strength of this project is that it springs from people's own demand; seeing Aminata Traoré "stoop down in the mud" to clear out gutters, they've understood her involvement and become aware of the potential for changing their living conditions. But on account of Missira's urban situation its inhabitants may not directly take responsibility because of the typically urban relationships they have between each other and with the town. Living in

town is very different from living in community as in Aït-Iktel village where people can rely on their traditional social capital. The town is a harbor more than an island; it leads to a specific exchange and distribution culture which creates a network weaving together patches of town and patches of life, often neglecting the direct environment which hardly reflects the urban dream. The neighborhood and the neighbors are reminiscent of ancestral communities and fail to bring about the modernity sought in urban life. I suggest here the possibility that neglecting the intermediate living scale represents a universal urban paradigm; Missira's response could thus serve as an example and be considered a real invention of the town.

In Missira the prime aim was to create a social climate inciting people to participate in decision-making; heightening their awareness and mobilizing them was long and hard work and it had to start with reconciliation with oneself and others while taking care of one's direct environment. Hygiene and cleaning-out were defined as the main fields enabling this reconciliation with dignity. The methodology whose complexity reflects city life tends to invent a social capital specific to the town, which copies neither traditional community models nor official institutions. The aims are to restore confidence and change people's self-perception by creating a feeling of belonging to a group and place but without their withdrawing into their own community. What is at stake is to create an African urban modernity capable of spreading towards other neighborhoods, other towns and other countries. At first there were two associations: YEELLEN and GNELENI. They were the genesis of the project and they joined forces to complete the paving of the section undertaken by Aminata Traoré. Considering the success of the project and the numerous demands, the FMACPE, i.e. the Federation of Malian Associations for the Cleaning-out and Protection of the Environment, was created. The FMACPE is a "ridge structure"²⁴ aimed at giving advice, training and supporting projects. People come and state their problem; then *the FMACPE prompts them to organize an assembly to share their problem widely with the people concerned and asks them to create an association. Once they have come back with the receipt testifying to the legal creation of the association, the FMACPE considers that the inhabitants have proved their genuine will to face the problem and offers them to join the federation.*²⁵ Each member association is autonomous and free to organize itself, particularly as far as recruitment is concerned. The FMACPE offers tools so that mobilization belongs to the association proper and that people federate around the action. The trainings offered deal with the philosophical and methodological principles inherent to these actions: solidarity and mutual help, project organization, book-keeping, leadership, social and political dialogue with the elected representatives, women's role in managing the environment, hygiene and cleaning-out ... Such trainings immediately enable associations to go beyond the materialistic scope of the project – paving, clearing-out and so on – and to promote a space devoted to dialogue, coordination and training in decision-making and initiatives, thus contributing locally and internationally to reinforcing social bonds and creating participatory democracy. At the same time an Economic Interest Group (EIG) is created, which is aimed at raising funds among

²⁴ Gaoussou Diallo, executive secretary of the FAMAPE – Interview at Amadou Hampâté Ba Center, Missira, Bamako, on December 2009, the 22th.

²⁵ Ibidem.

families and donors and explaining the way the structure operates. The fees amount to 1,5000 CFA francs a month per family – about two euros. There are no other go-betweens apart from the EIG, which allows total openness – everyone is free to consult the register – and autonomy in the use of funds. The institutional scheme has been oversimplified and consequently avoids bureaucratic uncertainties and the corruption coming with them. Thus a considerable part of the funding is directly put back into the neighborhood households through the creation of temporary jobs for the young who get involved in the project. So people get paid for their participation. This definitely gives strength to this project which explores ways of generating incomes for vulnerable people while embellishing the environment with credible answers to unemployment. So participation is not a gift to the community which would have no alternatives considering the State's desertion. Neither is it an ephemeral utopia; it is a movement towards social, economic, material and political transformation of living places. It enables to invent life at the same time as the town and offers an easy and efficient alternative to free-market globalization.

Planning and opposition forces.

The methodology that has been used enables to federate energies and give coherence to various initiatives without centralizing resources or decisions. The inhabitants' appropriation of their neighborhood thanks to actual involvement in development work goes hand in hand with a political appropriation of the analysis of situations and answers to be brought. Both enthusiasm and infrastructures become durable as infrastructures are managed and maintained by people who have become sentries of their public space which induces hope and dignity itself. Compared to the other neighborhoods of Bamako, the transformation of Missira is spectacular. The hundreds of planted trees have cooled down the streets and created buffer spaces between concessions and the street, that are intermediate spaces easily appropriable by the inhabitants. The paving stones also contribute to coolness and to the disappearance of dust. Unrolling and folding according to the specificities of each business or entrance, this urban carpet has invented a public development that is enriched by being used. The gutter clearing-out or covering has considerably reduced malaria and children can now play on the streets without risking falling into trenches. The concession walls have been whitewashed with ochre and yellow patterns with the help of local artists. People sweep up the slightest dead leaf and sit in the shade, now feeling closer to their neighbors. A market for local products has been set up, updating the ancient technique of the Nubian vault, and commune weaving workshops have been created to provide women with an income. Energy has spread within concessions themselves: today 70% of the inner courtyards are paved. Applying concrete structures onto earth constructions has enabled to maintain the places' character while making housing denser and thus fighting against family breakdown while inventing a contemporary architecture at the same time. Soundness in the choice of materials and methods leads to soundness in urban and architectural forms which reflects the emergence of an African modernity. This project has radically changed people's living conditions by suggesting answers to the environmental challenge, socioeconomic stakes and political violence of the contemporary world. The confidence that has been built and the implacable efficiency of the project allow local people to

reconsider the vision they have of themselves as well as their capacity to construct the town's policy. Such initiatives, which are identified by or with local people, deserve more support instead of being fought against by the State which only sees in them dangerous opposition forces. It is indeed a matter of opposition forces but they are creative and humane and should inspire an overhaul of political practices rather than fear.

Towards ritual town planning...

Michel Agier, a French anthropologist, has endeavored to redefine the town not on the basis of its physical structure but of its relational dimension, particularly its urban situation.²⁶ He has defined four types of situations – ordinary situations, occasional situations, transient situations and ritual situations –, each of them implying a particular kind of relationship between the individual, space and society. All those situations put together could define the town in its entirety. According to him only ritual situations – such as Carnival – enable to connect simultaneously the individual, space and society. Using as a basis the Missira project “Self, neighbors and neighborhood” I could define a fifth situation: a situation of urban mobilization which could also allow synergy between the individual, space and society and which would be a starting point towards town planning based on dialogue and trust. I might even go as far as talk about ritual town planning.

Words for the world

Methods for social participation in territorial planning: such is the wording of this seminar. It immediately leads to questioning the meaning of two key notions: *participation* and *development*. Let's focus first on the notion of *participation*. In principle in terms of town and country planning a territory cannot be considered out of its ontological dimension. A territory is primarily the place of men and women living on it, crossing it or dreaming it. Its physical structure – the foundation of a whole range of life situations and human relationships – cannot solely represent it. The very term of territory tends to call to mind an exclusively materialistic concept which doesn't take into account relational or cultural dimensions that are, however, essential components of any housing project in a given society. Thus it seems more appropriate to talk about human settlements than territories, preferring an ontological approach to a materialistic one. This dimension is of utmost importance to tackle the notion of participation as it is a way of going beyond the usual planning methods that have created the problematic situations that people's participation is supposed to solve today. Indeed, isn't it ironical in today's democracy-dominated world to talk about people's participation in the management of their living environment while the latter have elected representatives in charge of enforcing those processes adequately to the voters' hopes? This is the core of the problem: representation is not democratic enough. On the one hand the State and people working in town and country planning (TCP) seem to be convinced of the legitimacy of their *analytical* / *analysis* methods and

²⁶ Agier Michel. L'invention de la ville. Editions des archives contemporaines, collection une pensée d'avance. Paris 1999.

decisional practices. On the other hand by voting people seem to rely entirely on the State and don't feel concerned by the improvement of their living environment. Moreover priority is often given to technical responses and materialistic improvements, which are only part of the problem as regards TCP. The ontological dimension of human settlements which constitute the very essence of any civilization is left out in favor of a solely materialistic dimension of towns and territories. Besides, the just-in-time methods imposed by the ultra-free market model *promoting* the capitalist society as the unique development model create materialistic *forms* and dismantling temporalities. Capital, raw materials and information flows but also people's movements are not considered in terms of relationships but thought as profit-seeking only. Thus territories are walked across rather than travelled, used rather than lived on, fragmented rather than embraced. As a result there is a scale confrontation between mega-structures such as motorways, boulevards, airports, industries and so on the one hand and housing, i.e. (that is) the irreducible unit in human settlement on the other hand. The disappearance or lack of visibility of an intermediate scale in TCP could thus be held responsible for the difficulties encountered by various human settlements both materialistically and relationally or economically. According to Françoise Choay²⁷, a French philosopher and anthropologist specialized in urban forms and theories; the disappearance of the intermediate scale which could lead to the appearance of the *no-town* also corresponds to the disappearance of the subject – the subject in the sense of an individual or group of individuals exerting their influence over their daily lives.

Thus, encouraging people to be actors or acknowledging them as such within their living environment could be a way into re-inventing development processes capable of producing a more familiar and relationship-orientated territory whose cultural dimension would guarantee a certain dignity – dignity which should be the prime goal of any project meant to play a part in any human settlement whatsoever. Consequently people's participation should be thought in that sense. So it is not about consulting people with the aim of having them support a project but about acknowledging and facilitating the emergence of actors capable of playing a direct part on their environment. Indeed in inner-cities there are many social and cultural dynamics that should be known, acknowledged and reinforced. We must start from what people have and not from what they lack instead of trying to get those dynamics to express themselves around a project coming from above. Thus, rather than talk about participation, which implies support to a process, it seems preferable to talk about collaboration or partnership between the decision-makers and the people. The main idea is to build mutual trust with the aim of people's dignity in view. "Dignity is more important than solidarity or democracy; dignity is what makes the human being." Consequently the *calling* of this partnership is to invent methods that must be simple, adapted to the situation and flexible enough to be corrected if need be rather than look for concrete solutions or answers to problems that often represent the visible part of the iceberg only. **"The way of doing things is even more important than what is done"**²⁸.

²⁷ Choay Françoise, *L'urbanisme, utopies et réalités*. Editions du Seuil. Paris 1965.

²⁸ Fatema Mernissi, *Les Aït-Débrouilles, ONG rurales du Haut-Atlas*, éditions Marsam-Rabat-2003. (Translation F.Levy)

The notion of development also needs questioning. We are talking here about *land development* but the word can be found nearly everywhere: the development of an idea, personal development, sustainable development, economic development, human development, underdevelopment, joint development and so on. What exactly hides behind that word? The word got popular with President of the United States Harry Truman in his speech about the state of the Union in 1949. He used it to refer to some countries' stage of advancement. Since then there has been a distinction between the developed countries, i.e. (that is) countries supposed to have reached a goal, an ideal, and the developing or underdeveloped countries, i.e. countries supposedly lagging far behind and whose ultimate goal would be to reach the level of the developed countries. This concept is close to the meaning of development in biology, i.e. *a combination of mechanisms participating in the growth of a living organism*²⁹. The term growth that has just been used is often associated to the concept of development, as this growth should make it possible to reach the developed stage. The words *development* and *growth* can be dangerous as they contribute to setting up a hierarchy *with regard to* a unique model that should be reached by all. Thus some countries – or even some continents – would be underdeveloped; some regions more developed than others, some districts developing and so on. Because of its origin, its use and its standard meaning, the concept of development seems to be solely western and to reflect a certain vision of civilization primarily based on expansion and transformation. Although it is sometimes used advisedly the notion of development often hides other forms of social and economic evolution whose principles are not based on *predation/greed* or profit-seeking. As we shall see presently the example of Africa, which is regarded as an underdeveloped continent, is significant in that sense. Some African researchers have pointed out that before the various colonizations, in the 15th century, Africa was relatively advanced. Indeed some countries had invented parliamentary monarchy systems while Europe was under the yoke of absolutism. What has become Mali today had also issued a genuine universal declaration of human rights known as the Mande Charter while western peoples were still enslaved. According to Amadou Hampâté Bâ, a great African thinker, “*any given society presenting a unity of behaviors in time and space based on a consistent system of knowledge inherited from its ancestors, transmitted from one generation to the next and in keeping with a certain vision of the world can be said to have its own type of civilization. In such a society the “move forward” or any possible evolution may focus not on the conquest of the outside world but on the pursuit or fulfillment of a perfect type of man taking the ancestor or the initiatory hero, the clan founder, as a model.*”³⁰ Aminata Traoré adds: “*The western world has freed itself from that kind of referent which, however, keeps on nourishing the imagination of many peoples and endowing human actions with a moral dimension.*”³¹ To conclude the development, particularly land development which concerns us here often seems to offer a unique model as reference and often leads to a dead-end or sheer failure. For Majid Rahnema, an Iranian diplomat, “*most social interventions in favor of the poor aim at reinforcing the economic*

²⁹ Larrousse Dictionary, 2010 edition. (Translation F.Levy)

³⁰ In Aminata Traoré, *Le viol de l'imaginaire*, éditions Fayard/Actes Sud, Paris 2002. (Translation F.Levy)

³¹ Aminata Traoré, *Le viol de l'imaginaire*, éditions Fayard/Actes Sud, Paris 2002. (Translation F.Levy)

*foundations of the non-poor*³²". Instead of the word development I'd rather use the word evolution, a term that refers to time and not to space and that guarantees a plurality of answers rather than the search for a model. Indeed in biology *evolution implies adaptation in time and the diversification of species which is the source of diversity*³³.

To put it in a nutshell, I'd rather talk about partnership than participation, human settlement than territory, and evolution rather than development. This could lead me to renaming this seminar – with all humility: *New partnerships for the concerted evolution of human settlements*. The search for partnership requires critical thinking and the questioning of many practices of planning and running of places to live. The new partnerships call for creativity and the search for simple ideas embracing the contemporary world stakes: people's dignity, social links, progress and consideration for biodiversity. This creativity is not easy to activate, neither by the decision-makers, who are used to applying recipes that are less and less effective, nor by the inhabitants, who are often trapped in aid or individualism. I offer you to contribute to reviving this creativity through several African stories. They are real stories implying actors, not just mere instances. As seen earlier, these actors guarantee the reintroduction of an intermediate scale which is a way out of the public/private dichotomy and a way of inventing places to live that would be more familiar, bond-creating and genuine cultural melting-pots. The stories take place in extreme situations where people's mobilization represents the only possible evolution considering the State's failure to lend support or its ignorance of those distressful plights in favor of projects likely to fit in the frame of international development aid organizations. I suggest the possibility that such extreme situations are an unsuspected pool of social creativity and lead to rethink TCP simply, pragmatically and efficiently, without trying to reproduce pre-established, complex and unsuitable schemes. Through these stories decision-makers will come to realize the very small cost of these projects and inhabitants will be able to see in them a way of building themselves while guaranteeing a certain independence as far as food, energy but also culture are concerned. These stories deal with various territorial scales and more or less complex social organizations. Through this diversity they are evidence of creativity possible at all levels.

³² Majid Rahnema, *Quand la misère chasse la pauvreté*. Collection *Babel*, éditions Actes Sud, Paris 2008. (Translation F.Levy)

³³ Larrousse Dictionary, 2010 edition (Translation F.Levy)