

ABSTRACT

The cities from developing countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, among which we find Yaoundé, the administrative capital of Cameroon, have suffered a demographic boom in the second half of the 20th century, due to the prospects for an improvement of the living standards. The lack of urban planning and investment as a result of the serious governability problems of the administrations, has led to an inability to absorb the flow of immigrants coming from rural areas of the country. The 60% of the population in Yaoundé lives in quarters without planning, called spontaneous settlements. The living conditions of these settlements are very low, the access to urban services (water, electricity, drainage and transportation) is deficient, the houses are built by themselves and the densification of the spontaneous settlements located in the city centre is alarming.

The goal of our studies is to know in depth what is the relationship between the access to urban services and particularly the transport access, and the capacity of human development of the inhabitants of these dense spontaneous settlements in the city centre. We would like to know if by improving the transportation access in the inner areas of the settlements, we are inducing a higher human development of their inhabitants.

The study is carried out in a pilot quarter called Melen, inside district 6 of Yaoundé's Urban Community. This quarter has been chosen because of these two features we considered to be essential: on the one hand, its near location to the centre and to most basic equipments such as health, market and education and on the other, an easy access to get to know the characteristics of the people living there.

In order to recognize the characteristics of its human development, we surveyed a cross-section sample of the inhabitants of Melen. The answers to these surveys have led us to define their human development rate. This rate has been worked out from the characteristics of their living standards, the problems related to the unhealthy conditions they suffer, the type of access to drinking water, the draining methods, the access to facilities, the expenses per family member and the access to electricity.

Subsequently, the accessibility rate has been defined. The motivations and difficulties to reach the desired destination, both economic and temporary, have an influence on it. The motivations of the trips of Melen inhabitants that have been taken into account are: going to work, to the market, to school and university. According to the mobility survey and the characteristics of the main labour tasks of Melen population, a diagram of the trips that Melen inhabitants carry out has been drafted.

The inhabitants of Melen travel, for the reasons mentioned above, outside the quarter (there is a very little part of the population that does not go out from the quarter during a day) and within relatively short distances. They walk to go to school or university. They go to work or the market by shared taxi, instead.

The road network in Melen has two very different levels. On the one hand, the national and primary networks are in good condition and suitable for driving. On the other, the secondary network and the one within the spontaneous quarter are exclusively used for walking trips. Since Melen is a quarter placed next to the national roads, once the people get to this road, they have easy access to other parts of the city. According to the distances and trip expenses, a difference of accessibility in the trip from the main road to the family house has been identified. In other words, what distinguishes the accessibility of two families living in Melen is their difficulty to get to the main road. Thus, the rate of accessibility of each house in Melen has been defined according to this premise.

From the relationship between the accessibility rate of the families and their development rate, we checked that there is a proportional tendency between the two rates. In other words, the better the accessibility is, the higher developed the family will be.

According to this proved hypothesis, the transport access should be one of the actions that local authorities should take in dense spontaneous quarters. The city is nowadays established in two levels, the inhabitants located next to the main road network and the others. This differentiation prevents the city inhabitants from getting to the urban services, and thus creating first and second class citizens. The inequalities created by this duality could disappear by little actions which will bring these two social groups nearer.