Listen to the Cradle

Building *from* Local Dynamics

areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana

can Renaissance

minique Hounkonnou

Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift van Dirk Roep getiteld 'Vernieuwend werken; sporen van vermogen en onvermogen' in het openbaar te verdedigen op 3 november 2000 om 16.00 in de Aula van Wageningen Universiteit

1. Hetgeen bij vernieuwend werken komt kijken kan alleen in volle omvang worden doorgrond indien het wordt begrepen als het werkendeweg opbouwen van het vermogen om een relevant geacht geheel van op elkaar inwerkende natuurlijke en sociale ordeningsprocessen anders te laten werken met het oog op het vestigen van een nieuwe socio-materiële orde (dit proefschrift).

2. De ingrijpende vernieuwing van landbouw en platteland sedert begin jaren negentig komt voort uit een doodlopend moderniseringstraject (dit proefschrift).

3. De gevestigde orde belichaamt bovenal een onvermogen om te vernieuwen (dit proefschrift)

4. Vernieuwen is een dramatisch proces (dit proefschrift).

5. De landbouw moet meer dan ooit haar eigen voortbestaan legitimeren.

6. Een onafhankelijke geest is bittere noodzaak om tegenwicht te bieden aan blinde volgelingen.

7. Een universiteit die haar onafhankelijkheid prijs geeft, verliest haar geloofwaardigheid.

8. Het langs technologische weg vervolmaken van de mens leidt ertoe dat de mens steeds onvolmaakter wordt.

9. Wie zijn bestaan wil verlichten moet zich ontdoen van zwaargewichten.

10. Bergafwaarts gaat sneller.

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Building *from* Local Dynamics for African Renaissance

Case studies in rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana

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Front cover: The *Whistle* of the Bonou farmers' group (Benin).
(A traditional *Whistle Club* is the cradle of the group)
Back cover: *Adji* players in Kotokpa
Photos: D. Hounkonnou

To the late Father Robert Niehe

    who devoted most of his life to Africa.

To the late Joseph Hounkonnou, my father:

    You left when I was about to start this work
    I missed your guiding hand which had always steered me,
    but you had taken care of the foundations...
    I hope I will have your blessing for the next steps...

To my mother, the late Anne Woli Boton-Agbakou:

    I was nearing the completion when you moved on.
    You had always insisted on humility
    and this is the greatest lesson I have learned
    from what you teasingly called my "travelling again"...

Preface

Why listen? ...
Recently, while considering alternative titles for this book, I happened to learn a story which strongly encouraged me to keep the current one. It seems that, in one of the meeting rooms of the Kampala Conference Centre (in Uganda), there is a painting of some African Heads of State in which our most honourable representatives have been painted without ears! When asked why, the artist simply replied: 'Well, they do not need ears, because they do not use them... they do not listen!' Some people might find the artist's opinion overstated ... but this illustrates quite clearly the frustration of local people having been overlooked for decades by national decision makers as well as 'development' institutions. National scholars, researchers, extension agents all face the same frustration, as the national authorities 'do not have ears for them', but rather listen to foreign 'experts' or advisers!

Listen to the Cradle comes from similar frustrations. From frustration accumulated over more than 20 years of professional experience at both national and international levels. From the feeling that development action is too disconnected from local realities.

A long standing project ...
The idea to start out on this 'adventure' was born a long time ago, in fact, back in 1978! I was then on a short training programme in Bordeaux. During that period, with my colleagues – a group of about twenty participants from francophone countries - we happened to visit the *SNIAS** where aircraft (the Airbus) were being produced. In short, when I was asked to give my impression on that visit, unlike some of my friends who were rather impressed by the robots that we had seen at work, I told our supervisor that I was rather thinking of the women and men who have been dismissed from employment in industrial countries in general, because of the high level of mechanisation or automatisation. I went on to stress that although part of the productivity gained is helping to pay for these people's subsistence allowances, this could never compensate their frustration for not contributing to the 'construction of their society'. I concluded that this might be called industrial development, but certainly not social or human development, and that African countries, given their attachment to human values, should not blindly copy Western development models... In the end, I was just told that I was 'philosophising' or dreaming ... but my motivation for alternative development paths was definitely born!

Currently, there are more and more reasons to 'dream' of alternative development paths ... The post-independence option for a fast industrialisation led African countries to blindly – and badly – copy Western development models. Due to their social and ecological consequences, these models are being severely questioned in their 'home countries'. In many cases (material) 'development' has happened indeed and continues to happen, but the price is high, unfortunately on the quality of life. This is giving rise to various social movements and to some gradual policy shifts... Therefore, it is time for African countries to realise that they were not only making bad or inefficient copies, but certainly also – to some extent – copying the wrong things! They are more and more forced to 'dream' and seriously think of alternatives ...

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* *Société Nationale d'Industrie Aéronautique et Spatiale*, which later became *Aérospatiale*.

'Landing' from the dream, back to reality ...

Today, thanks to some key people, with this book, I have the feeling that my 'dream' has started to materialise and that I have begun to wake up back in reality ...

When I left CTA at the end of 1996 (after twelve years of service), I first explored with two other universities the possibility to embark on a PhD programme before meeting Professor Niels Röling in Wageningen. He welcomed the idea with enthusiasm, then he quite quickly brought me back to reality ... with a *'but ... how can we make this a subject for PhD research?'* Of course I did not have a clue! To make a long story short, today I can only express my deep gratitude to him for connecting so quickly to my passion and for helping me to design the first steps along the road he accompanied me on, for four years. His connection (and motivation for this research) came to the full when he took the trouble, after a mission in Togo in 1999, to visit the two main villages I was studying in Benin. His visit has been a 'turning point' - which I realised when he told me 'I really see now what you are talking about...'. This strengthened my own determination and conviction. Niels, thanks for being 'the *Mzee*', with your continuously inspiring attitude and your humility.

Right from the beginning Niels told me that an anthropologist should be involved. He then advised me to discuss the matter with one of his colleagues I had never seen before, Professor Paul Richards ... The meeting went quite well. Today, however, I can confess to Paul that having seen him, shortly after that first meeting, in the position of an opponent challenging a PhD candidate in a defence ceremony in the 'Aula', I started wondering ... But Paul, let me tell you one of the most important things I owe you : you helped me get rid of my initial romanticism about local traditional values and discover the importance of power struggle in local organisations. Thanks to you I later discovered, in the field, that the 'cultural erosion' we used to deplore can also, in certain circumstances, release resources to some (otherwise disadvantaged) sub-groups of actors, allowing, for example, access of rural women to arable land. Thanks so much, Paul.

Another professor who strongly encouraged me to undertake this research, and whom I used to call 'my hidden promotor', is Professor Ki-Zerbo. From the first time I met him to discuss the subject of this research, he confessed that he would not have time to be a co-promotor, but invited me to come and discuss whenever I wished. This book owes a lot to his long experience in African development history and to his well-known and respected wisdom. It has been honour and a privilege for me to learn from him.

The local people ...

I have to express my deep gratitude to the farmers I met - and stayed with - during my field work, particularly those of Bonou and Kotokpa (in Benin), of Saponé (Burkina Faso) and of Yamfo (Ghana). I know it took them a while to understand that I had come to learn from them... so I am grateful to them for their patience and for their time. The high interest they have shown in also learning from my findings in the other places I was visiting is inspiring me to design a follow-up programme. I hope this can materialise so that I can 'pay' a little back to them.

... and the main lesson

The title of this book carries the main lesson they taught me: the modesty to listen to them, to be able to launch together the necessary learning process for development initiatives to be needs-oriented, locally-driven and then given the best chances for success. I can promise them to echo the message as widely as possible!

As usual ... last but not least! I have also learnt – mainly in the Netherlands, that everything has a price! Let me now come to those who really paid the price for my little passion for the local dynamics: my family, mainly the small one, but also the large one, and all my friends. My wife Laure and our three daughters, Carole, Sandra and Djona suffered both morally and materially. I have been too often away from home, and sometimes at crucial moments ... and I have drawn too much from our financial resources for this 'family sponsored-PhD'! Thanks for coping ... Thanks also for the enthusiasm you showed during the whole process, sharing my findings and helping to prepare what you called 'the small cards', for the village workshops. This was also the way to keep you connected, to feel that we were always together. I cannot pay you back for the support you have provided. The only thing I can tell you, as well as to the whole family and to all my friends, the only thing I know, now for sure, is that I will be back home soon, and I can promise that my next dreams will be less costly!

I have always believed in the African renaissance. This research has convinced me that local development dynamics can contribute to it. Let's join them, let's listen to the local people and *let's participate in their programmes*, instead of guiding them – to participate in our projects!

Dominique Hounkonnou
18 December 2001

'Something has broken down in Africa - throwing billions of dollars at us will not change anything. Africa must learn to become whole again... We must build ourselves from the ground up... infrastructure, logistics and superstructure, including the brain.'

<div align="right">Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 1989</div>

Introduction

Over the past forty years, the programmes and projects implemented in Africa in the field of development in general, and of rural development in particular, have contributed very little to real and lasting change on the continent. This has been confirmed repeatedly in several recent evaluations and studies.

'At independence, Africans had high hopes of rapid development. New energies were released by the ending of colonialism, and African leaders were determined that their countries should catch up with the developed world...' [1]

From the time of independence on, industrialisation was seen as the motor for development - it was the panacea - and agriculture, although declared the basis of the economy, was relegated to a lower position. With technical and financial support from the donor agencies, Africa's new nations worked out their Development Plans, with investment priorities placed in vast primary industries run in most cases by state companies.

An initial period of growth made way, in many countries, for a period of economic difficulties, followed by economic decline.

In fact, the first decade of independence witnessed some rather impressive rates of industrialisation. In a number of countries this led to what was even called a 'golden era', but from the second decade onwards African countries started lagging behind the rest of the Third World (Mkandawire, 1987). During that period, African governments embarked upon strategies of 'modernity', such strategies comprising modes of organising social life which had first emerged in Europe during the seventeenth century and became more or less world-wide in their influence (Giddens, 1990).

The World Bank report (1989) cited above clearly stated that development efforts failed because the strategy was misconceived:

'Governments made a dash for 'modernization', copying, but not adapting, Western models. Result was poorly designed public investments (...); too little attention to peasant agriculture; too much intervention in areas in which the state lacked managerial, technical and entrepreneurial skills; and too little effort to foster grassroots development. This top-down approach demotivated ordinary people, whose energies most needed to be mobilized in the development effort.' [1]

However, since then, there has not been much change. Government services still continue the tradition of the 'expert culture', ignoring local knowledge and 'people's science' (Richards, 1985). Recent studies have confirmed that most failures in rural development projects and programmes are not due to the incapacity of rural people, but rather to the ways that governments, donor and international agencies and some NGOs usually proceed (Uphoff, Esman and Krishna, 1998). In other words, 'poverty is not created by the poor' (Versluysen, 1999)!

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1   'Sub-Saharan Africa : from crisis to sustainable growth', World Bank, Washington, 1989.

The result of development failures was for several African countries to embark upon structural adjustment programmes, with all their economic and social consequences increasing the burden of the most vulnerable parts of the society.

Furthermore, in several parts of the world, the recent history of development has shown that approaches which focus on increased productivity have very clear social limits. In Africa, it is obvious that these approaches have not even attained their economic objectives. In fact, the 'productivity path' has led to the exclusion of even larger numbers of people from the very systems in which they could be contributing to building their own society.
And yet, what is the purpose of development, if it is not social?
The people of Africa, given their strong attachment to human and social values, should then be seeking alternative development paths which better match their norms and values. This is the way suggested by the *African Renaissance* Project, a vision claiming that the development of the continent should be based on the *Ubuntu* philosophy, - that is - on indigenous African human and cultural values. It is important, however, to be aware that every renaissance is first and foremost a reawakening of thought (Mamdani, 1999). At a time where critics are questioning the African renaissance vision, it is a challenge for the African scientific community to help define the content and the strategies for its implementation.

Africa is faced by failures and grave difficulties and there is a consequent and growing wave of pessimism. And yet Africa still holds some valuable assets for its development. On the one hand, it has vast natural resources which, if managed rationally, could contribute substantially to increasing production and to improving standards of living. On the other hand, there lies a great strength in the achievements of the many grassroots initiatives which have been undertaken over the years, drawing mostly on local resources and on *local ways of doing things*. Furthermore, the new wave of local initiatives which is deriving from current profound political changes serves to demonstrate the endogenous capacity of the grassroots populations. Strong traditional local organisations (such as endogenous economic co-operatives like rotating credit associations or labour exchange groups, craftsmen's guilds, funeral groups and various socio-cultural groups) have long been present in many places in Africa. Now new social and economic groups are emerging and taking their place in this landscape of local initiatives, guided by the growing concern of the local populations to take control of their own destinies.

In all this, there are many synergies possible, but due to the lack of clear or organised links between local, intermediary and national levels, they are not happening. Successful experiences, where they exist, are limited to the localities where they are implemented, and mechanisms for replicating or up-scaling them are lacking.

The need for such linkages has become crucial because of the complex and uncertain nature of our times (Woodhill and Röling, 1998), which leaves developing countries in particular with no other choice than to look for new perspectives in which to create effective and efficient development partnerships.

The main goal of this research was to explore, from a better insight into the local organisations, the possible ways to better link up or 'bridge' with them in order to improve development processes. First of all, a limited number of local dynamics selected in three West African countries - Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana - have been analysed in order to assess their purpose, how they are formed and what makes them work. Then, on the basis of our learning,

suggestions are made as to how to set up effective linkages between these dynamics and relevant support levels, in order to promote a more concerted development action.

Finally, it is expected that in a near future, on the basis of the results of this research project, a pilot programme for local development could be initiated in areas identified in the three countries involved.

This book comprises thirteen chapters. The first chapter explains the general context of the study, starting from the historical heritage which explains in part the parallel paradigms of *the tied* and *the bypassed* which are still present today. On the one hand are the still strong links between colonial and post-colonial Western institutions and the colonised or (today) national institutions and who may be described as *the tied*, and, on the other hand, the local communities who may fairly be described as *the bypassed*. The interest - both general and personal- of this study is also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 2 presents the research objectives, their relevance and the research problems. The initial concepts explored are explained, as well as the research methodology. The research location is also described.

It was necessary, in the beginning, to get an idea of the reality of local dynamics in order to better finalise the design of the research process. Chapter 3 gives an account of an exploratory tour in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana which confirmed the need to conduct the research and gave some indications on the variables to study and on the way to proceed. Thanks to a literature review, mainly reported in Chapter 4, the main findings of the exploratory tour have been revisited to define more precisely the scope of the study.

The empirical results of the pilot cases are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and a first analysis is made in Chapter 7, explaining how these cases served to identify some basic characteristics of local dynamics, and suggesting a general framework for the rest of the study.

Two other cases were then studied in depth, in different countries, to assess further the main outcomes of the pilot phase (Chapters 8 and 9). Also, in the three countries, a number of (secondary) cases, said to be (local) successes or failures, were briefly visited to check whether one or more of the main characteristics previously identified were the reasons for success or failure. These are reported and analysed in Chapters 10 and 11.

The final research question, concerning the possibilities of linking, is then discussed in Chapter 12. Although the first suggestion on this issue is *that linking is not always necessary*, two examples in Benin and Burkina Faso are explored on *linking as it could work*.

The conceptual lessons to be derived from the findings are elaborated upon in Chapter 13: a new perspective is suggested, which builds *from* local dynamics, the *so far overlooked dimension of development programmes*. Subsequently, some practical implications are proposed, as a contribution to the research methodologies for studies of local groups, and to the improvement of development programmes.

Chapter 1

An overview of the development context in West Africa
How the grassroots are overlooked

1.1   Historical and political background

It is certainly difficult to disagree with the argument advanced by Pottier (1999) that the politi-co-economic regimes that affect most African small-holders today are rooted in colonialism. One has to realise also that in most African countries, formal colonialism ended almost forty years ago. Yet, we have to recognise that the governing classes which took over at that time have done very little to shift the economy and politics away from those designed by the rulers of yesteryear (Mohan et al, 2000).

What remains of the 'salvation mission'?

The essence of the colonialist 'salvation mission' and administration, and its impact on local cultures, and consequently on the evolution of norms and values will be analysed in later sections of this book, while describing the specific characteristics of the countries covered by this research.

As far as the economy is concerned, the European colonists wanted the conquest of the African continent to pay for itself (Pottier, 1999). Therefore, at least during the first part of the colonial period - until the Second World War - the most important effect was that expansion largely benefited the metropolis and the colonies themselves too little, as stated by Crowder (1968), who clearly explained the situation for West Africa:

'In both British and French West Africa economic policy (up to the Second World War) subordinated African interests to those of the needs of the Metropolis. The railways, and later the tarmac roads, tell the tale most clearly: simple feeders linking areas that produced the crops and minerals Europe needed with the ports on the coast. There was little attempt to develop communications in such a way that the internal as distinct from the export economy of the colonies would be stimulated. So West Africa was subjected to an administrative system whose avowed purposes were to bring the material as well as the spiritual 'benefits' of Europe to the African, but saw these not in terms of the rational development of these colonies in their own interest, but in the interest of the mother country.'

On the whole, the Second World War brought a number of economic and social reforms which were supplemented by political reforms leading progressively to the independence of the colonies. It 'changed the lethargic speed of social, economic and political change into a higher gear from which it was difficult to go into reverse' (Crowder, 1968).

Western models in a non-Western environment

The development tragedy of African countries has been, for several decades, the complete sur-render to external models and policies (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999).
In fact, after the Second World War, both economic development and modernisation theories have been utilised in the colonialist effort to westernise the Third World (Mehmet, 1995). Western institutions and models were imposed on colonised people, to varying degrees - which will be highlighted at a later stage.

Moreover, until the 1960s, many social scientists even argued that traditional institutions obstructed development. It was only during the 1970s that it became popular to consider that use could be made of these institutions for enhancing development action (van Dusseldorp, 1993).

Today, many analysts even support the view that the pre-colonial past appears to have been much more secure than recent models, since development practices were regulated through institutionalised means that could be controlled locally. Knowledge was localised and socially constructed, embedded in local livelihoods and cosmologies (Pottier, 1999).

Non-Western rulers in power: the 'tied' and the 'bypassed'

The African politicians who took over from the departing colonialists brought little change. With very few exceptions, the colonial mode of accumulation was maintained in most of the countries, this time with the governing classes playing a major clientelistic role (Mohan et al, 2000). They pursued policies which protected their own interests, some commercial interests of the former metropolis and some elites from the ravages of recession. Unfortunately, these policies increased the burden of austerity on the most vulnerable groups (Clark, 1991). This confirms the diversity in prosperity which is apparently inherent in the development process: some groups are included, others are excluded (De Haan, 2000).
In fact, once in power, the new governing classes failed to mobilise the previous coalition allies - the workers and the peasants - who helped them to confront the colonial power. Very quick-ly the one-party state replaced the expected dictatorship of the proletariat (Mohan et al, 2000). The period 1960-1980 then witnessed a strong intervention of the state in the economy; the validity of this option can often be questioned in the case of emerging economies. As explained by Secker and Cobb (1991), while many African governments were hostile to private enterprises, Asian governments considered them as central to growth, investing hugely in agri-culture and rural infrastructure, and then raising agricultural productivity. In most African countries, lack of investment in the rural sector resulted in a fall in agricultural productivity, and general poor economic performance leading to the rise of 'parallel markets'... thus posing a threat to the authority of the governing class (Mohan et al, 2000).

The 1980s was then a period of rapid economic decline for sub-Saharan African countries, and this was subsequently aggravated by the indebtedness of the late 1980s exacerbated by the development of corruption.

On the whole, it was not interventionism as such which produced the crisis, but the nature of state intervention which resulted in the macro-economic imbalances that led to economic reform and structural adjustment programmes.

The consequent structural adjustment programmes had high social costs, and given the current socio-economic context, it is understandable why pressing and persistent demands for equity, democracy and social justice were expressed as paramount objectives alongside the need for economic growth (Clark, 1991).

1.2   Socio-economic context

1.2.1   The macro level

'Development, where are you?'
Development can be defined formally as the achievement of economic growth and hence improved living standards. However, over time it has become clear that, even in the so-called 'developed countries', development is not just about economics.
Justifying the call for alternative development paths, Friedman (1992) questioned trends in poverty, unemployment and inequality. He expressed his doubt that, if one of these key concerns has worsened, whether the result could be called 'development' even if per capita income doubled.
Economic growth by itself does not lead automatically to improved living standards for the majority. A model of development which aims at ensuring justice, or just development, should therefore be about attacking the web of forces which cause poverty and should comprise the following ingredients: development of infrastructure, economic growth, poverty alleviation, equity, a sustainable natural resource base, democracy and social justice (Clark, 1991).
In his introduction to an analysis of the role of grassroots organisations and NGOs in rural development, Uphoff (1995) questions in clear terms the notion of development decades...

The 1960s were dubbed the first 'Development Decade', and the 1970s managed to qualify as the second, though less confidently. The 1980s might better have been called the 'debt and disillusionment decade.' How will the 1990s be characterized? As the deregulation, democratization and decentralization decade? Or will a drearier designation be appropriate - the decade of disorder, disinvestment and decline?'

Uphoff seems to be torn between the classical positions of the 'pessimist' or the 'optimist.' Indeed, we discuss the place of 'Afropessimism' later in this book. To some extent, the failure of development decades has certainly to do with the 'quick fix' mentality which is fed by the short-term returns and blindly short budget lines which dictate the behaviour of national decision makers and of international financial and donor institutions. And yet, if we regard development as a social process , surely we need to accept more dimensions than the short-term, material ones. What about the temporal dimension, of different time frames and of patience, or the cultural dimension, of different values?

Structural Adjustment Programmes did not make it
The long-lasting economic crisis in most African countries which led to structural adjustment programmes has generated a growing body of analysis and prescription on what has gone wrong and what should be done (Whitaker, 1986). African states have been facing serious dilemmas in their attempts to implement the economic reform policies required by the World Bank, IMF and some bilateral Western donors. These reforms encompass the removal of price controls and subsides on basic necessities, shrinkage of the public sector and the liberalisation of trade.

The austerity measures implied have a negative impact on the living standards of the majority of the population (Ho-Won Jeong, 1997). The liberalisation of the markets and the withdrawal of the public sector from many economic activities was (apparently) justified by the weaknesses of the state in promoting development.

However experience has shown that there is good reason for continued concern about achieving equity. It is after all financial motivation and reward which ensure the efficiency of private operators; these do not match any (philanthropic) objective of helping the poor.

In other words, the system had been opened up because government support was weak, but there has been no improvement. Especially where public regulatory and monitoring services are missing, excessive privatisation is even leading to the polarisation of wealth, environment degradation and increasing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Furthermore, over the last decade, African governments have been under constant pressure from the group of donors to democratise. Democratisation is supposed to bring in the stability and equitable power-sharing which are necessary to facilitate economic growth. Some recent examples in Africa, however, have shown that the paths chosen for democratisation are leading rather to the fragmentation of society by the political parties being created around ethnical groups (Meilink, 2000). At the same time, the wave of democratisation is to some extent undermining efforts to implement the unpopular economic policies which are said to be needed to achieve economic balance (Ho-Won Jeong, ibid).

The key element emerging here is the growing recognition that structural adjustment policies, which are formulated by nations in collaboration with - and under the pressure of - the major international financial institutions and have as their primary goal the restoration of equilibrium in the economies, are short term in their focus. Despite their medium-term implications, there appears to have been a tendency to neglect Africa's longer-term needs (Stewart, Lall and Wangwe, 1992).

Furthermore, the inherent internal social and political inertia in many African countries, combined with the need to cope with drastic structural adjustment measures, have led many African countries to progressively move away from the *Lagos Plan of Action* adopted by the OAU in 1981. This was designed with clear long-run objectives: alleviation of mass poverty and improvement in the standard of living of people, self-sustained development and national and regional self-reliance.

Local initiatives still 'bypassed'

Being guided by external initiatives, development programmes and relevant support resources have for a long time been managed by government institutions which are not linked to, or supportive of, grassroots efforts in any coherent and enduring way.

'It is because development has for long been seen as the responsibility of the state that popular initiatives have been thwarted, much to the detriment of Africa's future. This ideology of development needs to be revamped.'

Anyang' Nyong', P. (1990). *30 years of independence in Africa: the lost decades* Nairobi, Kenya, Academy Science Publishers

One of the great development challenges has always been to mobilise local experience and integrate it with relevant expertise (Johnston and Clark, 1982). There is still a need, however, for more information on existing local organisations and the way to build from them.

Which way to go?

'At a cross-roads Alice tried to get advice from the cat:
Alice: Which direction should I take?
The Cat: It all depends where you want to go.
Alice: But, I don't know...
The Cat: Then, you'll have to walk a long time.'

<div align="right">(Lewis Carroll, Alice in the Wonderland)</div>

Not knowing where they were going led many African countries to be *'hemmed in'* on the *long road to structural adjustment* (Mohan et al, 2000). Having always asked 'experts' for advice on how we should 'develop', many of our countries have become the subject of endless studies, making them permanent laboratories for all sorts of tests.

The 'expert culture' which dominated the 'modernity' approaches in the first post- independence period continued to guide the thrust of development activities, in particular in the field of agricultural and rural development. Prevalence is still given to experts' ideas and advice, undermining those local experiences which have been, over the years, ' effective responses to the highly specific challenges posed in African agriculture ' (Richards, 1985). It is important to underline here that, unfortunately, the current practices of most African governments so far have matched these Western development models.

Today in Africa, the failure of government attempts to control economic development is progressively leading to a process of political and economic liberalisation which allows local initiatives to flourish. It has to be recognised that in Africa, from the time of independence onwards, the relationship between the capitals and the rural areas has continued to evolve to some extent, as has the system of checks and balances. However, it is only of relatively recent date that economic problems or failures have helped to engender the importance of involving all stakeholders at different levels.

Many countries are now trying to design their policies for decentralisation. It is the case in Ghana, under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Local Government, and in Benin and Burkina Faso, through decentralisation projects.

Nonetheless, the debate is still going on about the real content of the decentralisation process, and whether they are really aiming at the empowerment of local populations. There are still questions about the right way to ensure proper linkage between local, intermediate and central levels.

Indeed, we are still confronted with two different situations. On the one side we have the 'modernity' institutions which are mostly governmental. Their agents are currently facing the reality that they have to find new ways to cope with the changing environment, but *they have no culture of real partnership and co-operation* with local institutions and populations. On the other

<div align="center">25</div>

side are local people and communities who do not believe anymore that they have anything to offer, as they have always been told that they should *change their way of being and doing* in order to 'develop.'

Towards a learning strategy
It is important to realise that decentralisation does not mean a government official going out from the capital to settle in rural areas, for that is only 'deconcentration'. There is no decentralisation without devolution of certain powers, fiscal and decision making, to local bodies (Ranis, 1991).

The way to achieve this is what remains the most questionable. The specific solutions in each country, even in different regions inside a country, will depend a lot on the relationship between the state and the civil society and on the system of power and representation in place (Chabal, 1992).

Somehow, we should look for alternatives to current development policies in Africa. The main challenge for African development today is to analyse past experiences and formulate new strategies for a better future (Delgado, 1995).

In this research, it is assumed that time has come to recognise that 'we do not know' where to go, and try to learn (together) our way out.

In his book *Indigenous African Institutions* which he said was *dedicated to African leaders and elites for their re-education*, Ayittey (1991) stressed that Africa's development must be rooted in its own indigenous institutions, building or improving upon them. As a prerequisite, there is a need for a deep insight into the local institutions and their development potential.
Therefore, it is hoped that the results of this research could contribute to current efforts to formulate new strategic guidelines for African development which learn from local dynamics.

1.2.2 The micro level: the local dynamics

About dynamics...
Dynamics:'the various forces, physical, moral, economic, etc. operating in any field / the way such forces shift or change in relation to one another...
<div align="right">Webster's New World Dictionary</div>

And what is local?...
'The local level is most often equated with the community level, but many kinds of collective action are better undertaken at a level below the community - at the group or neighborhood level - and others may be better handled by several communities together. Moreover, what is called a 'community' may provide no substantial social basis for collective action. Rather it may be only a geographical entity labeled as a village or community by outsiders for their own convenience...
'Local' has different meanings depending on...the perspective...'
<div align="right">Uphoff, 1986</div>

What are local dynamics?

It is felt that the notion of *local dynamics* suits best to describe the various *forces on the move at local level, in the continuously changing environment* of Africa, struggling to help local communities to meet some of their priority needs. Such forces are in general small associations or groups, or even individuals, both social and/or business-oriented. Some of those dynamics are old or long-established, others are currently appearing, but in their entirety they form part of the basic constituencies of the emerging *civil society* in Africa.

For this study, it was decided to focus on associations or groups in rural areas. This was to avoid dispersion, but it was also based on the assumption that in most rural areas, those groups, in general, have more impact than individuals.

'A nation can be maintained only if, between the State and the individual,
there is interposed a whole series of secondary groups near enough
to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action
and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life...
Occupational groups are suited to fill this role, and that is their destiny.'

Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, 1974

However, it is important to stress here that group dynamics are not faceless or anonymous. Many of them owe their dynamism to strong leaders, whatever may be the source of their motivation. In this study, the strategies of the main actors were assessed alongside the groups' strategies.

In practical terms, the local level is the level where people believe they can easily influence their own affairs. Putting it differently, one can also say that the local level is the space within which people feel it is still worthwhile expressing their passion to the full.

Examples of local dynamics, many of them unfortunately not well-known, can be seen nowadays in many places in Africa.

In Bonou Asrossa, in the south-east of Benin, thanks to the sphere of solidarity built up around a *'whistle club'* of some young people of the village, a strong farmers' association was born. This led to the creation of a Savings and Credit Fund and a Rural Health Credit Union, which are much admired today.

In Kotokpa (Zogbodomè), in the Central Region of Benin, the *Adji* game, a well-known African traditional calculus game, helped local communities to build up a strong cohesion. On this basis, they set up a savings system, took steps to increase agricultural production and then embarked upon various collective activities such as drinking water supply and organising an efficient security system at village level.

In Sapone, in Burkina Faso, over a period of twenty years, a very informal football club of young people turned into a dynamic farmers' group. Today it owns a large farm, invests in many village development activities and runs a small local radio station as well as a secondary school.

In Ghana, the success of the Development Committee in the Yamfo village is mainly based on the resources provided by the traditional Funeral Group: drinking water supply, contributing towards the village electrification, and towards the construction of a health centre and a school.

Such dynamic initiatives are not widely publicised, although in some cases such initiatives just need peace and quiet - or to be left alone, unknown - to stay alive; experience has shown indeed that too much support has killed development successes.

Despite this one limitation, it can be assumed that, whenever justified, avoiding current discontinuities between different levels, and specifically building on local dynamics could be a sound way to ensure more coherent and collective action for development.

1.3 The interest of this study: questioning the discontinuities...

1.3.1 General interest

It has to be admitted that much of the institutional change implied by the complexity of 'development' problems is beyond the framework of the local development dynamics. It requires more global solidarity. The contribution of local dynamics is just a part of the solution, but one of the few answers within our reach.

Contribution to learning approaches on sustainable development
The 'failure of contemporary development to meet popular interest underscores the need to devise more people-centred approaches which stress empowerment and participation' (Brohman, 1996).

There is also 'a growing concern that the expansion of scholarly attention to the impact of global intrusions on local space has not been accompanied by adequate attentiveness to local response.' (Chadwick Alger, 1988)

Therefore, it is expected that the evaluation of the concepts and the methodologies used in this research could better guide further insights into the local dynamics and help improve the linkages between these dynamics and support levels.

Besides, the lack of adequate linkages between local development dynamics and national policies can be seen as a braking influence on rural development. The process of political and economic change currently underway in Africa is encouraging several national, regional and international institutions to redefine the links between research and development institutions on the one hand, and, on the other, grassroots actors and other local partners. The results of this research could shed some light on this process and contribute to improving learning processes on sustainable development in the countries concerned through the implementation of measures to be suggested to better capitalise on local dynamics. Hopefully, this could lead to improving the national development programmes, through better design and implementation of national, regional and international partnerships or co-operation for rural development. The necessity is indeed more and more recognised for development co-operation organisations to create space for more effective partnerships with the developing countries where the latter could really take leadership in development efforts (Rasheed, 1996).

Such change can only be based on practical programmes and experiences. It is hoped, therefore, that this research could ultimately lead to a pilot programme for local development in the areas covered in the three countries.

On the same line, there will be widespread dissemination of results to all those persons and institutions having contributed to the research project, to local actors (cf next section), and at the levels of scientific institutions and decision-makers. Means will be sought for publishing in the most appropriate media in both French and English.

Contribution to learning and development practices at local level
At the micro-economic level, it can be expected that through efficient linkages (when necessary), support institutions could help local actors to strengthen the impact of their development activities. In particular, it is hoped that the results of this research will contribute to processes of genuine empowerment of local actors in national partnerships, so that their own developmental values can become part of the equation of local dynamics and national policies. This is a key issue in the current context of decentralisation programmes in most African countries, where many questions are still open, about what was really centralised and what is really being or to be decentralised. Many concerns are also being expressed about the extent to which the local people could really have the capacity to influence the new (decentralised) institutions, so that we do not end up simply with a deconcentration of the central power system (APAD, Bulletin Nº 16, 1998).

Every effort will be made for a participatory design of some of the methodological tools to be used for field work in this research, so that local organisations could continue using them in their management systems. The same way, to their benefit, necessary action will be taken, with the support of intermediary organisations and associations, to ensure publication of short summaries of the results in the main local languages and dissemination through such media as local and rural radio.

1.3.2   Personal interest

Childhood in the shadow of the village chief
I grew up in the shadow of the man who, for more than twelve years, was the chief in our village: my father.
Already when I was about seven years old, I found myself in the privileged position of going through the School of Life, in a very enjoyable way. Every Thursday, following my father's secretary, I would attend on the often impassioned sessions of the Arbitration Tribunal which my father chaired and where people always tried to settle any conflict that had started in the village. That is how I learned the essence of all I know about village life, about what is important and what is not, about what binds people together and what comes between them, about who has power, or not, and why... It is during this period that I discovered the major values of our society; later, when I attended the 'modern' school in town, I very quickly could put things in perspective... comparing urban and rural life, in some, modernity and tradition. From that time on, the choice was clear to me. I spent most of my school holidays in the village. During the first half of the holidays I even refused to play with my friends, preferring to stay in my father's shop, where there was an endless stream of customers, and of village elders coming to advise him...
It gave me intense pleasure to listen to the 'old men' and, above all, in the evening, to talk over the day's news and events with my father... Very soon my keen interest in 'village affairs' was born.

Professional background

The initiative for this research came forth from that background and from an analysis which draws on personal experience in rural development: ten years at the national level and twelve years in international co-operation.

From the experience at national level, I learnt two key lessons, about the discontinuities with local level and about the limited contribution of the national expertise to development strategies.

Indeed, with my village background, when I started my career (in agricultural extension), I could quickly realise how much the 'modernity'-oriented administration overlooks village life. Our image of village reality is limited (by our frame) or deformed: we see what we have learnt to see, what we are used to. Our field trips - too quick to see and understand what is really happening - are more often guided by administrative concerns rather than development purposes: collecting production statistics to complete our monthly reports or to help the hierarchy to design new projects which will bring 'fresh oxygen' in a crisis environment...

Another important problem is the marginalisation of national experts, whose contribution is hardly used in the design of government policies and strategies, or who are called in when firm guidelines have already been decided upon. The main reason is that, more often, priority is given to foreign experts. The popular saying that 'No-one is a prophet in his own land' really applies, unfortunately, in this case.

We are trapped then in what could be called *the vicious circle of false agreements on development programmes*. National experts act as if they were in agreement with ministers. In fact, because of their very fragile material conditions, few of them dare to give their real opinions or to give different opinions to those of their ministers. The few who have the courage to do so often get remarks like 'That is the experts' conclusion', as well as the reputation of being trouble makers with all the possible implications of that.

Consequently we are often faced with the situation that in negotiations with donors the national agenda is often quite weak. With such poor opposition in the debate, the donors are accused of pushing their ideas and views, often rightly but perhaps more than they deserve.

Later on, I realised that the more that such exchanges become international and multi-lateral in nature, the greater is the challenge of bridging various conceptual and cultural gaps. There are attempts, in international fora, to establish processes of multi-party stakeholder dialogue with representatives ranging from highly articulate (Northern) governmental parties to relatively inexperienced and fragile bodies from a country's emerging civil society. When the spectrum of opinions, experiences, needs and expectations is so diverse, it is hard to resist the tempting - but short-sighted - conclusion that 'we are of one world, but we live in different ones.'

If development is to take the more human and community-focussed dimension which it has so often lacked in recent decades, we face a dual challenge, and it is hoped that this research can contribute to that. We need first to empower *the bypassed*, the local initiatives, to explain and communicate more about the (often holistic and hard-to-grasp) nature of their approach, when they are comfortable and unthreatened in doing so. But we also need to enable, perhaps

even to empower, *the tied* to learn to understand and appreciate that which they have not properly seen: the power of the local initiative.

In this, we face the added factor of increasing Afropessimism which risks becoming a barrier to the dialogues we need now and shall need in the future. Afropessimism is a frame of mind which is born of exasperation, but like most exasperations, it is based more on lack of insight than understanding. The current solutions offered by Afropessimism lie in leaving the burden of Africa to the Africans. They fail to recognise the imperative of building up linkages and meaningful communication between the tied and the bypassed, and of not absolving external parties of a share of the responsibility...

Towards an African perspective
On the whole, during my professional experience, I have been confronted with the realities of the 'world of rural development' from local to national and international levels.

From the situations I experienced in the field, in villages and at national level; from the lessons I learnt from successes as well as from failures; from the insights into the diversity of Africa which my international experience has given me and from the possibility of 'stepping back' which I got with living abroad for a while, I have drawn the following conclusions (or assumptions) which were the fundaments of my strong motivation to conduct this research:
- there are remarkable discontinuities between what we are trying to push from the top and what is really happening at the grassroots level;
- there are very clear limits to the value of 'imported development models'. This suggests that African countries stop thinking that they should run behind the 'developed countries' *in order to catch up*;
- there are some fundamental values (left) in the 'African social contract' (the solidarity tradition of Africa) which must be maintained, but we have to ensure that our development activities result in measurable progress. Experience shows that not all our traditional values lead to what we can call positive change for the society;
- despite the failings of some national development policies and plans, a good number of local initiatives - in rural development in particular - have achieved real success because they have met the essential condition of being based upon the real problems and the wishes of local people, thus ensuring their motivation and involvement. Nonetheless, through a lack of skills in strategising at the local level, these gains have not been capitalised widely;
- it is in rural areas that traditional social and cultural values are most alive. It is from here that directions for the future, for attaining sustainable development, can often originate, through learning from local level to improve development programmes at other levels;
- there is, therefore, a need to establish a dialogue between those involved directly in local dynamics and those at higher levels, in charge of development policies and strategies, in other words, 'those with the power to decide what will happen and those with the power to decide what should happen' (Wagemans, 1987);
- in the whole process, capacity strengthening at local level should play a major role: empowerment of local people through various activities, and organising of the contribution of *the Diaspora* - the 'Sons abroad'.

There is, in conclusion, a need for future African development strategies to integrate those elements and to draw from national realities and thinking, rather than foreign approaches.

The underlying ambition of this research project was therefore to seek to make a contribution to the on-going process of reflection on development policies which could be genuinely African, a contribution to root to the African renaissance vision into local realities.

Chapter 2

Designing the research process

2.1   Overview

The problem addressed in this research, as has been explained in Chapter 1, is the extent to which local dynamics are overlooked and the predominance of the 'expert culture', which are major factors leading to development failures.

The research has been inspired by the fact that very little literature is available on local development dynamics which I consider should be the entry point to sustainable development. The key focus is then to develop a *praxeology* - a theory to inform practice - about the local dynamics, for development workers, but also local people as well as for the co-operation agencies, starting with a better insight into these dynamics and, therefore, to suggest possible ways to build from them. In that respect, I decided to base the study on an open exploration with the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as a general methodological approach, and on a series of iterations based on Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984).

The current chapter presents the research objectives, the initial concepts explored, as well as the research methodology and the main features of the research location.

2.2   The research objectives and questions

2.2.1   The research objectives

The overall objective
The overall objective of this research was *to provide a better insight* into the reality of local development dynamics (in selected rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana) and *to formulate propositions for effective linkages*, when necessary, between them and various support levels, in order *to develop a praxeology on how to build from local dynamics for sustainable development.*

The specific objectives
The specific objectives of the research project were the following:

- Specific objective 1
  to identify, explore and analyse some examples of local dynamics in rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana in order to have a general view of their processes;

- Specific objective 2
  to assess the mode of operation of the local dynamics, in order to identify and analyse their principal characteristics;

- Specific objective 3
  to further assess, in other areas of the same countries, the importance of the main characteristics identified;

- Specific objective 4
  to examine a number of local development successes or failures - endogenous groups or project groups - in order to check whether they could be explained by some of the main characteristics identified;

- Specific objective 5
  to assess the current and potential links between local dynamics and the support institutions, and to make suggestions for sustainable development partnerships or co-operation programmes.

It is hoped that the research will contribute to new development practice, through suggestions to improve the linkages between local dynamics and other institutions. In that respect the results could lead, at a later stage, to design guidelines for a pilot programme to support local development in the three countries involved.

The analysis of the local dynamics (specific objectives 1 and 2) will aim at
- understanding how they emerge and how they work, clarifying the management process and styles involved, including the decision making process and the power system;
- highlighting the main characteristics which could be upgraded and contribute to institution building at different levels.

The examination of the linkages between the local dynamics and the support institutions (specific objective 5) will aim at optimising the capacity to use the lessons drawn from local aspirations and norms, as well as assessing the possibilities for improving what is happening at local level.

The implications for future partnerships or co-operation will be broadly assessed, paying attention to the way in which external interventions, when and where necessary, could be planned to encourage local dynamics (and not to hamper them).

2.2.2   The research questions

Main research questions
The context of African development, as explained in Chapter 1, shows the necessity to improve linkages between development efforts undertaken at local level and those at various support levels.

An initial survey of the literature points, on the one hand, to publications about overall rural development policies in Africa and to evaluations and analyses of these policies and, on the

'With the developmental model, comes the cultural model. Inside its shell, a compartmentalized way of life where each aspect of life is tied up to different sites, where each type of knowledge is ascribed to different, self-legitimizing specialists.

The school is the site of our learning; the factory or the business is the site of our labour; the temple, the church is the site of our belief; the clinic is the site of our birth, of our care, and of our death... And each site has its own specialists, endowed with the right to preach and practice their speciality.

This sort of world vision is contrary to the vision alive in many African societies, where life is indivisible, and just not available for compartmentalization, where spirituality and materialism are not just hand in hand, but forming the same: everything is everything, and God is everywhere.

The thrust to specialize has brought with it a division of labour, has facilitated a rich diversity of domination and exploitation, and has legitimized the creation of relationships based upon the notion that knowledge unshared is power maintained.

True knowledge, though, is a resource that is shared, that draws its very being, its strength and its development from being collective.

Life itself is a collective experience.'

(Enda Graf Sahel, Réinventer le présent: quelques jalons pour l'action, Dakar, 1994)

A soft systems approach, therefore, seems appropriate for such a study, as 'people are at the heart of soft systems thinking' (Hamilton, 1995), where 'a system is a construct with arbitrary boundaries for discourse about complex phenomena to emphasise wholeness, inter-relationships and emergent properties' (Röling, 1994).

2.3.3   The sociology of organisations, an actor-oriented approach

The analysis of the local development dynamics will draw on the theory of the ' sociology of organisations ' (Bernoux, 1985; Reed, 1992), an actor-oriented approach (Long, 1992).
According to Bernoux (1985), organisations cannot be seen as 'responses to environment, but rather as 'social constructs' of actors willing to play a specific role in their environment'. He then recommends that the role of actors be considered as the central issue in the study of organisations. In his method for the strategic analysis of organisations, therefore, the main actors should be identified, and their goals, resources and constraints assessed, together with their alliances and their oppositions; this should help to uncover the individual and the collective strategies.

In the same way, Livian (1995) stresses, as illustrated by Figure 2.1, that only the analysis of individual actors' behaviour in specific situations can help shed light on the organisations they belong to:

Situation   ⟶   Individual actor ⟶ Behaviour
Problems
Constraints
Opportunities
Partners
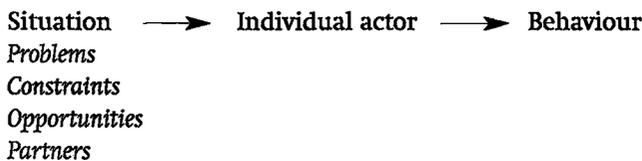
Figure 2.1 Individual actor's behaviour in specific situation (within an organisation)

2.3.4 Collective action and social dilemmas

Apart from some individual successes which could also be considered, most of the local dynamics are in fact local organisations and, as such, involve more than purely individual efforts. 'They embody some kind of *collective action* in which the interests, resources, ideas, and ideals of many persons are brought together. (They) serve as channels for collective action that are reinforced by diffused benefits, legitimation, and shared expectations. There can also be *penalties* imposed for persons who violate institutional obligations.' (Olson, 1965).

However, the concept of *economy of affection*, as defined by Hyden (1980), applies to most of the economy-based local dynamics in Africa. For those dynamics, 'economic action is not motivated by individual profit alone, but is embedded in a range of social considerations that allow for redistribution of opportunities and benefits in a manner which is impossible where modern capitalism or socialism *(at least their influence)* prevails and formalized state action dominates the process of redistribution'.

It is also important to stress that the negation of power relationships in the economy of affection, as described by Hyden, cannot be considered today as a general rule, even in rural areas where, as elsewhere, claims for democracy and *transparent procedures* are more and more important. This consideration is crucial for the viability of the local groups or dynamics. Many collective initiatives have collapsed in the past because the management system did not allow the setting up of a clear basis to assure accountability and viability (Vodouhè, 1996).

Olson's theory (ibid) is also relevant here for collective action, which helps to determine whether a group is *privileged* (presumably succeeding) or *latent* (failing unless incentives are available to induce or improve members' contributions, according to net benefits from the collective action to the individual members.)

Although individuals are often facing dilemmas, confronting their own interests with the collective ones, 'it is possible to have a *social dilemma* represented by a pay-off structure and yet have people co-operate. The reason would be that the individuals' utilities do not present them with a dilemma. The utilities most important in eliciting co-operation are those associated with altruism, following social norms, and obeying dictates of conscience' (Dawes, 1980).

2.3.5 Culture, cosmovision and development

As explained above with the systems approach, development should be based on the people's aspirations, it should be built on local cultural and social values.

The productivity-driven development model of the western world which is already being questioned (Petrella, 1995) is quite far removed from the African culture and from *the African way of life* which cannot really match the Western 'instrumental reason' characterised by reductionism, dealing with the complexity of human development by reducing it to its (apparent) constituent parts (Woodhill and Röling, 1998).

New thinking on *cosmovision* also seems quite relevant to this study, as it can allow, as defined in the overall objective, 'a better insight into the reality of the local dynamics'. The cosmovision concept is based on the fact that in many places people's perception or view of the world is quite different from the Western rationale concept. In that respect, the COMPAS[3] group

other hand, to publications about local development or rural development initiatives. There appears to be a lack of 'vertical' studies or research on both levels, and on the synergies which (could) exist between them. With the exception of a few networks[2], it has to be said that many of the works on the dynamics of grassroots rural development have a tight local focus, and are often centred around the relations between village-level actors themselves or between them and their (generally) Northern partners. Such relationships often emerge because of the lack of mechanisms for exchange and partnership with other actors within the countries.

In that respect, many scientists have clearly expressed the need for further investigation, among them Olivier de Sardan (APAD Bulletin, No 6, 1993):

'Such is the nature of the problems in the permanent crisis facing African economies - no matter what their causes may be - that it is very often tempting to say 'All that has to be done is...'. Yet what is missing the most is a proper understanding of the real mechanisms at work, and an analysis of the processes at play, at all levels.' (de Sardan, 1993)

Therefore, this research focused on three main questions:
1 what are the main characteristics of the local development dynamics currently in place in some rural areas in West Africa, and specifically the conditions for their emergence and their development?
2 what are the current linkages - if any - between the local development dynamics and the different support institutions?
3 when and how to improve the effectiveness of these linkages or how to build on local dynamics in order to promote a more coherent and concerted action for development?

Sub-research questions
The main questions could be divided in the following sub-research questions:
• What are the main goals/aspirations of the local people involved in the local dynamics?
• What problems or constraints (related to the goals/aspirations above) do they address?
• How are the dynamics initiated?
• Which traditional and / or cultural or religious values are they rooted in?
• What is the real part of these values played in the creation, the development and the current evolution of the dynamics observed?
• How do the local dynamics operate their own development processes?
• What were the main steps in building these dynamics, what were the difficulties faced and the strategies developed to solve them?
• What are the current problems and the possible solutions at local level and at any other level(s)?
• What are the key factors explaining success or failure of local development initiatives??
• What are the current linkages between the local dynamics and the various development services and institutions operating at local level?
• What are the conditions for the creation of a supportive environment for the development of the local dynamics and/or their replicability?

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2   The GAO network, between some African NGOs and their European partners is one example.

2.3   The initial concepts explored

2.3.1   A preliminary option: about theoretical perspective and local dynamics

Although working towards a praxeology, based on an open exploration - as explained in Section 2.1, it was not possible to go to the field with an 'empty mind'... A first set of concepts were necessary, as an 'initial pair of glasses' to help frame or have an initial look at the reality. Among these concepts are the following: soft systems perspective, sociology of organisations, collective action and social dilemmas, and cosmovision and development. The current section briefly introduces them. After the exploratory tour (Chapter 3), the concepts which then appear to be the most relevant to this study will be reviewed (Chapter 4). They then help provide more focus for this study, based on the first indications on the reality of the local development dynamics.

However, the main option for this study was to look at the local reality without preconceived ideas. It was very important that insight into local dynamics be guided, as much as possible, by local experience, perceptions and views.

One of the main reasons for failure in many development activities is the predominance of interveners' perspectives which often discard common sense wisdom, in this case, the local people's own apparatus to classify, experiment and evaluate daily phenomena (Brouwers, 1993). In that sense, theoretical concepts should be used in such a way that they can help build on local knowledge. This position is illustrated by the following proverb:

> 'Pour sortir du puits, c'est au bout de la vieille corde qu'on tresse la nouvelle'
> (Proverbe Fon, Bénin)
> *To get out of the well, you need to use the old piece of rope, and lengthen it with the new one'*
> *(Fon proverb, Benin)*

Consequently, during the field work, sufficient attention had to be paid to traditional / historical roots of the local dynamics selected.

2.3.2   A Soft Systems perspective

The complexity of the situation under study suggests to take a systems thinking approach. As expressed by Engel (1997), 'systems thinking is to set some constructed abstract wholes or 'systemic images' against the perceived world to help us study it. The aim of such study may be to more adequately intervene in it, to illuminate certain aspects of it, or more generally, to learn about it'.

Checkland (1981) stressed that the reductionist approach of science is not able to cope with the problems of the real world which is composed of 'coherently organised entities which cannot properly be reduced merely to an aggregate of their components'.
It seems, indeed, as illustrated in the following box, that the reductionist approach does not match the African context.

upholds that 'sustainable agriculture can be developed by building on traditional agriculture' but that 'traditional agriculture can only be fully understood if the cosmovision of farmers is taken seriously'. Indeed, in the local people's cosmovision, both the material and the spiritual dimensions are considered relevant and objectively existing and influencing their daily life. The COMPAS group argues that so far 'the recognition (usually) given to indigenous knowledge is rather utilitarian and limited to technical aspects'. There is a 'tendency (...) to validate parts of indigenous knowledge based on formal (material) criteria and to isolate it from the value system, belief system and own logic of the local population... (while) understanding and dialoguing on cosmovision (can facilitate) endogenous development of the community' (COMPAS, 1996). Finally, the COMPAS group recommends that the objectives of development programmes be reformulated in order to allow activities which can bridge the gap and develop synergetic relationships between farmers, scientists and intermediary organisations: 'both indigenous and external knowledge will be strengthened and the potentials of the community will be mobilized'.

2.4   The methodology

> ' Le fait suggère l'idée, l'idée dirige l'expérience, l'expérience juge l'idée' [4]
>
> (Claude Bernard)

2.4.1   The general methodological orientation: the Grounded Theory approach

The general methodological approach for this research work had to be flexible enough to respond to the complexity of the context, and to take into consideration that past experiences with strong frames and rationale led nowhere.

Without rejecting any theory or exogenous logic, it was important to follow an approach which looks for the best way possible to optimise the dynamic pluralism of the actors involved, validating and confirming findings and suggestions, progressively building the propositions for effective linkages between local dynamics and national development strategies.

It was felt, therefore, that the Grounded Theory would suit as a general guideline.
The Grounded Theory is a method that has been used extensively across a variety of social science disciplines. The basic principle of this approach is that a theory must emerge from the data; in other words, a theory must be grounded in the data. Hence the approach is inductive rather than deductive, as defined by two of its major proponents (Strauss and Corbin, 1990): 'the Grounded Theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived Grounded Theory about a phenomenon'...
The research process implied by this approach can be summarised as follows (Steins, 1999):

> A Grounded Theory is developed on the basis of a recursive, process-oriented procedure that has two key analytical features: (i) the constant comparative method and (ii) theoretical sampling. The constant comparative method begins as soon as researchers start forming provisional categories from the data. While coding an incident for a

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3 COMPAS: Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development, an international programme for intercultural dialogue on cosmovision and agriculture. Congress, 1996
4 Our translation: The facts lead to the idea, the idea shapes the experience, and the experience judges the idea (Claude Bernard)

category, it is also compared with previous incidents in the same category. As a consequence, theoretical properties of the categories are generated...

The processes of constant comparison and theoretical sampling continue until data gathering and comparative analysis yield no new examples and properties of a conceptual category, in other words, when the point of theoretical saturation is reached, and the Grounded Theory can be written (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

<div align="right">Steins (1999)</div>

Coutts (1994) suggests three important guidelines for researchers using the Grounded Theory approach:
- a periodical stepping-back to question the development of the research and the researcher's interpretation of the reality;
- the importance of maintaining a sceptical attitude;
- the necessity to follow the procedures - data collection and analytical procedures - which are designed to give rigor to the process.

In addition, the choice has been made to use case studies as a research strategy, in order to highlight the main features of social life in the communities concerned, as well as the interactions, the behaviour patterns... (Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, 1993).

2.4.2   Experiential learning: the successive learning cycles

For Kolb (1984), 'learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'.

The application of the research methodology results in learning, which relates not only to the area of application, but also to the framework of ideas and concepts, and to the methodology itself (Hamilton, 1995).

Furthermore, the theory generation implied by the Grounded Theory approach supposes the use of 'an iterative procedure - a succession of question-and-answer cycles - that entails examining a given set of cases and then refining or modifying those cases on the basis of subsequent ones' (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

Learning for theory generation through an iterative procedure then calls for a learning style such as experiential learning. This can be described as 'a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes - concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation'(Kolb, 1984). Only the first three stages are relevant to this research, where 'learning is then constituted by the apprehension of immediate concrete experience (observation) and comprehension of symbolic representations of experience (understanding). Transformation of knowledge from apprehension to comprehension takes place through intentional reflection (thinking)...' (Maarleveld, 2000).

These three-stage iterations can be represented in the figure below:
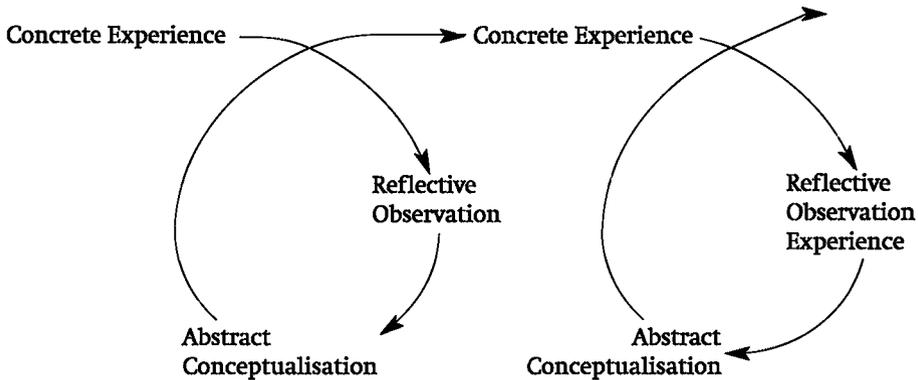
Figure 2.2 A three-stage process of experiential learning (Adapted from Kolb, 1984)

2.4.3   The different phases of the field work

The option taken to be guided by the Grounded Theory and through an iterative process such as experiential learning led to design as follows the different phases of the research project, with each new phase capitalising on the concrete experience of the last one.

The first phase of the research was an open exploration in the three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana). This phase, which relates to specific objective 1 (Section 2.2.1), helped, in the beginning, to establish the necessary contacts in order to facilitate the implementation of the research project, and, indeed, to get a first idea of the reality of the local development dynamics.

The outcomes of this *first learning cycle* were some broad categories of characteristics of local dynamics.

The next phases of the research were built progressively, each of them drawing on the outcomes of the precedent one - according to the basic principles of the Grounded Theory. On the whole, three other learning cycles were experienced, which can be summarised as follows:
- a second learning cycle which consisted in the pilot study, in Benin (Chapters 5 and 6), for the assessment of the broad categories of characteristics (derived from the first learning cycle); it led to identify what could be considered as the Key Existential Factors (KEF) of the local dynamics;

- a third learning cycle was designed to further assess the KEF with two other main cases (in Burkina Faso and Ghana), and, for comparative purpose, in a number of endogenous groups and project groups considered as successes or failures;

- a fourth learning cycle dealt with the last research question, the linking issue and the conditions for wider impact.

The following diagram (Figure 2.3) recapitulates on the four learning cycles and indicates, accordingly, the relevant chapters of the book. The inputs and the outcomes of the learning cycles - as they turned out - are presented in Table 2.1

What is the problem? *(Chapter 1)* ——————⟶ ⟵—————— The Research Design *(Chapter 2)*

The first step:

The First Learning Cycle *(Specific Objective 1)* ⟶ An Exploratory Tour *(Chapter 3)* ⟵
↓
Broad Categories of Characteristics

↓ ⟵—————— The Literature and 'the Reality' *(Chapter 4)*

The Second Learning Cycle *(Specific Objective 2)* Two Pilot Cases *(Chapters 5 and 6)* ⟵
↓
⟶ Key Existential Factors (KEF) *(Chapter 7)*

↓

The Third Learning Cycle *(Specific Objective 3)* Assessing further (the KEF): 2 Additional Cases *(Chapters 8 and 9)* 22 Group Observations *(Chapter 10)* ⟵
↓
⟶ Emerging Patterns *(Chapter 11)* About the KEF About Limitations to Impact

↓

The Fourth Learning Cycle *(Specific Objective 4 and 5)* Exploring Conditions for Wider Impact *(Chapter 12)* ⟵
↓
⟶ Conditions for Wider Impact: Catalytic Partnerships

↓

Drawing Lessons *(Chapter 13)*

↓

Towards a Fifth Learning Cycle *(Trying to implement)* Emerging Perspective Practical Implications

Figure 2.3 Recapulating on Methodology: The Four Learning Cycles and the Chapters Planning

Phase Components	1st Learning Cycle (LC1): An exploratory tour	2nd Learning Cycle (LC2): The 2 pilot cases	3rd Learning Cycle (LC3): Assessing further	4th Learning Cycle (LC4): Exploring conditions for wider impact
Objective	To get an idea of the reality of some local dynamics	Assessing the broad categories (from LC1)	Assessing the key existential factors (from LC2)	Assessing the key factors limiting impact (from LC3)
Methods / Techniques	Open exploration (grounded theory approach) / Open interviews of Key Informants and focus groups meetings	2 Pilot case studies / Participant observation, interviews of Key Informants, focus groups meetings	2 additional case studies (same techniques as for LC2) and 22 group observations (Focus group meetings and interviews of Key Informants)	2 additional group observations Same techniques as for LC3
Nodes for reflection	First patterns	Table with categories of the characteristics of the local dynamics	Table by KEF	Bottlenecks, then requirements for desirable impact
Outcomes	Broad categories of the characteristics of the local dynamics (for LC2)	Key Existential Factors (KEF) of the local dynamics	Patterns emerging from KEF & Other Patterns: Key Factors limiting impact	Conditions for wider impact (Catalytic Partnerships)

Table 2.1 Inputs and outcomes of the successive Learning Cycles.

2.4.4   The selection of the cases

The criteria for selection of the village groups visited during the different phases of the research will be explained at appropriate points in the relevant chapters but the general features are the following.

The locations visited during the first phase - the exploratory tour, were suggested by public organisations or by NGOs providing support to rural organisations and by resource persons - individual development actors - at national or local level. These were organisations considered as local development dynamics, as defined in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2). Two categories of groups were visited:
- organisations set up by local communities themselves (supported or not by development programmes or projects), whether their activities are cultural, economic and social, or integrating these different aspects;
- village groups of development projects.

Another basic criterion was that the local organisations selected should be those which, through their achievements, are making an effective (or visible) contribution to the development of their socio-economic environment (Husson, 1986).

Lessons learnt from the experience of the exploratory tour indicated the necessity, for the following phases, to base the selection on information gathered from all categories of possible informants, individuals or institutions active in the field and not only from the most dominant or the most available information.

As an example, for the second tour, my attention has been drawn to the Adji Club in Kotokpa by a person who has no institutional linkage with that village group or relevant to this research. The most striking fact is that less than two months before my first visit to the club, the agricultural extension staff guided me to visit another farmers' group in the same village! Later on, I was not surprised to discover (see Chapter 3, the *Do we have* story) that the Adji Club was not (officially) known to the extension service...

Finally, according to the methodological principles of the Grounded Theory and as shown in Table 2.1, each step of the research provided information for the next one. From the end of the second learning cycle each of the following ones is also introduced by a section entitled 'Taking the next step'.

2.4.5   Methods and techniques for data collection

Several different instruments were used for collecting data at each location, depending on each specific phase and the prevailing circumstances, mostly open or semi-structured interviews of key informants, group meetings, and participant observation.

The use of participant observation was determinant for this study, as it helped to gradually integrate in the local population through permanent or regular contacts over a long period (Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, 1993). Being able to participate in internal meetings of local organisations visited often allowed me to gather very interesting data.

The immersion 'in the normal daily life of the community members helps the researcher to collect relevant information, 'through observation rather than through formal surveys, indirect questions rather than questionnaires' (Pratt and Loizos, 1992).

Descriptive and analytical frameworks
The general descriptive and analytical frameworks used for the collection of the basic data in each group (Annexes 1 and 2), based on the theory of the sociology of organisations (Bernoux, 1985), helped assess, as explained in Section 2.3.3, the goals, resources, constraints, alliances and constraints of the actors.

The analytical frameworks designed to assess the main features emerging from the different phases of the research (Learning Cycles 1 to 4) are presented in Annex 3.

Assuring the quality of the inquiry
Combining different research methods - e.g. interviews, group meetings and participant observation - already contributes to the methodological triangulation. (Morse, 1994).

Furthermore, a key point in this research is the population targeted during the whole process of data collection. It has been quite informative to cover not only the active members of the local dynamics identified, but also *those who have been excluded*, and the part of the community which, for any reason, *did not join* the local organisations studied.

For each main case - as explained in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 - validation workshops have been organised, with specific tools designed together with the farmers (for visualisation and mapping) in order to ensure full discussion of the main results, with adequate participation of the local actors. In some of the villages the farmers' groups decided to make use, in future, of the visualisation system (Chapter 7, Section 7.3) for their internal meetings, as this facilitates their decision-making process.

2.5   The research location

Three countries have been selected for this research project: Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana. The specific locations studied are described in the relevant chapters. However, it is important to specify here what led to the choice of these three countries. They have a number of similarities but also distinctive points worthy of consideration.

As Benin and Burkina Faso are two former French colonies, while Ghana is a former British colony, it would certainly be quite interesting to compare the impact of the colonial heritage on the local organisations, as the two colonial systems were quite different in their attitudes vis-à-vis the local settings. Apart from very few exceptions, in the British system, known as indirect rule, the strategy was to use the local chiefs in place and indigenous traditions for establishing governing rules and regulations, while English officials worked behind the scenes, exercising a veto power. As for the French, with the so-called *direct rule*, the objective was, on the contrary, to try replace the indigenous organisations, establishing and administrating themselves the rules and regulations for their African 'colonial subjects'.

2.5.1   General characteristics of the three countries

Despite the differences in colonial history, today, in all three countries, at local and national levels, tradition and modernity rub shoulders every day: traditional cultural values have a strong influence upon attitudes, management styles, and social life in general.

> In Burkina Faso, despite the power of the 'modern' political system, the Emperor of the Mossi, the Moro Naba, still has considerable influence over his compatriots in their daily life. As an example, the Larlé Naba Tigré, a Minister of the Emperor, is at the same time, a Member of the National Assembly and a senior civil servant... He is also publisher of the journal 'Tradition and Modernity'.

> In Benin, despite the influence of the 'modernisation' waves of the 1960s and 1970s which led to some cultural erosion mainly around the cities, traditional values are still very much alive in most of the rural areas, nurtured by local chiefdoms and relevant events and ceremonies. Furthermore, since the end of the revolution era in 1989, the (yearly) voodoo feasts and other related manifestations, as well as local cultural festivals, also play an important role in the revitalisation of local cultural values.

> Ghana, even for the whole African continent, is one of the most eloquent examples where traditions are still very strong, and this might partly be considered as a consequence of the indirect rule. In most places, chiefdoms and the related cultural

institutions continue to play a very important role not only in people's life, but they are also involved in the current administrative system.

2.5.2   Specific characteristics

Although Benin and Burkina Faso share the same colonial background, the current political situation is quite different in the two countries.

The general features described in Chapter 1 clearly dominate the evolution of the development context in Benin. During the colonial period (up to independence in 1960) the economy was organised around palm oil and cash crops such as cotton, coffee and tobacco for export. The relationships between the central (colonial) power and the rural areas were dominated, apart from the slavery system, by organising farmers in order to ensure cash crop production (Vodouhè, 1996). These trends continued during the first post-independence period (1960 to 1972), a period characterised by unprecedented political instability which led the military forces to seize power in 1972, embarking the country upon a period of Marxism-Leninism until the late eighties. That period was characterised by strong governmental influence on political and economic activities in general, and particularly in rural areas on the organisation of farmers' associations through a centralised planning system, with too little room for voluntary participation of the rural population. After an initial period of enthusiasm, membership fell off rapidly owing to lack of real support and excessive bureaucratic interference (Allen, 1989). Many of these (administratively created) local groups have now collapsed.

The economic failures of the Marxist-Leninist period led the country into a Structural Adjustment Programme, with some drastic social consequences. Under the pressure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, most government institutions were reorganised and many civil servants were sacked from the public sector. Among what can be considered as the positive changes induced by this reorganisation is the creation of new types of relationships between the public and the private sector, and the increase in the number of non-governmental and local organisations (Vodouhè, ibid).

However, it is important to note that the development of the state apparatus after independence did not really help the central power to impose its hegemony on the local political arenas. They are still dominated by a set of intense dynamics where the bureaucratic logic of the central state is permanently confronted with local systems of logics for politics and action (Bierschenk and Mongbo, 1995).

It is in that context that the national political conference of 1990 paved the way for important political change and consequently for significant social and economic evolution. As stressed by Gbegnonvi (1995), that conference did not provide the Benin people with more jobs and money, but rather with a voice and the right to call for transparency in the power system. The democratic conditions thus created have unleashed numerous local initiatives, resulting in hitherto unknown rates of growth, and the freedom the local people now enjoy vis-à-vis official institutions.

In Burkina Faso, in the early 1980s, following a period of renewed economic difficulty, a revolutionary regime was put in place, which reduced the privilege and influence of the tra-

ditional chiefs, with the implementation of the 'Revolutionary People's Tribunals' and, as it was also the case in Benin, the 'Committees for the Defence of the Revolution'(CDR). The role of the CDR, established throughout the country, was to control the enforcement of the policy and relevant instructions from the national level. Despite this centralised and strong political power, the populist approach to development of the 1980s (Mazzucato and Niemeijer, 2000), made it possible for local and non-governmental organisations to benefit from a relative freedom, then surging ahead in a development style which is exemplary in West Africa. Basically, these trends are maintained today with the programme of action of the Popular Front currently in place.

Ghana represents another example, with - until the political change occurred in January 2001[5] - a relatively strong political power at central level, but which led to quite a remarkable economic recovery in the last ten years. The development of national infrastructure was clearly a high priority, but the government had also emphasised rural development heavily.

From the late 1970s the country suffered a severe economic crisis which led to the implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme in 1983, with the support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, followed by Structural Adjustment Policies from 1986 (Millar, 1996). Specifically, a Medium Term Agricultural Development Programme was implemented from 1996, which stressed, among its main goals, the necessity to assure a balanced regional development. This strategy, implemented through the decentralisation programme led by the Ministry of Local Government, is contributing to strengthen development capacities at local level.

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5   On January 7, 2001, the leader of the former opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), John Kuffuor, took over as President of Ghana, from Jerry John Rawlings (National Democratic Convention, NDC).

Chapter 3

First step on the journey: an exploratory tour

3.1   Overview
3.2   On tour
3.3   Outcomes

3.1   Overview

Before embarking on this research, a first round of orientation visits was made in the three countries selected. The objective was to explore a number of local groups in order to get a first overall impression of the prevailing reality. This also gave an opportunity for familiarisation with the possible research conditions and for establishing preliminary contacts. The tour was made in the form of an open exploration following the general methodological line of the Grounded Theory. Two main techniques were used for collecting information: open interviews of key informants and focus group meetings. I did not have any fixed set of questions 'to administrate', so, in each location, after the greeting formalities - which we know can take some time but are very important in African context, I just asked the farmers to tell me their story. It is the way they chose to tell the story, what they bring up themselves, which then inspired the questions and the following exchange. I only had to make sure that they covered the various descriptive and analytical aspects of my framework.

The exploration resulted in some broad lines of reflection which in turn led to an approximation of the broad categories of specific characteristics of local dynamics which would guide in the further design of the study. The main lessons learnt from these first series of visits also helped to strengthen the motivation for this research.

This first phase of the research can be summarised as in Table 3.1.

Phase Components	1st Learning Cycle (LC1): An Exploratory Tour
Objective	To get an idea of the reality of some local dynamics
Methods / Techniques	Open exploration following the Grounded Theory approach, Using open interviews of key informants and focus groups meetings
Results	Nodes for reflection
Reflection and Outcomes	Broad categories of characteristics (for next phase)

Table 3.1 Objectives, methods and outcomes of the 1st phase.

3.2   On tour

About the need for alternative development approaches...
I started the exploratory tour in Burkina Faso. One of my first visits was to CAD (*Centre Africain pour une pratique culturelle du développement*), where I met Bruno, the founder and one of the five staff members of that local NGO. He can be regarded as a local dynamic on his own. Here Bruno explains why he broke with the conventional development approach:

The key problem today is how to reinvent our development. Some local strategies could resist external influence because, like every society, they have their culture, which is not limited to folklore or to theatre, but is formed by the support of all their activities. In our traditional society, there was no need of media to save environment. This was the responsibility of the village chief who used to secretly sow seeds of Néré (Parkia biglobosa) and other trees... in order to leave some heritage to future generations...
How can we reinvent our development ? We have to face the challenge!
It is difficult for the leaders of our countries to believe in such a process because they are so used to the conventional way...But good signs are coming...'
Back in Burkina Faso in 1977 after his studies in Belgium, Bruno Sanon refused to become a civil servant, he wanted to try 'something else'. He then started alone with a few sociological studies...but today his 'bureau' has developed: two additional senior staff and two assistants are employed. Bruno is still moving on his motorcycle, 'refusing any core funding which can stop' his dynamism, but he has such a reputation that, for example, Prince Claus of the Netherlands paid him a visit during one of his trips to Burkina Faso (Bruno had been involved in some studies for the Dutch co-operation programme).

Signs are coming from the grassroots
In Katapor, in Ghana, the farmers I visited in 1997 were some way ahead of the national decentralisation programme, thanks to their solidarity around the basic problems of their village: they made a substantial contribution to the construction of the village school, as well as to the well and the water pump. The secretary of the Katapor Development Committee, reported on this issue with pride:

'Although the decentralisation programme is only starting in very few places in the country, our development committee here is already very active: we contributed to the school because the previous situation was too bad: the children had to travel 1.5 miles in the dry season, but much more with the floods of the rainy season... We have frequent meetings to discuss our needs and problems as well as means and ways to tackle them. We have started adult education for production activities and for health... Our village is now divided into clusters, each of them having a supervisor dealing with various aspects of the village life, for example reporting on illness and mediating with the health centre...

The dynamism I could notice, a month later, with the farmers of Maregourou in Benin, was in the same vein. Already in his welcome address, Alpha Yarou, Chairman of one of the two farmers groups, clearly explained, with a little tinge of irony, to what extent the population is taking care of its own development, without relying too much on national bodies:

'We are grateful to the government for providing us with teachers, health and rural development agents, but also for the freedom we are given to do the rest ourselves! The road you just followed to reach us since you branched from the macadam, the beautiful school you have seen on your right while entering the village, the huge building on your left - which is our Cultural Centre -, all this we have built ourselves, with our own money! We also have two big stores for the farmers groups.'

I found out later, discussing with them, that this investment capacity comes from the rebates which the farmers get on the earnings from cotton.

Also in Benin, in the village of Sèdjè-Dénou, in the *Atlantique* region, some local groups are now investing in social infrastructures in their village, thanks to the improvement of their income. They have also started running a village shop selling basic commodities, like petrol, sugar, salt and cement, which were not available before at reasonable prices.

In the central region of Burkina Faso, in the Kouritenga Province, near Koupéla, is the village of Gamboulsin. Here, as in many other places, farmers are quite disappointed with various development strategies which have very often blocked their own dynamics... They now insist that any new external initiative is approved by the village chief, and has the correct justifications to enable him to compare the 'real meaning' of the suggested new activities with the one of similar activities in the traditional system. Once agreed upon, the new technologies are implemented in such a way that they complement the old ones... The farmers could illustrate this process by the way they dealt with the PNGT *(Programme National pour la Gestion des Terroirs)* in their village.

'When the PNGT people first came here, we took them to our Chief to explain why their new techniques (of 'pebble dividers') is better than our ancestral techniques for reducing (or fighting) erosion. After many meetings and demonstration, we finally agreed to try, but up to now, these 'dividers' are still associated with the traditional Andropogon lines'.

(Mori Yassê, Secretary of the Gamboulsin Village Group)

The current success of the PNGT in that region is based on their experience with the Gamboulsin village: because of the progress made (despite the initial resistance of the farmers), the extension activities of the Programme in other villages are now supported by a theatre based on the approach of the Gamboulsin villagers.

The starting of local dynamics
As mentioned earlier, this first exploratory tour was deliberately open.

In most of the cases, my attention was drawn by the many different ways these various group dynamics started:

> The village of Fufuo, in Ghana, about 38 km from Kumasi, has always very much suffered from rural exodus because the economic activities are very limited during the minor agricultural season, until....
> Some time ago, three extensionists, natives of Fufuo, returned home, settled for farming and introduced a new variety of maize which could easily grow and be harvested in time during the minor season. A group of young farmers decided to try... and succeeded.
> Today, the Fufuo group of farmers is one of the best seed growers groups in Ghana, holding many official certificates!... Since they started many villagers came back from Kumasi and other cities where they could not find jobs.
> Farmers in Eyinase, ... Cape Coast, told a different story: '... We were working on individual plots when the Extension Services advised us to for a group because the

government would like farmers' groups for easy assistance'.

In 1991, they got assistance from the Sasakawa Global 2000 Project: mainly seeds and fertilisers, and advice on cultivation techniques.

In 1992, when they started getting more yield, both the Extension Service and the SSG helped them to build cribs for drying and storage of cereals.

In 1993, an American NGO, Self Help, gave them a loan to acquire a small tractor which helped them expand their farm, increase effectively their production. The loan has been paid back according to the commitment but within a year the tractor was out of order! Classic reason: spare parts... 'That is the main problem we are facing now...', said the farmers.

The case of Eyinase is not a unique one; in the three countries concerned, a number of the groups visited had been 'created' in order to get assistance from donors or from the government; the main difference between those groups and the needs-based groups will be discussed in further sections.

In other cases local dynamics have been triggered by a reaction to unacceptable circumstances. It is the case, in Benin, with the Savings Group of Hèjamê and with the Health Centre of the Farmers' Group of Bonou.

> The originating factor of the Savings Group in Hèjamê, in the Mono region in Benin, was the shock experienced by a group of women of the village after the fine (of one month's instalment) imposed by the CLCAM of Dogbo (the local rural bank) on the Women's Group for a default of two days in the repayment of their loan.
>
> Pierrette Hounkpè, the Chairwoman of the Savings group explained how this happened: 'At that time we had a women group for gari (cassava flour) production. We got a first loan from the PEMR[6] project, which we reimbursed; for the second one, PEMR refused and advised us to go to the CLCAM, where we finally got the loan. We were paying back every month without any delay, but the problem occurred when our chairwoman went to a relative's funerals... it was a Friday; the next Monday, when we went to the CLCAM they said we must be fined, because a new month had just started that day! We argued a bit between the 'two day - delay' and the 'new month started', but finally we had to send somebody to the village to collect money from every one and pay these people before they could allow us to go back home. The next day we met and decided to start a Savings group, because we realised that if that huge amount we paid for nothing could be pulled every month and invested in the village, we would achieve a lot!'.

As will be discussed later, in the pilot case of Bonou, the farmers' decision to start their own health centre was a collective reaction of feeling rejected by a purely political decision. Indeed, the political authorities decided to implement elsewhere - rather than on the piece of land the farmers had selected and cleaned - the new Centre to be built by a National Health Project for their community.

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6   PEMR: Poursuite des Etudes en Milieu Rural

When 'traditional' or (pre-) existing social groups can lead to development dynamics...

Another interesting feature is that, in a number of places, it seems that indigenous social groups played a role in the emergence of some economy-oriented local dynamics. The Saponé case in Burkina Faso and the Kotokpa case in Benin give some first indications.

In June 1997, when I first met Edouard Nonguierma, the very dynamic Executive Secretary of the *Association Vive Le Paysan* (AVLP), in Saponé, 35 km from Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), he started with a classic presentation, explaining the five main areas of their activities:
- agriculture, livestock
- informal and formal education
- human and animal health
- training of members and support services
- improvement of the position of women in development activities.

But I insisted on hearing the story of *the soccer ball* I read about in a magazine in Bobo Dioulasso....

> *The Saponé story*
> There was a time when the young people of Saponé got a soccer ball from a visitor, a native of their village... The soccer club quickly came to birth and a nice festivity was organised every Sunday, which the whole village enjoyed... until the day the soccer ball burst!... Sadness...
> The young people tried to raise funds within the village in order to buy a new ball of the same quality, but they could not get enough money. People liked soccer very much but as far as their poor resources are concerned, they do have other priorities... They young people met to discuss the issue, and then decided to do some gardening to get the necessary amount...They implemented their project, got plenty of money, bought the ball, then decided not to stop such a nice process but to invest and continue their productive activities...

Today they constitute a very important village adult group which conducts many productive activities but also invests a lot in social infrastructures and other activities relevant to the development of their village. They own a local radio station, broadcasting from 18h to 23h every day. A few years ago, they built a private college for their village, where school fees are lower for girls...

Apparently, apart from the early gardening activities, the gathering which was made possible by the soccer event offered the young people of Saponé the opportunity to discuss village problems and affairs, and to get together to act.

The development dynamics of the Bonou village, which today has taken shape in a strong farmers' group, a Savings club and a Community Health Centre, are also rooted in the approach of a traditional youth club (Vangbè).

In the same way, my very first visit to Kotokpa, in the central region of Benin, helped me to understand that the local development activities taking place in that village are based on the social cohesion, trust and solidarity which are founded on cultural links. These links have been developed through a genuine system of social learning, the traditional Adji game.

The 'Do we have' story...
When I heard of the Adji Club of Kotokpa, I first went to the extension regional office to seek their assistance in order to establish relevant contacts and visit the club. The head of the office then called his technician in charge of the support programme to farmers' groups and associations, and they had the following conversation:
Do we have something called 'Adji Club' in Kotokpa, near Zogbodomè ?, asked the regional director;
Not as far as I know, Sir. What we do have in Kotokpa is the best cotton growers' group of that area..., replied the technician.
As I insisted (the person from whom I got the information having visited the club only three weeks before), the Chief called the District officer... who confirmed. The next day, once in the village, we discovered that a Savings initiative of the Adji Club was in fact, for the cotton growers, a very efficient alternative to the official - but rigid - local agricultural bank. At the end of the visit, the extension technician told me, very modestly, 'I knew that this cotton group was very strong, but although I have been working in this area already for twenty years, it is only today that I have discovered why!'.

From that story we could probably conclude that, sometimes, local dynamics are things we have but we don't know!

What makes local dynamics work and what keeps people together
It is clear, from the description made by the people I met that a number of elements could be explored to understand what really makes local dynamics work. Among those are certainly local leadership, social cohesion, trust, solidarity and respect of tradition. The solidarity spirit can be rooted in a very deep tradition; that is the case in Boro, a village in the Northeast of Benin.

The roots of the trust and the solidarity spirit among of Boro people are to be found in the history of the village.
Boro was created by migrants from different villages: Tankongou, Sonsoro and Gogounou, in majority from the ethnic group Gando, but moved also with many friends from different ethnic groups. They chose for the new village the name Boro - in the *Bariba* language - *which means friendship.*

The farmers of Boro illustrated their solidarity spirit as follows: 'In some other villages, when a lorry comes, full of fertiliser bags for the farmers' group, the villagers would let the driver wait for the treasurer or the secretary of the group to come and explain the (financial) conditions for unloading... Here, we do the work first: any villager the driver would see upon arrival would immediately assemble a group of villagers to do the work! If some money has to come afterwards, the people in charge would let us know...'

Similarly, for the Bonou case the explanations given by the Chairman Gandaho, confirm that there are many advantages which keep the group together: the group strengthens the members' ability to cope with the changing environment (it helped them in a specific situation after the devaluation of the FCFA franc), it contributes to secure their working conditions (access to land and to various support services) and it helps maintain their solidarity, thereby reinforcing social links.

One can then wonder what keeps people together in cases even where the situation seems hopeless. In Southern part of Benin, about 10 km, North of Pobè, there is a small village called Wouignan Potopoto. There is a quite dynamic group of women, who started their activities (as a group) twelve years ago. The name of the Group is OLUWA SHOLA (God is great). Their idea was to get together in order to improve their living conditions and to increase their purchasing power. They were 36 members at the beginning, of which 22 still remain. They grow maize (2 ha), as well as - during the minor season - beans, soya and sesame; their major activity, however, is palm oil production. These women show an impressive goodwill and a lot of enthusiasm, but they did seem to lack virtually everything or - at least - seemed to need strong support before they could really take off! They did get some help to build a store room for their production and some food aid from the WFP but:

- they need drinking water; they got a well with the national Hydraulics Programme but the water is salty and cannot be even used to wash clothes... the well is there, but it has been closed;
- the road to the village is terribly bad and made of clay; after even just a little rain, it is very difficult to cycle or even walk to Wouignan Potopoto (the Potopoto part of the name - which does not mean anything specifically - is just a way to express that difficulty!).
- a school does exist but it only consists of two very small and poor 'cabanes'.

> When I asked these women why they are still motivated to stay and continue struggling, two of them replied, comparing their situation today with the goal they had set twelve years ago when the group started its activities. The first one said 'Our situation has improved compared with the one of those who did not join the group'. The second one added: ' Yes... also we are better informed and we constitute a real chain of solidarity'.
>
> The women also told me that the village has recently decided to change its name into Wouignan Ilé, which means (literally) Wouignan (is also a) Home!

Goodwill is not enough, success matters!

The *Wouignan Potopoto* case shows that the determination of these women cannot solely solve the enormous problems their village is facing; this is certainly part of the reason why many members left the group. Indeed, very often spontaneous goodwill to get organised to respond to perceived needs is not enough; in many cases an 'external catalyst' is likely to be needed (Holmén and Jirström, 1994).

The same feature can be seen in the evolution of the Savings club initiated by the village of Hèjamê, after the frustration suffered by a women's group in the dealings with the local agricultural bank. Compared with some others, this Savings club appears to be rather stagnant; the environment seems not to be very conducive and has apparently nothing to really drive this organisation.

In Ghana, on the other hand, we can see the success of the Fufuo group, where membership carries a lot of prestige. As one the founders put it: 'In this village, we have the brighter chance of getting a hand in marriage because of our assured future '.

Cultural factors and local management

One of the main points observed during the visits is the extent to which local management - the local way of doing things - is influenced by the cultural values...

The system in place in the Bonou case in Benin represents one of the illustrations, where a Supreme Village Council has been set up for conflict resolution, which comprises representatives of the main social forces of the communities involved in the development dynamics.

> The Supreme Village Council is composed of 18 members, wise and notable people, and includes the village chiefs, and the Zangan (the Zangbétô[7] chiefs), one coming from each village. It is not by chance that these people are members:
> * the village chiefs have the indispensable tasks of passing on to the Council information about any suspicious activities of which they have been told.
>   The Council is then supposed to carry out an enquiry to confirm or deny the case;
> * the Zangan participate in the Council meetings, and, in addition, represent the security component of the organisation. Their task is, when necessary, to mobilise the secret societies which they head. The sanction by Zangbétô is the ultimate available recourse.

In some villages, the system is just controlled by the members of the secret society and, now and then, this may lead to abuses. Here, it is collectively used for public security and for the enforcement of the management rules of the local association.

A number of other village groups also adapt their rules of operation to the local conditions and (apparently) to the level of trust.

> In the Hounsa group in Benin, a women group for cassava processing, the money box which stays in the Treasurer's house has two locks, but the treasurer has no keys! These stay with two other ladies... Three of them have then to be present before money can be withdrawn. Of course, when asked, they always say 'It is not that we do not trust each other, it is just to be sure!...'

Can isolation strengthen motivation?

Cobly is a land-locked place in the *Atacora* Province, in the north-east of Benin, 86 km from Natitingou, the provincial capital. Until less than ten years ago, any civil servant transferred to Cobly saw it as a punishment. Today, that image has changed quite a lot. When asked what makes Cobly so popular nowadays, one of the farmers replied: 'We don't know that we are popular... What we do know is that for many years we have suffered from isolation...and as we do not have many resources we decided to get organised together to solve our problems'

We had the opportunity, the accompanying agricultural extension officer and myself, to test that mobilisation in a way: our car broke down shortly after Tanguiéta (36 km before Cobly). It took us some time to reach (by telephone) the District Agriculture officer of Cobly to send his car to take us... We arrived with more than three hours' delay in Cobly. We really apologised because the villagers, the District Officer and the Head of the District Administration did not move from the meeting place, even for lunch...

The population of Cobly is organised in development committees at different levels: village, commune and district (called *Sous-Préfecture*) level. The main role of the committee at the *Sous-Préfecture* level is to coordinate the activities of the lower levels' committees and to stimulate

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7   Zangbéto: a secret society with a deterrent discipline, in charge of village security, especially at night time.

co-operation between the local population and various development organisations and donors. Thanks to their mobilisation, they could attract external funds to reconstruct the road from Tanguiéta to Cobly and to build a very efficient and attractive market place.

It is the *PADES-COBLY*, a Dutch co-operation project (started in 1991) which is the main support of the community for their development activity.
One of the main problems in Cobly is the lack of infrastructures and teachers for primary education. As explained by Mr Sambiénou Yatté Rigobert, head of administration in Cobly, there are schools run by one teacher only, there is one in Tapoga, where there are 127 pupils in the classroom (1st year of the primary education). The situation forced them to create, apart from the official 22 schools existing in the region, 14 'informal schools', each of them hosting 60 to 98 pupils per class. Parents contribute to the management of the informal schools with a lump sum of FCFA 250 per month. On the whole, thanks to this efficient form of organisation, Cobly today is just different!

Who said 'Farmers are not open to innovations' ?
The Kotokpa example clearly shows how farmers can invest in improving and increasing their production when they are convinced 'that they will get value for money', and when the support services are efficient. When borrowing started from the Savings system of the *Adji Club*, it was mainly for social expenses (funerals, wedding, etc). Loans quickly shifted to use for economic activities, avoiding the unnecessary administrative procedures of the official agricultural bank. Slowly, their cotton production increased to the extent that they became the biggest producer in the area: seeds, fertilisers and pesticides are available, credit is also at a level they can control, and the market is there! This evolution will only decline or even stop (unfortunately maybe soon) if there is no room for further improvement, for example through profit sharing at higher level, between the farmers' union and the private and government companies involved in the marketing system.

In the *Atacora* Province in Benin I found two examples of farmer-introduced innovations: in the village of Pabégo, when the current Chief - then a young farmer - introduced sugar cane, and Karhum Yaourou where two farmers introduced fish farming.

> *The Pabégo story*
> More than 20 years ago, a young man (currently the Chief of the Pabego village) who immigrated with his parents to Ghana decided to come back home. He took with him seven cuttings of sugar cane 'to try' in his native village, Pabego, near Copargo, North of Benin.
> After the first year of production, many villagers came to him to get some cuttings...
> Today, sugar cane is the first source of income in Pabego, before cotton.
>
> Karhum Yaourou, where two villagers introduced fish farming fifteen years ago...
>
> In 1985, two villagers visited a fish farming pond managed by the technical services of the Ministry of Agriculture. Back home, they could convince other farmers to join them for fish farming. Since then, although some technical support is needed to develop the dynamic, fish is available in their village... and the official pond they first visited does not exist anymore...

Another case is the Gamboulsin village in Burkina Faso. Despite the disappointment they expressed vis-à-vis former development projects, they could embark into the new activities suggested by PNGT, but only when these show enough potential to be worth trying. This suggests that farmers are open to innovations but they keep their eyes open! And, above all, they are innovators themselves.

When women get control over resources

For different reasons - mainly transport arrangement in Parakou, at the Province capital - in that morning of June 1997, we arrived in the Sonsoro village at 1pm instead of 11 am! At the market place, in front of the small building hosting the Savings club (the interest of our visit), we had been informed by some villagers that the gérant - the accounts manager of the club - already close for lunch and his little nap. We were advised, however, to cross the village until we reached the rice farm where the Chair Lady of the Savings club would certainly be working still. When we reached the farm we had no time to apologise for the delay; the lady was still expecting us and proceeded to the welcome greetings as normal. When we told her that the accounts manager would probably be taking a nap, she shouted clearly: 'Who sleeps in the village at this time of day? Did you see me in my bed?' We then went straight to the gentleman's place; Mrs Gando knocked just once at the door and pushed it: 'Gérant, gérant, our visitors from Parakou are here!', she said. The gérant had no choice but to get up and follow us. We then learnt that the Sonsoro group of women farmers had been created in 1981. The group had, in 1997, 250 members in agricultural production (36 ha of rice, 9 ha of maize). The Savings club, a CREP *(Caisse Rurale d'Epargne et de Prêt)* had been set up in 1992. Their savings amounted FCFA 39 million. The Chair Lady explained with determination and pride how they managed to keep to the priorities of women.

'At the beginning men were not allowed to be members; some of them are trouble makers...
Two years ago, the first men were admitted but only for deposits. From this year, some men can get loans'.

With the support of PADES[8] - a Dutch-funded project - the women groups for crop processing in the Dogbo District, Southwest of Benin, decided to federate into a Union. Their goal was the organisation of a system of production and sales which strengthens their hands against the domination of traders who try to impose their prices on women working in the small-scale processing of agricultural products.

After less than five years, there is already a noticeable impact at the level of the activities of grassroots group: sales prices have improved (thus creating higher revenue and encouraging other activities to be developed...), and quality of products has also improved. At the level of social development, women have become more closely and effectively involved in socio-political decisions about their locality, through their experience in regional and international meetings. There is also an impact on cultural development as a result of their literacy work, and one of them said to conclude our discussion: 'Some of us here even know how to drive!'.

How support could make better impact

It was apparent in many groups visited, that external support makes more impact where endogenous organisations exist and are dynamic. In Ghana, it is the mobilisation of the Katapor villagers which helped them maximise the impact of external support. According to the farmers, that is the reason why World Vision preferred to work with them rather than with the neighbouring village Atapa 'where people are always in conflicts'.

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8   PADES: Projet d'Appui au développement de Sous-Préfecture(s).

The same applies for the Saponé case, in Burkina Faso, described earlier. They get substantial external support but it is very efficiently used thanks to their strong group dynamic.

A lot depends also on the ability of the supporting institution or project to follow the evolution of the local initiatives in order to really accompany the on-going process. The Sasakawa Global 2000 support to the Bonou group in Benin is one example. Although the initial technical agenda of the Project (seeds and fertilisers packages) has been completely changed by the farmers to match their needs for broader support services, the project managers were able to adapt. Thanks to this, the Bonou Savings Club could split into village units - *les mutuelles villageoises'* - with many advantages, but mainly to improve accountability and mobilisation of savings at grassroots level.

Some 'new projects' are trying new ways

The PDRI[9] / HKM project is an integrated rural development project covering three out of the forty five provinces of Burkina Faso: Houet, Kossi and Mouhoun. The mission of the project is to help generate local initiatives for sustainable rural development. The objectives are to assist local populations for a better management of local resources, to help reinforce the economic capacities of the rural areas, and 'help local communities to emerge'. Their main principles of action:

- a participatory approach is followed in all project activities to assure full farmers' involvement
- operational partnership based on contracts clarifying 'who is doing what'
- broad coverage (to keep away from the *narrow focus projects*): the project is dealing with the maximum *possible* of matters of concern for the farmers; all the requests are carefully analysed and, when necessary, passed on to towards other partners.

Among their strategies are:

- the setting up of a funding mechanism in which each activity (school or health centre building, etc...) is planned with farmers and submitted to committees (in which farmers are the majority)
- the fact that each activity is technically set up with the local artisans and contracted to them under the supervision of the head of the province administration, the *Préfet*.
- the setting up of a management committee for each specific activity.

The main fields of activity are:

- funding of local development infrastructures (social and economic infrastructures),
- management of natural resources (watersheds, pasture zones, village plant nurseries, etc.)
- support to economic activities
- training.

However, some points of concern emerged from a recent evaluation of the project, after five years of operation:

- on the gender issue, the attempts to strengthen women's position still meet some resistance in a few places;
- on the land issue: land availability is a problem; the migrant population is higher than the native one;
- the proportion of subsidies seems quite high, although (apparently) necessary.

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9 PDRI-HKM: Programme de développement rural intégré - Houet, Kossi et Mouhoun

The PADES project in Benin, mentioned earlier as support institution to the women groups of the Dogbo District, belongs to this new type of project. In a first stage, the PADES helped promote a number of local initiatives. As it will be described at a later stage, the current activities of the project aim at empowering the local institutions to prepare them for the implementation of the Decentralisation Programme in Benin.

3.3   Outcomes

About the characteristics of the local dynamics:
A summary analysis of the information collected during these first series of visits gives some indications, some broad categories of characteristics, which can constitute a starting point for the next step of this research. The main indications, which were found to be relevant to most of the cases, are the following:
- the way the local dynamics get started
- the importance of a historical perspective in the study of their evolution
- the possible role of pre-existing social groups in the initiation and the development of development dynamics
- the integration of cultural values in the management of local development activities
- the importance of a conducive environment or driving force to assure the development of the dynamics
- the linking possibilities or the interface between the local dynamics and support institutions and projects

On methodological issues:
Due to the limitations bound to the necessity/quality of translation in some local areas on the one hand, and, on the other, to the closeness required for a deep insight into the local dynamics, it was decided to conduct the next step of the research (the pilot study) in Benin and draw conclusions to further assess in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The sites to select for this pilot study should then be areas where translation was not necessary and where I could have the best interaction with the villagers. This option also led to put some emphasis on *participant observation* as will be described later.

Chapter 4

Revisiting the scope of the study

4.1   Overview

As explained in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.1), at the beginning of this research, a first set of initial concepts had been considered as 'initial glasses' to frame a first insight into the local dynamics. Following this, the option was to undertake an exploratory tour across the three countries, before a further examination of the available literature with the clear goal of shedding light on the issues emerging from the field visits.

Indeed, the exploratory tour, as described in Chapter 3, led to the identification of some broad categories of the characteristics of local dynamics. Many of the cases visited illustrated the gap between development programmes or projects and the local dynamics, not only for the failure to meet some basic local needs, but also for the lack of capacity of support institutions to effectively respond to those needs. They confirm the need for alternative development approaches; some new development projects, although with difficulties and their limitations, are trying to pave the way...

The current chapter briefly analyses the main issues in the available literature on local development organisations, in the light of the results from the exploratory tour, in order to revisit the focus of the study.

4.2   About local development organisations

In order to further specify the focus of this research, it was useful to look back to the discussion on the comparative roles of state and local organisations as introduced in Chapter 1.

Sahn and Sarris (1995) stressed that the post-independence period in most sub-Saharan African countries retrogressed from an early period of optimism to a period of increasing difficulties which gave rise to the current era of stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes. According to them, one of the causes was 'the contradiction between indigenous rural institutions that have evolved in rural areas in response to underlying technological, social and economical conditions, and institutions espoused and promoted by the post-independence African states'.

In Benin, for example, as explained earlier, the 'revolutionary period' was characterised by strong governmental influence on political and economic activities, with no room for manoeuvre for local organisations in the centralised planning system, particularly in rural areas.

4.2.1   Organisations, institutions and institutionalisation

What is meant, in this research, by *local dynamics* has been explained earlier (Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2). It is now important to clarify the notions of *institution* and *organisation*, and explain how these have been used in the study.

As pointed out by Sahn and Sarris (ibid), the term 'institutions' remains difficult to define and raises ambiguity in its use. According to Uphoff (1995), 'in most of the social science literature, no consistent distinction has been made between 'organizations' and 'institutions'... (and) the two words are used interchangeably'. He suggested the following definitions:

> Organisations and Institutions
> '*Organizations*, whether institutions or not, are structures of recognised and accepted *roles*',
> while '*Institutions*, whether organizations or not, are complexes of *norms and behaviours* that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes'.
>
> Uphoff, 1995

However, this does not seem to be enough to alleviate the confusion often encountered in the use of these terms: the time dimension, which is supposed, for Uphoff, to be specific to institutions, is included, by some other scientists, in the definition of organisations. As an example, for Reed (1992), an organisation is a 'social unit and related social practices which assemble collective action into sustainable institutional forms that can be stretched or transported across vast time/space distances.'

Uphoff (ibid) explained that the confusion is due to the fact that both terms refer to different but overlapping sets of social phenomena, and that, 'in fact, institutions, like organisations, should be understood as matters of degree'. He then went further, in his attempt for clarification, suggesting the following examples:

Institutions that are not organisations	Institutions that are organisations and vice versa	Organisations that are not institutions
Money	The Central Bank	A local bank
The law	The Supreme Court	A new law partnership
Marriage	'The family'	A particular family
Land tenure	The Land Registrar's Office	A surveying company
Higher education	Oxford University	A tutoring service
Technical assistance	The World Bank	A consulting firm

Table 4.1 Contrasting examples of institutions and organisations (Uphoff, 1995)

The following figure summarises his analysis of the specificities and overlaps of institutions and organisations:

Institutions
Complexes of norms and behaviours

| Institutions that are not organisations (e.g. money, marriage) | Institutions that are organisations (e.g. Central Bank) | Organisations that are institutions (e.g. local bank branch) |

Organisations
structures of recognised and accepted roles
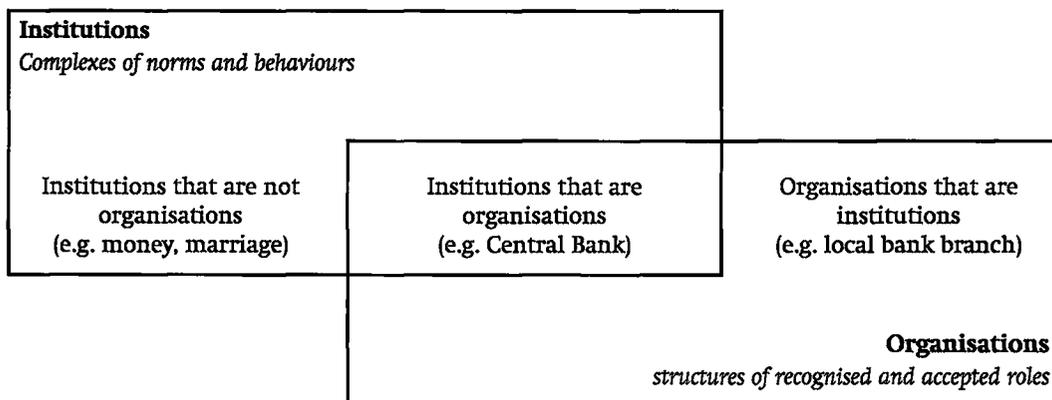
Figure 4.1 Institutions and Organisations as overlapping sets (adapted from Uphoff, 1995).

However, depending on the social environment considered, this clarification can still be challenged: as an example, in most African countries, marriage can also be clearly seen as an organisation of which form varies according to the different ethnic groups (Richards, 2001, *personal communication*).

Nonetheless, in this research, the general definitions suggested by Uphoff will be adopted, and while discussing the local development dynamics (as defined in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2), it will be referred to local organisations.

What is more important, in the African context, is to be aware that, above the local development organisations - like the farmers' groups or other associations - there are some (often) ancestral institutions which can (still) have an important influence on them. The way the farmers' organisation in Bonou has associated different traditional institutions in their conflict management council (Chapter 3) is an illustration of that reality. However, as we will discover in Chapter 10 (Section 10.2.2), traditional institutions do not always offer a conducive environment for the development of local dynamics.

4.2.2   About the 'local' level...

In Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.2), the local level, which is often equated to community level (Uphoff, 1986), has been defined as the *level where people believe they can easily influence their own affairs*. Uphoff (1995), recognising that there is little consensus about what is really meant by local level, suggests that, perhaps, 'this is because there are, analytically speaking, three local levels, not just one'. According to him, the 'uppermost limit of what is 'local' is likely to be the area served by a rural market town, commonly referred to as a *locality*'. That level includes communities with trading, intermarriage and other co-operative linkages, where people have some personal acquaintances and some experience of working together. 'It is the area that rural people refer to when asked where they come from if they think their questioner will not know the (particular) village where they reside'. The second level is the *community* level or the

village level, which corresponds to what is referred to as 'local'. Lower than the community level is the *group* level, which is a smaller unit in terms of social organisation.

The following figure from Uphoff (1986, 1995) represents the local level(s) as described as well as other levels for decision making and activity.

International Level

↓

National Level

↓

Regional (... or Provincial) Level

↓

District Level

↓

Subdistrict Level

↓

Locality Level
A set of communities having social and economic relations,
Usually with interactions centred around a market town:
this level can correspond to the subdistrict level
where a market town is the subdistrict centre

↓

Community (or Village) Level
An established socio-economic residential unit,
Often referred to as the village...

↓

Group Level
A self-identified set of persons with some common interest,
Such as an occupational, age, gender, ethnic or other grouping...

↓

Household Level

↓

Individual Level

Figure 4.2 Local Levels and other decision-making and activity levels for development (from Uphoff, 1986, 1995).

4.2.3   The multiple facets of local organisations

As far as the typology is concerned, Esman and Uphoff (1984) distinguish three categories of local organisations (LOs): the local development associations, the co-operatives, and the interest associations, specifying that they did not make the 'common distinction between formal (or 'modern') and informal (or 'traditional') LOs. For them, the degree of formalisation can rather be considered as a variable cutting across all other types of local organisations.

Local development associations, as they define them, are often set up - by most of the members of the communities 'to promote development by direct self-help or other means, such as lobbying for needed services or raising funds for new constructions...'. Most of the village development committees fall in that category.

The second type, co-operatives, is extremely varied 'as thousands of LOs around the world are called co-operatives', but their common feature is the pooling of resources by members. The rotating savings and credit associations for example belong to this group. According to Esman and Uphoff (ibid), the local development associations contribute mostly to public goods accessible to all, while the co-operatives are mostly benefiting the members.
The Kotokpa case in Benin, which will be further assessed during the pilot study, seems to be a counter-example as the village *tontine* system led to the creation of important public goods, not only for the benefit of the whole village, but also for the neighborhood (water supply, village security system).

The third type, interest groups, is the most diverse, and is not defined by geographic boundaries but rather by certain common features of membership. As specified by Esman and Uphoff about those organisations, some people come together 'for the sake of performing some particular function better, perhaps water management or public health or primary education'. In general, in rural areas, probably in most African countries, but anyhow in the three covered by this research these activities are often carried out by village development associations, as revealed in the Maregourou case (Chapter Three, Section 3.2).

On the whole, designing a general typology for local organisations is quite a difficult endeavour (or task), as there are many possible entry points: the activity orientation (economy, culture, social, religion, etc.), the mode of initiation (endogenous, exogenous, endogenous but catalysed by intervention, etc.), the mode of operation, etc. Holmén and Jilström (1994) simply stress (see following box) the diversity of local organisations and the 'need for more analysis before we can build on them':

> 'There are many different kinds of local organizations in the Third World. Some are public like, for example, village or small town councils. Others are non-governmental. Among the latter, some are indigenous while others are created from outside with or without external assistance. Hence, before we can assess the virtues of 'another development'... much more analysis will be needed...'
>
> Holmén and Jilström (1994)

They went further, revisiting the notion of NGO as this is often referred to when discussing the potential of local organisations. They support the view that 'little is known about what NGOs

are best at - and under which conditions'. They also stress the fact that the very limited number of indigenous NGOs to promote in the Third World countries is leading western NGOs to try 'establish their own branch organizations as 'local' NGOs...'. They consider that NGO is a 'blurred concept. It does not refer to size, purpose or type of activity. It is used indiscriminately about western aid-agencies (northern NGOs) and groupings in aid receiving countries (southern NGOs).' Furthermore, they argue 'that some Third World NGOs are run more or less as one man's private business, pointing out the recent enormous increase in the donors aid through NGOs which inevitably attracted many 'fortune hunters'. Finally they radically suggest that the best 'might be to drop the term NGO altogether', 'if we want to find effective ways to mobilize local people and/or to channel aid resources to poor groups...'.

4.2.4   Local organisations and collective action

It is a fact that local organisations have emerged in many parts in Africa as substitutes for the state and the markets, mainly in areas where both have failed in delivering public goods or assuring basic needs of the populations (de Janvry, Sadoulet and Thorbecke, 1995). Transactions and mutual insurance are achieved among community members through various arrangements (Fafchamps, 1995), such as savings associations emerging in response to exclusion from formal financial systems (Thorbecke, 1995). It has been explained indeed (Chapter Three) that the setting up of the local financial system of the Kotokpa Adji Club in Benin was the result of the rigidity of the official credit institution.

There is also evidence that, whenever possible, the provision of collective goods by local groups is most effective: provision of drinking water, guaranteeing small credit and assisting in bereavement (Thorbecke, 1995). Many examples of that nature were encountered during the exploratory visits: in Benin, the health centre of Bonou, the social infrastructures in Maregourou, and, in Burkina Faso, the social investments (rural radio and school) by the AVLP group.

For Uphoff (1995), a basic characteristic of what is 'local' is that most people within a locality, community or group have *face-to-face* relationships and are likely to have multi-stranded connections, as members of a common church, as buyers at the same market, or as relatives though extended families. This provides a better basis for collective action than found above and outside these levels...'. Taking the concrete example of overgrazing of common pastures or 'the tragedy of commons'(Hardin, 1968), Uphoff (ibid) suggests that local groups can 'help organize and educate herders about environmental impacts to get them to control herd size, sharing quotas among themselves and enforcing limits upon their members'. He also recognises that those willing to challenge this approach could object that although it would spare the government from coercion, it could be 'slow and possibly unreliable' and therefore not acceptable if there were a need for urgent solutions.

That is exactly where we are facing the problem with the decision making system of politicians or governments in the African context: because of short electoral terms, most of the time, they are after emergency solutions. Moreover, in the same way that rural people are usually (wrongly) accused of not being open to change, politicians and other decision makers can be accused of being afraid of alternative solutions they never tried! In places where group behaviour is important, strong local organisations can emerge and play a key role in the devel-

opment of their environment and in alleviating poverty, provided decision makers could facilitate the process, thinking more creatively in order to overcome 'the poverty of (their) institutional imagination' (Streeten, 1991, quoted by Uphoff, 1995).

4.2.5 Local organisations as conflicts and power struggle arenas

Local is beautiful, indeed, but not always easy. Local life does not escape the power reality of social life as expressed by Long (1992): 'the daily struggle of peasants, the dilemmas of frontline bureaucrats, the vicissitudes of policy makers, the aspirations and strategies of traders, or women's manoeuvres for social space *in a man's world*'.
It is a fact that local creativity and initiatives are permanently confronted with consequences of 'obstructing power' (Luhmann, 1979) from various origins.

However, as stressed by Nelson and Wright (1995) power struggles and power shifts occur not only between people and policy-making and resource-holding institutions, but also within the structure of organisations.

I have to confess that the exploratory tour was an 'eye-opener' for me vis-à-vis the power issue, which I certainly underestimated at the beginning of this research. The first field visits helped me to discover that there can be severe obstacles to the realisation of the 'traditional' potential for collective action at local level. For various specific goals, some individuals or interest groups can develop strategies to try neutralise or hamper collective action (or other individual) initiatives. These are real 'black holes' for development (Wielinga, 1999, *personal communication*).

Apparently, in the setting up of the security system in the Kotokpa village or of the Community Health Centre in Bonou, the villagers had to overcome the resistance of the representatives of the official system, and they continue to develop strategies in order to maintain the power balance acquired. Further assessment of these cases will provide more insights into the issue.

The individual strategies within the village groups, as discovered during the visits, also confirm that power is both experienced at the interface between organisations and/or institutions as well as inside these systems. This is a good illustration of the importance of the power system and a clear indication that it should be taken into consideration to sharpen the focus of this research.

An essential point of interest is that the local people's way of dealing with social conflicts is mostly influenced by their cultural values. As pointed out by de Janvry (1995), the *African palaver* (the traditional way of discussing and resolving conflicts, (originally) in the shade of a tree, is quite an institution in many African countries. Today, the *palaver tree* represents a metaphor evoking real platforms for consensus building for collective action. During the exploration tour, this was observed in the village of Bonou (Benin), where the farmers' association had set up a village council - *'Haut Conseil Villageois'* - composed of the elders and the village authorities - to refer to in case of conflict. Instead of the 'modern rules', they use the traditional wisdom of the elders who are very pleased to be involved in the current life of the village. It will be very instructive to study the possible social dilemmas facing such an institu-

tion in assuring transparency and accountability, and the effectiveness of the enforcement of internal rules (Wade, 1988).

4.3 Local organisations and co-operative behaviour

4.3.1 Cultural theory and group behaviour

Cultural theorists put culture at the centre of the explanation of social life: what people do or want is guided by their culture. 'Social sciences tries to develop an objective discourse of needs, but needs are cultural. They do not appear from thin air but are generated by the social interactions though which communities are constituted (Richards, 1999).

Mary Douglas (1982, 1992) uses the so-called Grid/Group analysis to assess people's behaviour in social situations. Grid and group are two dimensions of sociability: grid stands for 'the cross-hatch of rule to which individuals are subject in the course of their interaction' (Douglas, 1978, 1982), and group for incorporation into a bounded structure. In other words, 'grid denotes the degree to which our lives are circumscribed by conventions or rules, reducing the area of life that is open to individual negotiation, and group the extent to which individual choice is constrained by group choice' (Hood, 1998). According to the Grid/Group cultural theory, people derive a great many of their preferences, perceptions, and opinions from their adherence to a certain way of organising social life' (UVA Website, 2001). This is revealed by their attachment to one of the two basic dimensions of sociability: incorporation or bondedness (group), and restriction, regulation or prescription (grid).

The Grid/Group theory can be summarised by the following figure:
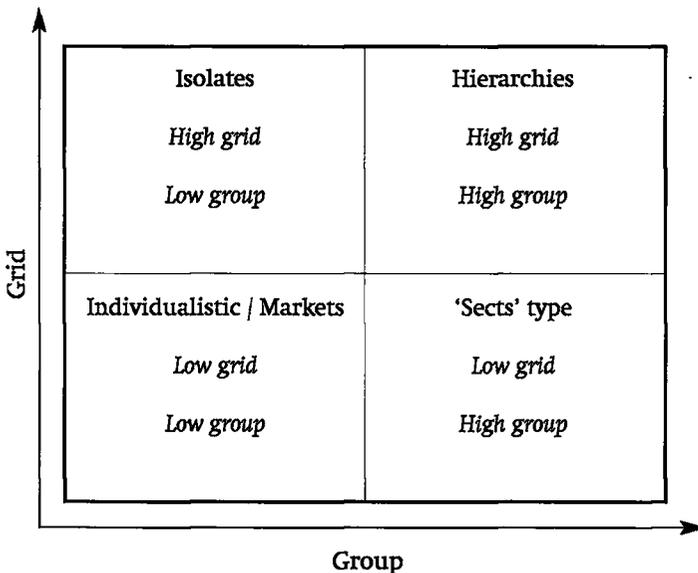
Figure 4.3 *The Grid/Group analysis (after Douglas, 1992)*

As explained by Douglas (1992), hierarchical institutions are based on the up-down bonding of individuals within a social group (for example the bureaucracies), the individualist institutions (like markets) are rather 'based on quid-pro-quo exchanges between individuals, while the 'sects-like' institutions 'base their relations on bonding insiders against outsiders'. However she clearly warned that the positions so described are not absolute: 'there is no absolute hierarchy - organizations are more or less hierarchical'.

There are also different breeds and intermediary shapes of the Grid/Group theory. The interest for this research lies in the extent to which theory could help explain the potential for group co-operative behaviour as observed during the exploratory tour in villages such as Kotokpa in Benin, while in some others in their neighbourhood individualistic behaviour is predominant.

4.3.2   Collective cognition and collective action

For Maturana and Varela (Capra, 1996), cognition is the very process of life; 'it involves perception, emotion and action'. Every being is capable of developing a cognitive process, that is, assessing experience according to some emotion and acting accordingly. Therefore, a cognitive system represents the duality between a *cognitive agent* and its domain of existence (Röling, 2000).

Röling (ibid) explains that a cognition-based perspective has significant implications for collective human action.

The following figure illustrates the cognitive process.
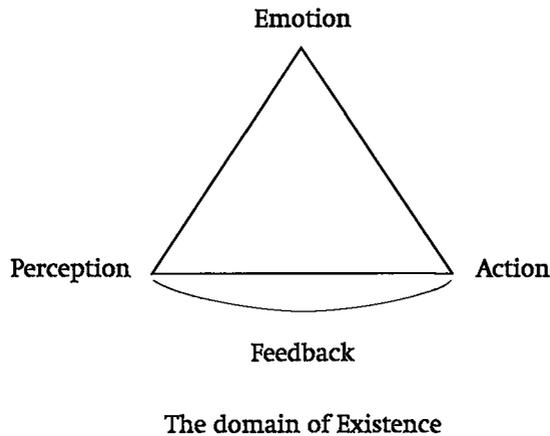
Figure 4.4   *The Cognitive System (from Röling, 2000, after Maturana and Varela, 1992; Capra, 1996)*

Bawden, quoted by Röling (ibid), has illustrated the cognitive agent's practice. Praxis, that is practice informed by theory, emerges from 'deliberate, interactive and mindful iteration through major anchor points of cognition and decision making: context, values, theory and action', as represented in the following figure:

Values

Theory — Action

Perception of context
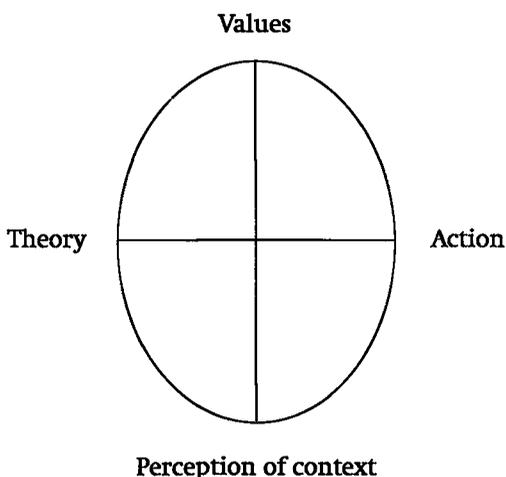
Figure 4.5 The Elements of Praxis and their relationships (Bawden, 2000), adapted by Röling (2000).

As explained in the introductory chapter, in many African villages, despite so-called 'modernisation' and the current development challenges, people still hold some coherent set of 'traditional values' rooted in their cosmovision. This constitutes the reference for a kind of 'collective way of perceiving' a given reality relevant to key issues in their life.

The question which still remains in the framework of this research is to further reflect, through the case studies, on the factors guiding perception and emotion to possibly explain different behaviours in villages 1 and 2 as described above (Section 4.2.4).
In other words, as per the following figure, what can explain that two villages with - in principle - the same basic set of reference values, develop, maybe overtime, different behaviours (group or grid) in similar situations. As discovered during the exploratory tour (Chapter 3), the development dynamic in the Kotokpa village group is quite related to the social cohesion created around the *Adji game*, but as to whether this explanation is enough is questionable.

Emotion 1   Emotion 2

Perception 1 — Action 1   Perception 2 — Action 2
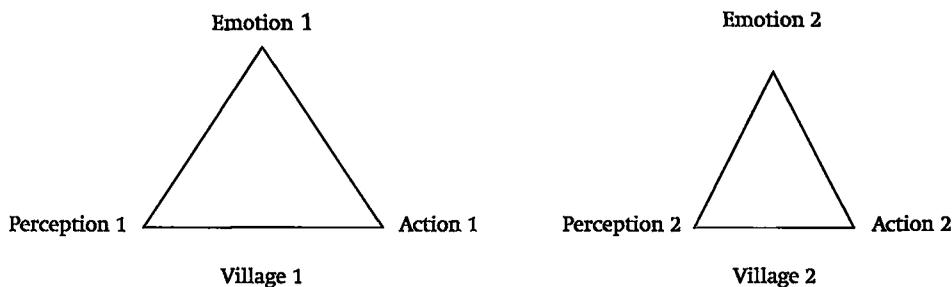
Village 1   Village 2

Figure 4.6 Villages with different behaviour in similar conditions
(Note: different perceptions - P1 and P2 - guiding to different emotions - E1 and E2 - therefore to different actions - A1 and A2).

4.4   The linking issue: from 'scaling up' to a social learning perspective

Local development successes are like most NGO achievements: they usually remain small, especially compared to the scale of development challenges (Uvin, Jain and Brown, 2000).

For Cernea (1988), quoted by Uvin and Miller (1996), the extent to which local initiatives can move beyond their constituencies and have larger impact is still under-explored: more empirical research is needed and improved methodological tools are required.

According to Uvin, Jain and Brown (2000), 'in many ways, scaling up is a natural, almost organic process' as local successes are often copied by neighbours... This seems to be the case for the security system initiated and implemented by the Kotokpa people, and which apparently is now being copied by the neighbouring villages (Chapter 3).

However, in most cases, local achievements remain isolated 'islands of success' (Schoones, 1997). Due to the development potential of grassroots initiatives, it is a challenge to design the best suitable and specific ways - according to local situations, and when necessary and desired by the collective of actors - to bridge with them for greater impact.

On the whole, linking different development institutions and/or organisations is nothing more than allowing creative interactions between different cognitive systems in order to lead to possible joint action on an overlapping part of their respective agendas. This could only occur through learning. Holling, quoted by Röling (2000), has 'identified adaptive management based on social learning - the property of cognitive systems - as the key ingredient of a sustainable society'.
The final question in this research (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2), is how to achieve this, given the strong attitudes inherited from the past experience. We had on the one hand the development agents who have *no culture of real partnership at local level*, and, on the other, the local people who have always been told that they have nothing to offer. During the exploratory tour, in most places, the farmers were rather surprised to hear that I had come to learn from them...
As the following figure implies, connecting (development) to the local system therefore means entering a learning process leading to respect and (partly) share the specific values and visions, the relevant objectives and strategies, which could lead to design and implement together a (minimum) joint agenda.
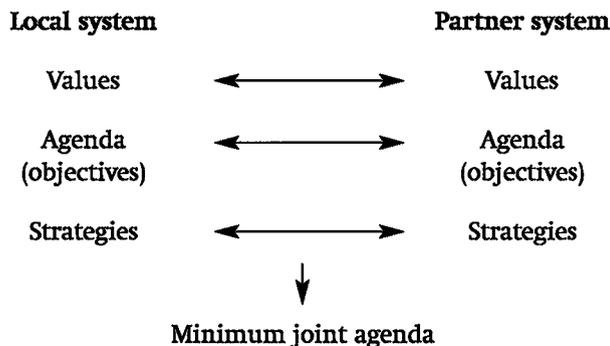
Figure 4.7 How to connect to the local system?

Such a complex learning process requires, as explained by Aarts and van Woerkum (2001), skilful mediators able to monitor the negotiations involved and:

- to assure equitable involvement not only of different stakeholders, but also their constituencies;
- to stimulate constructive relationships between the actors involved;
- to try make explicit the implicit or 'tacit' part of the joint knowledge systems;
- to help preserve an adequate balance 'between making choices (*'what do we want?'*) and gathering knowledge (*'why do we want this?'*, *'what are the consequences of this choice?'*).

Indeed, as stressed by Woodhill and Röling (1998), 'social learning is a framework for thinking about the knowledge processes that underline societal adaptation and innovation. As the rates of change, risks of environmental decay, and complexity of globalization escalate, the demands on societies' capacities to evolve become immense... Meaningful interaction and communication between individuals is central to social learning. Through such interaction appropriate responses and ethical social practice can be sought'.

As the findings of the exploratory tour show, for example through the *Bonou case* (vis-à-vis the collaboration between the community health centre and the governmental one), it seems that scaling-up local dynamics would only be possible if the relevant partners at local level could embark in a more efficient interaction through a collective learning process. Such a process would aim at:
a) strengthening linkages between the local population and different support institutions;
b) clarifying the potential areas of co-operation;
c) determining specific constraints and available capacities among the various partners.

4.5   Taking the next step: diving into the local dynamics...

After reviewing some main issues deriving from the available literature on local development organisations, one of the main conclusions is the necessity to explore, in the case studies to follow, the power dimension, in addition to the broad categories of characteristics as previously identified (Chapter 3, Section 3.3). In fact, 'power is everywhere and can be analysed through the creation (and the enforcement) of social norms or customs that are practised throughout society' (Cooke and Kathari, 2001).

Furthermore, a number of contributions, for example the discussion and the analysis by Sahn and Sarris (1995) on the contradiction between indigenous rural structures and those promoted by the post-independence states in Africa, indicate that is useful to first start looking into the endogenous groups at the origin of the current development dynamics, and then, progressively assess their subsequent evolution.

Also, the necessity to design new approaches for effective linkages between local organisations and development partners is confirmed. In that respect, cultural theory and the concept of collective cognition offer a broader perspective for the analysis of the 'linking potential', through a social learning process.

For the following step of the research, two village groups were then chosen in Benin: in Bonou village, in the Southeast region, and Kotokpa village, in the Central region. Taking into consideration one of the key practical lessons learnt during the exploratory tour, I made sure to select places where I can speak the local language, so that I could discuss directly with the farmers. Furthermore the main criteria for selection was *success* or *efficiency* considering not only economic aspects but also social, political and cultural factors. As suggested by Uphoff, Esman and Krishna (1998), one should always be cautious using the word success, and whenever success is spoken of, one should ask, by what criteria?

It is also to be recognised that development successes are more documented and disseminated than failures, with the result that there is a lack of understanding of lessons learnt (Botes and van Rensberg, 2000). That is why, for this study, the option was taken to examine, at a later stage (Chapter 10), cases where local dynamics work and where they do not.

The selection of cases for this pilot study has drawn on the performance indicators as designed by Esman and Uphoff (1984), to which the dimension of culture has been added, given the important role played by cultural values in the dynamics observed during the exploratory tour (Chapter 3). While Esman and Uphoff (ibid), have clearly explained that their focus on development-oriented organisations does not mean that they deny the value of organisations with 'purely social or cultural orientation', I argue that so far, I have seen no local group which were purely social or cultural. I have rather observed, like in the case of the *Lonlonhoun* group in Ghana (Chapter 3), local people 'drumming for development'! With part of the money raised, the group helps, for example, provide roof to a primary school or equip a local health centre...

Table 4.2 presents the selection criteria:

Criteria	How to assess ?
Social benefits	In terms of equipment or other facilities for health, education, nutrition, water supply, transportation, and/or other public facilities
Economic gains	Through agricultural and/or non-agricultural production and/or income
Equity effects	Through level of access to services for the majority (and mainly poor)
Reduced discrimination	For example, evidence of increased social opportunities for women and / or other disadvantaged social groups
Participation in decision making	At the community and (possibly at the national level), as indicator of the power system
Cultural dimension	Through integration of (local) cultural values into the overall system

Table 4.2 Criteria for selection of the cases for the Second Learning Cycle [Adapted from Esman and Uphoff (1984)]

For this research it was not felt necessary to go further and qualify the dynamics observed with more specific indicators such as the level of performance for each component. The main objective here was to test the loose categories of characteristics, as described in Chapter 3 (Esman and Uphoff, op. cit.).

In Bonou Asrossa, within the sphere of solidarity built up around a 'Whistle club' of some young people of the village, a strong farmers' association was born. This led to the creation of a Savings and Credit Fund and a Rural Health Union, which can both be considered as development successes.

In Kotokpa, a traditional game, the *Adji*, helped local communities to build up a strong cohesion. On this basis, they set up a savings system, took steps to increase agricultural production and then launched various collective activities such as drinking water supply and organising an efficient security system in the village.

In both villages, the main components of the development dynamics concerned were examined, and the activities, the actors' strategies as well as the impact were assessed.

As for the methodology, and as explained in Chapter 2, key informants were interviewed, and workshops were conducted with focus groups to confirm the characteristics identified and to grade them. It is important to note (again) that the main method used was *participant observation*. My assistant and myself spent together more than four months in each of the two villages - where we still pay regular visits - in order to get some basic information on the current developments. In the general section on research methodology, I have elaborated on the importance of *participant observation* in this type of research. However I would like to stress the need to combine interviewing and observation, as interviews can help the researcher to understand what he/she has been observing: 'through interviewing or other means of data gathering, we need to place the observed scene in context, searching for the potential positive or negative sanctions, which are not immediately observable but may be important in shaping behavior' (Whyte, 1984).

The following table summarises the methodology followed for this second step of the research.

Phase Components	2nd Learning Cycle (LC2): The 2 pilot cases
Objective	Assessing the Loose Categories of Characteristics (from LC1)
Methods / Techniques	2 Pilot case studies / Participant observation, key informants (KI) interviews, focus groups meetings
Nodes for reflection	Table with categories of the characteristics of the local dynamics
Outcomes	Key Existential Factors (KEF) of the local dynamics

Table 4.3 Moving to the Second Learning Cycle

Chapter 5

Where 'a whistle club' of young villagers led to a development success: the Bonou case in Benin

5.1   Overview

In the beginning, there was the Vangbè...
More than twenty-five years ago, the people who are now the major players in the development dynamics in place in Bonou Asrossa, in the south-eastern region of Benin, were the thirteen young men who belonged to the *Vangbè* (the 'Whistle Club').
The young men used the whistle to call together a meeting of their club on each important occasion: the death of a parent (and thus the need to organise the funeral), or to work on the fields of a client (since the club was also a small agricultural service provider), etc. On special occasions, they distinguished themselves visibly from other young people: the Vangbè members used to wear uniforms for feasts and funerals.
This small social organisation, and the income generated from its agricultural work, formed the basis for an increasingly coherent group, and the *Vangbè* club grew into a smoothly-operating group of young farmers, and gave birth to the strong Village Group of farmers *(Groupement Villageois)* which we know today.

With their income continuing to grow over the years, the young men of Bonou found themselves without a savings and credit system. The body they would have normally used, the branch office of the local agricultural credit union, the *Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuelle* (CLCAM), had been moved to Adjohon, the country town of the neighbouring Sous-Préfecture[10].

With assistance from the NGO Sasakawa Global 2000, the farmers of Bonou set up a Rural Savings and Credit Fund (CREP, or *Caisse Rurale d'Epargne et de Prêt*) which led to the setting up of a Rural Health Credit Union (MSR, or *Mutuelle de Santé Rurale*). Today, these creations are their pride, and are much admired, even outside Benin.

It is important to remember the call for 'caution about success' from Esman and Uphoff (1984), referred to in Chapter 4 (Section 4.5), but the same authors also indicate quite clearly that the appreciation should be based on 'those things the rural people seek': 'productivity, well-being, and empowerment'. In that respect, the enthusiasm of the Bonou villagers is a clear indication that things are moving in the direction they want.
What is the context of their development dynamics? How were the different components initiated and how do they work? What are the main actors and what are their motivations?

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10   Administrative unit corresponding to the District level.

Map 1 Benin, The Bonou village

BURKINA FASO

NIGER

BENIN

TOGO

NIGERIA

Abomey
Bonou

Porto-Novo

Cotonou
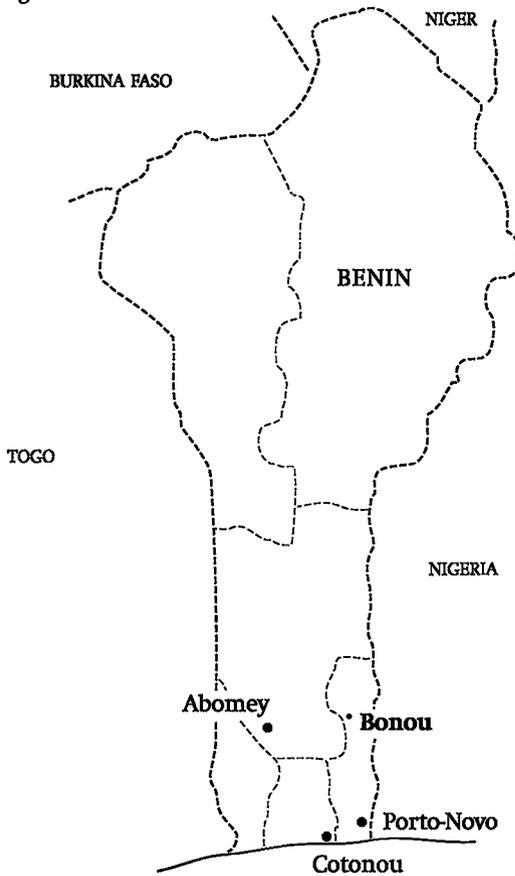
5.2   The local context

5.2.1   A fertile physical environment, although landlocked at times...

The *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou is located in the Department of Ouémé in the South-eastern region of Benin. One of its five communes is that of Damè-Wogon, with about 5,000 inhabitants, comprising the villages of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè which are the main focus of the Bonou dynamics.

The CREP is based in the Asrossa village, that is why it is often referred to as the Asrossa CREP as well as the Bonou CREP. Administratively Asrossa is divided into four hamlets (Ahitonou, Gbahouété, Gbèfadji and Awoyotomè) under the authority of one village chief assisted by five counsellors.

Asrossa enjoys a sub-equatorial climate characterised by two rainy seasons and thus two growing periods (from March to July and from September to October), and two dry seasons (for the periods July to August, and November to March).

The *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou is part of the area called '*Vallée de l'Ouémé*' (the river Ouéme valley). It is an area which is known for its high production of food crops - mainly cereals, cassava and vegetables - and where it is possible to grow certain crops out-of-season, notably sweet potato and maize.

Another noteworthy feature of the area are the floods between August and mid-October which make travelling difficult throughout the *Sous-Préfecture* and which cut off the commune of Damè (and thus the village of Asrossa) for cars during this period. People have to use canoes over a distance of about one kilometre. Bridges are now being built to deal with this problem.

In terms of population, the village of Asrossa has 1,167 inhabitants spread over 235 households, of which 155 are farming households, according to the census of 1992. The principal language is *Ouémè*.
In terms of infrastructure, the villages of Asrossa-Ahouanzonmè have a primary school with two classes, a Rural Health Credit Union (MSR) and a market is being built.

5.2.2   Socio-cultural and religious context: restless relationships...

The village of Asrossa houses several religions: Catholicism, celestial Christianity, *the Union for the rebirth of Man in Christ* (URHC) and animism. More than 70% of the population are animists, and the voodoo chief is established in Damè, but his power goes beyond the boundaries of the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou. We shall see later how some of these religions have had a determinant impact on the development dynamic in Bonou.
On the socio-cultural level, there are two secret societies: the *Zangbêtô* and the *Orho*. The *Zangbêtô*, a society for night-watches, is the oldest secret society in the area under study; it is quite spread throughout most villages in southern Benin. Today the *zangbêtô* plays a central role in the local dynamic underway in Asrossa.
There are also numerous traditional groups and farmers' associations, the oldest of which, the Village Group of Asrossa, has its origins - as we have seen - in the old 'Whistle Club' of young people, known as *Vangbè*.

5.2.3   The local settings and the main actors

Our attentions are devoted, in particular, to the following bodies which are the main components of the Bonou development dynamics:
- the Village Groups of farmers (*Groupements Villageois* commonly called GV) of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè;
- the Rural Savings and Credit Fund (CREP) which was set up by these groups, and then spread out to eight other villages in the *Sous-Préfecture*. It was subsequently decentralised through the establishment of a local Savings and Credit Union (MEP, or *Mutuelle d'Epargne et de Prêt*) in each village. The headquarters of CREP is based in the village of Asrossa, which explains why it is often referred to as CREP of Asrossa or of Bonou Asrossa;
- a Rural Health Credit Union, set up by the major players in the CREP. It started operations in Asrossa, in the offices of CREP. Despite having moved latterly to a new building in Ahouanzonmè, it has kept the name of *Mutuelle de Santé Rurale* of Asrossa (Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union);

- a Supreme Village Council (*Haut Conseil Villageois*, HCV)[11], set up by villagers for conflict resolution at the level of local institutions, especially CREP and MSR;

The major local players include:
- members of Village Groups, of CREP and of the credit unions. Of these, special mention should be made of *Gandaho*[12], Chairman of CREP, a farmer, and former Mayor of the Commune and his Deputy, *Ganwégô*.
- the director of CREP and MSR, the chairman and deputy-chairman of the Supreme Village Council, as well as the village chiefs of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè and the mayor of Damè Wogon;
- the *Sous-Préfet*, the local administrative authority representing the central government;
- the Chief of the rural Police (*Commandant de la Brigade de gendarmerie*).

The strategic roles of some of the local actors will be assessed in Section 5.4.

Other important actors involved are:
- the NGO Sasakawa Global 2000 which supports several local initiatives in Benin, mainly in the domains of savings and credit, and rural health, but which had stopped its activities in the area;
- the NGO Bénin-France which supports a few local areas including Bonou in setting up and running village Health Units.

5.3   The Savings and Credit Unit: at the heart of the system

Experience on savings schemes in many parts of the world has suggested that the time might have come to move away from the notion of 'credit programme', to consider credit as a tool - but a powerful one - in integrated programmes of development (Oxfam, 1987).

If this is indeed the trend, then we could certainly learn from the catalytic role played by the credit system in Bonou vis-à-vis other on-going activities.

5.3.1   Background: born from real needs

The Rural Savings and Credit Fund (CREP) of Asrossa was established in June 1992, bringing together 70 people from two villages. Six years later, it covered ten villages with 1,332 members from all over the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou, and even had some tentacles beyond the borders of this administrative area. It was established with the support of the Sasakawa Global 2000 project which saw here an opportunity to fill the gap caused by the cessation of its activities in the area (primarily selling fertilisers and seeds to farmers on credit for maize production, Gléhouénou, 1996).

One important factor helped this initiative to take shape: the branch office of the local agricultural credit union (*Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuelle* - CLCAM), which normally would

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11 The Haut Conseil Villageois (HCV) is also called Haut Conseil des Sages (HCS), or Council of the 'Wise People' (means, of the Elders). My 'calls for harmonisation' had not been successful, as the farmers always replied, simply: 'It is the same...'.

12 Whenever necessary, the option has been made to use nicknames instead of the real names of the actors. Gandaho, in local languages goun or fon means: big chief, and Ganwégo, second chief.

have been the alternative microfinance institution, was moved to Adjohon, about 20 km away, a distance which local people felt excessive. Here lies the story of how a group of farmers, not wanting to stay dependent on money-lenders, appointed a committee of three members, including one woman, to actively encourage villagers to join the CREP. How is this Savings and Credit system organised and what are the main achievements so far?

5.3.2 Organisation of the CREP

Initially, when it covered only two and then three villages, the CREP was run by a centralised board of management. As its activities developed and its structure embraced eight more villages, its operations became fairly complicated. This is the main reason behind the process of decentralising the CREP which started in June 1995 on the recommendation of a consultant provided by the Sasakawa Project. This led to the establishment of village units called MEP (*Mutuelles d'Epargne et de Crédit* - local savings and credit unions). At the level of the village, this led to the establishment the body of the MEP. To date, ten MEPs have been set up.

Many bodies exist at the central level: a Board of Management, and a Credit Committee which examines credit applications, and decides on how to deal with them. It reports to the Board of Management.

The same bodies exist at the MEP level.

The basic contribution for membership was fixed at FCFA 2,700: 700 as the entry fee and 2,000 as a basic contribution to the capital.

Each member receives interest on savings deposits, and has access to a credit ceiling which is linked closely to his savings assets. Withdrawals of funds are also allowed under certain conditions to which I shall return later. Each member has a vote, and can be elected, at both the level of his MEP and of the CREP on condition that he has no debts towards the CREP or to the MEP of which he is member. The member is accountable to his MEP but not to the CREP. He also enjoys banking secrecy. It is only the MEPs themselves which are accountable to the CREP. Each member is bound to respect the conditions laid out in contract for the agreed loan. Non-respect of this principle means that the MEP stands the risk of losing access to credit, in a construction known as a solidarity fine.

5.3.3 Activities of the CREP

Quite a remarkable savings system

At the Asrossa CREP, the amount saved is left up to the each individual member, but there is a minimum deposit of FCFA 500. The rate of interest on deposits paid by CREP Bonou has been 6% since the beginning, compared with the 3.5% offered by CLCAM when it re-opened its offices in Bonou in 1994. This then started a competition which had a positive impact on the CREP as will be seen further. The rate of 3.5% is the minimum fixed by the Central Bank, and none of the commercial banks dare to offer more. Therefore it is much more profitable to place savings in the CREP in Bonou than in any bank in Cotonou!

After seven years of operation, the Asrossa CREP has mobilised local savings up to a total amount of FCFA 340 million. This is the result of expanding activities in each village, helped by CREP's decentralisation (which in turn led to several memberships of CREP in 1995 and 1996). Out of the current 1,332 members 851 are men, 286 are women and 195 represent various associations.

It would be wrong, however, simply to stay at the level of the CREP for properly describing the savings policy. At the level of the MEPs there is an instructive degree of diversity, and for this reason, it is essential to get an idea on how the system operates at village level.

We thus selected two village units: the largest, the MEP of Asrossa, and the smallest, the MEP of Ouébossou. It is an arbitrary choice, but these two MEP provide nonetheless a good description of the general situation.

The MEP of Asrossa
The MEP of Asrossa is the largest of all MEPS belonging to the CREP of Asrossa from the dual points of view of the number of members, and the volume of savings deposits; as of 31 December 1999, there were 484 members with total savings deposits of FCFA 25,893,875. As shown in the following tables, over the period 1993-1999, the number of saving members (individuals and associations) and the net volume of annual savings both grew gradually, with the exception of 1997 when the overall net volume saved and the net volume of savings held by associations reached the highest level of the entire period.

Years	Total	Individuals		Associations	
		number	%	number	%
1993	34	24	71	10	29
1994	75	61	81	14	19
1995	137	116	85	21	15
1996	223	190	85	33	15
1997	289	238	82	51	18
1998	388	313	81	75	19
1999	484	394	81	90	19
2000	562	452	80	110	20
Average	274	223	82	50	18

Table 5.1 Growth rate of number of saving members (by type) in the MEP of Asrossa 1993-2000 (Source: Survey 1998-2000)

Years	Total net saving deposits	Individuals		Associations	
		amount	%	amount	%
1993	894,825	617,780	69	277,045	31
1994	3,139,995	2,480,265	79	659,730	21
1995	5,937,641	3,646,050	61	2,291,591	39
1996	11,577,745	7,907,017	68	3,670,728	32
1997	1,064,047	9,508,608	33	18,992,700	67
1998	1,295,270	16,876,466	65	9,217,690	35
1999	1,225,670	15,676,190	61	10,217,685	39
2000	1,959,925	12,411,446	48	13,550,812	52
Average	913,048	8,640,478	54	7,359,748	46

Table 5.2 Growth rate in members savings deposits (by type) in the MEP of Asrossa (FCFA) (Source: Survey 1998-2000)

Some specific factors characterise the MEP of the Asrossa village. First of all, there is here a remarkable growth in the number of members saving in this MEP. In addition to the relatively favourable rate of interest, this trend is also the result of a support strategy of the GV of Asrossa (the farmers' association), which is an organisation of cotton farmers, cotton being an excellent cash crop throughout Benin. All farmers members of the Asrossa GV are automatically considered as CREP members, the required FCFA 2,700 being deducted from their cotton income.

This automatic affiliation may be questionable, but so far the advantages for the individual members make it work.

We should also take note of the 'boom' recorded in the number of saving members in 1997, just one year after the start of the decentralisation undertaken in the CREP. It was also in 1997 that the MEP of Asrossa benefitted from a significant deposit of FCFA 13,772,432 by the USPP (*Union Sous-Préfectorale des Producteurs*, the farmers' union of the District).

In fact it is an atmosphere of suspicion which limits the success of the MEP. Some inhabitants of the village of Asrossa only have an account at the CLCAM, the local agricultural credit union.

They do this to avoid their assets being known by those of their immediate neighbours who are the local staff of the CREP and its managers. It would appear that these people do not practice banking secrecy. The reticence of these savers, well justified as it is, may be seen as a major challenge for financial institutions such as the CREP. Furthermore, this phenomenon would seem to put in doubt approaches which are based on 'proximity'.

The MEP of Ouébossou

The MEP de Ouébossou is one of the smallest MEPs in the CREP of Asrossa. As of 31 December 1999 it had 103 members of which 94 savers, representing a capital issue of FCFA 112,800. At this date, the MEP also had 58 saving members, with total deposits of FCFA 1,225,670. Compared with the case of Asrossa, this is a low level of saving members: 56% as opposed to 83% in Asrossa. Over the period 1994-1999, the number of individual saving members grew gradually whereas the number of saving associations has stabilised at 6 in 1997 and 1998, then increased to 8 and 9, respectively in 1999 and 2000, as shown in Table Number 5.3.

Years	Total	Individuals		Associations	
		number	%	number	%
1994	2	2	100	0	0
1995	15	12	80	3	20
1996	28	24	86	4	14
1997	44	38	86	6	14
1998	51	45	88	6	12
1999	58	51	88	7	12
2000	82	73	89	9	11
Average	40	35	88	5	12

Table 5.3 Growth in numbers of savingmembers in the MEP of Ouébossou (Source: Survey 1998-2000)

Years	Total net saving deposits	Individuals		Associations	
		amount	%	amount	%
1994	130,300	130,300	100	0	0
1995	390,000	369,700	95	20,300	5
1996	326,125	272,082	83	54,043	17
1997	1,064,047	975,002	92	89,045	8
1998	1,295,270	1,175,127	91	120,143	9
1999	1,225,670	762,470	623	463,254	17
2000	1,959,925	1,835,971	94	123,954	6
Average	913,048	786,665	86	124,391	14

Table 5.4 Growth in level of annual savings in the MEP of Ouébossou (FCFA) (Source: Survey 1998-2000)

The growth in total savings deposits has been principally affected here by those of individuals, with an (apparent) peak in 1998. There is a relative weakness in the numbers of associations in Ouébossou, compared with those of Asrossa.

We should also stress that the village of Asrossa is known for its dynamism. In addition, cotton - a cash crop selling well - has played a key role in the development dynamic in Asrossa, while, in Ouébossou, the farmers are not cotton growers.

On the whole, an average amount of FCFA 28,722 was saved annually by each association in the MEP of Ouébossou, as compared with FCFA 158,627 in Asrossa for the same period - 1994 - 1999, and FCFA 25,764 with individual savers, as compared with FCFA 42,755. In Ouebossou, the individuals saved almost up to the same level as the associations, while in the case of Asrossa, the associations saved four times more. Here again we have to recall that these data are skewed by the presence of the USPP in the list of institutional saving members in the MEP of Asrossa. What is important to stress here is that in both cases, the individual savings are far above the national figure for annual savings in rural areas, which is FCFA 10, 400[13].

From the above, it can be concluded that not all MEPs live in the same type of situation. There are important differences which are not necessarily visible at the level of the CREP. Any approach to strengthen the CREP should therefore start with strengthening MEPs of the type found in Ouébossou. This is not to say that the position of the MEP of Asrossa is satisfactory. We have cited as an example the way in which its managers breached the arrangements of the solidarity deposit. Such a practice has not yet occurred in the case of Ouébossou, a smaller MEP and thus one perhaps easier to manage, according to the way local people look at the issue. To incorporate all these aspects in the management of MEPs and of CREPs would seem to be a wise strategy to follow.

The Credit system: where progress is held back only by financial potential
The maximum loan size possible from the CREP in Bonou is FCFA 500,000. The permitted ratio of loan to savings deposit is 5:1. As of May 1998, CREP had made loans of a total FCFA 317,688,000 since its establishment. Around 50% of loans have been made for agricultural production, processing of agricultural products and agricultural equipment. The rest went to trade and various other activities for which alternative funding possibilities are missing at the local level, such as funding for small crafts-men and women, including two dressmakers.

It goes without saying that were it not for the limits to its financial capacity that the CREP would play an even more important role in community development.

The following table shows the division of the loans by season and in relation to credit applications.

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13   Survey 1994, INSAE (Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique), Benin.

Season / period	Loan applications (FCFA)	Loans made (FCFA)	Coverage
1993-1994	560,000	555,000	99.10 %
1994-1995	6,600,000	5,255,000	79.62 %
1995-1996	21,270,000	14,155,000	66.54 %
1996-1997	52,800,000	29,662,000	56.17 %
1997-1998	93,362,000	41,305,000	44.24 %
1998-1999	141,000,000	80,639,000	57.19 %
1999-2000	208,639,000	106,406,000	51.00 %
Average	74890,142	39,711,000	64.84 %

Table 5.5 Trends in credit applications and loans in the CREP of Asrossa (Source: CREP Asrossa,April 2000)

The table shows that the demand for credit has always exceeded the provision of credit by CREP, and that the gap has been growing consistently from season to season until the financial year 1997-1998 (44%). It improved slightly (57%) in 1998-1999 (57%), but has dropped again, down to 51% for 1999-2000.

There are two reasons for this:
- the low volume of cash available for loans, which limits the room for manoeuvre;
- the continual growth in the number of applicants, in conjunction with the average value of the loan applications.

For example, the average loan requested increased from FCFA 22,200 in the 1993-1994 season, to FCFA 127,880 during the 1997-1998 season. This is an annual growth rate of 95%.

This explains why there was a need for external finance. In this framework, the PADME fund (Projet d'Appui au Développement des Micro-Entreprises) agreed to finance a loan of FCFA 20,000,000 to CREP with an annual interest rate of 10% in April 1998.

Towards a stronger savings policy

The savings policy followed by the CREP in Bonou since the beginning has always been clear-sighted. Despite this, it nearly fell into bankruptcy at the end of 1996 because its operating system had no restrictions on the volume of withdrawals. In order to correct this, the managers took appropriate action in the form of encouraging fixed-term deposits with immediate payment of the interest upon deposit.

The overall rapid growth in demand has led the managers of CREP to pursue several lines of action:
- reducing the maximum permitted ratio of credit to deposit from 5:1 to 3:1 (as from 1994);
- promoting savings by organised groupings (religious groups, folklore groups, groups based on lineage and clans, rotating savings groups) which rarely apply for credit but which are mainly seeking a safe place to invest their funds.

In 1997, the greatest increase in savings deposits was from groups, with total deposits of FCFA 18,411,865. This is explained by the fact that the USPP Bonou (*Union Sous-Préfectorale des*

Producteurs) joined the CREP during this period (as we have seen earlier with FCFA 13,777,432). There are other significant depositors in this category, namely the Union des groupements de la commune de Damè, the UDP, *Union Départementale des Producteurs* (UDP) de l'Ouémé, the local branch of the *Chambre d'Agriculture* and the Sasakawa Post Harvest project.

Despite its perceptive policies regarding savings and restricting credit, the CREP of Bonou erred into bankruptcy at the end of 1996, thanks to its operating methods not including any ceiling to withdrawals. To correct this its managers took improvised remedial measures by encouraging term deposits on which interest was paid out at the beginning of the deposit period! Members were then very happy to have immediate cash at their disposal. This very clever strategy also attracted many new savers.

Also the competition from the CLCAM forced the CREP to reduce the interest rate on loans down to 15%. Initially, it was 18%, but was brought down to 16% (rate applied by the CLCAM) and then to 15%.

Loan recovery
The strength of a financial institution lies above all in its ability to recover its loans. In this regard, the CREP in Bonou has a very good record, as shown in the following table.

Agricultural Seasons	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999
Recovery rate	100%	100%	100%	99%	97%	99,83%

Table 5.6 Trends in loan recovery rates for the Asrossa CREP 1993 to 1999 (Source: CREP books, Asrossa)

Collective guarantee makes it work!
Taken across five seasons, the average rate of recovery is 99.2%, higher than that achieved by CLCAM (95%). This good performance has been achieved thanks to a 'solidarity measure'. Through this, if any loan in a given village has not been repaid from a previous season, then no further loans will be made to that village. (It is recalled that since decentralisation the CREP only deals with MEPs and not with individuals.) This system means that if any individual is in arrears on a loan, then this has consequences for the entire MEP. This will slow down the activities of all of its members.

Difficult cases are settled by the Supreme Village Council (see 5.5).

Competition forcing to flexibility
It must be said that members would like this rule to be more flexible, since the fund managers have problems in applying it consistently. In particular, the chairman of the Bonou MEP was in arrears by FCFA 500,000 on a loan from the previous season, while 'his' MEP still had access to credit for the 1998-1999 season. The chairman of CREP has explained that to apply this solidarity measure would have two major inconveniences:

- it would strengthen the position of their rival, the CLCAM which is now based in this village; and
- it would lead to the loss of significant partners in the Rural Health Credit Union, since the chairman of the MEP had personally made a lot of effort to get 18 new members for this credit union during the financial year 1998-1999. The chairman of the Bonou MEP is also chairman of the board of management of this health credit union, and vice-chairman of the board of management of the CREP.

This explains why the rate of recovery for the Bonou MEP in the 1997-98 season was only 80.50% while most of the others reached 100% - apart from Asrossa with 97.7% in 1997-98 and 99.42% in 1998-99. And whatever the justification might be, it must be noted that the leaders themselves broke the rules!

Other activities

Apart from its activities in savings and credit, the CREP in Bonou opened, in December 1997, a shop selling basic commodities (petrol, sugar, salt, cement, etc.) and agricultural tools, which were not available at reasonable prices in the village. In 1995, it had opened another shop for pharmaceutical medicines, but, in view of disappointing results, the CREP transferred it to the health credit union, which was in financial difficulty.

Another key example of additional activities is to be found in the work of the members of the *Whistle Club* in launching a programme to improve rural dwellings. Already thirteen maisonettes have been completed and are the pride of all the Asrossa village.

Annual income and social investment

Annual accounts are clearly set up every year among the different village units. At the level of the CREP (the central level), for the periods 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 the net profits made were of FCFA 1,016,581 and FCFA 831,211 respectively. Of the FCFA 1,016,581 profit made in 1996 - 1997, an amount of FCFA 595,000 were used to finance the shop for various products, and the rest was placed in the CREP account. Of the FCFA 831,211 profit made in 1997-1998, most of it, FCFA 762,435 , was used to cover rebates made on loans to MEPs. In 1998-1999 the total income, 2,975,368 were returned to the MEPs (see Table below). This allowed some of them to invest in social equipment, thus confirming their role as instruments of local development.

	1997 - 1998	1998 - 1999
MEP: Asrossa	262,435	878,934
MEP: Ahouanzonmè	81,225	78,960
MEP: Damè	52,815	370,634
MEP: Avlankanmè	18,555	103,312
MEP: Bonou	30,065	208,839
MEP: Ouébossou	35,210	428,379
MEP: Adido	4,110	283,556
MEP: Tatonnonkon	168,360	143,900
MEP: Agbonan	52,560	251,603
MEP: Affanmè	57,060	227,251
Total	762,435	2,975,368

Table 5.7 Allocation of rebates paid on loans to MEPs in the Asrossa CREP.
(Source: Archives CREP of Asrossa)

Each MEP is free in deciding how to use the rebates it receives. In general, part of the rebate is used to remunerate its manager, and the remainder is used for equipment. As an example, the MEP of Asrossa used FCFA 332,500 from its rebate for the period 1998-1999 as an advance towards the purchase of a plot of land to be used for an open market for the five villages in the commune of Damè. Similarly, two MEPs made grants of FCFA 20,000 each to the public primary school of Ahouanzonmè to build a classroom.

In addition to these financial results, an exceptional profit of at least FCFA 165,000 was made by the CREP on a speculative operation on fertiliser stocks, in connection with the devaluation of the FCFA in 1994. Being a group helps them cope and even take advantage of such special circumstances.

5.3.4   Perspectives

The above analysis points to two special assets for CREP: the rates of interest it applies, and the use of the 'solidarity measure'. There is a third one, equally important: the membership of associations, notably the USPP, the Rural Health Credit Union. Indeed the future of this CREP seems to be essentially linked to the development of these two bodies. Nonetheless, it is clear that interest rates are, and will remain, undeniable assets for CREP, because they can be steered. This is not to exclude the possibility that the CLCAM could adjust its rates, but the CREP would be able to adjust its own rates within the limits of its resources. The use of the solidarity measure is also an important asset, but its future is unsure, in view of the current difficulties in applying it. This situation cannot be kept hidden if it continues much longer. If the situation is prolonged, then there could be strong reactions, which could lead, for example, to a change in leadership, or a move towards independence of some MEPs. This obviously would weaken the central body.

If such a crisis was to occur, the consequences could be dire for CREP. It has to be pointed out that the fact that the USPP is a client cannot be seen separately from the fact that the two organisations are chaired by the same person. Here we have a major player, with considerable means, who can influence the rules of the game. If a crisis was to occur which could lead to the loss of the USPP as a client, it would very quickly induce a liquidity crisis. In such a scenario, it could be possible to call on support from external donor agencies, but it is questionable if this would be a sustainable solution.

To sum up, CREP is thus essentially dependent on a number of people (key players, Section 5.6.1), without whom it could not function without running the risk of weakening itself. It is therefore to be hoped that events will be favourable to keeping them in their (current strategic) positions, at least until other, equally dynamic leaders emerge.

It is important to stress that, on the whole, the Bonou CREP seems to have a promising future. Very few of the limitations usually mentioned as hampering grassroots' credit organisations - 'under-capitalisation, low credit-worthiness, lack of management skills and contacts, and a relative unfamiliarity with doing business' - apply in the case of Bonou.

The entrepreneurial strength of Bonou's leaders is well illustrated by the recent election of the Chairman of CREP as the Chairman of the national union of community savings groups. Of course success often has a price. Because of his new responsibilities, he will certainly be less available for local affairs...

5.4   The Rural Health Credit Union (MSR)

In 1994 a *Mutuelle de Santé Rurale* (MSR) - Rural Health Credit Union - was set up in Asrossa. After some start-up difficulties, the union had by 1997 become the most visited health centre in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou. How did this come about? Why, and how, was this body set up? This chapter examines these key questions, after my introductory remarks on certain events prior to, and after, its creation.

5.4.1   Background

Born of a conflict: two health centres in the same commune
In 1994, the rural commune of Damè received financial support from the government for a communal health centre. There already was a health centre, but it was poorly housed in temporary accommodation in the village of Damè. The process of deciding on the site for the new centre led to a struggle between the village of Damè, the headquarters of the commune, on the one hand, and a coalition of the villages of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè on the other.

Assuming that one of their villages would certainly host the new health centre, the coalition members cleared in advance the piece of land they intended to present as their contribution to the 'project'. Unfortunately, due to political lobbying by some local authorities, when the national officer in charge of the 'Health Centres project' came for the implementation, the announcement was just made that the new centre would be established in Damè, the commune headquarters. While the official was still delivering his speech, the coalition members left the meeting and went to assemble on the plot they had cleaned; there they swore that they would immediately start building their own health centre!

The Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union takes shape
It took some time for the coalition members to get organised but they worked hard from 1996 to get the Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union off the ground and it opened up for business in the CREP building in April 1997. It has become of the most original contemporary experiences in the field of public health in rural areas in Benin. Gandaho, one of the major players, explains the background:

> The Bonou Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union: An original experience.
>
> ' Here are the principles we operate upon. First of all, staff are recruited and financed by ourselves: the nurse-in-charge of the credit union, the midwife, the assistant and the person charge of the pharmacy. Since we pay for them ourselves, they would take good care of our sick people. Each member of the credit union pays an amount of FCFA 25,000 at the beginning of the year; of this, FCFA 5,000 is for her or his share of the operating costs of the union, and FCFA 20,000 is an advance payment for health care.
> It is a simple system. When the members of a family fall ill, they are looked after as need be in the health centre, and the corresponding expenses are noted. At the end of the year, if, for example, the family has received health care for FCFA 24,000, there is a debt of FCFA 4,000. The head of the family repays this when he has sold his cotton or maize. If, on the other hand, there have not been many illnesses in the family,

and the costs are only FCFA 15,000, then the family has a balance of FCFA 5,000 which is automatically carried over to the next year.'

The permanent buildings of the Asrossa health credit union were inaugurated in November 1997, a clear sign that the coalition had, in the end, got its way. How did it get so far? Ganwégo explains:

'God must have been on our side: we were here when Mr Loko[14] paid us a visit. We told him about how our health credit union needed buildings. It goes without saying that we did not tell him about our conflict with Damè. He came back to us several months later with the good news that finance had been found. We would probably not have got this far if we had not already been doing something ourselves, no matter how modest it was.'

Local people contributed not only manpower but also local materials such as wood, sand and water; there was also a financial contribution from CREP. The NGO Benin-France mostly contributed cement, roofing sheets, painting, technical equipment and possibly some cash too (although we could not find out to what extent...).

5.4.2 Organisational set-up and functioning

The Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union now runs: a nursing section, run by a nurse; a maternity section, run by a mid-wife with a State diploma, and a small surgical section (not operative).

There is also a medicine store, where sales are run by a 'school drop-out', and an administrative unit which largely looks after member records.

The staff work under the supervision of two bodies:
- the board of management (*Conseil d'administration*, CA) headed by Mr Tigo until he passed away in 1998. The principal task of the board of management is to work out the centre's budget, and to encourage local people to become members of the union;
- the commune management committee (*Comité de gestion de la commune* - COGEC). This committee is responsible for monitoring and controlling all aspects of financial management in the health credit union. This control ranges from the monthly stock control of medicines, through monitoring entries arising from members' transactions to the checking of expenditure against the budget. This finance committee is headed by Abraham Lokonon.

In addition to the share of FCFA 1,200 paid by each member, the financial resources of the MSR are made up of the profits made on sales of health care subscriptions and medicines, and of a part of the FCFA 5,000 paid by each member for annual membership.
These means are used by the MSR to meet its financial obligations, which are essentially the salary costs of its personnel, the purchase of small materials, the fund for supplying drugs to the pharmacy and for possible external support. As a result, the strategies of the fund's managers aim at having a large number of patients and of members.

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14 Representative of the NGO France-Benin.

Soon after its launch, the credit union was faced with its first difficulties.

The first difficulty was to deal with the salary (FCFA 100,000 a month) of the doctor, who was the first employee of the credit union. He resigned after two months. To solve this problem, the MSR was forced to call upon the generosity of CREP, which provided a loan of FCFA 74,000. In addition to this financial support, CREP also handed over its medicine shop, at a value of FCFA 666,000.

Then the midwife at the *Sous-Préfecture* health centre (a state centre located in Bonou) refused to weigh and vaccinate babies born at the MSR centre, because she objected to the latter's competition. After considerable pressure, the centre's doctor managed to resolve this problem in January 1998.

Despite all these difficulties, the Rural Health Credit Union has been able to consolidate its position.

5.4.3   Actors' strategies

The major objective of the MSR is, as stated, to have a significant number of members and a high level of patient use. Four strategies have been noted for this in Asrossa.

- awareness-building of health workers in good conduct; a training course is provided to each newly recruited health worker in the MSR, in which the rules of good conduct towards the local community are brought home. These rules deal principally with the reception to be given to users of the centre, with a call to dedication and the prohibition of flirting with someone else's wife;
- building up public awareness of the community of the advantages associated with being a member;
- some local organisations have provided financial support to some people desirous of becoming paying members but without the necessary financial means. This is the case with the GVC of Ahouanzonmè: in order to redress the balance with the Asrossa village which had more members, in 1996, the group made loans of FCFA 1,200 to some inhabitants keen to become members, by drawing on its reserve assets[15]. The same holds for the CREP in 1998. A line of credit of FCFA 25,000 was opened for CREP members keen to become paying members of the MSR[16].
- involvement of the inhabitants of other villages in the managing bodies of the MSR.

Sensitisation has been, indeed, an important element in the local actors' strategies to meet their MSR's objectives. This is notably the case with the Village Group of Ahouanzonmè which, in 1997, again lent FCFA 1,200 to its members - this time all of them - wanting to become a member of the health credit union. The underlying objective was 'to save the honour of (their) village', balancing the numeric domination of the Asrossa village. Similar objective applies to the case of CREP; the extra credit made available to its members gave them the prospect of becoming the largest health credit union in Benin and thereby winning the ambulance being offered the NGO France-Bénin. Indeed, they won the ambulance; it was delivered on the occasion of their last General Assembly in February 1999! That meeting highlighted the very active

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15 This initiative is a good illustration of the stimulating role played of competitive strategies developed by different stakeholders. Similar situations have been described by Vodouhè (1996).

16 In reality this offer was made by the CREP which found itself in a competitive situation vis-à-vis other health credit unions in the country, since membership levels were an indicator of the most performing unions, and would be rewarded among those supported by the NGO France -Bénin.

role played within the institution by the initial members of the Vangbè; thanks to their lobbying, six new members (out of seven) joined the MSR Board. The departing members had not paid their membership fees; this had discouraged other members and had not encouraged new members to join.

5.4.4   Results

There are three communal health centres in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou: the CCS Damè which uses the health worker teams of Damè and of the MSR of Asrossa, CCS of Affamè which uses the teams of Affamè and Allakpon, and the CCS of Bonou which uses the teams of Bonou and Atchonsa. We shall now attempt a comparative analysis of three teams, namely those of the MSR of Asrossa, of Damè and of Bonou.
The performance indicator which we shall use in this comparison is the level of visits recorded by each of these teams. The three teams are similar to one another in the sense that they can compete in terms of the more or less identical services they provide: nursing care, deliveries, and prenatal and postnatal care.

During 1997, in the period from April to December, the Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union registered 1,143 patients; this compares with the figure of 726 at the Damè health centre, and 2,192 at the Bonou public centre, over the same period (as shown in Table 5.8). According to these figures the Bonou (public) health centre was way ahead of the Asrossa centre, which was used by half the number of patients during its start-up phase. However, from the month of November 1997 onwards, the Asrossa centre surges ahead: 271 patients against 234 in Bonou in November, and 341 against 292 in December. The Damè centre stayed more or less at the same level, with an annual average of 81 patients a month.

	Patients			Deliveries (Average 1998/1999)
	1997 (Apr. to Dec.)	1998	1999	
MSR Asrossa Total Average (month)	1,143 127	5,023 419	3,377 281	22
CCS Bonou Total Average	2,192 244	1,939 162	3,657 305	21
CS Damè Total Average	726 81	1,129 95	1,213 102	8

Table 5.8 Number of patients and deliveries at the three health centres in the period April 1997 to December 1999)
(Source: survey 1997-1999)

It is also important to underline the sudden increase in patients registered in November (271), as opposed to 77 in the previous month, more than three times higher. The November level

was similar to the monthly average of 76 recorded over the previous seven months. There are several reasons for the Asrossa health credit union to have achieved this. We stress in particular that it was in the month of November that the permanent buildings of the union were inaugurated, and there was a change of nursing staff.

In the year 1998, the dispensary of the MSR of Asrossa recorded 5,023 patients as against 1, 939 for CCS Bonou as shown in Table 5.8. The MSR of Asrossa thus had a recorded level of performance almost 260% that of CCS Bonou. The Damè team comes last with 1,129 patients recorded. The monthly average number of patients in were for the MSR of Asrossa, CCS Bonou, and the Damè team respectively 418, 162, and 94 patients.

The trend observed between Asrossa and Bonou was more or less reversed during the year 1999: 3,377 patients were recorded by Asrossa as against 3, 657 for Bonou.

In actual fact, the head nurse of the health team in Asrossa had had some legal difficulties with the parents of a girl from a neighbouring village. He had performed an abortion on her, at the request of the fiancé. He was relieved of his functions and was replaced. This change upset a not insignificant part of MSR's clientele which more or less decided on a tacit boycott of the centre. Their action was without doubt an explicit recognition of the nurse's competence.
Since then, various meetings have been held and the activities of the MSR would appear to have returned to normal.

As far as the maternity wing of activities is concerned, in 1999 the MSR of Asrossa, with a monthly average of 22 deliveries, stayed ahead of the Bonou team, with a monthly average of 21 deliveries, because the Atchonsa team does not have a maternity section. The Damè team came last with a monthly average of 8 deliveries.
As for pre- and post-natal consultations, the Damè team again came last. Otherwise, the trend is contrary to that observed for deliveries. Here it is the Bonou team which heads the list (a monthly average of 107 consultations) ahead of the MSR of Asrossa (97 consultations on average each month).

The number of paying members in the MSR of Asrossa continued to grow, from 70 in 1997 to 118 in 1998 and 121 in 1999, but decreased to 100 in 2000. The leaders explained that they had to exclude those members who were not paying their full contribution. The following table shows the distribution of the members on the basis of the village of origin.

Villages	Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè	Bonou	Avlankanmè	Agbonan	Total
Numbers 1998	98	19	1	0	118
Numbers 1999	109	18	1	1	121
Numbers 2000	83	16	0	1	100

Table 5.9 Distribution of paying members of the MSR of Asrossa from 1998 to 2000 (Source: files of MSR of Asrossa)

As a result of the surveys held, the following points may be noted:

- the larger the size of a household, the more inclined it will be to become a member of the MSR;
- non-members are aware of the advantages enjoyed by members, but they explain their non-membership by a lack of finance;
- the members of the MSR very rarely make use of other health centres (only when the MSR nurse find unnecessary to refer to a bigger health centre a sick member of the family, or in other cases of incomprehension;
- the traditional doctor continues to hold a preferred place in the health strategies of local people. Despite their credit facilities, 26% of union members had recourse to traditional doctors for various illnesses in 1998.

The success of Asrossa is thus clear, and is at the cost of its competitors, as witnessed by the nurse at the Damè centre: 'Things are boring now, because of the low level of visits. The worst of all is that people from the village go straight past us to be looked after at the Asrossa centre (which is 3 km further). Clearly, if things go on like this, my centre may have to close. I'm also trying and hopeful to get a job at the other centre myself, otherwise I might get rusty', he added.

5.4.5   Perspectives

A quick analysis of the above shows that some people work harder than others for the success of the health credit union, *Gandaho* and *Ganwégo* in particular. What will happen to it if they fail? Much of the dynamism of the major players in the union comes from the desire to still win the competition! Is that strong enough a motivation for it to continue over time? One thing is almost certain. That feeling of competition will lessen in time, and with it the passion of the villagers for the union. As far as the performance of the union is concerned, in its competitive environment, there are broad grounds for optimism. One of the factors that could lead to a deterioration in its position is the risk of lowered standards of patient care, linked to lower staff motivation. It is likely that this will only happen if staff salaries fall, but such a scenario may not be excluded since salary levels depend on the contributions made by the membership.

It has to be said that the current management strategy designed to increase the membership and client base gives cause for concern about makes one question the union's sustainability. It is based on support from other organisations, CREP and GV in particular, which have relatively little room for strategic financial manoeuvring. The painful experience of the GV with its loans of FCFA 1,200 for members is not something it wants to repeat. As far as CREP is concerned, it can only be hoped that it will be able to continue to provide the same level of support to the MSR in the future. Another problem will emerge when irreducible costs can no longer be absorbed within existing means. The health credit union will be faced with two choices:

- reduce salaries and other expenditure, as far as possible;
- increase fees.

This will pose a real dilemma for the major players of the MSR, because both alternatives will be in conflict with their basic objectives: making medical staff available, and facilitating access of local people to health care. The challenge facing the MSR now is how to avoid this pitfall.

An important matter of concern is certainly the exclusion of members or of a large part of the population of such schemes, due to clear management constraints. A consistent support system is obviously needed to assure that the needs of the most vulnerable groups are covered.

5.5 The Supreme Village Council

The Supreme Village Council (*Haut Conseil Villageois* - HCV, or *Haut Conseil des Sages* - HCS) was created in 1996 with the following objectives:
- to deal with the disobedience being shown towards the chief of the village, increasing conflicts and juvenile delinquency.
- to assist creditors, in particular local organisations (CREP, MEP and others), in recovering their dues when faced with the bad faith of certain debtors; and
- to guarantee a greater degree of participation in community tasks.

After almost 4 years of existence, its score sheet varies according to its field of work. It has performed relatively well in terms of dealing with thefts, insolvency and poor participation in community tasks. However, it has not done well enough in dealing with drug (ab)use, and its objective of helping to settle land tenure disputes has been practically dropped.

Which strategies should the SVC adopt to solve these problems? What problems can they expect to encounter in putting them to work, and how should they respond? What do local people think of the Council after three years of activity? How do they regard each of different areas of the Council's work?

5.5.1 Composition of Supreme Village Council

The Council has 18 members, wise and notable people from the villages of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè; it includes for example the chiefs of the two villages, and two *Zangan* (*Zangbétô* chiefs), one coming from each village. It is not by chance that these people are members:
- the village chiefs have the indispensable tasks of passing on to the Council information about any suspicious activities of which they have been told. The Council is then supposed to carry out an enquiry to confirm or deny the case;
- the *Zangan* participate in the Council meetings, and, in addition, represent the security component of the organisation. Their task is, when necessary, to mobilise the secret societies which they head. The sanction by '*Zangbétô*' is the ultimate available recourse.

Given the role of the *Zangbétô* as described earlier with the CREP, the involvement of the *Zangan* is quite strategic.

5.5.2 Different activities, different strategies

The scope of the Council's activities is in the domain of litigation, recovery of loans and organising the population for communal labour. In addition, it has started a 'solidarity savings' system which offers a special opportunity for people to meet and share information.

Mobilising the local people to participate in community tasks

The advent of democracy in Benin in 1990 was marked by many villagers of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè, young people in particular, responding less to calls to participate in community works. That was their way of expressing themselves freely, and enjoying their civic rights. It was a situation which weakened the authority of the village chiefs, and not one to encourage communal development activities (infrastructure, cleaning operations...). It led to the establishment of the Supreme Council, which developed a simple strategy: everyone boycotting communal works would know in advance that they would suffer sanction by the *zangbétô*. This sanction means that the guilty person is given a fine, and his name is shouted all over the village all night long, sometimes for several nights. It is a strategy which seems to work.

A conflict resolution system based on local culture and solidarity

The most frequent conflicts concern land tenure, theft and adultery.

The issue of land tenure is one of the most frequently recorded conflicts in rural areas in Benin (Mongbo et al, 1995, Fanou, 1992, and Aguèmon, 1998). There are, it seems, clear limits to the effectiveness of the legal system in settling such disputes. That, at least, is the opinion held by villagers and members of the Supreme Council, and used to justify their intervention in this area. The basic principle is that an amicable solution has to be found, with the involvement of the protagonists or their family. The members of the Supreme Council are of the opinion that it is the protagonists who are the most useful sources of information in such cases.

Cases which can not be dealt with are referred to the official security system.

The way the council deals with theft and marital conflicts has some internal shortcomings... When the Supreme Village Council takes action on theft, it holds public meetings. This is done in order to ensure transparency on the one hand, and to educate the guilty person through humiliation, on the other. It has a further effect of educating the public through dissuasion. When the accused has been proved guilty, in the eyes of the Supreme Councillors, but continues to proclaim his or innocence, the *Zangbétô* comes into force. The objective is to put pressure on the 'stubborn one'. The problem is that the supreme councillors often tend to make no distinction between presumed guilt, and guilt, when, in fact, innocent people can wrongfully suffer from this. Nonetheless, it is unanimously agreed that this system is more effective and faster than the official procedure. However, it is worth mentioning that certain cases strongly suggest that the decision-making of Supreme Council is not always independent..

With regard to theft and adultery, here are the evaluations made by two villagers of the work of the Supreme Council.

' *This body has contributed a lot to social calm in our two villages. Before it was set up, it was unimaginable to leave your door open when you were away. You would be cleared out of house and home in five minutes. Owners and drivers of motorcycles would be attacked and have their scooter taken from them in full daylight, without the criminal even feeling worried. Then there were the cases of self-imposed justice, where scores were settled without going to the village chief. All of this has disappeared these days'.*

Adrien here is giving a 'carte blanche' to the Supreme Council, but Mamali is more cautious in her remarks. ' *Not a week passes by without an act of adultery in these two villages. It's the same with theft. Just recently, the chairman's shop was robbed twice, the last time in January. To this day, the thieves have not been identified'.* She insinuates that the Supreme Council's power of dissuasion is rather limited.

Assisting the CREP for loan recovery

The supreme council gets involved in loan recovery in support to local organisations such as the CREP, the MEPs of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè, the Asrossa Rural Health Credit Union, etc. They can all call upon the support of the Supreme Council in dealing with their creditors. The same applies to individuals. To achieve their goal, the supreme councillors occupy the debtor's house, on a date agreed with the debtor, and only leave it when they have received the out-standing debt. This works as a form of pressure on the debtor. The final stage of this pressure process is to involve the *Zangbétô* as for the case of the CREP (see Section 5.5.4).

Fight against drug use: the heavy burden of the SVC

There once used to be, even recently, no drug use in the villages of Asrossa and Ahouanzonmè. It raised its head during the 1990s, with the return of young people from Nigeria. This new development brought along some conflicts which upset local tranquillity. The SVC took up a strong position on this issue, swooping on locations suspected of being where young people took their drugs. Once apprehended, the young people would be warned and given advice by members of the Council. In all, the Council has organised three such swoops since its establishment.

The Tontine of the SVC: a tool for solidarity, and an information sharing platform

In 1997, members of the Supreme Village Council set up a revolving solidarity savings system (tontine). It was open to any person sharing its ideals of solidarity:
* any person whose 'turn' has yet to come can be given priority if needing to meet the costs of the funeral ceremony of a family loss;
* any member who has had his turn but then suffers a family loss will receive a sum of FCFA 500 from each of the other members[17].

The following table shows the growth of the *tontine*:

	Membership of the SVC tontinea	Contribution (in FCFA)	Frequency of contribution	Theoretical amount to be collected by each participant (FCFA)	Actual amount collected by each participant (FCFA)
Episode 1	35	1,000	1 monthly	35,000	30,000
Episode 2	65	1,000	1 monthly	65,000	60,000

Table 5.10 Growth of the Asrossa SVC solidarity tontine
(Source: Survey 1998-1999 (Episode 1: 05.03.97 to 09.01.99 / Episode 2: from 17.01.99 until the last member is served)

The conclusion of each 'round' of the *tontine* is normally marked by a ceremony, and this was indeed the case at the end of the first exercise. In 1998 the participants made up a common dress which for them symbolised their solidarity.
Funds raised in the tontine were deposited in an account opened to this effect in the CREP of Asrossa.

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17 The participants in this tontine are also seen as sharing the ideals of the Supreme Village Council.

In addition to the solidarity function of this tontine, it also provides a place where information can be exchanged about cases of suspected theft and drug use by small groups of youths, with its members coming from all neighbourhoods in both villages. This is of obvious benefit to the members of the Supreme Village Council[18], and it also enables part of the continuity to join in discussions about life in their locality without having any explicit responsibility assigned to them.

5.5.3   Difficulties

Conflicts of competence
When the Supreme Village Council was established, the village chiefs found that - contrary to all expectations - they lost their individual authority to settle litigation and other disputes at the village level. Moreover, it was unacceptable for the two chiefs that legal matters were handled by the chief of police. Similarly, the latter got involved in a conflict with the Supreme Village Council, and the *Sous-Préfet* similarly.

In reality, the present position of these two village chiefs reflects the application of the official government position since the administrative reforms of 1974. There is one underlying reason for this: the village chiefs were making judgements on the same types of cases as prior to the establishment of the Supreme Village Council while the above reform was - and still is - applicable. This shows the gap between what should be done, and what is actually being done. It is easy to understand, then, that the removal of the financial benefits enjoyed by the village chiefs forced them to respond. The ensuing loss of social status (now shared with others) in their new position is another contributing factor. One of them ended up leaving the Supreme Village Council, and the other only attends those sessions concerning his village. The two chiefs have contradictory positions on the same question, depending on the issues involved, and thus seem to be following individual strategies. A similar conclusion could be reached with regard to the (former) chief of police[19], whose hostility to the Supreme Village Council seems to have been tempered by the bribes he could get periodically, if those involved are to be believed.

However, the (former) chief of police and the *Sous-Préfet* finally organised a meeting with the supreme councillors in May 1998. At this meeting, they tried to convince the councillors to limit their activities to initial enquiries, in the case of theft and other criminal acts. At present, also thanks to the goodwill of the new police chief, the activities are fairly chaired between the two institutions.

Conflict with the Union for the rebirth of men in Christ
In its efforts to mobilise the population for communal labour, the SVC was confronted with a number of problems, mainly with one of the churches in the locality, the *Union for the rebirth of men in Christ*. That church refused to submit to the *Zangbétô*, thus avoiding the controls of the Supreme Village Council. The Church claimed that to submit to the *Zangbétô* was to disobey God. This Church is located in the Gbahouété neighbourhood and recruits its faithful mainly from young people there.

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18 There is nonetheless the risk that this body could be infiltrated by people close to the delinquents. Its social nature should allow people to lose sight of the need for vigilance, otherwise its strategy could have results opposite to those intended.
19 The new police chief who took over since 1999 is very much aware of the complementarity of the two systems, and thus more open to co-operation.

It was during a visit by participants at an international seminar on microfinance held in Benin in 1999 that the people in charge of the local dynamic of Asrossa deliberately sought out the young members of the secret *zangbétô* society, living in the famous Gbahouété neighbourhood, to organise the cultural aspects of the visit. They were especially touched by this approach - seen as a sign of recognition - and, as a result, a good number of them no longer respect the boycott orders given by their religious leaders. As if to save face these leaders no longer forbid their faithful to respond to calls from the *zangbétô*. On the contrary, they have started to participate in it themselves. The 'divide and rule' strategy drawn up by the leaders of the development dynamic in Bonou is clearly working.

'Self sanction' dilemmas

It is clear, however, that the supreme councillors have some difficulty applying this rule in cases where they are themselves involved. This was especially the case with one of the doctors who worked in the Rural Health Credit Union, and from whom certain members had received medicines on credit. Wade (1988) has emphasized the inherent tension between enforcement and accountability: *'those who have the power to enforce may use that power to resist being held accountable for their actions'*. Uphoff (1986) and Vodouhè (1996) have emphasized the need for putting a countervailing power in place, as a check on the proper functioning of groups and related bodies. The foregoing case of the Supreme Village Council nicely illustrates this need.

5.5.4 Impact of the SVC

Apart from the general information obtained on the SVC all the way long during the research, on the specific point of the impact, an interview was conducted on a random sample of 30 people, from the Asrossa and the Ahouanzonmè villages. Only those who had been in permanent residence in the area during the period 1994 - 1998 were surveyed. Since the Council had been set up in 1996, the years 1994 - 1995 served as a period of reference.
This short survey gave an opportunity to measure the impact of the major activities of the SVC and its strategies.

For their action against theft, according to most of the people surveyed (69%), the years 1994 - 1995 were a period when theft was at its most rampant, and the year 1998 when it was at its lowest level. Among the major factors behind this change, people cited not only the sanctions operated by the SVC but also the indirect call to work for the young people who had been put of work, as it were, by the public repression of theft. Some of these youths switched to selling fuels. Another factor was the impact of education work among farmers' associations. Mongbo (1995) has stressed the importance of farmers developing, within these groups, new knowledge which they can apply themselves.
The impressions received from most people would seem to indicate that theft is on the wane. Indeed more than half of those surveyed feel that this trend will continue, on four conditions:
- the current level of repressive measures by the SVC is maintained;
- the night watch is brought back;
- more young people start to work;
- the brigade of official security forces reduces the pressure it is putting on the SVC and keeps its promise to improve its relationships with the Council in a spirit of co-operation.

A clear majority of the people surveyed (87%) believes that the degree of community participation in community tasks has fluctuated noticeably during the period 1994-1998 whilst 13% have a different opinion.
According to the results of the survey, participation was highest in 1997 and 1998.
The reasons for this heightened level of participation during these two years lie, according to those surveyed, in a greater awareness of community affairs that will have grown under the influence of the SVC and the development of farmer organisations.

At the other end of the scale, the years 1994 and 1995 were confirmed as being those with the lowest participation levels.
This is perhaps because there was no mechanism for repressive measures, and there was a poor understanding of democracy - in fact, an abusive interpretation of 'liberty' - after a period marked by the relative coercion of the revolution.

With regard to the development of participation in community tasks over the period 1999 - 2000, all of those surveyed (in May 1999) were optimistic: 59%[20] thought that it would stay at the same level, and 41% expected an improvement.

As for the fight against drug use, the results are rather controversial. More than half of those surveyed (53%) felt that the situation around drug use in the villages of Ahouanzonmè and Asrossa had not changed during the period 1994-1998, whilst 47% had an opposite opinion.

Drug use appears, for 50% of those surveyed, to have reached its peak in 1994, whereas another 40% believe that this was the case in 1998. Those mentioning 1994 point out that was the year when several young people returned from Nigeria where, as migrants, that had discovered the 'pleasure' of using drugs. Those mentioning 1998 as the year when drug use peaked point to the ineffectiveness of the campaign undertaken by the SVC in the matter.

The chairperson of the SVC recognises that the youths will of course try to get around its measures, asserting that 'a bent twig, when burnt, only leaves a twist of ash'. Many of those who work closely with him have a similar opinion.

In this situation, it is difficult to forecast how it will develop. Almost 40% of those surveyed say, in effect, that they can make no prediction, whereas 43% expect that drug use will diminish and - for some - disappear. The measures taken by the SVC and, above all, the development of farmers' associations give grounds for optimism.

In analysing these results, what emerges is that the performance of the SVC varies according to the areas of activity. There would appear to be some determining factors, mainly:
• the extent to which a specific problem can be 'fought' against or the willingness of the local community to co-operate, which is quite limited (as people are often reluctant to denounce their neighbours or relatives;
• the existence, or not, of a real means of pressure.
All the above notwithstanding, the relative success of the experience of the SVC has inspired two other neighbouring villages (including Damè) to set up similar structures, even though, it may be noted, they are somewhat in abeyance.

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20   Of the sample of 30 people, 29 of those surveyed had a response to this question.

It may also be mentioned that, thanks to income generated from its activity, the SVC has made some investments in education through providing funds for:

- 20 benches worth FCFA 20,000 for a primary school in a neighbouring village;
- organisation of classes (to help the village children catch up) during school holidays in 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 in the primary class in Ahouanzonmè.

5.5.5   Perspectives

The above analysis sheds light on several elements of the supreme council's dynamic. One element is the authority of the *Zangbétô*. Although it is questioned, the zangbétô does often achieve its ends. Others elements are the humiliation that comes from the public nature of the council's sessions, and the involvement of protagonist's families in the process of settling land tenure disputes. These are all aspects that should be maintained. On the other hand, the internal differences will remain as long as the supreme council continues to pass judgement on affairs which are covered by criminal law. The dissatisfaction of the two village chiefs will only grow, since they find themselves being loosing a position of authority which they had illegally appropriated for themselves. If these two authorities were to leave, what will the Supreme Village Council be worth?

It is essential that the negotiation spirit between the different sub-groups of players be maintained, so that the positions of various power bodies within and vis-à-vis the Supreme Village Council are harmonised. In this process, the two *Sous-Préfecture* authorities will also need to make concessions concerning the competence of the Supreme Village Council. This should be the case with land tenure, for example, where the villagers are visibly satisfied with the work of the council. It is certainly worthwhile for the two authorities to wait for the constitution and bye-laws of the council, currently in drafting stage, to be introduced and applied. If the *Sous-Préfecture* authorities decide not to maintain a flexible attitude, the council could choose to operate in a totally clandestine way on some subjects. It should be recalled that the actual power of the administrative authorities to take action on such a village council is relatively limited if complaints are not lodged by possible victims.

5.6   The key local players and their strategic importance

5.6.1   The path of the players

Gandaho: the pillar of the system

Born in 1955 in the village of Asrossa, *Gandaho* dropped out of school in the CE2[21] form. He went into agriculture, working alongside his father. In 1977, he was elected chairman of the mutual support group of young people in Bonou called *'Vangbè'*. The group became a 4D Club[22] in the early 1980s, a Revolutionary Co-operative Group (GRVC)[23] a number of years later, before being renamed a Village Group in 1991. Throughout these changes in the Vangbè, Gandaho

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21 CE2: Second year of elementary education, and fourth year of primary school

22 4D Club: Club of rural youth - these clubs were numerous in Benin during this period, being part of a programme supported by the World Bank / the name 4D comes from (young people who) Democratically Decided to Give their best for their Future / (jeunes ayant) Démocratiquement Décidé de Donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes pour leur Devenir.

23 GRVC: Revolutionary Co-operative Group / Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative (under the Marxist-Leninist period in Benin, 1975-1990)

kept his position as chairman. After four years in his position as chair of the Village Group, he resigned when he was elected to be President of the *Union Sous-Préfectorale des Producteurs agricoles* (USPP) in Bonou in 1995. It is because he held this new position that he was able to place USPP funds in the CREP of Asrossa.

He has held many posts: counsellor for the village of Asrossa from 1978 to 1980, communal councillor from 1979 to 1982, then a member of the Conseil Révolutionnaire Local (CRL)[24], mayor of the commune of Damè from 1982 to 1990, chair of the board of the CREP since 1992, chair of credit committee of the CREP also from 1992 onwards, chair of the board of the MEP of Asrossa since 1995, and vice-chair of the Conseil Consultatif de l'Unité Communautaire de Développement (UCD) in the village of Asrossa since 10 September 1998. In 1998, he became the chair of national union of the CREPS *(Fédération Nationale des CREP du Bénin, FENACREP)*.

On a personal level, he holds a Red Cross First Aid diploma, after successfully completing a nine-month course in Adjohon in 1979. It was after this course that he opened a pharmaceutical outlet in the urban commune of Bonou. He also dispensed health care at people's home, as a roving health worker. It is Gandaho who proposed that the CREP should sell pharmaceutical products, and he ran this activity. In 1992, he was made Knight of the Order of Agriculture of Benin. A farmer, he is married with three wives and is the father of nine children.

Ganwégo: symbol of trust and efficiency

Born in 1958 in the village of Asrossa, Ganwégo started farming alongside his father at a very early age. He was young when joined associations. When he was 20, he became the chair of the *Gbénonkpô* co-operative group (Groupement à vocation coopérative - GVC) of Asrossa and two years later he became the village chief of Asrossa, a position he held until 1990. From 1979 to 1991, he chaired the board (Conseil d'Administration - CA) of the CLCAM of the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou, although it seems that he had no real autonomy. He recounts that all instructions were issued by seniors in the hierarchy and the board merely had to implement them. It was, though, an instructive period: *'It was through my responsibilities in the CLCAM that I learned that credit should not be used to finance ceremonies or other dubious activities for which it had not been sought.'* Whilst in the CLCAM he also followed several management courses. When the CLCAM of Bonou was closed in 1991 (through bankruptcy), he became a member of the board of the CLCAM of Adjohoun in the same year; a year later he left in order to become the treasurer of the CREP, a responsibility he has held to this day. He has also been the chair of the MEP Asrossa since 1999 and treasurer of the USPP of Bonou since 1997. He is universally recognised for his rigour in management. He is an important farmer and trader, and is married to 4 wives and is the father of 16 children.

Akowé: 'better in than out'

Born in the village of Hondji in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Dangbo of a farmer father and a housewife, Akowé followed primary education in the primary school in Hondji Akpamè where he obtained his *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elementaires* (CEPE) in 1974. He followed his secondary schooling at the CEG in Dangbo and at the Lycée Béhanzin where he got his Baccalaureate in 1982; it was during this year that he passed the test of 'young revolutionary teacher'. Then he worked as a teacher in a series of schools: Kodé, Akpadanou, Aguégué, Affanmè Abéokuta, Tovo and Atchabita; it was at the latter that he got his *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle* (CAP) in 1996[25].

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24 As well as his experiences in this position, he recognises that he developed the art of speaking and negotiation.

In 1987 he became the General Secretary of the *Union of the Association sportive des enseignant des écoles primaires of the Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou, and in 1988 general secretary of the coordinating committee of the *Association des parents d'élèves* of the *Sous-Préfecture* of Bonou. He became a member of the departmental committee of the *Association des parents d'élèves de l'Ouémé*, a member of the management committee of the community health centre (MSR), and, in 1996, general secretary of the Supreme Village Council. In 1990, he tried to enter politics, standing as a candidate for the position of mayor of Damè. He failed in this, blaming the man he wished to succeed: Gandaho. 'He was afraid of me', he asserted. Akowé also stood in the legislative elections in March 1999 as a candidate for the Alliance Etoile in the 20th constituency. He is well known for his eloquence and his powers of persuasion, qualities which led Gandaho to do his utmost to persuade him to join the Supreme Village Council[26]. Akowé is married to two wives, and today is the father of seven children.

Mêbibi: watchful, and influential
Born of farming parents around 1964, Mêbibi spent his childhood working alongside his father in agriculture. He also followed a literacy course in the Ouémè language from 1978 to 1979 and obtained his diploma. Early on he became involved in organisational affairs at local level and he joined the *Vangbè* in 1977. At the political level he became counsellor to the village chief in 1979[27], a position he held whilst also being a militant commando until 1987, the latter post comprising the collection of civil taxes and capturing outlaws. He led the teams which seized the assets of people owing money to the CREP and of any other person in credit trouble. He became treasurer of the *Sonagnon* group in 1998, treasurer of the farmers' group of Asrossa in 1996, chief treasurer in the board of the MSR, and member of the board of the Supreme Village Council. Since 1991 he has been communal councillor; he is an influential member of the *zangbétô*, is married to three wives and is the father of nine children.

Gangnonnou, dynamic and smart!
Gangnonnou became the new president of the community health centre (MSR) in February 2001. She was born in 1968 in the village of Dasso; her father was a farmer, her mother a housewife. Dasso is part of the *Sous-Préfecture* (district) of Ouinhi which borders that of Bonou, where she went to primary school and obtained her first certificate, *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires* (CEPE). She settled down in Asrossa when she married a man from the village.
She is considered to be smart and her knowledge of the French language is relatively exceptional when compared with other members of her family. These qualities, plus the fact that members of the MSR had made the option to elect a woman to head their board, led her to being chosen as the health centre's president.
She is also the treasurer of the parents' association of the public primary school of Ahouanzonmê, a housewife and mother of four children.

Baba: intouchable... but tamed in the end!
Mêho was born of farming parents around 1934 in the village of Ahouanzonmè, where he has lived all his life. With his family being relatively well-off and of royal descent, he chaired a movement of the young people of his village during the reign of President Apithy (former President of the Republic!); this position gave him certain benefits. Until several years ago,

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25 In the meantime, he went to the Ecole Normale des Instituteurs in 1984. He left with a Certificat Elémentaire d'aptitude pédagogique (CEAP).
26 Gandaho accepts that he is fearful of the ability of Akowé to stir people up, and feels that it is dangerous to have him against you.
27 In particular he had the responsibility for distributing the village chief's summonses to people when required.

Mêho was a controversial and feared figure, his wives nonchalantly not involved in community tasks. Local people explained his attitude through the fact that his father had been village chief for about twenty years. With this status that was special only to them, Mêho - like his brothers - did not join in communal work. Leaders of local organisations in Bonou had problems in penalising his disobedient protégés and, keen to involve him and his close ones in the development dynamic underway, they persuaded him to accept the position of vice-chair of the Supreme Village Council, a position which he still holds today. It must be said that he has integrated himself well in this body, which can enjoy his influence. He is married, and has about twenty children.

5.6.2   The collective strategy: consensus and social integration

The preceding analysis of the individual positions/roles of the key players shows that the cohesion of local organisations in Bonou is largely due to a desire for consensus in living together. The guiding philosophy is based on the principle of *'ruling well by involving dangerous elements and leaders with divergent opinions all in the one boat'*. This strategy is remarkably similar to that used by numerous governments (throughout the world) to reduced the opposition to silence. Of course, in Asrossa there is no real opposition, but the strategy shows its similarities through, for example, the measures taken to prevent a man such as Akowé using his feared eloquence to negatively influence part of the community, or the efforts to get people like Mêho and his protégés to become more involved in the development dynamic. This is opposite to another political strategy, namely that of 'divide and rule'. In Bonou, this would not work well since just one person (or even a small group) would have a hard time getting enough power to get their hands on the benefits associated with a body such as the CREP or the MSR. It is here that we find the real power of the organisations we have studied. However we must recognise at the same time that herein lies, paradoxically, a weakness, one of the unknown factors which point to the need for caution and vigilance in the future. The major front-line actors in Asrossa have not arrived where they are by chance. Their particular paths are obviously closely linked to their current roles, and most of them hold a large number of responsible positions.
At present there is a debate in Benin at the national level about the concentration of responsibilities in democratic institutions, in the context of steps towards decentralisation. This will obviously have repercussions at the grassroots. New players and new leaders may emerge, bringing with them no doubt new balances of power. It is to be hoped that they will be cast in the mould of the development dynamic already underway.

Chapter 6

Where a traditional game led to a village development dynamic: the Kotokpa case in Benin

6.1 Overview

The cultural dimension of development has become a key concept for international development strategies although ways are still being sought as how to incorporate or integrate cultural components into development plans and programmes (Warren, Slikkerveer and Brokensha, 1995)

Stressing the necessity for research and development professionals to improve their 'knowledge about poor people's knowledge', Chambers and Richards (1995) have called for humility, in order to meet the need to 'learn from people before we try to teach them'.

Back in 1975, the Third World Forum held in Karachi insisted that the concepts of development go beyond the economy oriented approach to embrace political needs and cultural patterns so that life in the Third World does not become a pale imitation of somebody else's experience but a proud extension of their own value system' (Cochrane, 1979).

A quarter of a century later, we still need to learn how to achieve it... and the 'pale imitation' is far ahead!

The case of the *Adji Club* in Kotokpa is a modest but quite instructive example of how local people can progressively extend the strong linkages between cultural patterns and social needs to economic activities.

When *Adji* competitions are held during funerals as a sign of moral support to a mourning person or family, no one in that part of Benin is really surprised. This has been the normal practice for several centuries, it seems. But when *Adji* fans in a village organise competitions, on a day known as the 'Adji feast' with a cup for the winner, and when what began as a simple game club starts to become a mutual aid group and a loan institution (for microfinance), and then when it starts to run village security, people really start to pay attention.

This is what is happening with the Adji Club in the village of Kotokpa, the subject of this case study. What lies behind the growth of the Adji Club? How does it work? What problems has it met? How does it solve them? How do different stakeholders assess the club's activities? What are their motivations? What does the future hold in store for the Adji Club?

6.2   The background

6.2.1   The physical environment

The Kotokpa village is located in the *Sous-Préfecture* (district level) of Zogbodomè, in the southern part of Benin. The administrative unit above the village is the commune of Avlamè. The total population is around 1,600 (1998 estimates).

Map 2 Benin, The Kotokpa village
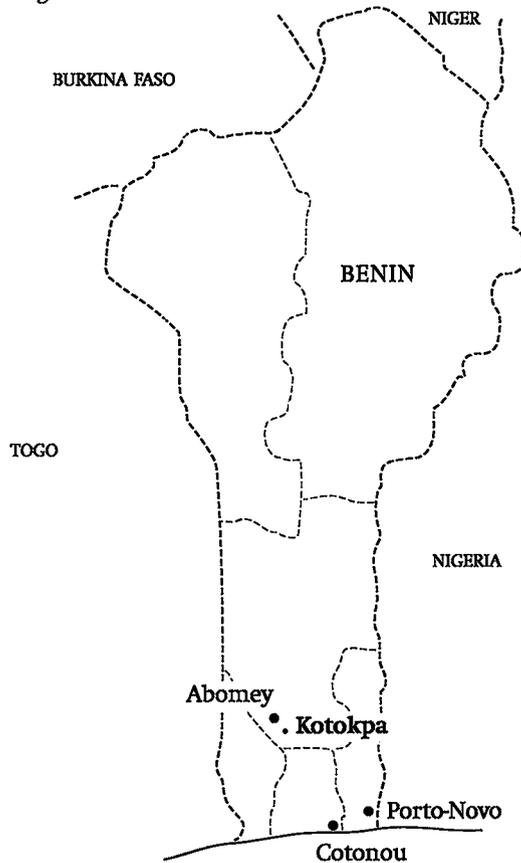
The area of Kotokpa is wooded savannah, with relatively fertile ferruginous soils, and a few patches of oil palm.

There are two rainy seasons in Kotokpa:
- the main one from March to July;
- the small one from September to November.

Kotokpa is bordered by three streams: the *Koto* in the West, the *Samion* in the East and the *Hlan* in the South.

Agriculture is the main activity in the village. Some secondary activities are growing in importance: small livestock, some food processing and small trading.

The social infrastructure of Kotokpa is rather limited: one primary school with six classrooms, a small market (with small thatched stands), and a track which is hard to drive on during the rainy seasons. Thanks to activities of the Adji Club, a water tower for drinking water and a savings and credit fund have been added.

6.2.2   The historical background

Born with the blessing of the god 'Guédé'
The history Kotokpa, as told by one of the elderly people, reveals that the village must have been born under the protection of the Abomey King and his favourite god.

'Way back to the eighteenth century, the death of a god called 'Guédé' was recorded at the Royal Palace of Abomey. It was during the reign of King Glélé. The god Guédé was renowned for bringing protection and happiness to the King. Visibly upset, the King sent off one of his spies to search for his protector. The spy's work was helped by the ability of the god to grow. This tale tells how Guédé grew in volume and weight during his journey, so much that his carriers had to cut slices of him at more or less regular intervals. The spy could then follow his path by tracking the slices. After slicing him five times, in the villages of Gbangnikon, Kpatalokoli, Cana, Wankon and Avlamè, the god's carriers let him for a while on the banks of the stream called Koto, just so they could rest a bit. Even during this short interlude, the god Guédé grew incredibly, causing a lot of problems for his carriers. They just managed to lift him onto their heads to continue their journey. But they collapsed under the weight of Guédé, who suddenly found himself on the ground. The spy saw all of this, and went back to the palace to inform the King. The King sent one of his faithful followers, who came from Agbomè-Ahoua, a village next to Agbomè (currently Abomey), to go and live with the god and look after him. And so was founded the place Kotokpa-Guédéhoué (near the bank of the stream Koto, with the god Guédé). The man was then joined by his family, and as more and more people settled there, the areas of Azamè and Ahinonslamè were born. The village that grew from this kept the short name of Kotokpa ('near the Koto')'.

Now forsaken by 'Guédé'... and his people!
Times have changed, indeed. Kotokpa might have been born with the blessing of a god two centuries ago, but today very little attention is paid to the village, maybe because it is a bit landlocked due to the poor track, branching off from the tarred main road... The community has to rely on themselves for their development. This has its inconveniences, but apparently with - on the other side of the coin - some advantages, as the Kotokpa people are definitely the ones driving development activities in their locality. In this context, their Adji Club plays a key role, as we shall see.

6.3   The main components

6.3.1   The Adji Club

About the Adji Club

I had explained earlier the extent to which the development partners of the Kotokpa community were unaware of the importance of the *Adji* game in the development dynamics of the village (the *'Do we have'* story, Chapter 3).

On the occasion of our first meeting, Moïse VIGAN, Chairman of the Adji Club explained the linkages:

' ADJI is a very popular game in our village. People have played since the times of our ancestors, but now it has become almost a work of God, when we see its impact today.

Just like our parents before us, we started to get together to play Adji just for fun, and then we decided to add something·to it: that is to have an annual tournament - we chose 17 August. We each contributed FCFA 300 a year, invited everyone in the village, players and non-players alike, and had a feast all day long with an Adji competition which took place in the morning. The results were announced in the afternoon, and the winner was named to loud applause, and given a prize as the champion. We did not do any more than this, since it is all we could afford.

In 1982, because of the difficulties encountered in getting people's contribution in time to organise the feast, we held a meeting which happened to be a turning point for us. We decided that instead of waiting for the annual event, we would pay a monthly fee of FCFA 500 instead of FCFA 300 each August, with the August contribution being used for the feast.

Because the money was then piling up, we realised that it would be stupid to 'let it sleep'!.. Then we came to the decision that for each member of the club who made regular payments, we could make a loan for funerals and other needs, as need be, just once for each person until everyone has had their turn;

If a member needed money to deal with another problem, and had already received the loan, then we would make a loan with interest... That is how the cotton growers came in order to develop their production activities. Since cotton was a crop that performed well, they were able to repay their loans without any problems. This in turn strengthened the funds of the Adji Club. There is a clear connection of mutual strengthening between the Club and the Village Group. Now you know the secret!

(Then, he said, with pride) Let me add that the money we collect thanks to the interest on loans helped us to engage into social investment, and that made our Club very popular!'.

Composition and organisation of the Adji Club

The *Adji* Club is composed of 62 people, of whom 20 are women (age: 20 to 70 years of age for men, 20 to 60 for women).

The organisation is managed by three bodies with distinct tasks:
- a board of·management of 9 members, chaired by Mr Moïse VIGAN since 1978.
- a credit committee of 5 members, chaired by Gbêdjêmagniho Urbain, and
- a supervisory committee of 3 members, chaired by Michel Ahinon. This committee monitors the management of the first two bodies.

The credit committee, and the supervisory committee, were only introduced a few years ago, upon the recommendation of the Agency for Financing Grassroots Initiatives - AGEFIB *(Agence de Financement des Initiatives de Base)*.

Activities
The *Adji Club* conducts a range of activities, most notably:
- the *tontine* solidarity savings group
- the credit system;
- organising village security; and
- organising a village feast every 17 August.

The savings system: a solidarity tool
Farmers in other regions of Benin have stressed the importance of some endogenous groups which are not taken into consideration by research and development workers (Vodouhè, 1995). The Adji Club and its savings system clearly belong to that category of organisations.

The solidarity savings group *(tontine de solidarité)* in Kotokpa was set up in 1980, since each member started making a monthly contribution of FCFA 300. This rose to FCFA 500 in the 1992-1995 savings cycle, and since 1995 it has been set at FCFA 1,000. The amount which each member can get has risen from FCFA 22,500 in the 1992-1995 cycle to FCFA 62,500 since 1995, the starting year of the cycle due to end in 2002. A savings cycle is the period required for all tontine members to get the amount of money pooled together. Unlike classical tontine groups, the money is not given on a systematic turn-by-turn basis.

With properly qualified exceptions, the money is given on the following conditions:
- loss of the participant's father or mother; and
- loss of the participant's father-in-law or mother-in-law.

Social prestige makes it popular
This *tontine* group clearly enjoys a certain fame, if we look at the growth in the number of participants: rising from the 1992 level of 45, of whom 14 were women, it has risen to 62 at present of whom 20 are women, an overall increase of 33%. A member explains the reasons for this growth.

The solidarity tontine saves our honour.
Akogan: 'It is inconceivable that you cannot meet the costs of the funeral ceremony of your parents or parents-in-law. It would be an irremovable stain of shame. But you never know when such events are going to happen. The Adji tontine means we avoid a scenario like this.'

Vodouhè (ibid.) reporting on the social role of *Kugbè*, quoted, as follows, one of the farmers he interviewed: '...(Without the *Kugbè*) many people would have got divorced or abandoned by their wives or got cursed'.

The same concern applies in Kotokpa village. We can call this social prestige. Prestige processes are among the ways people exercise social control: social behaviour moving people to act in ways other people want them to act (Goode, 1978).
In most of the villages in Benin - for good or bad - these local values are still much alive. The question lies in the way to capture them in the 'right' direction for the majority of people.
Apart from the amount disbursed to the members, part of the tontine is used for the annual Adji feast *(Adji-hué)*, usually on 17 August, anyway between 15 and 20 August.

The Adji feast in Kotokpa: mobilising social energy

Development indeed has many dimensions. Ritual and purposive interactions at community level, such as drumming and dancing together, help generate or revitalise social energy. This collective energy, which is often dormant, if not 'torn asunder by factionalism and the fragmentation intrusions of technocratized, bureaucratized development, can be released as a potent development force' (Mayfield, 1985).

The *Adji* feast in Kotokpa was first held in 1975. With the exception of non-members not being allowed to participate in the debate at the General Assembly on 17 August, no distinction is made at this event. Member or not, people can join in the feast (free food and drink, dancing...), but the *Adji* competition is only open to those members whose experience and skills are already recognised. According to the entries in the Club's records on the last 16 years, the number of competitors has varied between 9 and 14.

During the 1992-1995 period, the amount of prizes given to the best three to five players varied between FCFA 10,000 and FCFA 18,000, while the amount spent on each feast varied from FCFA 29,000 to FCFA 128,000. These costs are borne by the *Adji* Club.

I managed to attend the *Adji feast* on 17 August 1999 and talked with a number of participants: the *Adji Club* members, but also the non-members. The event was well appreciated by all the people. The interviews held show that:
- the *Adji* feast is a good opportunity for people to get together and reinvigorate their relationships; it is a feast-for-all: there is no segregation;
- for elder people in particular, it means that an ancient game is kept alive, a game traditionally important in popular culture.

6.3.2 The Savings and Credit System

From tontine to credit: an answer to the rigidity of the official credit system

It is highly questionable whether existing social / economic relations, for example in rural (poor) areas, can be 'inserted into formal-bureaucratic (financial) structures' (Hospes, 1996), as bureaucracies remain largely unresponsive to their aspirations (Korten and Alfonso, 1981). This is somehow illustrated by the evolution of the credit system in Kotokpa.

We have already mentioned the solidarity function of the *Adji tontine*. However, the rhythm of sad events requiring expenses cannot be foreseen. Furthermore, the popular saying that sadness never comes just once is highly relevant here. For example, a member of the *Adji tontine* might be faced with two deaths (of father and mother-in-law, for example) during the same cycle. For this reason, the members of the Club decided, as explained by the chairman earlier, to grant a loan with interest to any person who had already received a solidarity loan. Besides, the cotton growers soon discovered how easy it was to borrow money from the *Adji Club*, instead of facing the heavy bureaucracy of the official credit system. Midofi, one of the best cotton producers explained the situation as follows:

'Even to get one-third of the loan I could afford in the other system, I prefer to deal with the Adji Club. With the other system I have to be assisted by my son to make sure I understand all the papers I have to sign!... And after all this, it takes a lot of time before their 'committee' can meet and even longer after the meeting

before they tell you that you will get half of the money you have asked for. With the Adji Club, the form is half a page and they know me!... They know who can pay what... and the decision is fast! Also, what I will do with the money is my problem, provided I can pay back, while others would send you people to check everything, even in your house!...'

Therefore, the credit system of the *Adji Club* was explicitly enlarged to other needs than before, and then to include people outside the Club (this started in 1993). This is how the *Adji Club* got involved in credit activities in Kotokpa, until the recent implementation of the Village Savings and Credit Unit (*COVEC, Caisse Villageoise d'Epargne et de Crédit*).

Obtaining credit
Earlier discussions on microfinance for the rural poor held that credit schemes should only aim at productive purposes. It is now increasingly recognised that it is important to take a broader view on what is meant by income-generation (de Groot and Hospes, 1988). Indeed, loans can be used to pay off existing high interest debts or even solve important social problems and would then help release the production capacity of the farmers concerned.

Conditions for obtaining credit from the *Adji Club* of Kotokpa vary depending to the status of the applicant. Normally, an applicant must:
• be a member of the Village Group of cotton producers (GV); and
• intend to produce a certain amount of cotton in the next cotton season, although the credit could be used, as explained earlier, to cover other needs.

However, non-members of the GV wanting to obtain credit should present a guarantee (for example a motorcycle) with a value above that of the loan required, and have the guarantee of two members of the GV. If these two members are not from Kotokpa, the applicant should also have a guarantee from a member of the board of management of the *Adji Club*.

Trends in credit provided by the Adji tontine in Kotokpa
The *Adji Club tontine* disbursed a total of FCFA 16,587,860 in credit to 1,511 people in the period from 1993 to 1998. The following table shows the allocation of this portfolio and the number of beneficiaries over this period.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998*
Number of beneficiaries	976	247	123	65	70	35
Growth in number of beneficiaries	-	-75%	-50%	-47%	7,7%	-
Total loaned (in FCFA)	7,853,700	3,482,455	1,069,680	1,120,625	1,575,100	1,486,400
Growth in amount loaned	-	-44%	-31%	5%	40%	-

Table 6.1 Trends in total loan portfolio, number of beneficiaries, and average loan size in the Kotokpa Adji Club
(Source: Kotokpa Adji Club files)
* As from November 1998: implementation of a new credit system (See Section 6.3.2)

This table shows that the number of beneficiaries of loans, and the amount of loan disbursed, decreased gradually over the first four years, before starting to rise. In 1993, the total of loans disbursed was FCFA 7,853700. The lowest point was reached in 1995 with a total loan amount of FCFA 1,069,680. In line with this, the number of beneficiaries fell from 976 in 1993 to 65 in 1996 before climbing again to 70 in 1997.

Compared with 1993, the amount of loans made by the Kotokpa *Adji* Club fell by 44% in 1994, while the number of beneficiaries fell by 75% over the same period. This trend occurred just one year after the *Adji* Club became involved in credit activities. The managers says that there are two reasons for this trend:
• the emergence of new competitive funds; and
• a cleaning exercise of the clientele, removing the bad debtors of the first year of the credit activity.

The trend was continued in the following year, when the growth in the number of beneficiaries and in the total amount loaned was negative, at respectively -50% and -31%.
According to the managers of the *Adji Club*, four competing funds emerged in all.

Loan recovery
Although records have been kept too informally, after the 'cleaning up' of the first year the recovery rate in the *Adji Club* has always been around 100%, apart from a few exceptions qualified as 'social problems'. Apparently, other loan schemes in Kotokpa are not so successful, according to a few local people and to the Club managers. How did the Club perform so well? The answer is to be found in the recovery strategy.
The managers of the *Adji Club* simply go to the leaders of the GV on the day that payments are made to the farmers for their cotton. Their loan is deducted on the spot from the farmer's cotton revenues.
This was the only realistic strategy, because the high rate of interest on the loans (30%) did not really encourage spontaneous repayments. On the positive side, one must recall that, to the credit of the club, any profits are invested in social activities.

Unlike the *Adji Club*, the other groups and individuals providing loans do not benefit from the approach of the GV. There is a simple reason for this. The chairman of the GV is also the vice-chairman of the *Adji Club*.

Collective income allowing social investment
The following table shows the *Adji* Club's gross operating results in credit activities.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998 *
Amount loaned	7, 853,700	3,482,455	1,069,680	N/A	1,575,100	1,486,400
Amount repaid	10,164,745	5,241,030	1,590,195	N/A	2,063,230	1,947,050
Gross result	2,311,045	1,758,575	520,515	N/A	488,130	460,650

Table 6.2 Gross annual operating results for Kotokpa Adji Club (Source: Archives Adji Club)
* up to October 1998

An analysis of this table shows that the gross result stays positive, but dropping from FCFA 2,311,045 (1993) to FCFA 460,650 (end October 1998; cf. next section). The costs of various feasts held on 17 August should be deducted from the gross results. With the gross results achieved in 1993, the *Adji Club* built a meeting room, costing FCFA 1,169,530, which is now used for meetings and literacy classes. Thanks to the activities of the *Adji Club* the village of Kotokpa made a required financial contribution of FCFA 800,000 as part of the village water project, as explained hereafter by *Togan*, the village Chief:

> *'Here is the money, now bring the water!'*
>
> Drinking water has always been an important problem in Kotokpa. Women spend many hours a day going to the Koto stream, although the quality of the water they got there was rather questionable. Then one day a representative of the National Hydraulics Service came to sensitise the community about a new water supply project and its pre-conditions...
> While the representative was talking, the Chairman of the Adji Club motioned his Treasurer to go and fetch some money. Half an hour later, the man showed up with a big package wrapped in a loincloth, containing notes and coins, certainly matching the total contribution of FCFA 800,000 required. He then dropped the package on the table and declared: 'Here is the money, now bring the water!'.
> The civil servant tried to explain that the meeting was just a first contact before they could meet the province officer to launch the procedures... in vain!

As a result, a water tower, which now stands out above the public square, provides the entire village with potable water. A small token payment is collected for each bowl of water in order to assure the maintenance of the system.

Loan activities and the solidarity function

It is clear that the credit activities could be undertaken thanks to the reserves built up as a result of low use of the tontine for sad events. Equally clear is that the rates of interest applied remain very profitable for the *Adji* Club tontine. This could lead the club to devote all its financial reserves for providing credit. In 1998 the Kotokpa *Adji Club* was fast approaching this situation, since they had only FCFA 100,925 in cash and FCFA 65,000 in the bank account. This started blocking the club's solidarity role and, more generally, any possibility of making a loan. Club members were claiming that their finances are in a bad condition because of poor harvests of beans and groundnuts. Although they were quite confident, waiting for the next cotton harvest, those difficulties led to the reduction of the interest rate on loans (to 20%). Anyhow, the implementation of their new credit system came in time...

Enhancing the credit scheme: the creation of the COVEC

As observed, the amount of new loans made each year by the Kotokpa *Adji tontine* has dropped from 1993 to 1995 and started increasing a little since 1997. This was because the Kotokpa group was a small group which 'saved' for a large number of credit applicants. This weakness could only be addressed with changes to the credit scheme and the support of AGEFIB[28], a national programme providing financial support to grassroots initiatives. It took several meetings, and quite some time, but the Adji Club members were able to set up a clear policy for savings mobilisation, and create, in November 1998, a new local institution for savings and credit, the village savings and credit unit, the COVEC (*Caisse Villageoise d'Epargne et de Crédit*), building on the experience of the Adji Club.

The first task of the COVEC was to launch the savings collecting policy - opening the system to all the tontine groups, the farmers' organisations, and other local organisations, and to handle the work of providing loans which the *Adji Club* has handled so far. In the beginning, the club was the only shareholder, but in less than two years, it had been joined by many others, so that now, although it is still the majority shareholder, it holds only 17% of the issued capital.

What has the COVEC achieved and what changes has it brought about?

The COVEC: structure and membership

In July 2000, the COVEC had 351 shareholder members (compared with 91 at the time of its establishment), and of these 11 are local organisations (farmers' bodies and various tontine groups). The issued capital has grown from FCFA 174,000 to FCFA 318,000.

The COVEC has four bodies: a general assembly, a management committee of 9 members, a credit committee of 5 members, and a monitoring committee of 3 members.

For the daily management of the COVEC, a young school-leaver of the region has been recruited, with a diploma from the first cycle of the secondary school. He has no real salary, but rather, a lump sum which - he has been promised - will be gradually increased, depending on the fund's income. This is indeed a source of motivation to ensure that he would do his best, but in any case he has himself stressed on several occasions how proud he is to serve in that village organisation.

There is nothing really new in the way the general assembly, the management committee and the credit committee operate, compared with similar institutions, but the monitoring com-

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28 AGEFIB: Agence de Financement des Initiatives de Base, a national programme for financial support to grassroots initiatives.

mittee has quite a strategic role. Using their experience, the Adji Club members managed to have the committee chaired by the Chairman of the GV. This is exactly the strategy they used earlier to ensure loan recovery. Although the cotton marketing problem is not yet resolved at national level to allow immediate repayment of credit, the monitoring committee can still contribute a lot to the performance of the system. The committee works closely with some club members who 'keep an eye' on the borrowers in different compounds, as well as in the field. This compares well with the official agricultural credit schemes which are less connected to the end users.

As for the financial contribution to the COVEC, the deposit is a sum of FCFA 2,000 for each individual member, and of FCFA 10,000 for each organisation. Each member has the right to withdraw and borrow funds, and the right to vote, and to be elected to office, and enjoys all other benefits associated with the co-operative.

The Savings and Credit activities
Table 6.3 shows the growth in the capital and savings deposits since its establishment.

	1998 (Nov. and Dec.)	1999	2000 (Jan. to July)
Capital	122.000	196.000	318.000
Savings *	305.000	2.830.580	3.135.580

Table 6.3 The COVEC: Capital and Savings (Source: COVEC books)
*NB. Data on 1999 and 2000 loans were not yet available.

During the start-up period, the interest rate on savings was fixed at 0%. The managers of the COVEC decided to first analyse its performance over an experimental period of two years before fixing any other rate. They justify the 0 % with the argument that the savers withdraw their funds continuously. Indeed, it does take time to change savings behaviour among the rural community. As de Groot and Hospes (1988) pointed out, there are two savings patterns: savings of surplus, and thrift savings. Thrift savings, as they define, are 'temporarily postponed expenditure which cannot be spared beyond a certain limit and are therefore not real surpluses'. This form pre-dominates among the rural poor. It is to be recognised that until a consistent shift could be made from thrift to surplus savings, it would not be proper to pay interest on these 'quickly vanishing deposits'.

As for the loans, and as mentioned in the table above, the data on 1999 and 2000 loans were not available during our last visit in Kotokpa. However, a AGEFIB loan of 13 millions helped the COVEC to meet the credit demand in 1999, and the same amount is available for 2001. The reduction of the interest rate mentioned earlier, was highly appreciated by the farmers, until the establishment of the COVEC. Then many farmers started questioning the 20% interest rate, in comparison with the 0% on the savings! The managers of COVEC leaders maintained their position, however, as (other) money lenders were charging more than 30%.
This debate on the high cost of credit for the rural poor has always been a matter of concern, although many situations have led to suggest that cheap credit can undermine rural development (Adams, 1984). It is clear that Kotokpa farmers are among those borrowers who pay high interest rates on loans but who realise even higher rates of return on the investments made

(Adams and Fichett, 1992). They rank in the top for both cash crops and food crops production in their region, and this is confirmed by the equipment they are now able to acquire thanks to the continuous increase in their income.

During this experimental period, another interesting and innovative element has been the introduction by COVEC of a new 'small 3-month loan' product in 1999. This has been appreciably successful, especially with the women's groups involved in small trading. The beneficiaries have been mocked by some other more established women traders who used to come from the neighbouring cities to the village on market days to impose their prices on the villagers. Those traders claim that the (local) newcomers would not have been able to take up trading without these credit facilities. In actual fact, the more established traders are concerned about competition from the local women, and the social benefit of fairer prices for mass consumption goods at the village level!

The social function continues...
The solidarity system of the Adji *tontine* is still operating efficiently and, as mentioned, the Adji feasts keep this very much alive.
As for the COVEC, part of its social impact can already be seen in the change in commodities prices due to the 'new traders' financed.
However, in the village of Kotokpa, concern about the high interest rate on loan is more and more raised as, during the experimental period of two years, there was no direct investment in social activities by the COVEC, comparable e.g. to the water supply system. Negotiations are now underway with AGEFIB, to build the new market infrastructure: if the COVEC could provide 10% of the costs (from the collective income), then the AGEFIB would cover the rest. The population is very much interested in the market, which 'will bring more money and make the village more beautiful', so they keep their 'eyes open to see' the outcomes of the current negotiations which will determine the future of the COVEC.

In the meantime, a new social activity has emerged: fighting theft! Theft used to be a big problem in that part of the country, but in Kotokpa it developed fast, with wealth... Again, in that area, it is the Adji Club which proved to be the most efficient organisation helping the village to cope.

6.3.3   The Adji Club takes charge of village security

What is the 'security problem' in Kotokpa?
As their incomes gradually rose, one of the problems facing the village of Kotokpa was theft, notably of livestock (sheep and poultry). In one night alone, fifty animals were stolen. This meant that a rich resource base which had been dearly built up was decreasing fast. Most of the robbers were inhabitants of Kotokpa. The punishment given to these robbers by the public security office (*the Gendarmerie*) did not stop the thefts according to local people who also believed that there was a degree of complicity between police officials and the thieves. This might have had to do with corruption: the official use of public office or political power for private gain. It is quite well known that, in many developing countries, some 'customs officials, police officers and (other) officials routinely use their position to extort money from people who need their services' (Versluysen, 1999). More often, local people have no choice but to obey, as refusal to pay can have unpleasant consequences.

The people of Kotokpa have long suffered from theft and corruption. This has not been, one might say, a favourable situation for the economic development and satisfaction of the local community. As well as the immediate consequences, certain inhabitants of Kotokpa were visibly frustrated by the poor reputation which their village was starting to acquire. This is why, essentially, the idea grew from 1988 onwards for people to organise themselves to deal with the phenomenon of theft in Kotokpa. As we will discover, things have not been (and are still not) easy, and the official security system has been reluctant to give them the power to organise their own system. We have here an illustration that 'development situations are not only shaped by but also help to shape power relations' (Arce, Villarreal and de Vries, 1998). Thanks to their collective action, the villagers of Kotokpa were able to combat both theft and corruption, having established their own security council in 1993, which is still operating today.

The organisation of the security council
Michel, one of the team leaders explains how the system is organised:

'Our security system is simple. There is a Security leader for each day of the week. At 8 p.m., that person has to put together two teams on duty that specific day: the team of the youth and the team of the elders. The elders just sit in a shed on the public square; they can be busy doing whatever they want, but their role is dissuasive: any person passing in the night is questioned in detail on which compound he/she comes from, where he/she is going...
At the same time, the youth team is patrolling in the village, armed with sticks, hand-crafted guns and torches. The rules are made clear to everyone. For example, people in the night can carry any lamp they want (to see the road) but torches may only be used by the guards. Consequently, from midnight onwards, anyone seen with a torch is either on security duty (and knows the password (for that night) or is a thief!
Any thief caught in the act or afterwards has to pay a fine of 12 500 FCFA and two litres of sodabi (the local oil palm alcohol), and there is more: sitting under a tree in front of the home of the village chief and facing the crowd, he should publicly describe how he committed the theft. Then, he has to sing a specific song and dance, accompanied by a choir...Four strong men armed with batons surround him, ready to beat him at the slightest sign of resistance. It is, without any doubt, quite humiliating.'

This approach seems to work well, since local people and leaders all say that since this treatment was given, there have been no serious cases of theft for years in the village of Kotokpa.

The security council has organised itself in three bodies: apart from the two groups mentioned by Montcho - the youth group and the elders group - there is a co-ordinating body.
The youth group is formed with teams of seven young farmers from in each 'neighbourhood' (or compound); each team is headed by two leaders - relatively older than the other members, and is on guard once a week, on a fixed day, from midnight to six in the morning. Only women and invalids are exempted. It is an imposition on young men to take part in the security system, but the women support the system by contributing 50 CFA Francs per person per month 'to help the guards buy batteries or lamps for their torches'.
The group of elders is also formed of teams of seven farmers per 'neighbourhood', but with four people in each group. As with the youth teams, each one has guard duty once a week. Set up one year ago, the Elder Watch exists to discourage robbers, and to encourage the young men in the Youth Watch to do their work properly.
The central co-ordination body comprising team leaders. It outlines action to be taken, and takes overall decisions affecting all the teams.

Popularity of the system

As a result of the establishment of the security council, major changes have taken place in the way people view life in Kotokpa and the surrounding areas. They have been recorded through various reports and observations. Here are some of them:

'Now we can even leave our motor-bikes outside and find them there the next morning'.

'You could always rob from your mother, but, even then, if she denounces you, you are finished'.

'What I have learned from this is that it's impossible to predict what will happen in a project, not from the start. Looking at the difficulties that the security council has had to deal with, no one could have said that this would get to the point they reached. Now we have a treasure in our village. We have peace, and the doubtful people had ended up understanding it all'

As well as these words of satisfaction from the inhabitants of the village of Kotokpa, there is another proof - just as important - of the usefulness of the system: its gradual adoption in nearby villages in the Avlamè commune. The mayor of the commune never misses an opportunity to show off his pride. 'The chief of police now says that if all the communes in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Zogbodomè were like the one I have the honour to run, there would be total peace in the area.' It took a long time, though, to reach that consensus!

6.4   The key local players

We have observed how the roles of some players are more important than others in Kotokpa. Among those who play a determining role special mention should be made of Basile Milogbo, Benoît, Dieudonné and Moïse Vigan. We shall now follow their path in the dynamic of Kotokpa, and analyse them, so as to better understand their current roles.

6.4.1   The paths taken by the key local players

Moïse Vigan

Moïse Vigan is born in 1963; his father was a farmer, and his mother a housewife. He was the sole responsibility of his mother from 1968 onwards - when his father died, and when he started attending the public primary school of Avlamè. He left this school eight years later, with *the Certificat d'Etudes Primaires (CEFEB)*. This diploma allowed him to enter the secondary school *(CEG)* in Bohicon, where he obtained his BEPC (certificate at end of secondary school). He became a teacher in 1982 and his first job was in Covè for two years. Here he passed an entrance examination for a professional teachers training college, and he got his diploma in 1984. He continued his career one year later in Covè, where he stayed until 1994 when he obtained his CAP *(Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle)*.

He is a great fan of the game of *Adji*, and his exceptional talents in it soon earned him admission to the close circle of elder players in Kotokpa. It is he who suggested that the players of *Adji* in Kotokpa should organise themselves into a formal body, and he was elected as first president of the club when this was founded in 1978. He holds that position to this day. With one exception, he has won so far every annual competition.

He is widely admired for his skill in the game of Adji, but he has also had known pain for being a native of Kotokpa.

'At one particular moment in our village's recent history, theft was so widespread that more than fifty kid goats were being stolen each week. Almost everywhere I went, people would say to me: 'your village has become a champion of theft, you've become just like Tindji[29]. Sometimes I would hear people who didn't know me talk in similar terms of our village."

His pride was so hurt by the bad reputation his village had acquired that Moïse Vigan admits to inviting Béïsi, the leader of the bandits of Kotokpa, to meet. He tried in vain to persuade Béïsi to stop theft. Learning from this failure, he started to introduce the idea of the security council around some of his close associates... Four years later, the initiative had taken shape. Married (and monogamous), Moïse Vigan is the father of four children.

Dieudonné Vigan

Dieudonné Vigan was born in 1961, the child of a small farmer family. When he was barely five his parents separated and his mother re-married with a carpenter living in Houawoué-Zounonsa, another village in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Zogbodomè. This gave him the chance to be an apprentice in carpentry for about six years, for then his mother separated from her new husband. This was in about 1973. When he returned to his native village, his mother put him to the care of one of his brothers, for whom he worked hard but he was not well looked after. He missed out on buying a bicycle when his guardian spent for his own purposes the sum of 32,000 FCFA which Dieudonné had earned from the sale of *néré* fruit. He was much marked by this: *'I realised that you can only count on yourself. Other people will ruin you just to get ahead themselves'.* Here perhaps lies the root of his determination, especially in combating theft, which is for him the synonym of injustice.

It certainly seems that he learned his lesson, and applied it, since he left his uncle at the tender age of 15 years. He became a successful carpenter, and was also rather handy as a plumber and brick-layer, both skills which he taught himself. He then started to farm and owned a maize mill. Having done all this, Dieudonné was appointed head of the security council in 1993, and has held this position to this day. Married to three women, he is the father of nine children.

Basile Milogbo

Basile Milogbo is about fifty-five years old, and can be seen as one of the pillars of the development dynamic in Kotokpa. He is Chairman of the Farmers' Group, and is well known for his courage and his enthusiasm for work. He produces on average 15 to 20 tonnes of cotton each year. He is a member of the Dogbin family, the founding family of the village of Kotokpa. Milogbo is a true head of the family; he has seven wives and twenty-five children.

Michel Ahinon

Born in Kotokpa, and 41 years of age, Ahinon Michel followed secondary education up to third form in Zogbodomè, the administrative centre of the district. He then returned to the village to take up farming. His level of education, combined with his serious nature saw him elected to the presidency of the COVEC's security council, as well as the management committee of the village water tower. He is married with three wives and is the father of 12 children.

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29 The village of Tindji is known nationally for the degree of theft in which some of its inhabitants are active.

Elisabeth Akpanon

One of the most dynamic women of the village, Elisabeth Akpanon is like many other women: she doubles being a housewife and a farmer, and she has also thrown herself into small trading with some apparent success.

She is a very active member of the COVEC's credit committee, and is one of those actively pushing for the project to build a new market in the village.

Benoît Vigan

About 55 years old, he is now the village Chief of Kotokpa, and at the same time Chairman of the farmers' union at the District level (the USPP, *Union Sous-Préfectorale des Producteurs (agricoles) de Zogbodomè*). He is, however, above all known as a very active farmer, almost as enthusiastic and productive as Basile Milogbo; he too produces between 15 and 20 tonnes of cotton each year. More particularly, his crop of 17 tonnes in 1999 gave him the means to buy a second-hand truck; he uses it for his own needs, but also hires it out as a commercial activity.

6.4.2   About the genealogy of the principal players

The development dynamic of Kotokpa thus seems to headed by a group of closely-related people. One could say it was a family business, although this is not a surprise for a village of (relatively recent) settlers. Is this the reason why someone like Moïse, or even Dieudonné, are so determined? That is not obvious. We have to say, though, for example, that when Moïse Vigan started to take action about a theft, this cannot but strengthen the position of his brother Benoît, the chief of the village. It is true that the latter was not in favour of the security council in the beginning, but this was also for very sound reasons. He most probably underestimated the political issues involved in this. However, you can often hear Kotokpa villagers talk in positive terms and quite spontaneously: *'Our village chief and his associates have won the fight against theft. Our village has become the shining point of reference in the entire sub-prefecture. We can only be proud of Benoît Vigan'*. Similarly, Milogbo Basile, Chairman of the farmers' group (and a cousin to Benoît and Moïse), helped to strengthen Moïse 's position by giving the Adji Club preferential treatment in its loan recovery compared to groups of money lenders. He is himself vice-chairman of the club. However, with the development of new activities, other actors from different families are coming on the scene.

6.5   Conclusion

In Kotokpa, the social cohesion developed around the traditional *Adji* game helped the villagers to establish, twenty years ago, a sound credit system to first solve social problems; it started as a solidarity tool helping 'to save honour' on the occasion of marriages or funerals. Later, due to the rigidity of the formal credit institution, it provided a basis for the development of production activities. The fact that the villagers of Kotokpa are currently seen as the most productive farmers in their region (South of the Zou administrative region) has to do with their access to that flexible financial system, of which management rules are mainly based on local norms and values.

The steps taken to gradually scale up the system are being entirely driven by the local people in order to stay fully in charge of it. Apparently, the Kotokpa people do not want to go faster in linking with formal institutions.

The AGEFIB is contributing to the upgrading of the local system. This is happening through direct links, in the form of training sessions and financial support. It is important however to stress that the AGEFIB intervention is efficient because it came at the right time, not too early, not too late. It came at a time where the local people were facing the limits of their own system, but because of the experience they have acquired, they can still keep control of the change process. Also the smooth scaling up of the security system of the Kotokpa village is to be mentioned: it is being copied by other villages which find it successful...

Chapter 7

Analysing the outcomes of the pilot cases

7.1   Overview
7.2   About the broad categories of characteristics
7.3   Validation workshops
7.4   Outcomes
7.5   Taking the next step: a further assessment of the key factors

7.1   Overview

The exploratory tour (Chapter 3, section 3.3) led to the identification of some broad categories of characteristics of the local dynamics:
- the way the dynamics start;
- the importance of an historical perspective in the study of their evolution;
- the possible role of already existing social groups in the initiation and the development of the dynamic(s);
- the integration of local cultural values and norms in the management of the activities;
- the importance of a conducive environment or driving force to assure the development of the dynamics;
- the possibilities of linkages, or the interface, between the local dynamics and support institutions or projects.

Studying these categories in the light of available literature helped in taking the option to focus on endogenous organisations for the pilot phase of the research (Chapter 4, section 5).
The purpose of the two pilot cases studied in depth (Chapters 5 and 6) was then to assess the loose categories as described above. The next step consisted of the analysis of the outcomes of these cases in order to suggest what could be considered as the key existential factors of the local dynamics.
Although the results were derived from previous interviews and meetings, validation workshops were organised in the two villages to sum up with the farmers, and to try grade with them the relative importance of the individual characteristics identified.

This chapter covers the assessment of the loose categories of characteristics and the report of the validation workshops, highlighting the key existential factors suggested.

7.2   About the broad categories of characteristics

The focus meetings and workshops conducted during this pilot study, the additional interviews and the reflection upon the main features deriving from the two cases of Bonou and Kotokpa, all seem to confirm the loose categories of characteristics resulting from the exploratory tour, but not always to the extent originally expected. An additional factor, the power system - which was not really suggested by the exploratory tour - clearly emerged as one of the most important characteristics of the local dynamics.

7.2.1   The way the dynamics started...

This could be considered as one of the key characteristics. I will call it the *originating factor* or *the triggering factor*.
In the case of Bonou, for the implementation of the Community Health Centre, the trigger was a collective reaction against a purely political decision. This motivated the population to build an alternative which is today a success story. In the case of Kotokpa, the security system was launched as a popular reaction to theft and the lack of justice and transparency of the official security system.

I have reported earlier (Chapter 3) on the case of the Savings group of Hèjamê, in Benin, which was established after the village had to pay a penalty for a loan default to the local rural bank; the people just decided that 'in future the money will stay in (their) village'. These facts are always recalled by the farmers whenever they are asked to explain the origin of their organisation.

However, the triggering factor is not necessarily of that nature. It can also just be that the needs were there, and an opportunity came. In Kotokpa, access to drinkable water had always been a real problem. However this would have remained latent for longer without the opportunity offered by the water supply project and, moreover, if the *Adji Club* had not been able to meet the challenge (to pay the village contribution) when the representatives of the project came to their village. In Bonou, the credit system started because it was badly needed because the local agricultural bank had been transferred to another district. In this respect, the *Sasakawa Global 2000* project played a catalytic role once they recognised that their original 'technological package of agricultural input' was not the priority of the farmers.

According to Jirström and Holmén (1994), the satisfaction of perceived basic material needs is a necessary starting point for local organisations, at least initially. What seems to matter most is the relevance of the starting initiative vis-à-vis those basic needs, not really the origin of the initiative. What boosted the development of the savings system in the Bonou case (Chapter 5) was in fact the input of an external consultant which resulted in the decentralisation of the CREP. This really stimulated the mobilisation of savings at village level, thereby strengthening the resource base of the local organisation. Indeed, no matter where the idea of change comes from, the critical factor is 'its making sense to the rural people and being taken over as their own' (Uphoff, Esman and Krishna, 1998).

7.2.2   Historical perspective / Evolution

Both cases also illustrate the fact that what we see today as a sign of success in these villages is just the tip of the iceberg. What was really interesting or important to discover was *the hidden part of the dynamics* taking a historical perspective throughout the process. The dynamics have evolved, passing through many cycles, of trials and of success as well as failure, conflict, negotiation and compromise, etc. What we see today, although not stable, is the *resulting force*, impelled by both positive and negative forces. In both cases, it was quite clear how much the various phases they have gone through were learning experiences which strengthened the group cohesion and helped build trust among the members. This is the construction process of the local dynamics.

I will call this factor *the time factor* or the *evolution process*. In the workshops held with the farmers, we agreed to visualise it in the form of a canoe on a river. The canoe was pushed, over time, by both positive and negative forces or experiences, but luckily, at the end, it still moved along the river thanks to the predominance of the positive side. The CREP and the MSR in Bonou have been shaken many times by 'the enemies of the system' - as the farmers put it themselves, but they still resist and succeed! Now, every time there is a new problem to deal with, the Chairman of the Bonou group says: 'The canoe is in trouble again, but we will manage!'.

In Kotokpa, the same patterns can be observed with the security system: it was not easy to implement, and is not easy to maintain. The very slow but sound building-up of relationships between the *Adji Club* and the cotton growers' group is also a good illustration of the importance of time in the development of local dynamics.

In both cases the progressive adaptation of the credit schemes to changing local needs took time, patience and, indeed, flexibility.

This leads us to reflect upon the often excessive pressure experienced in most development projects for immediate results. These tend to be measured with quantity indicators, in term of goods and services delivered, and this approach overlooks institution building. This makes it difficult to move beyond a relief approach to poverty: the distribution of food is much easier and faster than helping people to improve their ways of growing it (Korten, 1980).

Although the CREP leaders in Bonou were convinced of the necessity to decentralise their credit system, it took a long time for the individual members to adhere to the collective discipline necessary to operate the village units (the MEPs, as described in Chapter 5). Even when innovations are appropriate, sufficient time has to be allowed for people to internalise the process and the mechanisms involved (Beauclerk, Narby and Townsend, 1988).

7.2.3   Possible role of already existing groups

In both cases, the importance of already existing groups has been confirmed. This was clearly observed in Bonou on various occasions. For example, the active role of the Vangbè in launching different economic and social initiatives, mainly in those of the Community Health Association, has been highlighted earlier. The core responsibility of the CREP (the savings organisation) also rests on their shoulders.

In Kotokpa, the *Adji Club* is clearly the basis of the success of the farmers' group. The members of the club are also the key organisers of the Security system, despite the difficulties they often face in assuring non-members' contributions to the system.

This suggests that the already existing groups, even social or cultural, can be the birth-places of dynamics, or as kinds of *cradles* where the social energy of the villagers crystallise and where the dynamics then originate. Both cases also show that the link between current social or economic activities and the original cradle might not be obvious at first sight... and, in some cases, we might need quite some time before we discover the real cradle(s).

Today, the whistle of the Bonou group remains just a symbol, but although the farmers' group has expanded, most of the new development initiatives are still led or at least catalysed by the original core group of thirteen members!

In the Kotokpa case, any visitor arriving on a weekend in the village and seeing the Adji players, will only recognise people playing a game. Let that person come a few more times or stay in the village for a while, and he/she will discover the central role of the game in the village life!

The intention here, is not really to contribute to the debate on the necessity of working through the traditional groups (Saunders, 1977) or not (Hunter and Jiggins, 1977) while establishing new local organisations. Further cases might suggest sufficient insight to privilege one option or the other.

The current reflection is simply guided by the fact that previous assessments of community development projects have concluded that what is needed for success is a high degree of 'fit' between programme design, beneficiaries needs and the capacities of the assisting organisations (Korten, 1980). As implied earlier, the activities going on in the cradles might be completely outside the scope of possible new projects. However, what the two cases suggest is that good linkages to the potential cradles could be a way to bring development partners closer to the people and to inspire the initiation and the design of more suitable development programmes or projects. Additional cases will help explore this further.

7.2.4   Integration of cultural values in the management of local organisations

This factor can be called the *norms and values factor*. As explained earlier, in the case of Bonou, this is illustrated not only in the day-to-day management but also specifically by the setting up and the mode of operation of the 'Haut Conseil des Sages' (SVC). The council settles conflicts and also serves as an interface with the official security system. The way the *Zangbétô* group is used as a collective tool to enforce local regulations is also quite illustrative. It is important to mention that in various other places in Benin *Zangbétô* groups are either called to perform in folkloric events or are considered to be part of witchcraft systems.

Another aspect in Kotokpa is that the management of credit activities, the security organisation and the related sanction system clearly show to what extent local norms and values are integrated in local settings. The credit system was launched because it was needed first to solve social problems; it started as a solidarity tool helping the villagers 'to save honour' on the occasion of marriages or funerals. Later, due to the rigidity of the formal credit institution, it provided a basis for the development of production activities, with a management system simply matching local ways and mentality, based on trust and kinship relations.

7.2.5   The Existence of a Driving Force

The observations made during the exploratory visits suggested that among those dynamics which had been born in similar conditions, some could grow while others could remain stagnant, depending on the existence (or not) of a *driving force*.

First of all, the driving force is not necessarily a material one. This is seen in both cases, where part of the driving force has been the dynamism and the dedication of the local leaders. Also, in Kotokpa, the annual Adji feasts not only galvanise the village's energies around the activities of the Adji Club, but their popularity and the huge participation of the population is a clear recognition of the importance of the Club in the village life. This provides a real drive to the Club members who constantly refer to the 'Feast of 17 August' with pride. Such forces, unifying and mobilising the community, are important in development context (Mayfield, 1985). Recognition, honour and pride are also driving the people in Bonou. Thanks to their success and their very active participation in meetings held at various levels for the village credit schemes, the chairman of their CREP has been recently elected as chairman of the national

CREP union. Since then, as a way to keep their motivation, the Bonou leaders always pass on to the members the message that the group has to work even harder to 'keep it going' so as not to lose its reputation!

Besides, the material aspect of the driving force can also be very important. In Bonou, the availability of land and the existence of a cash crop, cotton - selling well - played a key role in the development of the Savings Club and the subsequent activities. In Kotokpa, thanks to the strong linkages between the *Adji Club* and the farmers' group, cotton revenues also helped both groups to develop rapidly. This resulted in the progressive transformation of the traditional savings system of the *Adji Club* into a village financial institution, *Caisse Villageoise d'Epargne et de Crédit*.

In both cases the driving force has been really internal to the dynamic and to its immediate environment. That self-reliance basis, or - in other terms - a local basis for human and material resources constitutes an important component of the socio-economic viability of the local organisation (Schmale, 1993).

7.2.6   About linking factors

It is important, for the development of local organisations not to succumb to the 'pathologies of 'localitis'...'... and to take advantage of adequate external assistance (Uphoff and Krishna, ibid.). This assistance can help local people to gain access to services, information and funds that they need to launch and develop their activities.

However, one has to make sure that the new resources do not 'create dependency on outsiders or impair the ability of the local people to manage their own affairs' (Uphoff and Krishna, ibid.).

Furthermore, in order for local successes to make impact at higher levels and, then, to really contribute to meeting development challenges, appropriate ways are needed for the systematic strengthening of local organisations within national systems (Mayfield, 1985).

The *linking factor*, or *interface factor*, represents the linkages between local dynamics and support systems at other levels. Appropriate linkage between the farmers' group in Bonou and the local political authorities made it possible for the group, in the starting period, to get access to land. This was determinant for the development of the activities, and for subsequent success.

This factor also illustrates to what extent the environment is conducive to or hampers the development of the relevant local organisations. This includes possible linkages with the *Diaspora* and with potential external actors. The analysis of the two pilot cases shows that linkages with external actors have played quite an important role in the support of local institutions in Bonou, while in Kotokpa local actors had to rely mainly on themselves. In both cases the basic services of CARDER (a public extension agency) were available, although this has been drastically reduced within the new context of the Structural Adjustment Programmes. In Bonou, the Sasakawa Global 2000 programme played an important role in the development of the CREP, and the NGO *France-Benin* was - and still is - the main partner of the Community Health Centre, while the Diaspora contributed to creating some turbulence on the route of the 'local canoe'... In Kotokpa, it is only recently, that the credit system got some support from the AGEFIB[30], thanks to the contacts established in the framework of this research. We will discuss later to what extent efficient linkages are important for local dynamics in order to develop and to make impact at both local and non-local level.

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30   Agence de Financement des Initiatives de Base, a microfinance agency

7.2.7   The power system

This factor was not part of the original set of loose categories which was derived from the exploratory tour. Although some illustrations of power systems at local level were observed, it was not initially decided to include power systems among the specific factors to be assessed further... until my attention was caught by (both the supervision and) the reality in the field. I must confess that in the beginning of this research I had been tending towards considering the power issue as most relevant to the macro-micro relationships as explained in the background section, while the macro level overlooked local knowledge and institutions. That view changed completely with the realisation of the importance of power systems later on during the pilot study. In fact, everything revolves around power (ENDA, 1994). In Bonou power is fairly shared between the youth and the old people of the village through, for example, the Supreme Village Council. This body is, however, severely challenged by the official security officers; but thanks to that collective force, the local actors were able to reach a workable agreement. This also applies to Kotokpa and the implementation of the local security system.

Part of the resistance can be found within the local organisations themselves (Esman and Uphoff, 1984). Indeed, inside the dynamics, the various forces 'shaking the canoe' are in fact representations of the internal power system. For instance, some members are privileged in having better access to relevant information through personal of family networking with some of the natives living 'in town', that is to say, closer to the information sources. Indeed, when an actor, or a group of actors, has a good command of any of the 'uncertainty zones' of an organisation, then it bestows on them a certain power over the whole body (Bernoux, 1985).

7.2.8   Summing up

On the whole, this second learning cycle can be summarised as follows:

Broad categories (deriving from Learning Cycle 1)	The way they appear in the cases		Outcomes: the Key Existential Factors (To be further assessed during the next learning Cycle)
	In Bonou	In Kotokpa (The Adji Club)	
The way the dynamics started	MSR CREP	Water Supply system Security system	Triggering factor
Historical Perspective / Evolution	MSR	Security system Links Adji Club Savings system-Farmers' Group (GV)	Process or Time Factor
Possible already existing groups	Vangbè (the Whistle Club)	Adji Club	Cradle
Integration of cultural values in the management system	SVC	The security system (sanction system, women participation)	Norms and Values Factor
Importance of Conducive Environment or Driving Force	Local leadership Availability of land Cotton	Local leadership Cotton	Driving Force
Linking Possibilities	(Limited and locally-adapted) support from Sasakawa, NGO Benin-France, CARDER and INRAB, etc.	Initially poor / Slowly improving	Support Factor
(A New Category deriving from the pilot study): the power system	Concerted decisions (through various channels) Influencing official systems	Concerted decisions (with possible influence of family links) Influencing official systems	Power Factor

Table 7.1 Analysing the outcomes of the pilot phase.

7.3 Validation workshops

A workshop was held in each of the two villages to validate the results of the pilot study. As mentioned in the methodological section (Chapter 2), appropriate tools were designed to assure full participation of the farmers. Representatives of the different relevant groups were invited. A mapping system was designed, with specific symbols agreed with them to illustrate the factors to be assessed. These symbols are presented in the following table.

Factors	Symbols
Triggering factor	A match aflame
Cradle	For the Bonou group: their usual whistle, a cow's horn For the Kotokpa group: a set of the Adji game
Time Factor or Evolution Process	A canoe on a river (moving along the river thanks to the predominance of positive forces)
Norms and Values Factor	A well-known cultural symbol in Benin: King Guezo's jar[31], a solidarity symbol
Driving Force	A cow pulling a cart
Support Factor	Two people giving each other a hand...
Power Factor	The Power stick

Table 7.2 Designing symbols for visualisation of the key factors.

The workshops consisted of two steps. The first step was to recapitulate the key factors, based on previous meetings, interviews and additional information, recalling them one by one, and sticking the corresponding card on the board.

For the second step, each participant gets seven cards representing notes from FCFA 1,000 to FCFA 7,000. The purpose is to stick them on the board again, with the individual factors depending on how much he/she values them.

Figures 7.1. and 7.2 on the following pages show the mapping systems for the Bonou and Kotokpa groups respectively. More details on the results of the validation workshop are given in Annex 7. In general, these results confirm the principal findings of the case studies, providing specific details on the main characteristics of local dynamics.

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31   The jar of King Guézo is a cultural symbol widely known in Benin. It has quite a lot of holes in it. They used to be used by the King to call on the solidarity of the nation: 'If all the children in this land were each to fill one hole in this jar, then it could still hold water!'

The ranking of the factors came out as follows:

In Bonou	As for Kotokpa, the results are
1 Norms and Values	1 Cradle
2 Cradle	2 Driving force
3 Power factor	3 Process or Time factor
4 Process of time factor	4 Norms and Value factor
5 Driving force	5 Power factor
6 Triggering factor	6 Triggering factor
7 Support or Linking factor	7 Support or Linking factor

With regard to the results of the workshops, it is clear that one has to be cautious about this 'public assessment session'. During the very first workshop, in Bonou, the first farmer to go to the board clearly told me that he did not feel comfortable 'to stick these things up in front of everybody'. He then suggested that the back of the notes be stuck instead... In the end, once all the 'notes' are mixed on the board, there will be no problem turning them back again to be counted. The suggestion was adopted and this rule was adopted for all the following workshops.

It then became quite important that the farmers' judgement about these factors be interpreted carefully.

Another illustration of this is that after the workshop some farmers in Bonou recognised that in fact the process of 'this pirogue sailing on water...is very important.'
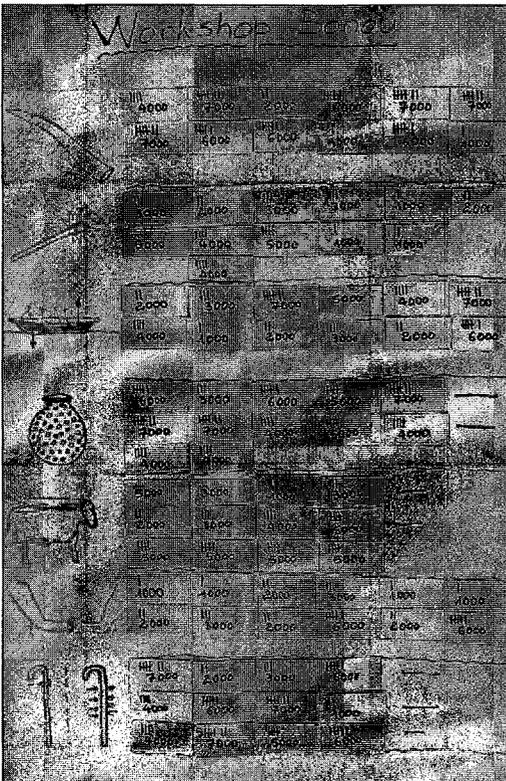
Figure 7.1 The mapping of the validation workshop in Bonou
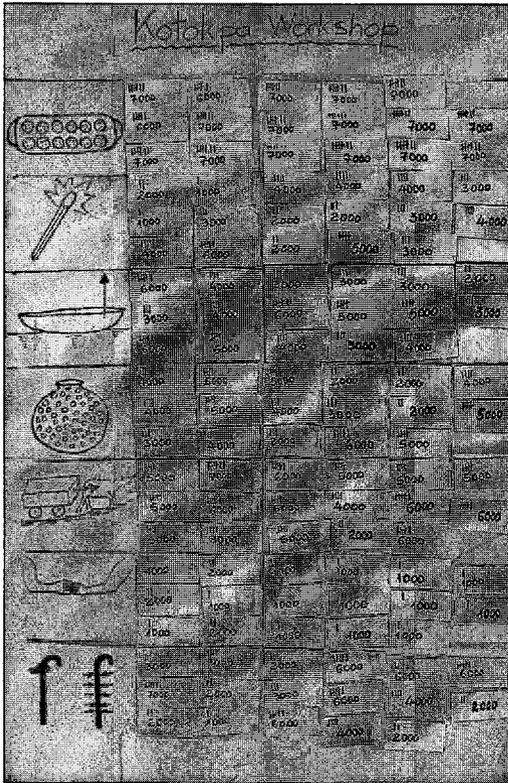
Figure 7.2 *The mapping of the validation workshop in Kotokpa*

7.4   Outcomes

Based on the first indications from the exploratory tours (Chapter 3) and summing up on the analysis in the section above, it seems that the following variables could be considered as the key existential characteristics, specific[32] to the local dynamics:

- the originating factor or *triggering factor*
- the *cradle*
- the time factor or the *evolution process*
- the *norms and values factor*
- the *driving force*
- the interface or *linking factor*
- the *power factor*

Furthermore, the study of the development dynamics in place in the two villages also confirms that social capital is indeed an integral element in the structure of relationships between people. 'To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others... who are the actual source of his or her advantage' (Portes, 1998).
In fact we have learned that the social cohesion which initially developed around the traditional game of *Adji* has gone further. It has provided the basis for the development of both pro-

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32 vis-à-vis general criteria such as accountability, transparency, etc (Esman and Uphoff, 1984), Vodouhè (1996), which apply in any case.

ductive and social activities around the credit system in Kotokpa, including the collective security guard watch system which is now the pride of the village.

The Bonou case, with the credit system, the community health system, the housing scheme and the village council follow the same pattern, building on the strong foundations of the *Whistle Club*.

Both cases are not only a fine illustration of the importance of cultural factors in development activities; they also underline how effective development activities can be when they are based upon the real needs of the local people, and directly undertaken by them.

Therefore, as far as development policies are concerned, I would argue that, although there is more and more awareness of the need to integrate culture and development, currently things seem to be going in the wrong direction. The most frequent examples in development strategies seem to be the efforts to incorporate cultural elements into development projects. What we learn from the Bonou case and from the *Adji Club* suggests that the opposite is the proper way to go: it is rather the cultural values and the local settings which could efficiently and progressively lead to the development of economic activities as needed by the local people. In both cases, the way that activities have evolved to adapt to changing circumstances in peoples' lives is quite remarkable.

In different parts of the world, experience suggests, indeed, that coming to grips with the fundamentally constructivist nature of human knowledge is liberating, energising and empowering (Woodwill and Röling, 1998).

7.5   Taking the next step: a further assessment of the key factors

The reason why Burkina Faso and Ghana were selected for this research are explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.5 on *Research location*). The results of the exploratory tour in these two countries suggested to select the following cases:
- the Sapone case in Burkina Faso, where, thanks to the cohesion created within the rural youth around a soccer team, a development dynamic was born: the village association *AVLP (Association Vive Le Paysan)*, is today very active not only in agricultural development activities, but also in heath and education;
- the Yamfo case, where a traditional Funeral Group provided a substantial part of the resources of the village development committee, helping in particular to finance the water supply system, the village electrification and the construction of a health centre and of a school.

The two cases seem to have comparable features to those of Bonou and Kotokpa (Chapters 5 and 6): they are rooted in cultural and traditional activities; they have been running for more than twenty years with some success and popularity, and are also contributing to local development in their respective areas.

However, apart from the specific aspects relevant to the historical background of the respective countries (Chapter 2), the new groups are operating in different cultural, political and economic contexts.

Therefore, it was interesting to further assess, with these two cases (Chapters 8 and 9), the characteristics of the local dynamics as identified above. This was part of the third learning cycle, completed with the exploration of possible determinants for success (Chapter 10).

Phase Components	3rd Learning Cycle (LC3): Assessing Further
Objective (from LC2)	Assessing the Key Existential Factors
Methods / Techniques	2 Additional case studies (same techniques as for LC2) and 22 group observations (Focus Groups Meetings and Key Informants Interviews)
Nodes for reflection	Table by Key Factors
Outcomes	Patterns Emerging from the Key Factors & Other Patterns: Factors Limiting Impact

Table 7.3 Moving to the Third Learning Cycle

Chapter 8

Where a group of young soccer players changed the life of a village: the Saponé case in Burkina Faso

8.1   Overview
8.2   The background
8.3   The 'Association Vive Le Paysan' (AVLP)
8.4   Conclusion

8.1   Overview

'We have to try to bring the concept of work back into the living of life. We could suggest to employees that they spend just half their time at work and the other half developing themselves and living out a dream project'. This was one of the calls made by participants at global meetings on local development held in Sherbrooke, Canada, in October 1998.

When I look back and reflect on the interviews I conducted during my first visits to Saponé in Burkina Faso, I have the impression that the people who are actually animating the development dynamic in the region have already gone beyond this stage: they are all living out a 'life project' to the full.

Many villages in Burkina Faso are faced with rural exodus, either to towns elsewhere in the country or to neighbouring countries (mainly Côte d'Ivoire) where they have formed an important reservoir of manpower ever since the colonial period (Allen, 1989).

When the young people of the village of Saponé decided to stay together and to fight the rural exodus, they said they were faced by 'detractors of the rural world, for whom nothing is possible outside the town'. Their starting point was that they had played football together; through their discussions they agreed to take up the challenge of 'being ok in the village, far from the town'. As sportsmen they knew about endurance and perseverance and that the road was - and still is - littered with difficulties. What they achieved in Saponé deserves admiration indeed. A degree of social cohesion has come from playing a collective game, and has made possible the establishment of a rural association which, as time has moved on, has become a real instrument for local development. The association, as well as supporting agricultural production, has been involved in activities for public health, education and communication.

How did the local dynamic of Saponé get started? Who are the stakeholders and how did they get organised? What changes have been brought about in the village as a result of the association's activities?

Map 3 *Burkina Faso, The Saponé village*

8.2 The background

8.2.1 Historical background: a village born from a spirit of conquest and pride

The history of Saponé is part of the history of the Mossi monarchy. Its founders were valiant and proud conquerors. Saponé was founded in about 1358 by the Moro Naba Kouda, the son of Naba Kûm-dûm yé and Pabda. He was the 11th Emperor of the Mossi. His father was a great conqueror who died during the conquest of the west of Burkina Faso. It was to continue his father's work that he settled in the Saponé region. He settled first in a place called 'Koudtinga' (the land of Kouda) before moving on to Saponé where he settled down definitively and set up his court. What is special about Moro Kouda, in terms of the royal succession, lies in the fact that he had not undergone all the customary ceremonies before setting out to conquer: the most important of these being having the head shaved, since this is a very important step in the enthronement process of the chiefs of the Mossi. This was noticed by some nobles prior to his departure and they sent a troop of people off to find him, with the order 'Wherever you find him, shave his head!'. He was found by his hunters to the south of Ouagadougou and they shaved his head, just as they had been ordered.

The place where this happened was given the name 'Sa-n-pông' ('Shave his head') and this gradually got deformed into Saponé. The new conqueror soon brought the local people to heel, and they very quickly became hard-working farmers.

8.2.2 The physical, economical and social environment

The department of Saponé is one of the seven departments which comprise the province of Bazéga, one of Burkina Faso's 45 provinces. The physical relief of Saponé is monotonous: the major elevations are a few low laterite mounds. Traces can be found of hills and granite domes which have been eroded down to heights of less than 10 metres. Low areas form depressions of which the two most important are the *walga* and the *kaloté*.
The most important basin in the region is that of Nazinon, and it crosses the department of Saponé. Reservoirs have been built in the villages, and they have facilitated the development of such important activities as fruit growing, market gardening and fish farming.
The climate is of the Soudano-Sahelian type and it is marked by a rainfall varying from 700 to 800mm. The year is divided into two seasons: a rainy season from May to October and a dry season from October to May. The dry season is divided into a cool period from November to February (marked by the *Harmattan*) and a hot period from March to May. The soil is mainly ferruginous on clay deposits. They are of poor quality but they are easy to cultivate because of their looseness.

In the area of depressions there are largely hydromorphic, fertile alluvial soils which can only be worked from November onwards (the time at which waters recede). Vegetation is a wooded savannah and is abundant in the south, but in the centre and the north, vegetation cover has gradually disappeared.

Saponé lies 40 km from Ouagadougou (the capital of Burkina Faso) on the road to Léo, and it is 34 km from the provincial capital, Kombisiri.
The total area of the department of Saponé is 800 km^2 and there is a population of 23,093 inhabitants (census of 1996), in 32 villages.
Now considered as the native population, the *Mossé* people are the major ethnic group. Minority immigrant populations are essentially composed of Peulh herders.
Ninety percent of the total population of the region is rural.

Agriculture is the principal activity of the region in the form of traditional subsistence agriculture with a focus on cultivation of cereals: millet, sorghum and maize take up most of the cultivated land. In addition groundnuts and cowpea are grown. Rice cultivation and market gardening are practised in some low-lying areas. There are also some fields of cassava and sweet potato.

Livestock production is also an important activity in two forms: pastoralism practised by the transhumant Peulh herders, mainly with large animals, and settled livestock farming practised by the native population with goats, sheep and poultry and sometimes a few head of large animals.
For most farmers, rearing poultry and small animals is principally for direct consumption and for traditional and social requirements (gifts, funerals, traditional feasts, sacrifices).

Fishing is practised mainly in the village of Koagma where there is a sizeable reservoir. Fish farming is also practised here, and a co-operative has been formed to promote this line of activity.

The principal artisanal activities in the region are hat-making and blacksmithing. Hat-making takes places in virtually every village. This has led to the establishment of a co-operative for the production and selling of hats inside and outside the area. The 'Saponé hat' is well known even outside the frontiers of Burkina Faso.

Since the end of 1995 onwards, an international hat marathon has been organised at the end of year as a way to promote this activity.

The people of Saponé follow several religions, of which the principal ones are Christianity, Islam, Protestantism and Animism. Despite the growing importance of imported religions, animism is still dominant since it embraces all the cultural practices of the region (funerals, traditional feasts...).

In terms of governmental infrastructures, the commune of Saponé - headquarters of the department - comprises a prefecture building, three primary schools, a primary education inspectorate, a post office, two security facilities (Police and Gendarmerie), a departmental college, agricultural and livestock services, an environmental service and a medical service.

In addition to these governmental facilities, we may count the achievements of the *Association Vive Le Paysan*[33] *(AVLP)*, which include primarily: a village store, a social centre, a child nursery and a private college.

There are several development organisations in the department. As well as the AVLP, which is the longest established and best performing, there is a *Fondation pour le Développement Communautaire* (Community Development Foundation)/ Save the Children Foundation (FDC/SCF), the *Association pour le Développement du Département de Saponé* (ADDS, the Association for the Development of the Department of Saponé), and the Association d'Action communautaire (ABAC, Association for Community Action), although the latter has almost stopped its activities.

8.3 The 'Association Vive Le Paysan' (AVLP)

8.3.1 From soccer parties to development activities: birth of the AVLP

The *Association Vive le Paysan* was set up in 1979 by eleven young people of Saponé. They used to chat and swap experiences and opinions each evening after a game of soccer. Their discussions would centre on problems of unemployment, rural exodus and associated constraints.

One of the founder members talks here about the genesis of the association:

'*When we had finished our football game and before going home, we would discuss such questions as: how can I find a good job? How can I earn money without going to Ouagadougou and lowering my standards. I want to stay in the village, so how can I be a 'big person' with a radio, nice clothes and a mobylette? There were quite a lot of constraints for young people who wanted to stay in the village and 'make it'. The town is where people saw success and well-being, but not for everyone because the town has got a downside too. What's more the pull of the town has led to people under-valuing agriculture as a way to earn money... One of us was always furious about the backward ideas some people had about the village. And then two of us had spent some time in the town and they used to tell us about how they used to earn money in the town but still came back to the village with empty pockets. All this led us to conclude that 'the town has got nothing to offer us' and that it would be best to stay in the village and fend for ourselves.*'

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33 From the slogan 'Vive Le Paysan!', which means 'Long Life to the Farmer!'

The idea of staying in the village caught on and the 'eleven young men of Saponé' pledged each other, as if in a blood pact, to stay together because they were happy enough as they were, they liked having their football team and the village people enjoyed their games. Then there came the episode of the 'burst ball' (see Chapter 3) which forced them to take up gardening initially in order to equip the football team, and then to find additional resources for staying alive! As the secretary-general puts it himself, this is how the *Association Vive Le Paysan* came to be. The name was chosen to underline the importance of the farmer in a context where the farmer was little appreciated, and this was a challenge which the founders of the association had committed themselves to surmount.

As time went on, they gave more thought to how the association could be better organised, and they set clearer objectives.
At the outset, the objectives had been completely general: they were virtually direct translations of the members' point of departure, and they aimed at strengthening social cohesion and at setting up economic activities:
- create a team spirit and working ethic among founders;
- make the village a pleasant place to live, to avoid rural exodus;
- create income-generating activities;
- discourage idleness among young people, and encourage other young working people to join the group.

Later on, the economic objectives were made more specific and they were incorporated in an annual programme of activities adopted by the bodies of the Association.

8.3.2   The organisation and its bodies: based on traditional settings

The AVLP was officially recognised by the State on 1 June 1984 as a non-profit Farmers' Association with the motto 'Millet and water for all'.
Membership of the Association is open to any individual, who then joins a neighbourhood 'cell' or a village group. The annual membership fee is FCFA 500 for men and FCFA 250 for women.

Several months after the start of activities, and because of a growing awareness of its existence, young people from other villages started to join the association. This led to the adoption of the following structure.

The basic unit at the level of each village neighbourhood is known as the 'cell'. Each basic cell has a representative called 'Taorsoba', (meaning: the one in front) who functions as the interface being the cell and the village group, the latter being the body composed of all neighbourhood cells. In fact, these divisions match the traditional form of organisation of working groups in the Mossi country.

The village group is run by a management committee and it meets to decide upon activities at the level of the village such as the construction of a grain silo or the purchase of a mill. The neighbourhood cells are autonomous and can decide on their own activities.
The management committees of the various villages are themselves co-ordinated by the Board of the Association.

The various central bodies of the Association have the following features:

- The General Assembly is the supreme body of the association and it establishes the overall political direction. It is composed of delegates from the villages and it is held every two years.

- The Board is the executive body for the implementation of policies and decisions of the Association between two General Assemblies. It is composed of members elected by the General Assembly, including a President and a General Secretary. The General Secretary is responsible for the public relations of the Association, and for assisting the Executive Secretariat in its negotiations with various partners for the funding of activities. He reports to the members of the Board and to the General Assembly.

- The Executive Secretariat is the body which implements the directives of the Board. It is led by an executive secretary who is either recruited or nominated internally. It reports to the President of the Board or to the General Secretary.

The Executive Secretariat comprises:
- An administration unit
- A department for internal income which is responsible for promoting income-generating activities
- A department for grant-aided projects which is responsible for implementing projects financed by the Association and/or its partners
- An education and training department

The overall structure of the AVLP can be graphically presented as follows:

Board

| Administration Unit | Department for Internal Revenue | Department for Grant-aided Projects | Department for Education and Training |

Management Committees of Village Groupings
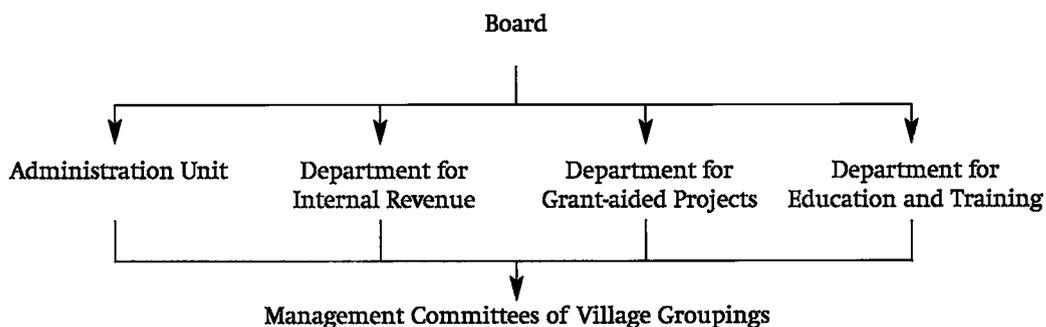
Figure 8 The organisation of the AVLP

8.3.3   The surprisingly rapid move towards a local development organisation

With structure of base cells and groupings, this young organisation was clearly a network organisation. This clearly helped to sensitise local communities to its work and to encourage a gradual growth in several new members in various villages. In addition, the decision of the organisation's leadership to base their structure on traditional groups also helped to swell the movement. Most young people in the villages concerned could easily identify with the Association's objectives whilst staying in groups they were accustomed to.

The activities of the association had centred first on agricultural production and they had gradually spread around the major themes which the association decided upon in 1987, namely:
- Agriculture, livestock and environment;
- Health and animal health;
- Formal and non-formal education;
- Training and support to production;
- Improvement of the position of women in development.

Over time, activities had thus diversified in line with the needs of the membership. In general, they could be defined as aiming at the improvement of living conditions of local communities and their empowerment.

In concrete terms, the major activities of the Association are:
- credit
- welding
- operation of pharmaceutical outlet
- artisanal shop
- service provision and broker services
- environmental preservation and soil conservation
- literacy work
- secondary education, through establishing a private vocational school
- sensitisation and education of farmers.

The network nature of the association led to a spectacular rise in membership. Launched by eleven young men in 1979 without any external funding, its first external funds were received in 1984/85; this allowed activities to expand to three villages. Then there was an explosion in growth. By 1989/90 the association has grown to having membership in 42 villages. With such an evolution, the Round Table of Partners, convened in March 1993, helped the AVLP to carry out a 'feasibility study on expanding activities'. This led, in 1994, to a set of strategies for consolidation and control of the growth process. As of December 2000, the association had 4, 700 members and covered 58 villages!

The management team has grown and developed in line with these changes, and it has now become a real co-ordination office with about ten members.

8.3.4   The credit system: an instrument well-suited to user needs

Under the association's credit scheme, three types of loans are made to members: for small-scale commerce, for agricultural production and for milling. For small-scale commerce, the credit is provided here for women to undertake income-generating activities such as the preparation of dolo, trade in cereals and germinated millet; spices, catering... Loans are for a period of 9 to 12 months at an annual rate of 10%. The loan capital comes from the savings deposits of members and from funds provided by such partners as German Agro-Action and from a national project, the *Projet de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle (PSAN)*. The rate of recovery of these loans is 90%. In general, women are regarded as being reliable borrowers in the Association. The following table shows the trends in loans for small-scale commerce since they were started in 1989.

	Loans	Number of Borrowers	Average size of loan	Villages involved
1989 - 1990	1,173,500	100	11,735	5
1990 - 1991	5,638,000	510	11,055	15
1991 - 1992	5,230,000	339	11,430	14
1992 - 1993	9,904,000	1,702	5.820	43
1993 - 1994	10,781,400	1,707	6,315	46
1994 - 1995	15,254,000	1,182	12,905	33
1995 - 1996	6,000,000	272	22,060	31
1996 - 1997	15,842,000	578	27,410	42
1997 - 1998	25,035,000	859	29,140	32
1998 - 1999	31,172,500	1,078	28,915	42

Table 8.1 Trends in loans (in FCFA) for small-scale commerce.

This table shows that the small loans have grown in line with the involvement of new villages, a process which the credit facility has no doubt helped. The number of new villages grew from 5 in the harvest season of 1989/1990 to 42 in 1993/1994. The fall in numbers and the subsequent fluctuations seen in following seasons, from 1994 to 1999, is essentially attributable to the consolidation measures put in place after the feasibility study on expanding membership which was undertaken in 1993.

Agricultural loans were the first type of loan to be made to Association members. This line of credit, based on a start-up grant from Caritas Germany, aimed at providing the bulk of the membership with agricultural equipment over a period of four years. Loans were made for a four-year period with an annual rate of interest of 10%. The programme did not meet its objectives because of repayment problems faced by the first round of borrowers. The table below shows the trends in this line of credit from 1985 to 1994.

	Carts	Manga hoes	Draft oxen	Donkeys	Number of borrowers
1985	-	50	16	29	58
1986	-	30	-	-	30
1987	-	-	-	-	-
1988	1	10	-	-	10
1989	2	-、 55	-	-	56
1990	1	4	-	-	5
1991	-	-	-	-	-
1992	-	-	-	-	-
1993	10	187	-	-	197
1994	15	16	97	34	144

Table 8.2 Trends in agricultural credit

The table shows a certain discontinuity in the acquisition of agricultural equipment, especially in terms of draft oxen. This is due to problems in maintenance and upkeep, which resulted in the death of several animals before the end of the loan period - causing repayment problems in turn.

Loans for mills and rickshaws ('pousse - pousse')
This line of credit is provided to village women's groups in order to reduce the burden of milling tasks and thus allow women to participate in meetings and other training and sensitisation activities. It has been suspended at present because of breakdowns, theft and the lack of return on the mills.

The following table describes the use of this line of credit:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	Total
Number of mills	1	2	4	6	4	5	3	25
Number of beneficiary villages	1	2	4	6	4	5	3	25

Table 8.3 Trends in the installation of mills

The table shows that a total of 25 mills were installed in 25 different villages. However in view of the difficulties mentioned above, most mills have been handed over to private users at

village level, to be run privately. The leaders of the groups concerned reached the conclusion that the overall aim was to attain the goal set by the Association, namely to ensure that women had continual access to facilities for milling their cereals. The AVLP thus stopped this activity which is now being pursued by private operators.

The conditions for obtaining different types of loans are as follows:

For individual loans (essentially for small-scale commerce), the borrower must:

- have been a member of the association and an active member of the village group for at least one year;
- have no debt history;
- live permanently in the village and be married;
- be proposed by his/her group;
- accept the repayment instalment fixed by the Association;
- accept the ceiling placed on the loan: depending on the experience/capacity of the borrower, this varies from FCFA 20,000 to FCFA 50,000;
- provide 10% matching capital;
- pay a penalty of 5% on any outstanding repayment due after the 31st day since the previous repayment instalment.

The final consideration is related to the village group of which the loan applicant is a member. The approval takes into account the group's dynamism and its ability to cover the loan, and its degree of organisation. These latter criteria are also used for the provision of collective loans for mills, carts and so on.

Constraints in the credit process

With regard to small-scale commerce, the major reasons for defaults on repayments are:

- the use of loan for other purposes;
- the passing on of parts of the loan to family members;
- the occasional death of husbands, leading to widows departing to their native village;
- witchcraft practices which, once reported, lead to the rejection of the person concerned.

In addition to delays, there are other constraints:

- the non-diversification of income-generating activities (with several women offering the same products on the village market);
- the poor level of returns on some activities;
- the inexperience of some women in small-scale trading.

With regard to agricultural loans, the principal constraints are related to the relative poverty of the soil, and subsequent poor harvests. In addition, mention must be made of the lack of upkeep of the draft oxen, which leads to their death before the end of the repayment period. The problem of defaults on this line of credit is due to the poor preparation of the criteria for loan disbursement.

With regard to milling loans, the problems are essentially those of theft, frequent breakdowns and lack of return on the technology.

8.3.5   Education Activities

The private Lycée
Over the period 1983 to 1999, with support from its partners, the Association helped build more than 30 primary schools in its area of operation. One result of this was an increase in the number of children with primary school diplomas *(Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires)*, and a consequent increase in the number of candidates for secondary education above the capacity of the only secondary school in the area.

The Association thus decided, once again, to invest in empowerment by setting up a private school - Lycée - with an annual capacity of 16 classes, with 4 different streams, each for the first, second, third and fourth year of secondary education.
The college was built with the funds of the Association itself and opened in October 1994. One of the objectives of the AVLP is the promotion of school attendance by girls. This is reflected in the school fees: FCFA 25,000 for girls and FCFA 35,000 for boys. It should also be noted that these fees are significantly lower than those charged by other private schools in the country (up to 30% to 40%), and are close to those of public schools - in the area of FCFA 20,000 per year.

The Lycée has boarding facilities so that it can be accessible to people from a distance. The boarding part is host to children from a range of backgrounds. In the school year 1998-1999, there were children from other regions of the country, and also from Mali, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Niger. During that year, there were 79 boarders; their costs were FCFA 338,000 per child per year.

Another innovation of the school is the inclusion of practical training in its programme. Students thus learn shorthand, practice market gardening and set up tree nurseries. Two hours a week are devoted to such activity.
The school's motto is 'educate and teach'. Thus one hour of civic studies is given each week in each class.

The first three years of operation of the Lycée have been supported by the Association; this is a good indication of its ability to operate autonomously, with the school covering its costs from its receipts.

The literacy programme: an innovative approach matching local needs
After the governmental literacy campaigns of the 1980s, several NGOs specialised in this line of activity. With the assistance of external trainers, the AVLP provided literacy training for many of its members.

It was in order to make this training more useful and relevant to local realities that the Association decided to organise literacy training sessions on a sectoral basis, depending on the economic activity of their interest. In the villages involved, young people were organised into groups to learn reading and writing in the Mooré language, with the help of a facilitator. After the first initiation year, each youth registers to study further with someone who is already practising the trade which the student wants to follow (machinery, welding, carpentry...). Each evening, after working in the fields, they follow literacy training sessions which are best suited to their trade. One of the leaders of this work, Doudou Naama, stresses the benefits of this new approach which is very popular amongst local people:

'Our literacy programme has gradually become what we call an education programme for social change, where the people with local knowledge in some trades hand it on to the young people.... This way a lot of young people can get - in addition to reading and writing - training in various topics including traditional trades such as weaving, tanning and blacksmithing. This will help them gradually find occupations outside the agricultural seasons and to diversify their income. One big advantage of this approach is that we can keep alive and kicking those traditional trades which were in danger of being lost in modern schools.'

It is quite usual to see in the literacy programme centres, a display of various objects produced by the trainees and which they sell to cover part of the programme.

In addition to this approach, and in line with another of its precious slogans, the AVLP invests in assuring full taking over by new generations, by helping to promote so-called classical education too, adapting it of course to the realities of rural life.

Sensitisation and communication
· Sensitisation and communication belong to the founding precepts of the Association. With its special interest in this line of activity being restricted by its relatively limited financial and human resources, a project proposal was drawn up for a local radio station.

The project was financed by the European Union and Oxfam-America, and the station went on air in 1996. It is now an important medium for the sensitisation and training of farmers, serving the principal objective of 'helping the young farmer to be capable and conscious of being the major player in his own situation.'

The objectives of the radio station are:
• to provide support to other departments of the AVLP in their missions
• to provide coverage and exposure for the day-to-day activities of the Association
• to participate in the training and conscientisation of members of neighbouring communities.

The radio broadcasts five hours a day, from 18h to 23h, thus reflecting its limited budget and the availability of farmers. It covers a range of themes:
farming activities;
• themes touching on the realities of young Burkinabè people in general, and the region in particular such as 'Youth and employment', 'Youth and poverty' and 'Youth and rural exodus';
• themes relating to income-generating activities for women, and to savings and credit;
• themes relevant to the rights of women and children such as marriage, filiation (descendancy), the rights of the child, divorce, succession...
• themes around customs and tradition, health, etc.

All these themes are covered in the local Mooré language, and some broadcasts for young listeners are in French.

With an eye to securing the financial autonomy of the radio station, the Association has opened its airwaves to other institutions and individuals wanting to pass on messages. For this, an hourly rate is charged. The station also organises video shows and recreational evenings, a way to introduce city opportunities into the village life.

Various learning opportunities, home and away
As well as the sensitisation approach followed through radio programmes, the Association has pursued dialogue through organising debates with key people. The most recent event - quite well received by the population - was about the role of the security forces in maintaining law and order. The leaders of the security forces in Saponé (the police and gendarmerie) held a debate with young people about the legitimacy of their institutions in the local environment.

Exchange visits have also been organised to other places in Burkina Faso and outside the country for leaders of village groupings. On such visits the leaders are usually accompanied by an officer of the Association. Those farmers who have benefited from the programme say that these visits are mind-openers and they come to realise that they are not the only people to be involved in a struggle with the harshness of nature. These visits help the farmers' leaders to discover other realities and other initiatives and often, on return to their village, to undertake new initiatives.

8.3.6   Other activities

Welding: an attractive activity for rural youth
The welding activity started in the 1980s, with the aim of cutting down the frequent journeys made by members of the association to Ouagadougou by offering them a service nearby. Previously village people had repaired their bicycles and ploughs in the capital.
The first welders to be trained there by the association were subsequently recruited and set up in Saponé. These pioneers were not specialised however, and they only carried out repair work, whilst learning to produce metalwork such as doors, windows and gates.

As time passed, demand grew and a professional welder was hired to run the workshop. Today this activity has developed well and, according to local people, it has made a definite contribution to reducing rural exodus. The Association's workshop functions as an apprenticeship centre for local young men interested in this trade.

The pharmaceutics outlet
The outlet was set up in 1984 with a grant from Oxfam-UK. It is run by one employee who reports every evening to the cashier of the association. The costs of the employee are met entirely from the profit margin applied in this operation. A uniform price for each product is maintained for all customers, whether they are members of the Association or not.

When this activity started, orders used to be made through a community centre in Germany. This allowed the Association to charge low prices in Saponé and to make it easier for the least favoured members of society to obtain the products. However, the regulations currently in force require the Association to obtain its stock from local pharmacies. As a result, the prices charged are almost the same as those charged in pharmacies in the capital, and deliveries are no longer regular, leading to stock shortages. The turnover figures for the last three years range between FCFA 7 million and FCFA 10 million.

The artisanal shop
The shop - or boutique as it is known locally - was set up in 1992 with financial support from Care-Canada.

It is a point of sale for various products: soap, cigarettes, manufactured items, rice, cement. It too is run by one employee who reports every evening to the cashier of the association, at headquarters.

This employee is also financed entirely from the profit margins of the shop. Stock-taking is done at the shop every three months, as in the pharmaceuticals outlet.

These two commercial activities have a double advantage which is worthy of note:
- they increase the availability of basic products in the village
- they contribute significantly to keeping prices near - or in some cases at the same level - as those in the town. Previously the local community was subject to the capricious pricing policies of a few private traders.

Development broker's role in practice

In order to gradually increase its powers of financial responsibility, the Association provides a range of services to its clients and partners. At the level of small loans to women, it operates as an intermediary between women applicants and the *Projet de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle*, by providing technical support and supervision of activities in the field. It receives payment from the Project for its monitoring work.

Similarly, when the Association receives visitors, mostly during evaluation missions and studies for various projects on local development, it makes its staff available against payment.

In addition, the Association rents out a number of facilities:
- lodgings for visitors
- chairs, audio-visual materials and electricity generators for large events
- trucks for transporting sand, gravel...
- tractors for ploughing in rainy season.

The Association also publishes newspapers in the national language (Mooré). The newspapers cover national news in general, agricultural news and the work of the Association.

The services of the Association are made available at the same rate to members and non-members alike. It must be stressed that this policy has contributed greatly to the good name of the AVLP.

Village water supply, environmental protection and soil conservation

In its programme to improve the community's access to drinking water, over the period 1983 to 1994, the Association installed 37 equipped wells, lined wells and a water reservoir.

Furthermore, the Association has also held several sensitisation workshops on environmental protection, and has contributed to the implementation of some practical measures such as the laying of anti-erosion stone barriers, and the establishment of reforestation nurseries in 16 villages.

8.3.7   Changes attributable to the Association

After twenty years on the ground in its tireless efforts to promote the farmer, the AVLP has brought about major change in its area of operation. This is all the more so because the AVLP

was the first local Association to be involved in popular sensitisation and education in the area.

The AVLP can count a great many infrastructures and facilities to its credit, all of them aimed at improving the lot and the situation of the local farmer. They include:

- school and literacy facilities. These have helped to reduce illiteracy rates and to open up villages to new techniques
- water supply systems which have reduced the problem of access to drinking water. As well as these systems, the Association has provided the women of the area with essential tools and equipment such as more than 350 hand carts (*pousse-pousse*) between 1983 and 1994. The goal here was to lighten the load of the women in various activities.
- Health facilities have improved the access of local communities to modern medicine. The establishment of the pharmaceutical outlet in 1984 further improved this access through its social pricing policy. In those villages without health facilities, mobile mother-and-child health (MCH) units were set up to improve access for mother and child to primary health care. The AVLP has also been playing a leading role in the whole campaign against AIDS in the Saponé department.

In addition to these facilities, the Association has made a significant contribution towards employment creation through its activities. More than thirty people are employed in the implementation of the Association's programmes. With a few exceptions, most of these people are from the region itself.

In its work, the Association has sought an improvement in relations with local authorities. Some have become involved in the implementation of the Association's projects. One such case is the project of sponsorship between four schools in the Association's area of operation and the town of Brest in France.

This project has supported educational activities, helping school canteens, assuring the payment of school fees for 271 students and the provision of a rotating fund of FCFA 1 million for the mothers of students at two schools. The same project has also sponsored 338 children in villages across the department.

The impact of a powerful channel of communication (the local radio station) is also measurable:

- it has opened up the minds of listeners through the information provided;
- it has contributed to the sensitisation and education of a greater number of out-of-school people, because of its outreach;
- it has supported local communities in their development activities;
- it has promoted the local language (Mooré) as a factor in local union.

In his comments on the impact of the education programme for social change, Doudou Naama made sure to send a little pointed arrow towards competing organisations:

'Our programme is based solely on the motivation of the farmers. Of course we organise as many campaigns as are necessary for that, but nonetheless... we have to smile when other organisations offer per diem payments to people to attend their literacy courses! Some of our farmer members are embarrassed by such approaches and they sometimes come to us to ask what attitude they should take. We tell them 'Listen, if someone is giving you money, why refuse', then they take it... But the funny thing is that at these events, as

soon as the per diem payments have been made, the room gradually empties, whereas at our courses, people just keep coming!'

A final remark, about the annual International Hat Marathon International which has helped to open up the region to the outside world. This opening-up helps people to slowly discover the potential of the area and gives rise to new partnerships.

None of this has been done, or will continue, easily or without difficulty. The AVLP has a number of achievements which are the pride and joy of the entire region of Saponé, but there have been problems on the way and 'The Struggle Goes On!'

8.3.8   The difficulties of the Association

Start-up difficulties and relevant strategies
The difficulties at the time of start-up were to do with the nature of the birth and early evolution of the Association. First and foremost were the relationships with local authorities. At the time of the revolution in 1983, the founding members of the AVLP were seen as counter-revolutionaries who had to be crushed. It seems that this led to the so-called committees for the defence of the revolution wanting to take over the leadership of the Association, so as to control it. After the revolutionary period, in 1990, the Association was put under guard because it was allegedly involved in power struggles between the organs of the political powers of that time.

Another source of difficulties lay in the exclusion of some early members from the association for reasons of 'indiscipline'. As Amidou explains, these members gave the body a hard time, but this did not reduce their determination:

They stayed bitter towards us and organised campaigns to denigrate us in the eyes of the local communities. But we held firm and true, and to convince people of our intentions we organised several sensitisation sessions in the villages, using our own bicycles and mobylettes! This because we had to be careful not to increase the costs for the Association, otherwise it could have quickly gone bankrupt - and that would have pleased our detractors!'

The following slogans are taken from the 1986 Annual Report of the AVLP. They show to some extent how the strategies which the group chose in this period to keep up members' motivation, to take the political leaders of the Marxist period at their word, and, finally, to win the interest (and the support) of development organisations.

'If we have proper equipment and facilities, we could reduce the spectre of famine to a sad souvenir. But we need to have confidence in our abilities too. We have the energy and the determination which is needed.'

'Give us the necessary tools and we will feed everyone. Food self-sufficiency should stop being the stuff of pompous speeches if it is to be a reality.'

'Those who really care for farmers will help them to secure their water.'

'Help us to organise ourselves and we shall wring hunger's neck.'

'Give us the means to secure our water and we shall work wonders.'

'You told us that water is life, so... give us life.'

'Give a man his health, you give him a lot.'

These slogans could be summarised into two groups:
- the world of the farmers is under-equipped and under-promoted. It should enjoy the resources necessary for playing its role as provider of food resources;
- water and health are fundamental issues which political leaders and external agencies should prioritise.

These were, then, the challenges which the Association set out to overcome gradually.

Current difficulties
It must be said at the outset that even if its start-up difficulties have not been totally eliminated, it has contributed to the improvement of the living conditions for local communities and to the promotion of the farmer.

Today the difficulties faced by the AVLP are principally in terms of human resources and less in terms of financial resources. Given their commitment and sustained efforts, the leaders of the association have so far succeeded in effectively mobilising the financial partners needed for the implementation of the programmes, even though the reduction in support being offered now is forcing the AVLP to revise its strategies.

In terms of human resources, the association is blessed with competent and devoted staff, but they do not number enough for the scope of the all its ambitions. The Association operates in the area from where its founders and leaders themselves come. They obviously want to have a staff which is devoted to the common cause and which is not composed simply of salaried staff interested in their own development, to the cost of the beneficiary community. The problem here is that even if such people exist, it is hard to mobilise them to work in the village, given the proximity of the enticing town of Ouagadougou. This is an important problem for the AVLP.

8.3.9   The strengths and weaknesses of the Association

One of the Association's leaders says it so well: 'The AVLP has its assets, and it has its weaknesses. But those are not insurmountable obstacles, they are simply challenges to be overcome!'.

The strengths
The strengths of the Association clearly lie in its roots. The principal strengths are:

- the management model, in which there is a constant emphasis on financial autonomy and self-management; the leaders of the organisation are scrupulous in maintaining a certain independence of funding sources;

- the local character of the association and the consequent familiarity with the area of work;

- winning the confidence of the members, who clearly share the common ideal expressed in the motto 'Millet and Water for All';

- the emphasis on dialogue which is so evident in the genuine involvement of traditional bodies and local administrative authorities in the Association's activities.

- the degree of commitment and involvement of the staff in charge of project implementation;

- the personal commitment of the educated founders of the Association: one of them resigned from public service in order to devote himself fully to the Association's activities when it was under pressure from provincial authorities at the time of the revolution. Today he is on the payroll of the Association;

- the commitment and dynamism of the General Secretary (who became President at the General Assembly held in 2000).
A teacher by profession, he has made his experience and teaching skills available to the Association. It is thanks to his dynamism that, at the national level, he has become the President of the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs, known as the SPONG;

- the attachment of the local community to the initiatives of the Association, which is clearly due to the way they meet real needs;

- the organisation of the Association at the grassroots: this is based on the traditional structure of working groups, which allows the farmers to identify closely with it;

- the degree of openness to other types of experiences, as seen by the importance given to study visits and trips to exchange experiences inside the country and abroad;

- the willingness to accept constructive criticisms and to take them into account, as witnessed by the many studies commissioned by the Association for an analysis, for a mid-term or overall project review or for an assessment of a new project.

The weaknesses
The weaknesses of the organisation can be seen in several ways:

- the size of the implementation team, too small in relation to the set ambitions and tasks;

- the inappropriate management model which gives rise to communication problems between grassroots members, who are largely illiterate, and the leadership team, most of whose members are literate;

- the relative concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the educated founders; this leads to the danger of the Association being taken over by its leadership and becoming separated from its founding principles, most notably that of 'helping the young farmer to be capable and conscious of being the major player in his own situation';

- the absence of relevant technical skills in the areas of some specific projects;

- the lack of a clear policy for the promotion of women's activities, women being the majority block of the Association's membership but having minority power; this is all the more notable in view of their recognised involvement in the life of the Association.

8.3.10   The ways forward

When it was established the objective of the *Association Vive Le Paysan* was to halt rural exodus by improving village life. At the outset, it did not have a clear vision of how it should develop and this was due, according to the founding members, to the lack of an appropriate model at the time.

After twenty years of existence, it is clear beyond doubt that the association has built up a remarkable amount of experience in the planning and execution of development activities. Strengthened by such an asset, the association has set its future goals. They may not yet be fully quantified, but they have the advantage of being an ideal to be attained. The AVLP wants, clearly, to continue working for the enhancement of farmers' levels of understanding and analysis, with a view to real social change.

The physical achievements of the association do not require any repairs in the short term. However, the process of changing people's mentalities, whilst having got underway, still requires much time, and undoubtedly more than is allowed by the current possibilities for funding (which are largely external). This is the reason behind the Association's shift towards becoming a support and advice provider. On the one hand it is necessary to increase (income-generating) service provision; this can be done by developing acquired experience into the ability to assist other organisations. On another hand, the association will direct its members towards specialised agencies on the basis of expressed needs and to the extent that it is possible and does not endanger its own achievements. The President explains this approach thus: 'the current objective of the Association is not to do everything in our area of activity, but to bring in everything that is necessary.'

In its first phase, the AVLP has taken up the challenge of improving the position of the farmer. Its future mission, in line with the direction taken at the most recent General Assembly in June 2000, is 'to help the farmer become conscious and capable of being the major player in his own situation'.

In this sense, the new needs for co-operation in the short- and medium-term are focussed on the strengthening the association's own capacities, and cover:
- support through training to staff and members;
- support to the promotion and development of women's activities;
- support to the installation of water-supply and educational infrastructure;
- organisational support to groups;
- a financial partnership for the implementation of activity programmes for a period of three to five years.

8.4   Conclusion

The Association Vive Le Paysan is a local association set up by farmers themselves. It has gradually grown into a local network of groups, co-ordinated by an animation and management unit.

The success of the Association seems to be deeply rooted in its beginnings and the shared ideal which was a powerful link between its founders. Its main strength resides in fact in the social cohesion which was born from playing a collective sport - football - and from the wish of young people in Saponé to come together to fight against rural exodus by improving living conditions in the village. These early elements are borne witness today by the many practical achievements in the fields of agricultural production, public health, education and farmer training. One of the - female - field workers put it well thus: 'The Association had made a great step forward and it is a real source of satisfaction to work there. I feel as if I am in my field... Thanks to the commitment and the attachment of members, many activities have been launched to improve the quality of life and the situation of farmers. Even if the Association has not succeeded in totally eliminating the phenomenon of rural exodus, it has helped to restore the image of the farmer.'

This success is, furthermore, relatively well anchored because the management team has always operated autonomously without any technical assistance other than that provided for specific activities in various studies and evaluations.

The AVLP does have a number of limitations; these are connected to the shortcomings of a management model which is heavily dominated by literate, male members on the one hand, and, on the other, by the founding members. The leaders of the association should take, as a matter of urgency, the necessary steps to fully involve the majority of members, and notably women, in decision-making bodies. It will not be enough to simply continue organising current training activities in the hope that both male and female farmers will participate increasingly in central management. A more rigorous approach will be needed, one that will help the association to develop the tools for collective communication and management which are required today, and to continue to develop them gradually. The openness and commitment of the current leadership gives good reasons for hope that they will be well-disposed to exploring and following through this course of action. On this depends the future of the association and the sustainability of its action.

Chapter 9

Where a funeral club helped finance village development activities: The Yamfo case in Ghana

9.1   Overview
9.2   The context
9.3   The main components of the Yamfo development dynamics
9.4   The Chieftancy Institution of Yamfo and the key players
9.5   Conclusion

9.1   Overview

'The funeral committee is not dead and will never die, it has rather been re-organised to meet the challenges of the present time'...says Nana Kojo Mama, one of the sub-chiefs and a member of both the old and new funeral committees of Yamfo.

Conceived and led in its early days by five educated members of the local Youth association, the Yamfo Funeral Committee grew into a mass movement with almost all persons who qualify to do so in the community, becoming members. Excess funds generated through the activities of this committee later became a major source for funding development activities in the village.

Sadly social differences, and in particular chieftaincy disputes, later introduced divisions into the ranks of the members of the committee. Things got to the point where certain factions refused to pay their contributions because they saw the excess funds so generated for development being used to promote the cause of their opponents.

The idea of using part of the funds raised for funerals to support development initiatives has however remained with the community. Some family heads, including Nana Mama, have adopted the method to collect family levies.

To ensure the continued generation of funds via this means, the traditional council and other opinion leaders in the community have also put in place a re-designed mode of operation for the Funeral Committee.

9.2   The context

Yamfo is a small but well-planned town in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. It is situated seven kilometres off the Sunyani-Kumasi highway on reaching Tanoso, with a population of about 10,000 inhabitants, mainly farmers and hunters. Cocoa farming used to be the main farming enterprise of the farmers but since the drought of 1983 that resulted in bush-fires that burnt several cocoa farms, food crops, mostly maize cassava and plantain, have become important commercial crops of the people.

In the chapter on the foundation of Yamfo in his dissertation, Osei-Kufour (1975) argues that present day Yamfo was settled by two families; *Nyinasiniase*, the royal family and *Atenofiem* the family of the head warriors, which also occupies the Krontihene stool today.

It is important to retrace their history, as the places and the way they settled still influence current social settings in the village. Both families were immigrants from Maase (in the case of the Nyinasinase family) near present day Old Tafo and Kukurantumi (in the case of *Atenofiem*); these are both Akyem-speaking towns in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is reported (Osei Kufour, 1975) that their migration was based on the avoidance of war with the King Osei Tutu of Ashanti in 1702 AD. These two families were later joined by five other immigrant families including the *Nyomase* family (believed to have migrated from Bantama a suburb of present day Kumasi in the Ashanti region), the *Akonkodease* family (believed to have been brought in as war captives from Gyaman in 1800), the *Asonomaso* and *Jumakyi* families (whose ancestors are believed to be from the Denkyira), the *Deduako* family (believed to be descendants of immigrants from Kumasi).

Map 4 Ghana. The village of Yamfo.

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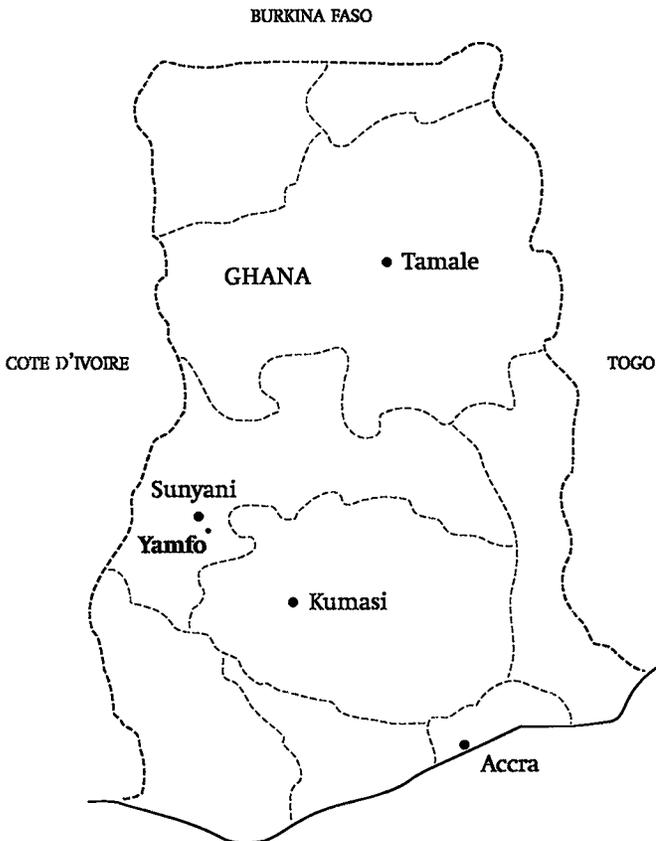
The family names of the early settlers of Yamfo were given fortuitously according to Osei Kufuor (1975). Thus *Nyinasin-ase* which literally translates as ' below the stump of the Onyina tree' was a description of the place where the first family settled; *Nyom-ase* for the settlers near a tree that bore bitter ('*Nyoma*') fruits and *Akonkode-ase* for those who settled near a tree called Akonkode in the local dialect. The *Jumakyi, Deduako* and *Asonomaso* families were named after the towns in Ashanti from which they migrated to Yamfo.

The present day people of Yamfo are therefore the tenth generation descendants of groups of immigrants mainly from the Akyem- and Asante-speaking parts of Ghana; they have become one people through inter-marriage and co-existence. Today, they call themselves 'people of Yamfo' rather than referring to their original homes. In spite of their different skills and cultural inclinations, this had led to some quite impressive development dynamics.

Although the village is situated off the main road, it has an impressive set of infrastructure which stands out - sometimes, as multi-storey buildings, quite literally from the general type of infrastructure seen in and around this part of the country.

Yamfo has several basic schools, (i.e. six-year primary schools and three-year junior secondary schools); two of the primary schools are privately owned. There are also a kindergarten run at the community centre for working parents, one secondary and one technical school, a health centre, a police station, a post office, safe pipe borne water, electricity, telephone communication centres and a branch office of the Nsoatreman Rural Bank. These facilities within the history, socio-economic circumstances and the geographical location of the town are by no means a small achievement.

The organisation and mobilisation of human and material resources for the establishment of these development facilities have depended on the efforts and determination of this mixed group of people having an identified common destiny and a realisation that success was dependent on mutual respect and support to one another. As one elder puts it:

'*...We started contributing our energies to communal labour for the development of Yamfo since 1949. At that time the driving force was the love, peace and togetherness that existed among us as a people, young or old, in the community. If this will continue, then the young people of today must develop that spirit*'

<div align="right">Nana Adu Gyamfi Kumanin</div>

Undoubtedly good leadership played a crucial role in the successes achieved by this community, through the Town Development Committee (TDC), supported by the Yamfo Youth Association and the Yamfo Funeral Committee, whose activities contributes to the local development dynamics. The major local players include local chiefs and sub-chiefs like Nana Boamah II, Nana Kojo Mama, and Nana Ohemeng Adjei, as well as some opinion leaders such as Emmanuel Saarah-Adjei.

9.3 The main components of the Yamfo development dynamics

9.3.1 The Town Development Committee

The selection of a group of people to form a Town Development Committee was based on the functions that the people perceived as priority needs to the development of their society. Ansa-Bonnah (1978) and Osei Kufour (1975) trace the origins and evolution of the Yamfo Town Development Committee. This leadership has had a vital role to play in helping these bodies to operate as tools for rural socio-political development, including the development of infrastructure for education, sanitation and environmental cleanliness of Yamfo during its growth.

An ancestral tradition

According to Ansa-Bonnah (1978), the selection of some members of the community to take care of mobilising the people of Yamfo for communal labour has been in place since the year 1700, when the ancestors of the landlords of Yamfo came to their current settlement. He lists some of this early group's activities as planning of the settlement, building the chief's palace, construction of public conveniences and digging of wells.

However, the formal recognition of specific persons who were entrusted with development activities in Yamfo began around 1930. Ansa-Bonnah (1978), mentions the existence of 'a crude form of council' of about eleven people with the chief of the village as the Chairman of the voluntary committee. Two young people within this council were given the responsibility of organising the men and women of the community for development activities.

This early council was voluntary and primarily served as a search party for farmers when they got lost[34], an occurrence that was very regular in those days. However, with time, the maintenance of sanitary conditions in the community, the mobilisation of people for road construction, the digging of wells and the construction of public conveniences. became part of the officially recognised responsibilities of this voluntary group.

The motivation and enthusiasm with which the leaders of these early groups worked were almost entirely derived from the respect and influence they wielded as youth leaders and as the only young people among the ruling council of elders. (The male youth leader was designated the chief of the young people or 'Nkwankwaa-hene' - Chief of the young ones in the local language) and was given recognition as such by the chief and the traditional council.

This early town development council is credited with the mobilisation of the people and resources to engage in significant activities including;
- the consultation and persuasion of the people to accept the challenge of demolishing their old houses and to re-build them in a plan that would improve the layout of the town (in 1930); in those of good cocoa revenues this was also quite affordable for most people;
- the setting up of a communal-labour day when 'men weeded and felled trees around the town, and women were mobilised to sweep the streets and empty ditches and ponds of any standing water'. This latter task was later given over to a sanitary worker on a more regular basis. The monthly salary of five pounds was paid from community funds raised by annual contributions of two pounds per household to a common fund until it was taken up by the local council in 1995;

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34 during the hunting parties

- the construction of a well in 1940 (popularly called 'Adwoa Adu' after the owner of the piece of land where it was dug), which served as the main source of potable water until the village was linked to the supply of pipe-borne water in 1963;
- the construction, in 1940 of about 51/2 miles of the road linking the town to another important town on its southern border called Bomaa. This road now links Bomaa to the regional capital, Sunyani;
- the supply of sand, stones and water for the construction of a bridge over the Numasua river which cuts across the Yamfo-Bomaa road, in 1950;
- the construction and maintenance in 1930, (through weeding and re-tracking as and when it became necessary), of the portion of the road between Afrisipakrom and Terchire and between Terchire and Gyaukrom on the Sunyani-Kumasi trunk road, until the late 1940's when government took over the cost.

In those days, a mixture of fines, ostracism, insinuations and open insults provided enough checks and deterrents to ensure compliance to calls to work (Ansa-Bonnah, 1978).

Times change: after independence, 'politicisation' and impact on local values
The advent of independence of Ghana raised the degree of political activities among several progressive youth groups in the country, including those in Yamfo. In some cases, this process of greater politicisation gave rise to conflicts and the emergence of splinter groups, within previously cohesive and otherwise closely knit groups.

The voluntary 'Yamfo Town Council' had its share of such unfortunate effect. Ansa-Bonnah (1978), writes that, 'By 1958 this voluntary organisation had assumed a new structure and organisation with membership shifting to a new class of people that included store-keepers, petty traders, school teachers, small scale farmers and middle school leavers'.

The Yamfo Town Council (then known as the Yamfo Town Development Committee) came to be led by a literate person, a school leaver, G. F. Aning who was the branch Chairman of the ruling Convention Peoples Party (CPP), as well as the Brong-Ahafo Regional Chairman of the party, taking over this leadership from Anthony Boampong, a farmer.

Motivation and the enthusiasm to work came no doubt from the dream of modernisation that came with independence, but political divisions among the people also played their part.

The incorporation and legal backing of the government of the day to these committees might have deepened such divisions. Opposition party members naturally felt less committed to the activities of the TDC than they had before. This situation appears to have persisted in the dynamics of Yamfo to this day although it may not be the sole reason for the apparent dormancy of the TDC in present times.

The first TDC: mode of operation and achievements
The Yamfo TDC of 1969/70 was the first to be formed on an elective basis. Previous TDC's had been composed by appointment by the chief and elders of the community. Two members from each of the five wards (which closely corresponds to the ancestral settlement area of the five ancestral families of Yamfo), two representatives of the chief and elders and one representative from the Zongo community formed the 11-member committee of this TDC.

Meetings of this TDC were held in the evenings to enable most members, who were farmers to attend. One third of members present formed a quorum at meetings. Permanent and ad-hoc sub-committees were assigned to various development activities, taking into consideration their specialist knowledge.

The committee's activity included supervision and or provision of health and sanitation services, roads, town planning, education, maintenance of football fields, street drains and cemeteries and clearing the paths leading to ponds.

The committee's main sources of revenue were from a 1% surtax on cocoa sold in Yamfo, the hiring of the community centre to clients for entertainment or parties and rent charges on the building built by the community and hired out to the police. Special levies and charges on the timber trucks for the use of the main trunk road through the town were other sources of revenue.

A comparative statement of revenue estimates and actual receipts is compiled by Ansa-Bonnah (who was also the Secretary to this Committee) as shown below:

Description	Estimate 74/75 (in Cedis)	Actual 74/75 (in Cedis)	Estimate 76/77 (in Cedis)	Actual 76/77 (in Cedis)
Cocoa surtax	25,000	15,000	20,000	18,000
Hiring of Community Centre	400	300	800	550
Annual Rent on Police Station	600	570	600	570
Total	26,000	15,870	24,400	20,620

Table 9.1. *Comparative Statement of Estimated Revenue and Actual Revenue, 1974/75; 1976/77, Yamfo TDC*

The committee operated an account at the Ghana Commercial Bank at Sunyani. Before funds could be withdrawn from the bank the committee had to meet and pass a resolution indicating the type of projects concerned and their estimated costs. This was then forwarded to the District Chief Executive (DCE) for approval, before the signatories (the TDC Chairman and Secretary, and the DCE) to the cheque could sign.

It is important to stress, however, that the TDC was accountable to the whole village: at the end of each fiscal year, the committee had to account for its activities at an open public forum. Government auditors also occasionally examined the TDC's accounts.

The general practice here was that at annual general meetings, the community indicated by consensus the major projects to be undertaken in the coming fiscal year. The committee in turn discussed the projects in detail and prioritised them. A resolution is then passed and forwarded to the DCE who in turn forwards it to the Regional Administrative Officer for approval.

The number of projects to be undertaken and the nature of revenue to be used for the project are published in the Local Government Bulletin. This gives a legal backing for any prosecution in courts of law of people who refused to pay; these were usually outsiders, mostly timber merchants. The TDC was thus able, in conjunction with the regional and district administrative offices and backed by the goodwill and enthusiasm of the people, to carry out many development projects in the town as well as in some smaller surrounding villages under their administrative jurisdiction, as shown in the table below.

Project	Place Sited	Description of Project	Supervision	Date Started	Date Completed
1	Yamfo	Extension of electricity from Abesim to Yamfo	Electricity Corporation	1969	1973
2	Yamfo	Construction of Yamfo Health post. (joint venture with the Brong-Ahafo regional administration)	Regional Administration	1968	1972
3	Ansen[35]	2 classrooms, office and store-rooms for the Presbyterian Middle School	Department of Social Welfare	1971	1972
4	Ahyiayem[35]	1 dwarf-walled classroom, office and store for local authority (L/A) primary school	Department of Social Welfare	1972	1972
5	Yamfo	2 classrooms for L/A Roman Catholic Middle 'B' School	Department of Social Welfare	1971	1972
6	Yamfo	6 classrooms, offices and store for Presbyterian Primary (Joint project)	Regional Organisation	1970	1972
7	Yamfo	6 classrooms, offices and store for L/A Methodist Primary	Department of Social Welfare	1970	1972
8	Yamfo	4 classrooms (dwarf-walled), offices and store for L/A primary	Department of Social Welfare	1970	1972

Table 9.2 Projects undertaken by the Yamfo Town Development Committee of 1972/73

The TDC today

In general, because of their incorporation into the local government system, the Town Development Committees of today, unlike their predecessors, serve as the agents of the ruling

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35 Ansen, Ahyiayem and Ruby are farm settlement villages of farmers from Yamfo; they depend on the larger town for some development support such as the building of schools, road construction etc.

government. As such, they are primarily concerned with ensuring the support and effective implementation of policies and programmes of the government of the day.

The rights, responsibilities and privileges of these committees are defined by the Ministry of Local Government in a handbook (*Model Standing Orders for Urban, Zonal Town and Area Councils*) which is distributed to all TDCs.

Under the new name - Yamfo Town Council (YTC) - the current town development committee has the following profile:

Creation
Members were elected or selected into office in 1994 to replace the earlier Town Development Committee. The committee mainly deals with issues concerning revenue mobilisation and generation for development.

Membership
General guidelines for membership and conduct of affairs are documented in the official handbook of the Ministry of Local Government. According to these, modalities set out in the handbook, five members out of the twenty are appointed by central government; this state of affairs, some people believe, has resulted in opposing political views being under-represented in the committees.

The committee is also required to include assembly members and unit committee members. The current YTC (as at 1999) thus consists of the five assembly members of the town, one representative from each of the ten unit committees in the town, and five government appointees, a total of twenty persons.

Sources of Funds for Community Work
The YTC's main sources of revenue include levies on timber extracted from concessions within the paramount area of the Yamfo Chief, market tolls on food crops leaving the town and taxes on sellers in the market.

Currently timber merchants are levied ¢50,000 (Cedis) per truck carrying timber from the town into the YTCs coffers. A percentage on the taxes on food crops leaving the town and occasional fundraising activities are the other sources of funding for the council.

These revenue sources are shared in a pre-defined way to the regional and district assemblies and the YTC. Below is a table of estimated and actual revenue of the current Yamfo Town Council.

Description	Timber	Hire of Community Centre	Maize	Plantain	Total
Estimate 1997	15,000,000	200,000	300,000	200,000	15,700,000
Actual 1997	8,300,000	50,000	70,000	50,000	8,470,000
Estimate 1998	30,000,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	30,600,000
Actual 1998	9,000,000	60,000	50,000	70,000	9,180,000
Estimate 1999	30,000,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	30,900,000
Actual 1999	14,000,000	60,000	120,000	150,000	14,330,000

Table 9.3 Estimated and Actual Revenue of the current Yamfo Town Committee (in Cedis)
(Source: Nana Ohemeng Adjei, Chairman TDC)

Mode of Operation
The Yamfo Town Council operates under the general guidelines provided by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. With its legal backing the committee has to some extent 'revived' the communal self-help spirit in the township.
Somehow, participation in communal labour has increased and 'people who hitherto considered participation in communal work as support for the chief now consider it as work for their own good' as one assembly member puts it. Commissioned agents under the supervision of members of the YTC collect revenues. Communal labour is organised as and when necessary but there are no scheduled dates or days for this.

Activities and Achievements
The YTC has undertaken educational campaigns and taken care of environmental health and hygiene issues in the town. Mr Darko, the assembly member of one of the constituents, gives here the record of the main activities of the YTC:

The assembly through the YTC had provided materials for the plastering of the walls of the Yamfo Islamic, Anglican, Ahyiayem local Authority, Tanoano Local Authority and Ansen Presbytarian primary schools. A borehole has also been sunk in the town and furniture provide to the town's senior secondary school. Also the assembly has given away scholarships to ten girls in the senior secondary school as a way of promoting girl child education. The members of the committee have assisted in organising communal labour for the construction of public places of convenience and own a cesspit emptying and refuse collection vehicles which are used for a fee'.

According to Nana Ohemeng Adjei, Chairman of the TDC and a sub-chief (Akyempim-hene) of the Yamfo traditional area, the executives were planning (end of 1999) to establish cottage industries for making tie-and-dye cloths and, in collaboration with the Youth Association, to assist in upgrading the town's health centre to a hospital by providing the required physical infrastructure.

9.3.2   Yamfo Youth Association

When asked to talk to us about the background and the achievements of the Yamfo Youth Association, Kweku, former Secondary school teacher in the village first declared:

'In the pre-independence era of Ghana (the mid-1950s), the young people between the ages of 16-45, especially the educated ones in several communities became very important elements in the socio-economic development that was to lead to the 'modernisation' dream of their people at independence.'

At that time, youth groups had become the 'eye' and mouthpieces of their mostly less literate and sedentary elders who were their leaders or chiefs. Several youth associations sprang up with different agendas in rural and urban communities across the country. The Yamfo Youth Association, (YYA), with its motto as Peace, Unity and Development was one of them.

Created in 1954 as a non-partisan pressure group, especially in cases of chieftaincy crisis, the YYA perceives itself as playing an important role in the social and communal development issues of their community.

The group's aims and objectives are to foster unity among members and the town as a whole, to forge a close relationship between the government of the day and the township, and to be a forum for discussing and finding concrete solutions to the problems facing members and Yamfo as a whole.

The idea of a youth group was conceived by some young men in the community wanting to have their voices as a group heard in the development of the town, alongside that of the TDC.

Membership of the YYA is open to all citizens of the town aged between 16-45 years having no previous record of conviction and having lived in Yamfo for not less than 5 continuous years. Over the years the YYA has been the moderator of the socio-political organisation of Yamfo. Several important opinion leaders, sub-chiefs and various committee leaders are, or used to be, members of the YYA.

Obviously the town development activities of the YYA have also decreased considerably over the last few years. Meetings are held less regularly than before and general interest in youth activities have fallen considerably in comparison to the late 1970s and 1980s.

In the period 1984 to 1999, the association recorded the following achievements:
- the establishment of the old funeral committee in August 1985;
- a tour of all primary education institutions to acquaint themselves with the problems in the schools and to give advice to the pupils especially on girl child education;
- educational campaigns on maternal care which has resuscitated non-formal education and reduced child mortality;
- as part of the plot allocation committee of the township, it has ensured a proper layout of buildings in the town;
- assisted in the acquisition and initial clearance of vegetation for the site for the agricultural extension agent's residence recently built in the community;
- provided all the manpower and technical requirements for the renovation of the local police station, post office and the building of a laboratory for the town's clinic;

- formation of a fire volunteers squad which has assisted in educating farmers on safe bush burning during the farming season.

The events that triggered some of these activities and the results so far achieved are outlined below.

In August 1985 the realities of difficulties faced in financing funerals dawned on a hitherto rich community. Funeral rites for departed relatives are very important social functions and several heads of families were finding it difficult to fulfil them in the wake of the disasters caused to farms by the wild fires of 1983. A way had to be found to avoid the accompanying social disgrace. The details of developments in this direction are described in separate sections under the title Yamfo Funeral Committees.

As proponents of development in their communities, executives and members take it upon themselves to organise occasional tours of social facilities to acquaint themselves with the problems and interventions possible by the association. The issue of girl child education and education in general is suffering setbacks in Yamfo. The tour of schools therefore was to give advice to the pupils especially on girl child education.

To carry out their planned activities, the association finds funds from the following contributions:
- Periodic appeals to timber merchants and other institutions operating or doing business in around the town for support for undertaking identified development projects.
- Monthly membership dues (currently fixed at ¢500)
- Occasional specially organised activities such as harvests football matches etc. to raise funds
- Very irregular donations from the Town Development Committee

The association operates a banking account with the Nsoatreman Rural Bank. The signatories to the association's account are the chairman, the secretary and the treasurer. Two of the three signatures are necessary for withdrawing money from the account.

The power structure of the YYA consists of an Executive body and other members. The executive comprises a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Organising Secretary, Treasurer, two trustees, and three life patrons. The elected members of the executive body are usually democratically elected by a head count at a general meeting of all members to serve a term of two (2) years in office. The mode of operation in the association is guided by the following simple rules:
- the executive in consultation with other members convene general executive and emergency meetings;
- the Chairman has casting vote, but no veto powers;
- executive meetings are held every month;
- general meetings are held every three months;
- the concept of 'majority carries the vote' holds.

For conflict resolution, any person who does anything to tarnish the image of the YYA or himself faces a disciplinary committee (or committee of enquiry) comprising the executive and five other members from the general body elected at a meeting for the purpose.
Against the background of seeking development for the township, the association works hand-

in-hand with every institution or body in or outside the community, which has similar objectives. It was at the initiative of the association that both the old and current arrangements for revenue generation through funerals were put in place. Some members of the executives of the association initiated and operated the old funeral committee.

Again the association made the suggestion for the new organisation and followed it up to be accepted and adopted by the community through the traditional council. In several instances the association has contributed human voluntary labour to undertake development activities in the town in collaboration with other bodies.

In the future the association plans to:
- accommodate an agricultural officer in the community;
- intensify campaigns for formal and non-formal education;
- to revive the students' union;
- to build a structure for a community library;
- to plant trees along the 'Numasua' river.

The main problems of the association are:
- the lack of funds for implementing plans of the association; though members have agreed to pay dues, payment is very irregular;
- the prevailing chieftaincy crisis in the community threatens to divide the youth on factional grounds and to kill the spirit of one-ness that used to characterise the activities of the association.

It appears that the YYA has complementing roles to those of the YTC. These include the tour of development projects to assure further progress, the solicitation of funds from organisations and individuals to construct infrastructure for development (for example the building of the laboratory for the local clinic) and campaigns for gender equality in the schools. This may not be surprising since in many cases YYA leaders or members graduate to become leaders of the YTC.

9.3.3   Yamfo Funeral Committees

The Yamfo Funeral Committees (YFC1 and YFC2) are attempts by the chiefs and opinion leaders of the town to put in place an 'enjoyable' form of organised revenue mobilisation, primarily to address a pressing social need and also to develop the town in general.

Contributors to the YFCs get direct or assured social as well as physical benefits. This motivated them to make further contributions at the time when the committees were functioning well. Costs of funerals are very high in Yamfo and the communities in the area. These costs include those of the purchase of a coffins, hosting of sympathisers and friends who may travel from elsewhere to attend the funeral of a dead relative, costs of drinks, hiring of drumming and dancing groups, purchase of specified mourning clothing and several others. These costs are usually borne by the bereaved nucleus and extended families.

As discussed earlier in the Kotokpa case in Benin (Vodouhè, 1996), in most places in Ghana, it is also considered a social disgrace if a particular family cannot for one reason or the other give a dead relative a befitting burial and funeral.

Unfortunately, the loss of cocoa farms, which were the main source of income to the people of Yamfo, to the wildfires that came with the drought that occurred across Ghana in 1983, made funeral costs unbearable for many families. The co-operative effort to assist in holding funerals through the YFC was very welcomed initially.

Though faced with several problems over the years of its existence many of the citizens of Yamfo with whom we have spoken have agreed that, if properly organised, the funeral committee could be a good source of revenue for development and one acceptable to most members of the community.

When asked how the system works, Kojo Appiah, a former Chairman explained as follows:

The system is simple. When a member loses a relative, we go to his/her place to provide our support. Each member of the Committee pays a contribution of 500 cedis to help the person to buy a coffin to bury his/her relative, then to prepare food and buy drinks for the visitors. We also drum and dance on the occasion...What you need to know is that part of the money collected goes to the Town Development Committee for social investment. A lot has been done here in Yamfo thanks to that local organisation...'

Yamfo Funeral Committee 1

Creation

The original funeral committee of Yamfo (YFC 1) was established in August 1985 with an initial membership of about two thousand citizens. Five citizens of Yamfo who had been very active in similar committees in the town either as members of the TDC or the Youth Association mooted the idea of a funeral committee. They included Messrs. Ansa Bona, Kojo Saara Alex Srampah Braimah and Lumumba. According to Mr. Ansa-Bonnah (1978), the idea was obtained from a similar committee that had been set up by the people of Tanoso a village about 7 km from Yamfo which was operating successfully. Messrs. Ansa Bona, Kojo Saara, Alex Srampah were also executive members of the youth association at the time. Upon acceptance of the idea by the traditional council and a general meeting of the community, the gentlemen were confirmed as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Organising Secretary in that order. The official term of service of elected members was established as four (4) years but one could be re-elected.

Although the primary objective was to reduce the burden of the high cost for holding funerals on members, the funeral committee at a later date was also used to generate funds for the development of the community.

Contributions/ Source of Funding

The launching of the YFC1 was in August 1985 at the funeral of the mother of one of the prominent citizens of the town. Being a 'big' funeral several citizens of the town residing outside attended. The first executives took advantage of this large presence of citizens to successfully launch and collect levies that were to serve as initial/seed money for future operations. Contributions were fixed at five hundred cedis (¢500) at that time at each funeral. This money (of which the exact amount is difficult to know now) served as the initial working capital of the committee.

Later, with the support of the traditional council and the trust the people had developed in this committee, a percentage of a surtax on cocoa sales in the town was also paid into the funeral committee's account. A third source of funding was a percentage of taxes collected on food sold at the town's market. These two latter sources of funding used to be collected into a

fund controlled by a Town Development Committee (TDC). However due to some difficulty on the part of this committee to account satisfactorily for some levies earlier collected, there was a loss in confidence in the TDC as a result of which several citizens became reluctant to pay any further levies. The YFC1 was therefore perceived by many as being the alternative committee for the generation and safe-keeping of development funds, not only to support bereaved families but also for the development of the town. There was therefore little dissent to requests to use the accrued funds for other purposes other than stated, as long as this was seen as concerning development. Again the fact that one stood to benefit from it inevitably one day (when bereaved) gave more credence to participating by donating, into this 'insurance fund' being run by the committee.

Activities and Achievements of YFC1
In the beginning, the YFC1 carried out two main activities; financing funerals and maintaining the funds accrued by investing into income-generating activities. Later on, support of development activities such as payments of salaries of the community's secondary school teachers, financing public places of convenience, hosting of community guests etc. became part of their activities.

Financing of Funerals
For the first two to three years of its creation the funeral club was very effective in financing funerals in the community, the primary purpose for which it was set up. Funds for the purchase of coffins, customary drinks, service of guests to funerals, and hiring groups were some of the expenses that the YFC1 financed in these early years.

Income-generating activity
From accumulating funds representing excess income/contributions over expenditure mainly at funerals, the YFC1 bought about one hundred and fifty wooden benches to cut down cost of hiring these during funerals to the committee. The benches were also hired out to entertainment groups that came to the town to perform to generate funds into the coffers of the YFC1.

Payment of Teacher Salaries and other community expenses.
At the peak of its existence the YFC assisted in the payment of the salaries of some of the teachers of the Yamfo Community's Day secondary school. This function was as a result of the lack of confidence that had been developed by the TDC of the day, who traditionally should be responsible for such activity. Three members of staff (two teaching and a welfare/care-taker) were paid their total salaries for three months from the coffers of the YFC1 and personal voluntary contributions from Nana Kojo Mama one of the Benkum-hene, of the town.

Again on several occasions the YFC1 bore the costs of protocol and hosting of official guests to the township. These expenses sometimes included the costs of boarding and lodging of such persons. The YFC1 also sponsored some costs of materials for repair and maintenance as well as refreshment at some voluntary labour days.

Mode of Operation: through traditional family channels
One contributory factor to the initial success of the YFC1 was the effective utilisation of the existing traditional chain of command within the extended family set-up for collecting contributions.

Heads of families, who were usually the oldest and most respected persons in the extended family, were made responsible for the bulk collection of donations from their family members and pay this to the committee. At funerals a representative from the bereaved family joined the executives of the YFC1 at the table set aside for collecting and recording all donations from members and visitors at the funeral and to record these in their membership cards.

The executives of the funeral committee paid for all the usual expenses at funerals - including the cost of coffin, customary drinks, reception of visitors, hiring of drumming and dancing groups, etc - from such funds.
Naturally certain funerals generated some profit and others ate into the savings of the committee, based on attendance and donations from non-members, but at the end of the day every member of the community had some insurance against the high costs at funerals.

In order to make bigger savings for community development purposes, it was at a later date agreed that the service of food and drinks at funerals should be limited to visitors only. The service of food and drinks at funerals was prepared and controlled by the bereaved family with supplementary funds provided by the funeral committee.

At the end of a funeral all donations and collections were checked and accounted for to the chief or his representative, usually a sub-chief, in the presence of all the collectors. After settling expenditure at the funeral excess contribution/donations were paid into the accounts of the funeral committee.

Conflict Resolution
The funeral committee was to account for its management once every year, at a general meeting of the community during which other issues concerning their operations were discussed.

Before this time, the family heads through the traditional council could handle any grievance or complaints. The involvement of representatives of bereaved families at funerals for collecting donations was to serve as the check against dissatisfactory service.

The peak of glory
The history of Yamfo indicates that most of the development infrastructure was built or initiated between 1958 and 1966 when Nana Kofi Boamah II, was the chief. He is credited to have initiated and seen to the provision of several development projects including the following facilities, during his eight-year term of office; a building for the local police station and community centre, a new post-office block with telephone facilities, a system of pipe borne water, the Yamfo-Tanom-Asuadei feeder road, the Yamfo-Rubi feeder road, the Yamfo-Ansen feeder road, the Yamfo-Prabonso feeder road and the construction of schools.

Nana Boamah II was one of the few educated chiefs of his days. In an interview, he explained his motivation and the possible reasons for his success:

'I was determined to make Yamfo look and compare favourably with any other progressive town in the country! Then, the immense dynamism of the members of the Town Development Committee of my time and the transparency we could assure in financial administration of public funds were the main reasons for success'.

His educational background, his working experience and probably, his political affiliation was a great asset in the pursuit of this desire.

During discussions held in Yamfo, it was obvious that since the (political) de-stoolment of Nana Boamah II, the development of the township has been rather slow. Different people attribute different reasons for this, but one commonly cited reason was the lack of funds and leadership crisis arising from several chieftaincy/factional disputes, which has hindered the ease of mobilising the people for development, as was the case in the earlier days.

Because of his great contribution to Yamfo's development, Nana Kofi Boamah II, known in private life as T. K. Appiagyei, was affectionately called 'Nana De Gaulle'. In fact, to carry out communal tasks, the population was divided into 6 wards with each ward electing a three-man leadership forming the ward executives. Each ward took part in communal labour on a specific day of the week guided by their leaders and on several occasions, by him. This was a great moral booster to the people who were not used to having their chiefs working alongside them on manual work of the sort. He recalls how in this way the 7-kilometer trench for laying water pipes from Tanoso to Yamfo and the Community Centre of the town were built:

'It was at the inauguration of the pipe-borne water project that the-then Regional Commissioner commented that only Charles de Gaulle of France could have achieved such a feat in such record time hence my nickname de Gaulle, affectionately known by everyone'.

Nana Kojo Mama, one of the most public-spirited sub-chiefs in Yamfo, recalls, as a young man, how all the skilled young people in various development projects to build Yamfo were expressing their desire for modernisation. His own contribution to Yamfo development activities is also very important. The spirit is still there, he said, but it is more difficult nowadays to find back-up funding.

The same way, Emmanuel Saarah-Adjei, one of the important opinion leaders, and member of the Youth Association of the early 1970s, also recalls with commendation the communal spirit that existed among the people in those days.

Problems and causes of breakdown of the Funeral Committee
The major setback to the committee was the irregularity of payments by some members. In attempt to solve this problem, the chief of the town put in place certain deterrent measures. These included a directive that defaulting families should pay for the burial grounds of dead relatives and a ban on a member of the affected family holding a funeral.

This directive was widely resented especially by those who had many relatives living outside the town, and therefore were usually the most indebted. This resulted in an impasse whereby several people were buried without a funeral. It is worth mentioning that traditionally a funeral in a town can only be held with the prior consent of the chief who is considered the custodian of the land.

These events and resentments as well as the absence of specified conflict resolution measures for the YFC1 led to its collapse. Currently a new arrangement aiming at averting all the problems of the YFC1, while retaining the benefits, is in place.

The New Yamfo Funeral Committee (YFC2)

The YYA claims to be the originator of the arrangement under YFC2. According to Nana Ohemeng Adjei, one of the sub-chiefs in the traditional council who is also a member of the YYA, the YYA led in the proposals and re-birth of the re-constituted YFC2.

This was in recognition of the important role the YFC1 at the peak of its glory played in the community and also to resolve the long-standing impasse on funerals which was having an impact on the community's development as a whole. Under the new arrangement, families, through their family heads, pay an amount of twenty thousand cedis to the new YFC2 and a bottle of schnapps to the traditional chief as charges for permission to bury and organise a funeral in the town. All other arrangements expenses and donations at the funeral are the prerogative of the bereaved family.

This new arrangement is three years old and the last time that the committee presented its accounts to the community, more than one million cedis had been saved for development activities in the town.

9.4 The Chieftaincy Institution of Yamfo and the Regional House of Chiefs

9.4.1 The Chieftaincy Institution of Yamfo

The Chieftaincy institution has played and continues to play an important role in the dynamics of relatively homogenous communities such as Yamfo. In such communities traditions and historic events as well as the custodians of such issues can greatly influence the total development of the town. This section is devoted to a brief description of the chieftaincy institution in Yamfo.

The traditional council of Yamfo is made up of the paramount chief ('Omanhene) and about 18 sub-chiefs with different responsibilities in the royal court. The Omanhene is appointed through a well-defined process as follows; Kingmakers of Yamfo including the queen mother, the Krontire-hene, the Gyaase-hene, the Akwamu-hene and the Abakoma-hene have the responsibility of nominating the heir to the stool of Omanhene upon being declared vacant (in the case of de-stoolment or death of the incumbent.

The procedure for the en-stoolment of an Omanhene was narrated by Nana Kojo Mama, current Benkum-hene as follows: the Abakoma-hene and the Queen mother upon consultation with the royal family nominate candidate(s) to be screened by the Gyaase-hene. Based on his findings the Gyaase-hene recommends the nominee to the other sub-chiefs for further scrutiny and acceptance or otherwise. A day is set for the out-dooring and swearing-in ceremony of the successful candidate to the sub-chiefs and people and then later on to the other paramount chiefs at the regional house of chiefs.

Appointments to sub-chief positions though made by families need to be accepted by the Oman-hene. Following in the tradition of the first settlers however, certain positions in the traditional council (such as the posts of the Oman-hene, Krontire-hene, Abakoma-hene and Queen mother) are reserved for only candidates of certain families/settler groups while others are honorary posts in appreciation of efforts of individuals or family member contributions to the community. Again some postings such as those of the Apegya-hene, Akyempim-hene and

Atipim-hene are traditionally reserved for princes and princesses to recommend. Other positions may be introduced/created by incumbent chiefs in honour of good work done or to promote the local integration and reconciliation of the multi-ethnic community. The details of the current chiefs in order of importance, the family from which they are nominated/appointed and their responsibilities as told by Nana Mama (the Benkum-hene) are shown in the table in Annex 4.

Funeral rites of chiefs and members of the royal family are very important activities of the royal house. Their performance is assigned to the Kyidom-hene, Ankobea-hene, Gyaase-hene and Apegya-hene. Other chiefs, led by the Kronti-hene, attend such funerals as mourners and sympathisers to the Omanhene.

It is worth noting that the chieftaincy institution/appointment is closely knit around defence of the settlement against tribal wars and intruders (slave raiders) which was common in the early days. As such several appointments that used to be relevant in the daily lives of people earlier, and therefore commanded high respect (including appointments of war generals/strategists who trained younger people in preparation for wars and community defence), nowadays have only traditional significance.

9.4.2   Relationships to Regional House of Chiefs

The regional house of chiefs is the highest chieftaincy institution in the regions. They were formed by an act of parliament after independence to facilitate the administration of regions, particularly with traditional and land matters, by central government. Membership is open only to paramount chiefs with land titles within the administrative borders of the region. There have thus been a few situations where paramouncies with traditional borders which cut across the colonially created administrative borders have had problems as to which house of chiefs to serve on. A regional house of chiefs has legislative, administrative and judiciary powers conferred on it by the act of parliament, however their judiciary powers are the most frequently invoked in the settlement or arbitration of destoolment cases, border disputes etc. The house elects a chairman from among the members who serves in that capacity for two years. As seen earlier (see Chapter 2, section 5 on research location), there is quite a difference - due to different historical backgrounds - with a francophone country like Benin, where the chief's role is reduced to a symbolic one (at times consultative). There are some exceptions, as in the case of some important chiefdoms which have, at local level, some power on religious and familial affairs, and to some extent in the resolution of local conflicts.

9.5   Conclusion

As we have learnt from the facts related to this case, the development dynamic of Yamfo, born thirty years ago, has perhaps passed its peak of glory. The current stagnation of the dynamic is obviously due to the erosive effects of internal power struggles.

From the discussions held on location, it was clear that most people were hesitant to be fully open about these questions. Recently, local divisions on political lines had clearly mirrored the political divisions at national level between the incumbent and opposition parties. In earlier times, the village had enjoyed a relative autonomy from the daily influence of national politics.

Now it is likely that the change in power relationships at national level will be echoed in Yamfo. In particular, the groups of young people who were organising themselves to revitalise the village association might get a voice and the resources necessary to create and enjoy new opportunities for a renewal of the local dynamic.

Chapter 10

Exploring determinants for succes

10.1   Overview

Development successes are, very often, better documented and disseminated than failures. As a result there is insufficient understanding of the lessons to be learnt from initiatives or enterprises which can be described as 'unfortunate' (Botes and van Rensberg, 2000). It is for this reason that the option has been taken in this section to examine cases where local dynamics work and where they do not. In the three countries covered by the research, and in addition to the four main cases described above, brief visits were paid to twenty-two local groups in all which were said to be (local) successes or failures, to serve as secondary cases. The objective was to check whether one or more of the key characteristics previously identified (Chapter 7, Section 7.4) was the reason for success or failure.

First, in each country, quick interviews were conducted with some key informants to help identify an average of eight cases. In the end 22 groups were visited: 10 in Benin, 5 in Burkina Faso and 7 in Ghana. Among the 10 groups in Benin, 3 had been visited already during the exploratory tour.

The focus was on both local indigenous groups and local sites/groups of development projects said to be development successes or failures. In the earlier approaches to the four main cases, efforts had been made to get information from members as well as from non-members. Prior to each of the 22 visits therefore, some basic information was obtained through extension services or other support institutions or projects. During the field visits, more information was collected, mainly through focus group meetings. When necessary, additional individual interviews were conducted. In Burkina Faso and Ghana, on average two visits (of one or two days) were paid to each location - apart from the visits by local assistants. More visits were paid to the sites located in Benin where local assistants also helped in three villages.

The present chapter covers the results of these observations. In the first section, comments are made on some of the local groups for each country. In the second section, a table highlights, for each group, the relevance of the key existential factors of the local dynamics, as identified in Chapter 7. The main details for the various groups in Annex 8.

The outcomes of this phase will help to better appreciate (in Chapter 11) the relative importance of these characteristics and related patterns, as well as some important limitations of the local dynamics.

10.2   A tour across the three countries

10.2.1   In Benin

A meeting with John, a local 'change agent'
John Comlan Nato (now about fifty-five) was less than twelve when he left his village, Dogbo Ahomè in Mono province, Benin, to follow his uncles then emigrating to near Takoradi in Ghana. There, John first learned to be a tailor, which he was for several years, before picking up skills in metal-casting where he specialised in making saucepans of aluminium, for which there was a flourishing market. Besides, he became the leader of young people from Benin in the Takoradi region. When the period of democracy opened up in Benin in the early 1990s, he decided to return to his home village. Things were very difficult at first - there were many disappointments - but he was adamant in his decision to become a 'change agent' within his local community.

In his own words, he came home full of motivation and determination 'to help the village take off':

'At that time, in Ghana, the Ambassador of Benin was a certain Coffi Randolph - If you know him, please, tell him you met John... John Comlan Nato... He will remember me very well! He used to meet us and to advise us to go back to Benin with the knowledge we had acquired, so that we could help our local people. Most of us did not have any official papers, but the Ambassador helped us to get passports; I was the contact person for that... Then I came back home. I was not happy with the poverty in my village, so some people joined up with me and we started setting up something... '

With 21 other villagers, and with the support of PADES, John set up a Savings Group called *Ayago* ('poverty has disappeared!') in 1995.
Unfortunately, less than three years later, the manager of the group ran off with the cash, FCFA 80,600 - plus 'what was not declared', as John put it. And to this day nobody has been able to find him!
In fact, and this is something that John, 'the newcomer', could not be fully aware of, the local power network could not allow that the manager be found: he is the Treasurer's nephew, and the Village Chief, who would usually help solve this kind of problem, is his uncle. 'So there was no way out', and the PADES people, said John, could not get involved.
However, John did not give up. He is now trying another kind of business, with a different target group:

*These days, people just want to acquire money fast, without working very hard, and the love of money has replaced the love of work... Now, I prefer to focus on young people, and I have started to get them together to learn to work with aluminium, so they can make saucepans and even spare-parts for cars!
I am already working with three young people from the village - two of them are school boys - and with two of my daughters. It is easier to work with young people: they are more open to change... '*

Midogbékpo[36], a women's group in Benin

I have long been an admirer of this very dynamic group of women gari producers in the village of Hounsa, 7 km from Dogbo, in the Mono province, in Benin. As well as their joint work in production and processing, this group stands out from the others for the particularly strong degree of solidarity among the members. The women have told me - and this is but one example - that they often go together to work in the individual fields of members who have been unable to go themselves to work them (for various reasons such as illness or childbirth...). They used to do the same for members who have been sent to meetings or other events on behalf of the group at the peak of field activities.

The success and impact of this group - created in 1991 - has undoubtedly contributed to the election of its president, Egui Kindémè, to the chair of the federal Association *Mialébouni*[37].

During my numerous visits over a period of three years, I often asked the group - even at the risk of annoying them with my insistence - what their real 'social cement' was. I never got an answer. It is only by pure chance, during a visit in January 2001, that I discovered what I consider could be, at least in part, the reason for their strong cohesion.

During all the previous visits, the Chairperson of the group had always welcomed us while being occupied with most of the members cooking *gari*. That day, although we arrived exactly at the agreed time, we saw nobody in the work place... Most of them were at church! This led me to some thinking...

It turns out, on the basis of some other information I got later, that eight of the fourteen members of the group all belong to the same church (the Pentecostal Church), where various activities progressively helped established the ties... This was an important factor in their connections (during various religious activities at the village level), and might even have lain behind their initial decision to 'get together to help each other.' But the Vice-Chairperson of the group, Kingnisso Agbo, went further to give an even stronger reason for the group cohesion:

'Well, you know, here, most of the women have to take care of themselves and of their children, including covering medical expenses. Individually, we could not cope. That is why, years back - maybe ten years before the creation of the current group- we were six women who got together and set up a solidarity group in order to help each other.

We really work together: one day we will be working in one person's field, and the next day in another, and so on... At harvest time, we work on one field at a time. The most usual crop was cassava which we processed into gari. We then went altogether to market to sell the product of one person's crop, and she got all the money. Mind you, she bought some spices for each and every person so that when we went home, each of us had the necessary for preparing the family meal. And we did this in turn for each member of our little group...

In 1991 when we participated in a workshop of the PAMR project, we were told we had to work together in groups... so with us it was easy to get things off the ground since our little group already existed!

Apparently, the religious fervour of some of the members would have also contributed to the 'social acceptance' of the group in that very conservative region where some men used to be

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36 In the Adja language, Midogbékpo means 'Let's unite!'
37 In the Adja language, Mialebouni means 'we will take care of it (ourselves)'.

reticent about their wives joining it. The major reason for the group's reputation and its staring down of its detractors, lies, as the president Egui Kindémè points out, in its early successes:

'Some men told their wives that they did not want to see them mixed up with the 'group of women who must be prostitutes because of how they joined in meetings in any way, anywhere', even in Lokossa, the provincial town, and sometimes even in Cotonou. This must be why two members of ours resigned early on. But once the men saw that we were starting to succeed, these women and others got interested in setting up similar groups; there are now six of such groups, including those in Kononhoué and Sonougbéhoué.
When we used to work individually we had to sell at any price. Now that we have shared storage facilities, when the prices are low we can store our products and wait for prices to improve...
Our income has increased quickly; we share out one-third of our income for our daily expenses and we keep the other two-thirds in our account at the CLCAM[38] in Dogbo. We use these funds to buy raw materials and equipment. Sometimes we make interest-free loans to members to cover medical expenses. All of these factors have earned a lot of admiration for our group!'

The profits of the group are in part deposited in the CLCAM fund, and another part is shared among the members. A third part is used to build up a solidarity fund which the group uses to make loans to anybody in the village needing some help, for example in covering medical costs or some small financial investments.

When asked how they could make sure that loans would be repaid, the women replied almost in unison: 'we send people to the debtor twice, as a warning. If the debt is not then paid off, we all go along in a group clapping and singing and we grab as much as we can from the debtor.' Even the President's direct uncle was given this treatment.

'Djavi', a development dynamic that got suffocated by bureaucracy
In the 1970s the co-operative of Djavi in the *Sous-Préfecture* of Avrankou, about 10 km from Porto-Novo attracted a lot of interest. Any visitor to the region had to make a trip to Djavi even just to admire, if not buy, the fine products of the co-operative: tables, chairs, baskets, all kinds of bags, cupboards and cane cradles. People just poured in, especially customers from the big cities of Cotonou and Porto-Novo, not to mention foreign visitors from Europe and America.

Things have changed a lot since then: instead of the twenty-five members it had when it was set up in 1965, the co-operative now has just seven brave souls as members who, despite the obvious restrictions, vow to carry on the co-op's tradition.

I asked the old man Assogba to explain what had happened, and his reply was a mixture of complaint, nostalgia and determination:

'You shouldn't be asking us that, Sir, you really should be asking those who abandoned us and are now with you, over there, in the town...
In the old days, when foreigners wanted to come here, they just used to stop anybody on the roadside, even in Porto-Novo, and ask 'Which way is the village where they make those lovely baskets?'... and they always got here, without losing the way. Today the children in Porto-Novo don't even know that we exist, but, well, as for us, every morning, we will turn up here and open the door!... '

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38 CLCAM : Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuel (a local agricultural bank)

The history of the co-operative of Djavi is not a simple one, being linked as it is to the fortunes of the rural development company, the SONADER (*Société Nationale pour le Développement Rural*) which was in charge of the promotion of agriculture during the 1960s and 1970s, largely through co-operative efforts.

It is this company which 'established' the Djavi co-operative. The responsibilities were very clearly divided: the SONADER would take the orders from the regular clients, negotiate the prices, provide the necessary income to the villagers. Under the co-ordination of Dah Hounsou, the Chairman and spokesman of the co-operative, the villagers would just be in charge of the work and paid according to the volume of production, following rules apparently discussed with them! That went on for almost thirteen years as, thanks to the success of the 'lovely baskets', the sales were high enough to maintain the interests of both parties. Not being able to provide themselves the amounts of raw material and the equipment necessary to meet the demand they tried to cope with the compromise... until the crisis which arose in 1978 between the two parties.

By that time, people in the village were rather sick and tired of belonging to a co-operative with such restrictions on their freedom to operate, and so they resigned en masse in 1978. The deal had not helped to improve their quality of life and they felt that the amount paid to them by the director of SONADER did not pay justice to their efforts. Hence their decision to liberate themselves from the situation.

There were orchestrated efforts to dissuade them from leaving, but they established their new co-operative's autonomy early in 1979. One result was inevitable, namely that they lost all the advantages of being members of SONADER, notably a supply of raw materials.

The members of the co-operative had to get organised and draw on their reserves of responsibility and initiative, especially in finding funding and developing their market. They started off with a loan of FCFA 200,000 from the *Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural* (CARDER), and some other small amounts. This financial support helped them to acquire their own means of production and working materials for re-launching their activities.

The new co-operative started off with a period of success which was thanks to the revival of members' motivation and, as Dansou explains, to changes in management rules:

'When we took the co-operative into our own hands, we still elected the seven members of the management committee in a democratic way, but we also agreed amongst ourselves which post each member should occupy to best serve the group. So, contrary to what is written is the co-operative's papers, this is not democracy in the sense that several candidates stand for the same post; instead we were at pains to settle this beforehand since we knew very well who could do what... Furthermore, in the event of any dispute, we can negotiate amongst ourselves, in an amicable way... '

There then followed a period of decline, and a dismemberment of the co-operative, caused by various factors:
- competition from Ghanaian products, often of better quality;
- the fact that many village people had been dependent on the local administration for a long while and were unpractised in the art of collective management, and this is an increasingly competitive field...
- the emergence of new opportunities such as *taxi-motos* (commonly known as *'Zémidjan'*); several members of the co-operative quickly moved into this sector.

Some of the seven members left are trying to attract the interest of their children, but what remains today is miles away from what was known as the *Djavi group*. How far will the kind of determination stated by the old man Assogba be able to go? How long will 'the door' be open? Time will tell...

Sèdjè-Dénou, development dynamics rooted in local culture

The village of Sèdjè-Dénou has quite a reputation for the dynamism of its farmer groups. It is based on the long experience of mutual support groups in various areas of local life: helping each other in agricultural work, tontine, mutual moral and financial support at times of sadness...

In particular, the village gave a shining example in a project to breathe new life into villages which was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 1988. In many of the villages covered by the project, the lack of adequate follow-up and of continuity in technical and financial support meant that it was just a flash in the pan. In Sèdjè-Dénou, on the other hand, the project had a remarkable success.

Unlike other cases, the Village Development Committee played its role effectively:
- co-ordinating the support coming from various projects and services, development projects and other NGOs;
- organising village participation in local development planning;
- promoting the emergence of solid farmers' organisations;
- encouraging and experimenting with local mechanisms and support structures in order to help the participation of local communities in the development of their village;
- helping to establish new models of partnership between village people and development support services;
- working for the gradual transfer of skills and responsibilities to village people.

This is an unusually impressive list of achievements, all the more so for the ongoing impact which has been made. The Village Development Committee has in a mere ten years' of activity had a real impact on the village by mobilising and organising producers, and through achievements in the socio-economic field:
- 23 producer groups (women's groups and mixed groups) bringing together more than 500 members, which is more than 10% of the active agricultural population;
- a rural savings and credit fund (CREP) with a modest level of resources but one which is nonetheless and without doubt operational (saving funds in 1999 were only FCFA 1,022,680);
- processing workshops (notably the production of *gari* and soap by women's groups);
- a day nursery for children, to help women when they are working;
- animal breeding units;
- drinking water supply, with the community's participation of FCFA 3,000,000 by the committee;
- a village shop selling essential items and products at practically the same price as in large towns.

There are several factors in the success of development activities in Sèdjè-Dénou, and without doubt one of them is the spirit of solidarity which is truly anchored in people's customs. There is also, as in the case of Agossou, a member of one of the groups, explained, that spirit of 'positive competition' which comes from traditional forms of mutual support.

The village clearly has a strong degree of social cohesion. When examined closely, this would seem to be based on some very solid cultural foundations.

The dominant religion in the village to this day is animism, not only in terms of numbers of people, but also in its degree of influence on the daily lives of people. The community fears and respects divine forces, as well as the local personalities who represent them and who possess traditional powers. Over a period of thirty years, up to 1987, a single king *Ganyé Miyi* ruled over Sèdjè-Dénou. It was he who settled all the disputes at village level, with the collaboration of his fetishist chiefs, who were his closest collaborators, and of his notables.

There are several local divinities, yet the entire community adheres to a common ancestral divinity known as *Dati Adjahouto* which ensures that local customs are respected, protects families, insists on a weekly day off (every five days, for Cotonou central market), etc.

Local folklore is very lively, with four principal groups involved:

- *Kpanougbé*, for women only;
- *Gogbé*, for young girls;
- *Massègohoun*, for adult males and females;
- *Kpalogo*, for young boys and girls.

These groups appear to form a sort of 'social cement' between the different sub-groups of the community. This bond, or cement, would seem to be more positive than the traditional rigid links of the elders, if we are to believe what Djidjoho, a farmer, told us off the record in an interview:

'It is true that a respect for traditions means that the secret groups which operate special information channels can guarantee public safety. This is well shown in the case of the Lègba fetish placed in front of the office of our CREP as the protector of our safe. But respect for traditions also has its negative side. It is because we have to respect our elders that we took such a long time to replace the three elders who stayed on in the management committee when they were clearly incompetent. This sort of blocked us for quite a while, and slowed our activities down.'

The Kansounkpa group: victim of a 'Marxist' government push to collectivisation

The group known as Kansounkpa is another example of a group set up under the political pressure of the government during the revolutionary era (with Marxist-Leninist orientations) and which grew in a spectacular fashion, thanks to organisational and financial support. At that time, no important visitor to the Ministry of Development, whether from a funding agency or a technical assistance programme, could make a field tour without paying a visit to the 'farmers of Kansounkpa'. This was helped by the relative proximity of the village to Cotonou - a mere thirty kilometres. Alas, this period of renown was but short, and the fall from fame was as fast as the rise had been.

In actual fact, the beginnings of the organisation, as a small group of eight members started in 1969, had shown all the possibilities of a gradual and sustainable growth. The members of the group, who had selected each other on the basis of the affinities they had developed in a traditional agricultural mutual support system called *Adjolu*, came to work together for four days each week; their land quickly grew from 4 ha to 12 ha. Their initial success quickly attracted new members as well as a grant from USAID. This helped them to set up a poultry unit for 300 meat chickens, a dryer and two storage silos to store and keep the maize harvest, their principal production. Thus was born the village group (Groupement Villageois or GV) of

Kansounkpa, which was officially recognised by CARDER-Atlantique, the agricultural extension office of which I was then part. At the beginning, in 1977, the GV had 20 members.

But then, politics got involved and even agricultural extension staff had to march to the beat of the new drum, at least to some extent... In 1978, the revolutionary military government decided that all Groupements Villageois (GV) were to become Co-operative Revolutionary Groups (Groupements Révolutionnaires à Vocation Coopérative, GRVC), as the 'first step to co-operative agriculture'! A political decision meant that the 50 ha farmed by the GV of Kansounkpa, in agreement with several land owners (some of whom were not members of the group), was declared to be the collective property of the GRVC. Another political decision was taken in 1980, to transform the 'most advanced' GRVC groups into experimental socialist-model agricultural co-operatives (Coopératives Agricoles Expérimentales de Type Socialiste, CAETS). The CAETS of Kansounkpa was officially installed in March 1980, in the presence of the minister for rural development. In the years 1981 to 1988, the membership and the achievements of the group had their ups and downs.

With hindsight, it would seem that the group's activities kept up at least a certain level thanks to the support provided by CARDER-Atlantique. A fumigation chamber was built by this project and helped farmers in particular to store their maize more easily while awaiting the best possible prices in the market. However, decline set in, pushed by the arrival of democracy in 1989 and with that, the wave of liberalism which allowed the land owners of Kansounkpa to take back their land. Today, the fumigation chamber, standing out above the trees of the savannah is the last remaining symbol of the period of glory of the 'farmers of Kansounkpa'.

Other village groups

Some other groups have been visited in Benin, in the following villages: Miniffi, Hêkandji, Avamê, Aplahoué and Lagbavé. The relevant details, summarised in Table 10.1, are presented in Annex 5.

10.2.2   In Burkina Faso

The 'Pag-La-Yiri'[39] Women Group, in Zabre, Burkina Faso

Thérèse Kaboré, the main initiator and Chair of the association, seems to be a dynamic on her own[40], the way she tells her story:

'After primary school, I spent two years in a technical school... then the family wanted to force me to marry somebody I hardly knew. I could escape and join my father - working in Ghana at that time!... I was determined to react against the poor conditions of rural women. As a little girl, I had always been upset by the difficult conditions my mother and other women were facing: they had to take care of the children, go far from the village to bring water and firewood, and grind the cereals manually... My motivation to help improve women situation started in that period...

Later on, I got married to a school teacher who was transferred to Zoaga, 15 km from Zabré. That is where I helped local women create an association in 1975. After some time we moved the headquarters to Zabré (the province capital), where an association created earlier with the assistance of Mrs Yaméogo had collapsed, but where women were looking for an opportunity to start again. There were at that time a lot of diseases for which people were accusing sorcerers! So, our first activity was to help the villagers transfer the

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39 Pag-La-Yiri (in the mooré language): La femme, c'est le foyer... The woman makes the home...
40 Very unfortunate... Therese Kabore passed away in December 2000...

sick people to an adequate health centre where they could be taken care of... For that, we had to hire motor-bikes with our own money, but that is how we started and how our group became popular: we helped some people recover and we helped bring peace back to the village as people stopped accusing each other of being sorcerers!... When we started building our office, the whole village came out to help!

In order to launch some economic activities, we set up a savings group of which the main objective was to strengthen solidarity among the members to fight famine: in the beginning we were five people saving only 10 CFA francs per week! But soon, we were joined by 10, then 20, 50, and thousands of others... Today Pag-La-Yiri is a strong association of more than 11,000 members from 200 villages!!!'

The association has two kinds of activities: community development activities and economic activities.

The community development activities include: group farming, soil and water conservation activities, agroforestery, local roads maintenance, running of nutrition centres (to advise women); building and running of village maternity and pharmaceutical units.

The group also runs an important literacy programme which has already benefited more than 6,000 women, and training centres for weaving and pottery.

The economic activities aim at progressively assuring the financial autonomy of the women members, so that they can break the (material) dependency link vis-à-vis their husbands:

- crops processing units, mainly for fruits juices and jam production;
- tree nurseries;
- small village 'auberges', restaurants and shops;
- small pig, sheep and poultry units;
- promotion of decentralised local credit units;
- operating a lorry and a petrol station
- credit facilities for 'small trade' and agricultural equipment.

With regard to credit activities, the group's leader explains:

'We set up our savings and credit co-operative (COOPEC, Coopérative d'Epargne et de Crédit) in 1990 to look after the resources we had been giving to the CNCA (Caisse Nationale de Crédit Agricole, the national agricultural bank) whereas it was us who were doing the work... The members of COOPEC are coopted, by groups of five, including a member of our group. This helps to form a chain of solidarity, and so it will be hard to misuse our funds!'

The Tanlili self-help group: the impact of traditional authority...

Traditionally the people of Tanlili, which is near Saponé and about 40km from Ouagadougou, worked one day every year on the land of the village chief. When this ancestral rule faded away, people came to realise that they could instead use this common effort to raise funds for themselves, to be able to provide mutual support when difficulties arose. In thus capitalising a tradition, they set up a working group called *Nogtaaba*. This group still works one day a week, the Wednesday, in the rainy season to help any farmer in need, with remuneration.

The principal activity of the group in the beginning was to make loans to anyone in the village to help them pay a medical bill, or to finance a funeral or a wedding. In each of the first two years, the total loan portfolio was FCFA 200,000; this helped, for example, several families to vaccinate their children against certain illnesses.

Elsewhere in the region, one farmer told me that in these small credit systems, what counts is

not the amounts themselves but the opportunity which a loan provides:

'Even when a loan is very small, sometimes just FCFA 5,000 to FCFA 10,000, it is all that is needed. What is important is to know that the opportunity is there, especially during the gap between two harvests when the farmer suffers the most. At times like those, you know, even FCFA 1,000 can be a lot of money!'

Unfortunately the *Nogtaaba* group fell apart after only four years of healthy operation. According to Eric, a young sociologist working in the region, it was paradoxically the victim of the traditional autocracy whence it came:

'The group's dynamic was based on the custom which recognised the traditional authority of the village chief. It had been triggered off, in fact, by the poverty being experienced by the farmers of Tanlili. It gave them the idea that they could use this shared dynamic to create at least a partial solution to their problems. The fact that they shared the same religion and the same values helped the dynamic to develop. However, the elders in the group had not been transparent in their dealings, and had hidden their personal interests; this turned off a lot of members, especially the youngest ones...'

The Saponé Youth Association for the Development of Saponé (AJDS): a genuine local dynamic!

With ten years existence behind it, the strength of its membership of fifty (of whom thirty are girls and young women), and enjoying the good reputation of its successes, it has to be recognised that the AJDS is one of the most promising grassroots groups in Saponé[41].

Early on in its growth, members decided that they had to build their headquarters, as the way to establish their presence. Then they set up their farm plots (for growing rice and groundnuts) and market gardens, and a plantation of '3,000 trees'. They moved into animal traction, and gradually extended their production. It should be said, nonetheless, that the success of the group does not lie in agriculture alone. Their cultural activities such as village balls and fairs have been much appreciated by the local community for the way they improve village life!

Ever since the outset, the aim of the group has been noble, and attractive: to create jobs and to minimise unemployment among the young people of Saponé. The group is diverse in composition, with farmers, students and civil servants. Its major strength, which also provides for a degree of homogeneity, is that its founders are all friends from their days at primary school, and are all 'brothers' in the village. Most of them their primary schooling without the funds to continue; hence they set up their group 'to take their future into their own hands'.

The basic funding of the group comes from members' contributions. However, its success and the effective outreach of their network into their diaspora have attracted the co-operation of the French town of Créon with whom a twinning project is nearing completion.

Among the several factors which have helped this local dynamic to develop are the 'melting-pot' at the start, the youth and dynamism of the members, their relationships with their diaspora, and their ability to communicate, with several members expressing themselves in French, English, Mooré and even a little Dioula!

When asked about the constraints hindering the group's development, after reciting natural factors such as poor rainfall and socio-cultural barriers, the youths quickly point to their rela-

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41 It should be noted that the AJDS is one of the core members of the AVLP (Association Vive le Paysan) which is one of the four major cases in this research study.

tionships with their elders... and this is a milieu where, traditionally, the latter are supposed to arrange and control everything. Minor disputes such as those regarding holding cultural events such as fairs are appeased by cajoling remarks, but they are not really resolved. In general, the members of the group feel that the best way to manage their relationships with their elders is to gradually become more autonomous, in the belief that the elders can only exercise their power through the control of material means.

The youths finally confessed that the early building of their own headquarters was not only to establish their presence; that also allowed them to get free of the patronage of the village elder in whose premises they held their early meetings.

Some 'Caisses Villageoises' in Burkina Faso: modest but encouraging results

The experience of popular savings funds in the region of Ouahigouya provides a useful set of cases. In the zone of Ziga, just 25 km from the regional capital of Ouahigouya, this experience started in 1987. The central fund in Ziga has about 1, 350 members, including about 400 groups, of which 44 are village savings funds. In order to grant a loan, the central fund requires that the borrower had written proof of ownership of a mobylette, and savings equal to at least 25% of the requested loan. This is beyond the means of small farmers, and it explains the growth of savings funds at village level. They operate like 'banks without walls', and their operation is to all intents and purposes a decentralisation of the savings and loans system of the central fund, through the intermediary solidarity groups in each village. Their results depend on their conditions of organisation and management.

The 'Caisse Villageoise' *Nabas-nongo* - which in Mooré means 'all is well that ends well' was set up in just one neighbourhood of Ziga - Baloungo. It is perhaps this physical restriction which has prevented it from really growing, after more than four years' existence. The fund's poor performance is blamed by its managers on poor agricultural conditions, most notably shortfalls of rain, and the high levels of mortality in the community which weigh on people. In reality, when examined more closely, the major shortcomings of the fund can be attributed to a lack of motivation. In consequence a lot of members are demanding the return of their deposits, with interest. At present, it looks like this particular case is not going to have a happy ending.

Just a dozen kilometres away, the women of Boursouma have been demonstrating an admirable degree of dynamism. Part of this is due no doubt to their motivation in wanting to overcome the lack of links to the main road from Ziga to Ouahigouya, but also to the way they have organised themselves well and the exemplary devotion of the liaison officer...

Since the fund was created in 1997, the 25 women members have set up solidarity groups, as have many others, but with the difference here being that they have clear and well-respected rules. In each group, the women have to:
- know each other;
- share confidence in each other;
- each have a viable activity;
- love one another;
- be sure that, if one member is unable to make her repayments, the rest of the group will help her out.

On this basis, the women of Boursouma are involved in several forms of production and processing of agricultural produce. Mobilising savings is their weak point: they are prevented by

lack of transport to taking (small amounts of) funds to Ziga to deposit, and all their requests for a vehicle have been in vain. They are, though, very solvent debtors. The total 1999 loan portfolio of FCFA 2,300,000 has been fully repaid, as were those of previous years. The women of Boursouma justify this success with reasons which immediately recall their founding principles:

'We love our work, we respect each other, we give each other advice, we listen to each other' before adding, ' and we want to make sure that no village does better than Boursouma!'

The 'traditional' bank of Somiaga: a real farmers' bank

'We are not very far from Ouahigouya, that's true, but there you will find policemen at the door of any bank... Here things are easier, because it is just for us farmers. There are no policemen, we are not worried about coming at anytime we want to deposit our money or to withdraw it...'

This is the fundamental difference that the farmers of Somiaga see in their bank, in comparison with the classical banks in the regional capital Ouahigouya, just 8 km away. There are other differences, though: the rate of recovery is exemplary, practically 100% with some exceptions. This is thanks to an original form of organisation fully suited to the cultural context, as Ouédraogo Kassim, chairman of the credit committee explains:

'First and foremost, the farmers know that this is their own money. Then, you have to understand that people here do not accept shame - this provides the basis for our system. In each village, a local committee of two people are the eyes and ears of the bank's management committee; they keep an eye on everything, and counsel borrowers. People are ashamed to let them down, and they too could not stand the shame of having those near to them seen as bad debtors!'

One very popular institution in the Ouahigouya region is the traditional savings and credit banks (Banques Traditionnelles d'Epargne et de Crédit) (BTEC) which were created by the *Naam*[42] grouping. The Somiaga bank was set up in 1990 with no external finance, except a small grant from the Swiss development agency to finish off the office built by the farmers. Their starting savings capital was zero. The chairperson was at pains to say, with a tinge of pride, that they had even 'avoided the white man's money... otherwise people would not pay it back.'

When it was established, the BTEC of Somiaga had 45 members, all of them small groups of agricultural producers. There are now 178 member groups, plus 674 individual members (439 women and 235 men).
The highest level of savings was reached in 1997, with FCFA 35 million.
The board of management of the bank has twelve members, six women and six men. The credit committee has five members, two women and three men.

The major difference between its management system and that of the traditional banking sector is, as stated above, its flexibility. The loan application form is just one page, the collateral for the loan can be just a simple cart, and the loan guarantor can just be another account holder at the bank.

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42 The Naam organisation is explained in Chapter 12 (section 12.2).

The local community has benefited from several social projects undertaken by the BTEC:
- a pharmacy, where of the inhabitants of Somiaga obtain their primary medicinal needs;
- construction of a three-class school;
- a contribution to the construction and operation of a health centre.

In 1999, the savings portfolio unfortunately shrank to FCFA 12 millions (from the FCFA 25 million mentioned above). The major blame was laid at the door of rain shortfall which had prevented a good harvest. This misses the real point, which is that there is a growing competition from the banks and other savings funds based in Ouahigouya. Some of them are offering higher rates of interest on deposits, and will even come to the villages to collect the funds. Faced with the prospect of additional profit, and the ease of this 'proximity banking', the farmer's fear about the policeman at the bank's door in Ouahigouya could simply fade away...

There is an even greater threat for the BTEC, coming from another angle: the public administration! The government has recently decided to decree that the bank close, since it is 'not officially recognised'. According to a law passed in 1994, the BTEC banks and other funds were given four to five years to obtain recognition.

This closure led immediately to negotiations between the Ministry of Finance and the leaders of the *Naam* groupings, which coordinate the BTEC banks. It has to be hoped that, in addition to formal recognition, these discussions contribute to a more open approach towards these local systems of organisation and management.

10.2.3   In Ghana

The palm oil processing group in Dodomé
Arriving for the first time, in 1998, at the base of the group *'Dodome nonvissi'*, in Dodome village, 20 km from Ho, the province capital (about 166 km from Accra) I was very much impressed by the infrastructure in place: a complete set of equipment for oil processing, a store and a decent meeting place. As soon as I got there I was welcomed very enthusiastically by about 25 members of the group.
Already at that time, having heard their story and discussed it in length with them, I had some doubts about their ability to keep things going as intended.
Two years later, during another visit, I saw some evidence that confirmed my first assumptions. That day, although they were informed as usual, it took them more than twenty minutes to put together a small group of eight people for the meeting. It was a clear signal that they had already entered a difficult phase.

The following story, told by Manfred Kpakpla, the Chairman of the group, indicates that the problem had to do with the way the group started:

'Some people came here and wanted to buy some oil, which we cooked for them. As they were quite satisfied, they asked us what we needed to improve our work... Later on, thanks to one of the natives of our village working in Accra and who introduced those clients to us, people of the Agricultural Sector Improvement Project (ASIP) came here. Then we formed a group, in 1995, in order to get assistance from the Government... It first started with a family group of 10 people[43], then was extended to include more villagers...'

The group comprised 72 members in 1998 (80% being women), and the cash left from 1997 after the sales and distribution to members was 900,000 Cedis.

During my last visit in February 2000, the number of members, which had already dropped to 59 in 1999, was 30. Emilia Deble, one of the leaders, just explained the situation as follows:

'People started losing interest and they were claiming a little cash every time they worked, instead of waiting for the sales or even for the profit to be shared later...'.

But after a long discussion, the reasons why people were losing interest became clear: there were no regular accounts anymore, as the secretary, a teacher who had been transferred to another village, left with all the books!

Although the environment is quite conducive - with palm oil selling well in the region - the lack of transparency, added to the lack of strong local leadership to drive the dynamic, led the group to decline.

The villagers were expecting that with the meetings they were planning to conduct, with the help of the extension service, they could progressively set things back to normal, but chances are rather limited...

Drumming for development: the 'Lonlonhoun' group in Kpetoe

The 'Lonlonhoun' group was created back to 1979 by a group of Ewe people who emigrated to Kpetoe, 30 km from Ho. The need for the creation of the group was felt shortly after the settlement, as explained by Kennedy Agbechiafa, the Financial Secretary:

'We could not continue like that, with all our Anlo[44] people scattered around, so we decided to form a society. We don't want other people to deal with our dead anymore, we want to do it ourselves, in our way, according to our tradition'

The members, numbering 50 in the beginning but 187 in 2000, are from different professions: farmers, weavers, traders, corn millers, blacksmiths, drivers, etc.

They take care of their own economic activities, but, as a social group, their main activity is assisting and drumming for a member when he/she has lost a parent. Different rates apply to the financial contribution they also provide to the member on that occasion: for example, when the member has lost his / her father or mother, he / she will get 60,000 Cedis from the group (each of them would have contributed 500); if it is the member who died, his / her parent will get 120,000 Cedis (each member would have paid 1,000).

The group also assists members when they are sick, to help them buy drugs or pay medical fees which 'they reimburse when everything is back to normal'.

They always help the community whenever necessary, within the limits of their resources. In 1999, they bought some chairs and tables for a secondary school for a total amount of 250,000 Cedis; they helped another secondary school to rebuild a classroom which the wind had blown away.

The group is managed by a committee of four members: a Chairman, a Financial Secretary, a Regent (who takes care of the drums), a fourth member (who keeps the keys!).

The committee members are elected for two years, but this term is renewable. The current

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43 Apparently the 10 people belong to the family of that native who was the contact person between the villagers and the Project.

44 Anlo is the place where they came from.

Chairman, Queshie Abaya, is in his second year. Before him, the former Chairman has led the group since the beginning, which means that the two-year rule is rather flexible! The Financial Secretary, Kennedy Agbechiafa, who has been in this position for three years, said: 'When the person has not done anything wrong, why replace him? We just select him again'.

So far, the need for these settlers to 'remain themselves' within a new community is still driving the Lonlonhoun group. As one of the members, Christian Adoukpo, explained: 'Many of us are not after money, but when a relative is dead, we need the crowd to be there, so that when visitors come they know we have people behind...'

The Kpetoe Kente Weaving Group: the motivation to maintain an ancestral reputation
'We want to keep the tradition alive! Our region is Number One (sic!) for kente in Ghana! In our culture here, in the Ewe region, kente is respected...we wear it to remember our grand fathers, our ancestors, and how they used their brains creating these clothes...Look at this one, we sell it 1,000,000 Cedis and nothing less, because this is for chiefs, it has to cost that. Even if we must wait for weeks for someone to buy it!...' That was the closing statement from 'Christopher' when describing for the first time in 1997 the weaving group in a place called Agontime Abenyase, part of the Kpetoe village.

I was rather struck by the determination of those eleven young people, excellent weavers, but also small farmers. Farm products and revenues are indeed crucial to them while waiting to sell their (expensive) kente! They are now thinking of joining sixteen other young villagers to create a co-operative farm.
When the started their activities in 1995, there were only four people, then others joined them.
In the beginning, they were 'doing everything individually', then when people came to order kentes, it was often too much for them to handle. There was a risk to lose the clientele, so, they got organised to meet the demand. The Chairman, Mr. Kojo Boapeng, explains how it works:

'When we get the orders, we share the work to complete it quickly. When the money comes, 10% is for the group and we share the rest. We use part of the group money to help the community, also part to entertain our visitors who come to learn a few things from us; sometimes we even drum for them...Of course, they also pay something for learning from us.'

The savings of the group amounted 700,000 Cedis in 1998, and 2,500,000 in 1999!
Among other activities, in 1999, they gave 500,000 to assist the community for the electricity programme.

As regard to the management, according to Kojo, one of the first members, things were easier and quite informal when there were just four:

'When we were four people, we looked at things, then just decided and go ahead! Now, everybody think his idea is the best, so sometimes we vote!... But relevant rules were made available and clear to new members in order to avoid management difficulties.'

When asked what are their constraints, they mentioned: 'Money'... Surprisingly!... They would like to have more money to buy some materials, especially yarn, so that they could weave enough in advance and not always wait until the clients are there. Of course, the strategy they

described earlier - waiting as long as necessary to sell their kente - does not guarantee the necessary cash flow!

That is also why, as currently no institution is helping them, they think they 'should register as a co-operative, for the Government to recognise the group so that it can get financial assistance'.

When finally asked why so far they have been succeeding to some extent, then two of them, almost simultaneously replied: 'Because we love what we do, and we understand each other'...

The Adidwan Co-operative Farming and Marketing

The village of Adidwan village is about 25 km from Ejura, the district headquarters, itself about 50 km from Kumasi.

The co-operative is one of those types of organisations which are created at times by farmers 'in order to get easy access to credit'... to develop their activities. In this case, the 'brokerage' was done by a native of the village who had worked with IMF.

Thanks to his mediation, in 1986/87 a FAO project helped them to acquire tractors and hybrid seeds on credit to help the co-operative, which was formed in 1984. Members were mainly farmers, the dominant crops being maize and cowpea.

Membership was then over 100, and the co-operative was considered as a pilot project.

The co-operative used to plough land for the members, on a credit basis. The average maize holding per member is 4 acres. Storage facilities are also available for both members and non-members, to store maize bags after harvest: non-members pay 400 Cedis per bag per month, while members can store up to 10 bags free, beyond that they have to pay. The peak storage volume attained was 1,800 bags. In March 2000, on 3 March to be exact, there were only 600 bags in the store and membership had dropped down to 58!

What had happened? Originally, there were five basic conditions for admission in the group:
- be above 18 years
- have a 'sound mind' (!)
- be an income earner (able to pay credit back)
- living within a certain distance from the co-operative location (to easily attend communal labour)
- own property (which can be sold if necessary to get credit back).

Apparently, times had changed... Members were not keeping up their loan repayments, and the management committee could not enforce the rules designed to ensure reimbursement. The co-operative then started to lose credibility, and the situation was worsened by private businessmen offering similar and more efficient services to the same villagers.

Other village groups

In Ghana, some other groups have been visited in the following villages: Kongo, Bagble and Assam. The relevant details, summarised in Table 10.3, are presented in Annex 5.

10.3 Outcomes

Characteristics / Groups	Triggering Factor	Evolution Process	Cradle(s)	Local norms and Values Factor	Driving force	Linking factor	Power System
Dogbo Ahomè (G1)	+	++		-	+		---
Women Group Hounsa (G2)	++	+	+++	++	+	++	++
The Djavi Group (G3)	---	---	+	-		--	---
Sèdjè-Dénou (G4)		++	+++	+	++	+	-
Kansounkpa (G5)	-	---	+	-	++	---	--
Miniffi (G6)		+++	+++	++	++	+	+++
Hêjamê (G7)	+++	+		+		+	-
Avamê (G8)		-		--		+	---
Aplahoué (G9)	++	--	+++		++	---	++
Lagbavé (G10)		+++	++	+	++		++

+   Relevant and positive impact
++   Relevant and very positive impact
+++   Relevant and highly determinant (positive) impact
-      Relevant and negative impact
--   Relevant and very negative impact
---   Relevant and highly determinant (negative) impact

Table 10.1 Recapitulating on the tour in Benin

Characteristics _Groups_	Triggering Factor	Evolution Process	Cradle(s)	Local norms and Values Factor	Driving force	Linking factor	Power System
Zabré (G11)	+	++		-	+++	+	++
Tantili (G12)	+	- -	+	+			- - -
AJDS (G13)	+	++	+++	++	++	++	-
Boursouma (G14)	+	++	+++	++	++	+	
Somiaga (G15)		+	++	++	+	+	+

+   Relevant and positive impact
++   Relevant and very positive impact
+++   Relevant and highly determinant (positive) impact
-        Relevant and negative impact
- -   Relevant and very negative impact
- - -   Relevant and highly determinant (negative) impact

Table 10.2 Recapitulating on the tour in Burkina Faso

Characteristics / Groups	Triggering Factor	Evolution Process	Cradle(s)	Local norms and Values Factor	Driving force	Linking factor	Power System
Dodome (G16)	- - -	- -			+	- - -	-
Lonlonhoun (G17)	++	++	+++		+		+
Kente Kpetoe (G18)	+	++	+++	++	+++		++
Adidwan (G19)	- - -	- -			+	- - -	
Kongo (G20)		++	+	++	+	+	+
Bagblé (G21)	+	-	+		-	+	
Asaam (G22)		+	+	+	+	+	++

+   Relevant and positive impact
++   Relevant and very positive impact
+++   Relevant and highly determinant (positive) impact
-   Relevant and negative impact
- -   Relevant and very negative impact
- - -   Relevant and highly determinant (negative) impact

Table 10.3 Recapitulating on the tour in Ghana

Chapter 11

Emerging patterns

11.1   Overview

While deciding to explore a number of success stories and development failures in the three countries (Chapter 10), the assumption was made that both categories would be quite informative as to the relative importance of the key existential factors of the local dynamics identified in Chapter 7. This proved to be the case. It was rather difficult, however, to get local people to point to failures. Several different situations were encountered, but, in many places, the most difficult was to get information out of people who were not part of the local group concerned; they were rather reluctant to 'say bad things about other people'. Even when the interviewees were members of the group concerned, it took some time to get out of them the real reasons behind the failures... This made it necessary to pay a number of visits to the same groups in order to compare and analyse the information received at different times and from different people.

Despite these difficulties, the exploration of this new range of local groups gave some insights into both endogenous and project groups at local level. As this could already be apparent from the results of these group observations (Chapter 10), the reasons for success or failure in these additional (small) cases can be clearly linked to some of the key existential factors previously identified (Chapter 7). Therefore, this new chapter recapitulates on the results related to these factors, as emerging from all the cases, as well as the main patterns across the three countries. Besides, the group observations show that, just as we have seen with the four main cases covered in Chapters 5 to 9, even where we do have local successes, the way they might impact at higher levels of decision-making is still very much open to question.

11.2   About the Key Existential Factors

Having looked at a range of different situations, local endogenous or project groups, success stories and some obvious and also 'hard-to-talk-about' failures, it is rather difficult to point to a specific set of criteria which makes local dynamics work. It almost goes without saying that those which have more chances of success are those based on an appropriate mix, which depends upon each local context. What seems to matter most is ownership. Time is a crucial factor. When appropriately used, cradle(s) can play a major role in incubating, while local leadership and other driving forces, together with a well-balanced power system, are all quite determinant.

Endogeneity versus intervention

The cases described in Chapter 10 tend to confirm that whether the development initiative is born locally or introduced through an intervention or a project, what seems to really matter is the actual *ownership*. This can be the result of different processes. There are cases where a locally-conceived idea did not need any external support to materialise and develop, as with the *Lonlonhoun* drumming group (Chapter 10, section 10.2.3). Others, although local initiatives, materialised and developed with external catalysts or support systems; this is the case of the Community Health Centre of the Bonou group (Chapter 5, section 5.3.2). Finally, some development dynamics have really started with an external initiative, which had been capitalised, sometimes transformed but internalised by the local people, as with the Kongo group of the Sasakawa project in Ghana. Among those cases however, the most successful groups are those where the first steps have been taken by the local people, based on pressing needs.

In general, in the cases encountered, *pure endogeneity* does not seem to matter. This is also suggested by the fact that during the interviews, in some of the cases covered, it took quite some time for farmers to remember exactly how some of the development activities really started. Unless the circumstances are particular, like in the case of the health centre in Bonou (Chapter 5) or of the savings and credit unit in Hèjamê (Chapter 3), *the triggering factor* can even vanish with time...

Discussing what they call the factor of initiation - meaning at whose initiative the local organisation was established - Milton, Esman and Uphoff (1984) found out that locally-initiated organisations have a greater probability of success, but, of the others, the ones initiated by external catalysts - such as donor programmes - are on the average much more successful than those inspired by regular government programmes. They went on to argue that 'the variable for initiative is no longer a simple continuum; it reflects not just the initiators' distance from the community but also their style of initiation'. This tends to confirm that it is not the fact of initiation itself which matters, but the full process of change and the way it is implemented. It is indeed the full process which leads to ownership (or not).

From the cases covered, it would seem that, apart from the triggering factor, ownership involves three other key existential factors of the local dynamics, as previously identified (Chapter 7), namely *the evolution process (or time factor), the cradle*, as well as the *norms and values factor*.

Once ownership is assured, whether from an endogenous change initiative which has got locally, or/and externally the necessary resources to materialise, or from an intervention which has been internalised by local people, in both cases, enough time is necessary to complete the process. To carry forward the initial vision, to be able to adapt and innovate as learning indicates and circumstances dictate (Uphoff, Esman and Krishna, 1998) time is crucial.

Time, the inevitable accomplice!

We have already discussed in Chapter 7 how, in development projects, the value assigned to the notion of time is often skewed: too little in preparation, too much in the rush of implementation. It often seems as if strategies which have been implemented (and still are in many cases) in development projects in Africa or elsewhere in the Third World have been inspired by the post-war reconstruction strategies of the mid-fifties. At that time, it was not really important to take time to involve the 'beneficiaries', it was enough to 'pay the experts, and they'll fix it'! The consequences of such strategies are plenty in Africa, from small failures to the well-known 'white elephants'.

In French, there is a saying that *'Ce qui se fait sans le temps est détruit avec le temps'*, which means 'What you make without taking proper time is destroyed with time'.

Indeed, the so-called 'white elephants' and other development failures tend to confirm that 'time is worth more than money, and by killing time, we are killing our own chances for success'1. Not allowing the necessary time to build the development process in fact takes more time and more money in trying to save the situation afterwards. According to Singe (1990), the 'quick fix' approach, dictated by time pressure, solves problem symptoms quickly, but only temporarily. However this approach often creates side effects which make it more difficult and often longer to reach the fundamental solutions.

How the cradle can help the process...

As described in the Kotokpa case, the Adji feasts held every year can be seen as a way to revitalise the group's cradle, the Adji Club, and to galvanise the energies of the village around the activities of the Club. The same applies for the Sèdjè Dénou group which, as we saw in Chapter 10, is able to maintain quite a strong degree of social cohesion thanks to solid traditional foundations kept very much alive through such cultural groups as the folklore clubs for different sub-groups of the society. While young people from the neighbouring villages tend to rush off to town at the weekend, running away from boring village life, those in Sèdjè Dénou regularly enjoy the *Gogbé, Kpanougbé* and other drumming and dancing groups...

The importance and the potential role of a cradle has been discussed in Chapter 7. Moreover, cases like the Hounsa group in Benin, or the Youth Association (AJDS) in Burkina Faso, confirm that whether the cradles are cultural, religious or any traditional groups, some basic trust has already been built among the members over time. Any new idea coming to them, provided it matches real needs, could start off the crystallisation of the energies of at least some of the people. It is in the cradles that the new idea or the change process will be steeped in the local *norms and values.*

The specific roles played by the *Whistle Club* and the *Adji Club* in nurturing the development process, respectively of the Bonou group and the Kotokpa group, have already been explained (Chapters 5 and 6). The same applies for the soccer club of the young villagers of Sapone (Chapter 8) and for the Funeral Committee in Yamfo (Chapter 9).

Beside the importance of the cradle, and as highlighted in Chapter 7while comparing the Bonou case and the Hèjamê case in Benin, for two development dynamics born in similar conditions, the existence or not of a *driving force* can make the difference.

Good leadership makes or breaks!

Most of the cases have confirmed the importance of a driving force as analysed earlier (Chapter 7), and the fact that it can be either material or immaterial. In the last category, leadership comes above all.

For Etzioni (1965), quoted by Hall (1977), leadership is the ability, drawn on the personal qualities of the leader, to elicit the voluntary compliance of followers in a broad range of matters. More precisely, Selznick (1957), quoted by Hall (1977) considers that the tasks of leadership fall into four categories as follows:

> The four categories of leadership tasks:
>
> The first is the definition or the suggestion of the organisational mission. The second task is the 'institutional embodiment of purpose', that is to say, building the policy

into the structure and deciding on how to get the resources to achieve the goals. The third one is to defend the organisation's integrity. The final task is arbitrating internal conflict resolution.

(Hall, 1977)

This applies indeed to the leaders we have seen in such cases as Bonou and Kotokpa, but also in some of the new groups like the Pag-La-Yiri group in Burkina Faso and the Hounsa women group. Of course, the viability of such groups without such leaders may be questionable, but given the challenges that local people are facing in a continuously changing environment in Africa, their role is very important. This importance will even grow further with the necessity to provide a balance for central power in the various negotiations that will take place in decentralisation programmes in the near future. Leaders like Gandaho in Bonou will then continue to play a central role, with his background of former mayor and the knowledge acquired in that position, as well as his current learning of the national institutions and mechanisms through being the Chairman of the Union of Savings Groups (CREPs).

Power is, of course, sometimes corrosive of those who hold it. In that sense, it is important for the viability of the Bonou group, for example, that other leaders are prepared to take over. The people of Bonou are aware of this, and three or four other members are progressively taking more and more responsibilities, and frequently acting as spokesmen of the group in absence of the Chairman.

The Pag-La-Yiri group in Burkina Faso is less fortunate, given that Thérèse Kaboré, the driving force and powerful leader of the group, passed away in December 2000. Here, it is clear that none of the committee members has been prepared sufficiently to play the same role. Given its internal dynamic, the group will certainly survive, but it is hard to predict - although interesting to follow - which direction it might take in the near feature.

Another example is that of John, in the Dogbo Ahomè case. Although born in that village, he was a 'newcomer' after so many years of living abroad. He became a victim of the local power structure, and could not really act with the full attributes of a leader in the group he helped create. However, this change agent does seem to have the basic qualities of a leader: primarily vision, and the capacity to innovate and invent new strategies when facing new problems. As noted (in Chapter 10) that, having refused to give up after his misfortune and still very much determined to help the development process in his village, John is now trying to set up a group of young people to learn how to 'work with aluminium', as they are 'more open to change'.

Uphoff, Esman and Krishna (1998) have stressed that success in some programmes have depended heavily on the vision, energy steadfastness and skills of specific individuals, and on their persistence and perseverance in the face of early opposition and disappointments. This certainly applies to Thérèse Kaboré and to John.

Other forms of the driving force

As we have seen with the women group of Boursouma in Burkina Faso, also in the Kotokpa case in Benin - in that case apart from the material factors such as 'a cash crop selling well' - the driving force can also be linked with social recognition, pride and honour. We also remember how, in the Yamfo case, one of the former chiefs, declared - with a tinge of emotion - that in their place, *people have always been driven by love, peace and understanding*.

The logic question this raises is: *How is this possible in some places, and not in others?* This is what I asked Benoît Vigan, the chief of the Kotokpa village, on the occasion of the Adji feast on 17

August 1999, what was really the secret behind their success:

'Look my friend, he replied... It might have to do with that game, you know... We had some problems in the beginning because many people we did not know came to borrow... It was very difficult to get the money back! Otherwise, with 'our own people', there is no problem... First of all, when we are playing Adji, we chat about everything, that's how we learn about everyone. So, if somebody comes to ask an amount of credit he or she cannot pay, we just smile and give what the person can afford...Also, the game strengthens our ties and creates good trust and good atmosphere in the village... Let's take the example of the photo camera you are carrying. If one day a farmer in the village next to us buys it, his neighbour would just be jealous and might show his feelings in different ways... Here, the day I would see this with one of my people, I would ask him how he got it... and from that moment on, I would take the necessary steps to buy one too! It is rather a positive competition! '

That is indeed social capital creation, in the sense that the Adji game has progressively led to accumulation of various types of social, cultural, cognitive, institutional and related assets that increase the amount (or probability) of mutually beneficial co-operative behaviour (Uphoff, 1999).

Moreover, we can refer to the notion of closure introduced by Coleman (1988) to highlight The importance of social capital for the acquisition of human capital. For Coleman, quoted by Portes (1998), closure means the existence of sufficient ties between members of a group to guarantee the observance of norms. Closure, in fact, results from what Uphoff (1999) calls the cognitive part of social capital, 'deriving from mental processes and resulting ideas, and reinforced by culture and ideology, specifically *norms, values, attitudes and beliefs* that contribute to co-operative behaviour and mutually beneficial collective action'. Social closure reinforces the internal power system of local groups.

The two faces of power

From what is revealed by most of the cases, there are two aspects of the *power factor*: the manifestation of power inside the local organisations, and the power relations between the local organisations and other institutions in their environment.

The internal problems faced by the Bonou group in Benin, which were forcing the group to compromise with some influential members like Mêho or Akowé (Chapter 5, section 5.4) represented some illustrations of the first aspect. The Gbowimê case in Benin and the Sapone case in Burkina Faso illustrate the same aspect. The difficulties encountered by the Bonou group in running their Supreme Village Council (Chapter 5) and by the Kotokpa people who had to challenge the official *gendarmerie* to set up their own security system are good examples of the second aspect. Thanks to the strong ties between the members of such groups, the internal power system is quite collective and, therefore, strong enough to face challenges coming from external power systems. Otherwise, where this internal strength is lacking, paternalism, local power structures and adverse power experiences can prevent local people from changing their circumstances (Uphoff, Esman and Krishna, ibid.).

Another aspect of this issue, the influence of the traditional power system, will be discussed in a further section.

Bureaucracy is still the worst of all, and it kills creativity!

The first time I was faced with this issue was in fact the first time I met the Kotokpa group. Among the difficulties they were facing, they mentioned that they had not yet been able to register with the extension services, one of the reasons being the fact that they only had seven people in their management committee, whereas the rules required a minimum of nine!

Another case was encountered in the village of Hounsa, in the case of the women's group for cassava processing. The only man to be a member was the Secretary, because he was 'French-literate' and one of the conditions to benefit from the support from the extension service and related projects is that the group reports should be written in French. Knowing that the group was engaged in a literacy programme, trying hard to learn how to write in their own language, I found this rather inconsistent. Moreover, this (only) man was more or less breaking the homogeneity (and the dynamism) of the group. We noticed several times during our discussions with the group how some of the women, when replying to our questions, looked at him as if seeking his approval. I raised this once, very discretely, when discussing various other issues with the Chair Lady... Her comments were very clear, as if she had been expecting that I would come out with the remark one day:

'We are very much aware of that problem... The man has even started to cheat us. We used to hire out to other village groups the cassava mill we have acquired. It is mounted on a hand-cart and is quite heavy to carry; so he is the one in charge, but sometimes he works in some villages and instead of bringing the money to the group, he puts it in his pocket and adds gasoline in the tank just to replace the quantity used! So, we are working on the issue, don't worry!'

I started worrying anyway, as this was an eye opener for me about how bureaucratic concerns could disturb the operation of local organisations, until I got a lesson in wisdom from Kojo Appiah, former chairman of the Yamfo Funeral Committee:

'Until very recently, I have been Chairman of that committee... from the beginning, which means for more than twenty years!... The thing is that here I know everyone very well, I know who is who, and people trust me and respect me. Although I am not literate, all the books are here, not with the Treasurer... When I give anyone some money to buy anything the group needs, I tell the person 'Please, bring the receipt', although I cannot read it! (Big laugh...)...In the evening, when my kids are back from school, I would ask them to read the receipt for me to check if this corresponds to the amount I've given; you see... From time to time I pass everything on to the Treasurer and the Secretary to do 'their writings'!...'

On the whole, local development dynamics need flexibility; in other words, they cannot afford excessive formalisation or too much bureaucracy.
Back to Kumasi after that visit, I happened by chance to meet a Ghanaian professor with whom I discussed the issue. In his conclusion, he went straight ahead to state the following:

'Yes, too much formalisation kills creativity!... You know, when you see a car passing by on the road with a man and woman on board, laughing and apparently enjoying themselves,... most of the time, they are not officially married!'

He was, of course, wise enough talking about 'too much formalisation'!...

In Chapter 10, we have seen what the Lonlonhoun group members think about periodically renewing their management committee members, as the group does not need to be registered to perform its drumming. They simply do not see the necessity to replace a committee member 'when the person has not done anything wrong'. We can question the viability of such a system. However we have to take into consideration the objectives of the local organisation and the extent to which it is difficult - or not - to learn how to hold any effective position in the committee and for other people to take over whenever necessary.

The worse part of bureaucracy is government bureaucracy, as we have seen with the Kansounkpa case and the Djavi case in Benin, and, in Ghana, with the Adidwan co-operative and the Dodome group.

We can recognise here the role of the State which has been described by Nuijten (1988) as a 'hope-generating machine.'

The two Benin cases belong to a specific phase in the country's history: the Marxism-Leninism period which was characterised by strong governmental influence on farmers' organisations through a centralised planning system (Vodouhè, 1996). During that period, civil servants 'established' many co-operatives instead of letting them emerge.

This period also had some impact on development activities in Sèdjè Dénou (Chapter 10), in the area of creation of co-operatives, with the SONADER as an umbrella organisation. Local land-owners had their land expropriated for the establishment of co-operatives; areas of land were zoned for cash cropping and for subsistence crops; local administrative structures were installed, rural roads built... Opinions are divided about the achievements of this period, but as for the Sèdjè Dénou village, where there were successes, it has to be said that they were largely due to the traditional spirit of solidarity within that local community.

11.3   Patterns across the three countries

'Economy of affection' and egalitarian society

Two decades ago, Goran Hyden (1981, 1983) had already pointed out that, in Africa, *traditional' institutions are no longer intact, but nor are they 'capitalist'*, stressing that they are characterised by an alternative economy which is based on the principles of reciprocity and affinity: *the economy of affection.*

As explained in the introduction to this book, the post-independence period in Africa has been characterised by a rush to modernization, with the primary focus on the emancipation of the individual rather than on the transformation of social structures (Hyden, op. cit.). Contrary to the modernisation approach, the economy of affection is based on networks in which people are connected by blood, kin, community and other affinities, and which are operating the physical limits of the community. Very often, these networks, organised from village level, include natives who have moved to the cities and the Diaspora. They form a kind of solidarity chain, where people help each other in various circumstances, and invest in social and economical activities.

According to Hyden, the economy of affection helps members of the community to cope with uncertainty whether caused by nature or placed upon them by outside individuals or institutions. These networks of relatives and friends mobilise an important amount of resources through loans provisions as well as on the occasion of social events like weddings or burials.

Besides, rural people, in particular, retain respectful links with traditional institutions, which serve as essential points of reference.

Goran Hyden (ibid.) mentioned that the economy of affection was flourishing because of the weakening of the state. These trends seem to be still valid today.

A general pattern deriving from the cases in the three countries is the great emphasis on communal values. The sense of community that characterises social relations among individual members of the society is an enduring feature on which have been stressed by many authors (Kwame Gyekye, 1996). During the field visits, while telling the stories of their groups, farm-

ers in each of the three countries often referred to the same proverbs and maxims, related to important values such as humanity, brotherhood, and solidarity:

> Some of the (African) proverbs and maxims quoted by the farmers in their statements during the research:
>
> *When descending from heaven, a person descends into a human society* (community spirit);
>
> *One finger cannot lift up anything* (solidarity);
> *The left arm washes the left arm and the right arm washes the left one* (mutual helpfulness).

This appears in fact as a confirmation of a general attitude which characterises the egalitarian approach based on mutuality and participation (Etzioni, 1993, quoted by Hood, 1998), with a general philosophy aiming (ideally) at not allowing inequalities among people, at least to some extent.

Some of the criticisms of the egalitarian systems question the high amount of time and energy necessary to cope with the endless face-to-face meetings required for decision-making, and the suitability of such management systems for the complexity of modern life (Hood, ibid.). This is to underestimate the capacity of these systems to adapt to changing situations. The case of the Adji Club in Kotokpa (Benin) is a modest but instructive example of how local people can adapt cultural and social factors to economic activities in line with their evolving needs in a continuously challenging environment.

This is also an indication that there are apparently some new trends nowadays, compared to the situation described twenty years ago by Hyden (ibid.). For him, one critical feature of the economy of affection was its diverting of a vast amount of resources, of which consequence was ' to hold back the development of a local capitalist class which could have led to a modern economic system'. What we are witnessing today is rather a kind of hybridization between the traditional settings of the economy of affection and new forms of economy-oriented cooperatives (Vodouhè, 1996). This is clear with many of the groups visited, among others, the Fufuo Group in Ghana, the Sapone and the AJDS groups in Burkina Faso and also with the Bonou and Kotokpa groups in Benin. Most of these groups are commendable for their economic performance, but the various ways they are managing their activities and solving conflicts are rooted in local norms and values.

There is, however, another side of the coin, as some shortcomings which manifest themselves through the power system and through jealousy, can be seen as weak points of this type of community life.

Tradition is not always beautiful: the weakness of strong ties

The social balance as desirable in the community is more or less maintained through the traditional power system, and this brings some limitations with it. As described earlier (Chapter 10), the Sèdjè Dénou case in Benin and that of the Youth Association (AJDS) in Burkina Faso clearly suggest that the respect of tradition can have its negative side, and hamper some development initiatives. In other words, traditional ties can have their weaknesses. That is *the dark side of social capital* (Schulman and Anderson, 1999). It is important to be aware *that tradition is not always beautiful*. It is unfortunate, but, indeed, 'not everybody is *driven by love, peace and understanding*' (Arders, *personal communication*, 2001). Even in the Yamfo village, Ghana, which this statement refers to, the old chief was talking about the past; today the development dynamic is declining, as change is difficult due to the strength of the power system.

Another factor hampering change at community level is jealousy. As seen in the Kotokpa case, in Benin, revitalising the cradle and social settings, through the Adji feasts, for example, can be very useful in maintaining a spirit of co-operation and in mobilising people for development activities. The result of this, as expressed earlier by the village chief, is that the Kotokpa people do not really suffer from jealousy. In other cases like Bonou, the various events 'shaking the pirogue', as mentioned by the chairman (Chapter 7, section 7.2.2), include clear attempts to pull down the local leaders because of jealousy, and in fact, it is collective action which is helping them to cope. Their example and others like the one of the AJDS in Burkina Faso (Chapter 10), suggest that it is easier to overcome the jealousy and the traditional feudality inherent to some egalitarian situations when people get organised to *grow together.*

The danger of cultural erosion
Strong traditional ties, as discussed in the section above, can hamper initiatives for change. Similarly the process known as cultural erosion, when it leads to the release of productive resources and energies to the benefit of stakeholders or sub-groups like women groups or the rural youth, cannot be judged negatively. However, the gradual loss of key cultural tenets may be blamed on the erosive influence of money. The growth of the cash economy has introduced a new element into people's behaviour and their relationships. Where solidarity was once a normal routine in people's life, now it has been devalued by being given - thankfully only in part - a monetary value into their relationships and exchanges. My last visit to the Kpetoe group of weavers (Chapter 10, section 10.2.3) was quite illustrative in that respect, as reported as follows:

Tell him he would have to pay!
I had visited several times, since 1997, the Kpetoe group of kente weavers, near Ho, in Ghana. When my last visit was announced by the local extension officer, the message I got back was - to my surprise: 'Tell him he would have to pay!'. The extension officer explained that following a recent meting, the group had decided not to allow anymore ' all these free visits' which used to take too much of their time...
By chance, the next day, thanks to the extension supervisor at commune level who was in the village the day after, the group happened to know that I was the visitor... The situation then quickly changed as I used to tell them some stories about similar groups in Benin or Burkina Faso... I was most welcome, and moreover, at the end of my visit I even got a kente scarf weaved with a warm ' Welcome to Ghana'.
It s important to stress, to the credit of the group, that they are very much right about the amount of time wasted with foreigners' visits. Nonetheless, their decision to get paid by visitors (other than professional weavers, see Chapter 10, section 10.2.3) was a completely new development.

Historical background and cultural patterns leading to specific development conditions...
The differences in the colonial histories of the three countries covered by this research have undoubtedly influenced cultural practices and values from situation to situation. Comparing Ghana - a former British colony - to Benin and Burkina Faso, both former French colonies (Chapter 2), the impact of direct rule on the one side, and of the indirect rule on the other, on local cultures has been discussed. In that respect, in Ghana, chiefdoms and the cultural institutions around them continue, quite openly, to play an important role as they are officially connected to the central administration. When things go wrong, as currently in the case of the Yamfo village, the power he has in that formal network of course helps the local chief against the local people (Chapter 9).
Comparing Benin and Burkina Faso, one can see interesting features at play which lead to local cultures taking differing paths, although previously exposed to the same colonial power. The

strength and the centralised mode of operation of the Mossi Empire, for example, had a profound impact on the way people respected traditional authority and co-operated in terms of solidarity. This was confirmed by the farmers during the validation workshop in Sapone, when we were discussing which symbol to choose to represent the *norms and values* factor. Instead of the well known Sapone hat, they preferred the horse symbolising the Mossi Empire: that seemed to be what really links them together...

Meanwhile, in Benin, there are indications that the democratisation process is playing a role, helping people to challenge traditional power wherever necessary and whenever possible.

In Ghana, a unique economical crisis of the 1980s and the Sankofa movement for returning 'Back to the local...' values, both drew on and enriched the cultural specificities of that nation and the well recognised ability of the Ghanaians to fend for themselves. One clear feature of the crisis is the ever increasing number of the Ghanaian 'shoemakers' - in fact 'shoe-repairers' - in most of West African countries, making a lot of money from the (apparently) insignificant '50 FCFA' they receive from each individual client. It may seem unbelievable but with the money they are making, some shoemakers own and rent out small flats or even houses in Accra or Kumasi! Such trends have clearly emerged and they reflect a diversity of cultural foundations and forces at play in local dynamics, even though each of the three countries may have, simultaneously, been following the same path of state centralisation - with differing results.

As explained in Chapter 2, although Benin and Burkina Faso had followed comparable paths with their 'revolutionary regimes', in the 1970s and 1980s, the room for manoeuvre left to local initiatives and NGOs by the central power in Burkina Faso has allowed local organisations to flourish. However, the different dimension observed in Benin is that the democratisation process is leading, through the farmers' unions, and the savings groups unions - among others - to the structuring, at different levels, of the basic constituencies of a real civil society. However, whether in Benin, or in Burkina Faso or in Ghana, the remaining question is how (even the most) successful local development groups could go beyond their immediate environment and leverage change. In other words, we do not have sufficient understanding about the possibilities of the local organisations to contribute to development (Holmén and Jirström, 1994).

11.4   Which way from local successes to sustainable development?

The first issue to question here is how far we should go trying to define what is development. According to van Dusseldorp (1993), there is no agreement on what is meant by development. For him, the problems with the development concept are well described by Apter (1987), when he says that development 'is a term that means many different things to many different people... and is loaded with ideological assumptions... (that) can be expressed as faith, science or both'. Van Dusseldorp (op. cit.) also refers to Bryant and White (1982), who define development as 'a process for evolving the capacity to influence one's own future'. This converges with the view expressed by Ki-Zerbo (1992) who stressed the endogenous character of development, in any part of the world. His now famous sentence *'On ne développe pas, on se développe'* (*No one can develop you, you only develop yourself*)[45] has become the motto of the African Centre of Development Studies which he has created. In the same vein, Conyers and Hills (1984) refer to

development as a state of human well-being rather than the state of the notional economy. They went further, defining three perspectives for sustainable development:
- the *economic perspective*, which is related to production or output oriented activities, particularly with the commercial or monetary aspects involved;
- the *social perspective* which reflects the more general well-being of individuals or groups of people;
- the *political perspective* which concerns the distribution of power between different groups or individuals, particularly the power to control, or make decisions about, the use of resources.

They also recognise that these three perspectives are not only related to each other, but also to more global one, the *environmental perspective*, concerning the physical or natural environment within which development occurs.

The new concepts of development, according to Conyers and Hills (ibid), are then characterised by relatively less concern with the quantity of production, with the use of indicators such as income per capita or the rate of growth, than with the non-economic aspects of development. Increasingly, the emphasis is put on social, political and environmental considerations, not only individually, but more and more integrated. The economic rationality is severely challenged by concepts such as *integrated human development* (Sachs, 1981), and even more by the ecological rationality which 'requires redesigning our institutions and other forms of collective action that are currently informed by economics' (Röling, 2000).

What we have learnt from the farmers' vision during this research confirms that development is certainly about change, but change leading to an improved situation desired by the people. In the southern part of Benin, most of the villagers refer to what we call 'development' as *'nunkonyiyi'*, which is 'moving forward', from their current situation to a better one. The Chairman of the Bonou group (Chapter 5) always put it clearly: 'We are looking for opportunities which can help us move ahead in the activities we have launched'.

It is also striking that among the problems mentioned by farmers as development constraints, very few were directly linked with technology. The majority concerned general welfare, social and other support services (drinking water, health centres, microfinance services), basic equipment and marketing. Many groups which have been covered by this research are organised around such activities... When agricultural technology was specifically concerned, the constraints expressed were, for example, more related to farming systems than to high yields. Besides, many cases studied in this research - such as the *Mialébouni* women association (Chapter 12) - show the political dimension of change as it is desired by local people, who also see their collective action as a way to get a voice. This leads one to think that the human development approach[46] is the one closest to these farmers' development vision, but moreover, that defining their development orientation or priorities can be facilitated by others but it remains their responsibility.

As Ki-Zerbo (1992) stated, 'to develop yourself is to go down a road you have chosen yourself, using specific inputs you borrow from outside, as part of your overall project of self-edification'. To be able to harmoniously integrate individual and/or collective objectives with internal and external resources, is something that requires appropriate relationships with others. This leads to support (Holmén and Jirström, 1994) who consider that 'most people can agree that no matter how development is defined, it is to a large degree a matter of organization'. From the outcomes of this research it appears that the most successful local organisations are

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45 First published in an article in the FAO journal CERES, 1968
46 UNDP: 1990 to date.

those with the ownership of their development process, where this is (mostly) locally driven and people collectively empowered (Chapters 5 to 10). Those which could get support - at least for some activities - like the Bonou and the Kotokpa groups (Chapters 5 and 6), or the Sapone association (Chapter 8) show a real potential for development.

The question is then how to establish efficient linkages with these organisations for joint planning and implementation of their development vision, where partner institutions should act as catalysts or facilitators (NGO Committee CGIAR, 1999), to lead to sustainable development.

Figure 11.1 helps to recapitulate what we have learnt so far from the insight into the local development dynamics, and on the remaining - linkages - question.

Triggering Factor

Cradle

Time Factor   Ownership (Locally owned)

Norms and Values   Catalytic – Sustainable
                                                 Linkages   Development

Driving Force   – Locally-driven

Power Factor   – 'Collectively' empowered

Linking Factor   – Adequately linked
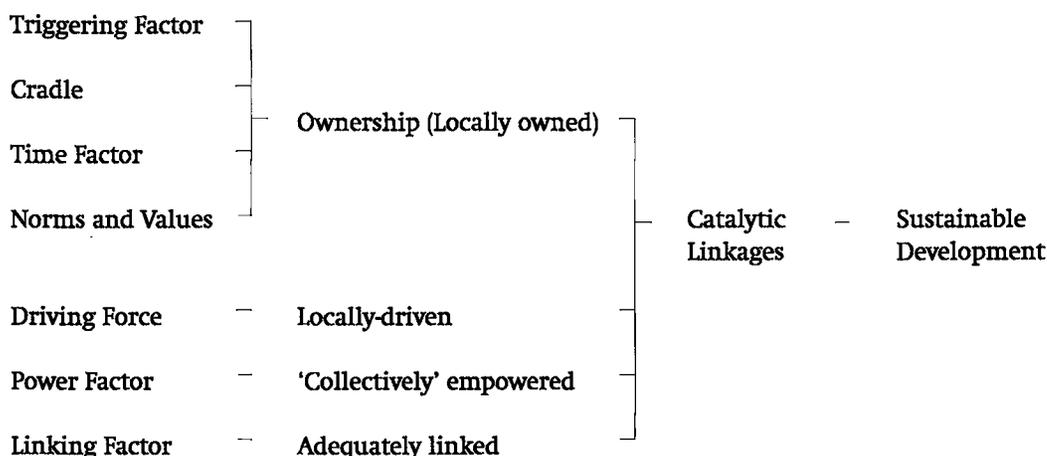
Figure 11.1 How could local dynamics lead to Sustainable Development?

11.5   Taking the next step: about linking to impact...

This research has led to the identification of two main patterns about linking or scaling up - vertical movement - and/or *scaling out* - horizontal movement. Some cases have shown how linking can be 'killing', while others have confirmed that many local initiatives need support to make adequate impact, otherwise even the best of them may remain small 'islands of success' (Scoones, 1997). The Sapone case in Burkina Faso, and the Bonou case in Benin, and many others show how the appropriate use of outside resources can help strengthen local development action. On the other hand, the young farmers in Aplahoué (Benin) has been completely pulled down because it has too much support. As a result, all the work they are currently doing just allows them to pay back the loans they got because of their earlier success.

This helps understand the slow approach followed by the Adji Club members in Kotokpa (Chapter 6). The steps taken to gradually scale up their rural finance system are being entirely driven by themselves, so that they can stay fully in charge. Apparently, they do not want to go faster in linking with formal institutions. Experiences have shown that local organisations can be (rightly) cautious about linkages. However, due to the development potential of grassroots initiatives, it is a challenge for decision makers and donor agencies to design the best suitable

and specific ways - depending on national and local conditions - to bridge with them, for greater impact of development programmes.

We are now at a time where discussions are growing about the necessity to scale up and/or scale out local successes in order to spread their benefits more widely, and the possibility is being explored to incorporate this objective into the project design (CGIAR/NGO Committee, 1999). We should avoid however creating a new generation of development projects, where both implementation and further expansion are planned without full involvement and commitment of all the actors concerned.

During previous steps of the research, two situations have been seen which seemed to be potential examples as how linking could materialise in order to progressively scale up and scale out local development dynamics: the Union of the *Naam* groups of farmers in Ouahigouya in Burkina Faso, and the PADES development project in Dogbo, Benin. It was therefore decided to briefly explore them in order to suggest at least some general principles as to envisaging effective linkages.

As will be explained in the next chapter, the Kombi-Naam is a traditional youth group quite popular in the Yatenga province in Burkina Faso. The merit of the founders of what can be called today the Naam movement has been to use their creativity to build a local development programme on this pre-exiting social groups.

The PADES development project in Benin is a Dutch founded project implemented with the technical assistance of SNV. The process followed by the project is quite remarkable: it started with the promotion of local farmers' groups, then supported the networking and federation of groups operating in same areas, and, finally, helped to establish dialogue mechanisms between the groups' representatives and public administration for planning and implementation of development activities.

These two last cases represent the fourth learning cycle which can be summarised as follows:

Phase Components	4th Learning Cycle (LC4): Exploring Conditions for Wider Impact
Objective	Assessing the Key Factors limiting impact (from LC3)
Methods / Techniques	2 additional group observations Same Techniques as for LC3
Nodes for reflection	Bottlenecks, then requirements for desirable impact
Outcomes	Conditions for Wider Impact (Catalytic Partnerships)

Table 11.2 Moving to the Fourth Learning Cycle

Chapter 12

Exploring conditions for wider impact

12.1   Overview
12.2   The Union of Naam Groups in Burkina Faso
12.3   The PADES Project in Dogbo, Benin
12.4   Outcomes: Catalytic Partnerships for greater impact

12.1   Overview

One of the major concerns with local development dynamics, as introduced in Chapter 11 (Section 11.3), is the issue of impact: even for the most successful of dynamics, the question is how they can really contribute to sustainable development. In other words, how to channel and harness endogenous sources of growth for sustainable development still remains a main challenge (Mehmet, 1995).

The *Naam* Union of farmers' groups in Burkina Faso is interesting from that perspective. Their mode of organisation is quite remarkable: from individual groups at village level, through unions at province *(département)* level, up to the federation at national level, and with impact in some other (Sahelian) countries. Linkages with development partners are built at the federation level.

The second example, PADES, a Dutch-funded rural development project in Benin, illustrates how intervention can promote and catalyse local groups and, furthermore, help bridge them with public institutions and resources in order to achieve greater impact.
It is important to stress that these two (last) cases were not studied in depth. They were simply explored briefly to give a general view on how linkages between and with local organisations could work.

The PADES case in particular has been analysed as a joint activity between local organisations and a development intervention agency, in order to assesss the basic requirements of this type of partnerships.

The current chapter gives an account of this overall exploration.

12.2   The Union of Naam Groups in Burkina Faso

'The tandem of Culture and Development cannot be dismantled: being rooted in you and your own is, generally speaking, the first condition for the development of a living structure. This is certainly the case for the Mossi farmers' groups of Burkina Faso known as the *Kombi Naam or Naam*[47]...

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47 Naam, in the mooré language, means (collective) power, or chiefdom. By extension and since time immemorial, the name has been given to temporary groups and associations which bring together, at given times of the year, the men and women, young and old, of the village, to carry out collectively the agricultural and educational tasks of the community.

Based on the cultural tradition of solidarity in sharing work and young people's education, the Naam have survived the colonial era and the introduction of monetarised exchanges. It is said that the Naam are the engine of rural solidarity... However, when the Sahelian countryside was seriously threatened by drought and desertification this engine did not funcion too well. This was the case until (Bernard Lédéa Ouédraogo)... together with a motivated team and technical advisors living in the field decided not to 'do away with the past' but to use it instead to help the village level to develop itself. All of a sudden, the Naam grew at a remarkable rate, building up their capacity to innovate and to mobilise.'

This is how the *L'Harmattan* publishing house introduces the book by Bernard Lédéa Ouédraogo (1990) on the organisaion and operation of the *Naam* groups. Although evaluation reports are not (publicly) available on that development experience, and although there are quite divergent opinions about its overall management - partly due to the political involvement of the leaders - the impact of the whole organisation in the development of members and their environment is widely recognised (Krishna, Uphoff and Esman, 1997).

12.2.1   The Kombi-Naam, a truly traditional organisation.

As the President of the Federation of *Naam* groups, Lédéa Ouédraogo (1990), has explained, the *Kombi-Naam* is an association of young men and women from the same village, or from a group of neighbourhoods, and of the same age ranges (20-35 for the males and 13-20 for the girls.) It reflects in miniature the political structure of the traditional Mossi society, with elected representatives sharing the various tasks to be implemented. The main leader of the association is the Kombi Naaba.
Once or twice a week, the members of the *Naam* (also known as the Nabiisi) work together in the fields of those villagers who have requested it, hoeing and harvesting away to the sound of the *tam-tam*.

The payment, which depends on the amount of work, was always in kind: some quantity of millet or groundnuts, or a few baskets of cotton, but nowadays, the payment is done in cash. The association only lasts one year, until the end of the cropping season. Then, a Naam feast is organised, for two or three days, and the youth of neighbouring villages are invited.

An important aspect here is that the bonds of solidarity which have been tied between the young villagers continue even after the dispersal of the group. In the next agricultural season, other *Naam* groups will be formed, but not always with the same members. These groups serve then essentially to weave a strong pattern of social cohesion between the members; at the same time, they have a real function in initiating people to collective management and discipline, as well as to other aspects of life.

12.2.2   From the Kombi Naam to the Naam as a Farmers' Group

The real stroke of genius which the founders of the *Naam* movement had was to graft an organisation with economic interests onto the achievements of a social organisation with which everyone in the community was familiar.

The transition from the Kombi Naam to the Naam Farmers' Group was a gradual one, and it took place with the assent of the elders who were convinced of the need to adapt their traditional social organisation in order to face current economic needs.

Apart from the coordination of the group's activities, the first leader, now called chairman, has to establish relationships with administrative and legal authorities at the district level. He is assisted by a management committee which comprises four other members including a secretary and a treasurer.

Training was gradually provided to members of the management committee, to help them deal with the complexity of their new functions. This was done as and when necessary, and at their request. Mr M. Ouedraogo, the very impressive and influential founder, is very proud of this approach, and loves to recall that 'Nothing is better than training that has been asked for!'.

All the Naam groups from the same province (*or Département*) form a Union of Naams, and above, is the Federation, comprising all the unions, with a management committee of twelve members, chaired by Bernard Ledea Ouedraogo, the founder of the new system.

Each Naam group organises its own field activities, with technical support from the union level, while some financial or co-operation matters, which cannot be dealt with by the union committee, fall into the domain of the federation.

12.2.3 The Naam organisation at work

As explained in Chapter 10, the Activities in the village bank of Somiaga is one of the traditional savings and credit banks (*Banques Traditionnelles d'Epargne et de Crédit, BTEC*) which were created by the *Naam* grouping. These local institutions are indeed very popular, their regular activities re quite well managed by the local people, and the net income is contributing to social investment, mainly to schools and heath centres. The creative way the credit system is monitored in the various compounds has been described earlier, based on the fact that people cannot stand the shame to be seen as debtors.

We have also mentioned that the non-recognition of the BTEC by the Ministry of Finance has recently led to their closure, according to a law passed in 1994. Apparently, this bureaucracy problem could also be due to lack of efficiency and transparency at the level of the Naam Federation.

The farmers we met in the village of Sodin definitely identify themselves with the new system. Thanks to this, they have had access to additional resources through the union and the federation, and built a large dam which has helped them to restart their market gardening and livestock production in the village.
The Chairman of one of the local Naam, Mr Porgo Isso, explains the difference between the past and the present:

Previously, the Naam just lasted for a year. After the harvest, we all ate and drank, singing and dancing, and then it was all over. Of course, we got a few sacks of millet from it, but not much more...

When Bernard (Bernard Lédéa Ouédraogo) and his people came to train us to improve things, we told each other that we had first of all to deal with the lack of rainfall. The land we are walking on now was empty at that time. Today, thanks to funding obtained through the good offices of the Union of Somiaga and the Federation, we have got this large dam in front of you. It is benefiting all the villages around us, with lots of vegetables growing; the livestock are happier and the owners too!

When we started the new organisation, we were 120 members, about 90 men and 30 women, then gradually (monsan monsan, he said), there were 3 Naam groups in our village with 200 members, with a coordinating committee at village level which I chair. We all have our own fields, and collective ones too - mainly of millet and groundnut. The strength of the Naam is unity and solidarity, based on the legacy from the old system.
The only problem here is that we do not have a health centre. We got the building three years ago, but since then, no nurse and no equipment... this no doubt has to do with high politics!'.

At that stage, the group started laughing and hiding their faces - including my interpreter - but there was no way I could learn more about this problem, unless I spent more time in that village which was not possible.

I tried again the next day, while visiting the headquarters of the Union, in Somiaga, which supervises the Naam groups of 38 villages, including Sodin. However, I could not get any additional information, apart from a general statement - although apparently full of conviction - from the Chairman, Mr Sawadogo, when I asked about a possible duplication of effort between the union and the federation committees:

'You see, at federation level, we have the founder and his team of people who hold the offices for general coordination, co-operation and funding, at the central level. As for the rest, in the Union, it comes down to working damned hard together, and providing training and animating community groups!'

There can be no doubt that the Somiaga dam, with a capacity of more than 300,000 m³, is one of the achievements that the entire Naam organisation can be proud of. More than anything else it is the result of a strong degree of local community mobilisation and of the efficiencies achieved through 'scaling up'. The initial period of work, from November 1982 to December 1984 (Ouédraogo, 1990), saw the construction of a 400 m³ spillway and the installation and filling of the 'gabions': in all, 1,920 m³ of stones and rocks were used. This phase was essentially run by the grassroots Naam groups, under the coordination of the Union and the Federation, and it benefitted from a very high degree of mobilisation of the local community. It was estimated that 35,740 man-days were invested in this phase. The following phase, involving earthworks moving 11,600 m³ and the building of the dyke, was carried out with machines, thanks to funding obtained by the Federation. The whole project then really worked out as a joint venture which would have not been possible without the *scaling up* of the village Naam groups, and the subsequent access to international development resources.

12.2.4   Linking with similar organisations and with international development partners: the 'Six S'

In several countries neighbouring Burkina Faso, traditional organisations similar to those of the Naam have always existed, with comparable structures and styles of operation (Ki-Zerbo,

1963): the *Samari* in Niger, the *Toh Fah* and the *Fah Dja* in Mali, to mention but two. It was in an attempt to pool their efforts in the campaign against the droughts of the 1970s that the leaders of the organisations brought together a number of synergies. With the support of the Swiss development co-operation agency, they created the 'Six S' association in 1976. 'Six-S' stands for '*Se Servir de la Sécheresse en Saison Sèche au Sahel*', that is, 'Making use of the Dry Season in the Savannah and the Sahel'. The name explains the objective, namely the associate members' intention to support village groups in their efforts to capitalise on the potential for undertaking development work during the region's long dry season, which lasts for six to nine months (Lecomte and Krishna, 1997). The association comprised Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Mauritania, as well as Niger, Senegal and Togo, and existed until the end of the 1990s. The administrative seat was based in Geneva, and the executive office in Ouahigouya, in Burkina Faso.

Within a short period the *Six-S* has grown into an international programme helping 3,000 groups located in 1,500 villages in West Africa.

> 'Through *Six-S*, latent human resources are harnessed to combat the poverty and drought that force many of the able-bodied, rural residents to migrate to towns... These resources are used, instead, to build dams, wells, dikes, to plant vegetable gardens and trees, to construct roads and schools, and to establish savings as well as grain banks. Literacy and health care are important components of the development package, which in each case, is determined by every village for itself. In all activities, Six-S emphasizes the primacy of local capabilities and needs.'
>
> (Lecomte and Krishna, 1997)

12.2.5 The impact of the Naam organisation

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, we have tried here to explore briefly some examples of organisations, the analysis of which could give some suggestions of how to examine the linkages between local dynamics and support institutions with a view to achieving greater impact. The results of the Naam system would seem to be incontestable at this level, thanks to the degree of their social cohesion and the spirit of solidarity which have been ensured by the judicious way in which these new organisations, with economic goals, have been anchored in the traditional system of organisation. The achievements of the Somiaga dam is one illustration of this, as well as the relative success of village banks.

The organisation is not, however, without its share of difficulties. The freezing of the local banks (which may have been lifted by now) is in part due to the fact that the announcement of technical services was not followed up quickly enough by decisions at the level of the Federation. The frequency of coordination meetings is not at the desired level, possibly due to lack of time, as the Chairman of the Federation was until recently the Mayor of Ouahigouya, the fourth biggest town of the country. It is not clear whether this position has to do with the political struggle around the heath centre project in the Sodin village...

Anyhow, everything seems to suggest that the system would have an even greater impact if the efficiency of the central coordination body could be improved, and if decision-making power could be decentralised to a greater degree towards the technical services of the Federation and towards the Unions.

Our most recent exchanges with the President of the Federation have convinced us that he was aware of these difficulties: he was thinking of dropping his mayoral responsibilities at the next election, in order to better devote himself to his organisation. However, according to the latest information received, things have indeed changed. It seems that he stood for election, but was not elected. It may be that this was tactical, with him not wanting to disappoint his voters by not standing. The question then arises if he will still have the same power of negotiation on behalf of his organisation, and even if he will have the same degree of influence within it. It is much too early to say, but our reflection on 'scaling out' and 'scaling up' has benefitted greatly from the most profound analysis and words of wisdom in the interview which Professor Joseph Sanou graciously gave us at the end of our visit:

'Of course the grassroots groups should gradually link up with the central structures, but against this there will be the danger that the central power authority will control everything...

M. Ovedraogo was really successful... until the time he became Mayor... That's when things started to go wrong. When he was elected as a deputy, since he was not allowed to hold two positions concurrently, he wanted to give up his position as Mayor - as deputies have parliamentary immunity and a certain freedom of expression - but he was instructed to remain Mayor...

The problem is how to avoid all of this. When he is no longer Mayor, as he now plans, he could no doubt take over his movement again. If this does not happen, then the Naam, no matter their successes, will be like a dynamic force that did not run its course to the full, a dynamic that was stopped during its evolution...

Every people in the world developed themselves on the basis of what they had and what they were... If Africa could build upon its own dynamics, and organise exchanges to strengthen each other, then one day there would be a Big Bang and off it would go!... But that will require us no longer looking primarily to the outside world but looking first at ourselves... to develop exchanges... Unfortunately, the process of decentralisation, which was supposed to assist this, is not catching, because of the limits of our political systems... '

(Ouagadougou, January 2000)

12.3   The PADES[48] project in Dogbo, Benin

12.3.1   Introduction

'We now attend the same meetings as our husbands, to discuss development issues of our district... and some of us even drive a car!', said Ahouefa, one of the women leaders of the Mialebouni Association during my first visit to their group. The confidence exuding from that declaration was a clear indication that this Dutch-funded development project did really make a change.

The main merit of the project is not of course about driving cars - that is just a symbol. It lies in the process approach of the intervention: during a first period, the project helped local farmers' groups to emerge in various priority areas which had been identified with the rural communities at the beginning of the project, the PADES phase. During a second period, the institutional development - or PADIC[49] - phase, coupled with the local administration - or

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48 PADES - Mono: Projet d'Appui au Développement in the Sous-Préfectures of Mono.
49 PADIC - Dogbo : Projet d'Appui au Développement Institutionnel in the Commune of Dogbo

PALO[50] - phase, the local groups got the necessary support to organise linking activities around common areas of concern. Through an appropriate training programme, aimed at strengthening local capacities and building on local knowledge, they were able to gradually constitute real bargaining power and to engage in negotiation and partnership with both public and private institutions at district level. That last step ended up finally with their strong involvement in the design and the adoption of a District Development Plan for the next ten years.

12.3.2 The starting point and the first activities

The PADES project, funded by the Dutch government and implemented by SNV, is in fact the continuation of an earlier co-operation project (the PEMR[51]), started in 1987, between the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences (FSA) of the National University of Benin, SNV and CARDER-Mono[52], and which could be considered as a pilot phase (PADES/SNV, 1994). The overall objective of the intervention is to contribute to poverty alleviation in three Districts in the Mono province, South of Benin: Dogbo, Toviklin and Lalo. The strategy of the project in the early years was encourage the emergence of professional groups around common interests, instead of the collective agricultural production as per the Benin Revolution period.

The results of the pilot phase were encouraging enough to embark into a second phase (1990 -1993), co-funded with the European Economic Commission and into a transition phase (1993 -1995) funded only by the Dutch partner.

During these initial periods, a total of 90 professional and income-generating groups had emerged, with an average of 10 to 15 members per group. The main areas of activity were crop production, livestock (mainly sheep, goats and poultry), crop processing and marketing. Three savings and credit groups were also formed. Furthermore, 25 village committees were created to mobilise the population for communal labour. This led to the support of the project in helping the local communities to meet some of their priority social needs. Between 1998 and 1994, 5 village health centres, 10 water supply units, 80 latrines were installed, and a good part of the network of local roads was repaired. The project provided both organisational and financial support, while technical support was mostly assured through the official technical services locally available.

An evaluation commissioned by the European Commission in 1993 pointed to the following positive aspects:

- the approach was relevant to local farmers promoting their own development;
- there is a well-applied strategy of action-research which ensured the participation of the 'target group' and the inclusion of local knowledge, as well as encouraging a counter-power
- the activities which had been supported by the project led to an improvement in the quality of life of the local community, and strengthened community infrastructure, even though the achievements remained modest in relation to the size of the needs.

At the end of that phase, the impact of the project was nonetheless somewhat limited, given the explosive growth in the number of local community groups and village committees which requested the project's support. As a result, in order to continue its activities, the project had to revise its strategy of intervention.

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50 PALO : Local Administrative Process
51 PEMR : Studies in the living environment
52 CARDER Mono, the Regional Office for Rural Development for the Mono Province.

12.3.3 The activities of the third phase (1995-1999)

As mentioned earlier, the area of intervention of the PADES project is the Southern part of the Mono province, the districts of Dogbo, Toviklin and Lalo, with emphasis on Dogbo and Toviklin. For this research we focussed on the Dogbo district, which belongs to the agro-ecological zone of *terres de barre*, and is populated by the ethnic group Adja-Dogbo, while Toviklin, which is part of the lowlands zone and has better soils, is populated by the ethnic group called Adja-Ehoué.

As the farmers explained, in the case of the Adja-Ehoué people both women and men are very good farmers, which makes, as the rumours say, the dowry very expensive in that region! *'When you marry a Adja-Ehoué woman*, they said, *you have two good farmers in the house!'*. On the contrary, most of the Adja-Dogbo women do not farm. They are occupied mainly with small business and crop processing activities, which can make them more dependent on their husbands unless they have a small capital at hand. This explains, as women have been identified as a priority target in the project, why there is an emphasis, in the Dogbo region, on the women crop processing groups.

However, in general, crop production is still the main activity, although a number of households get the most important part of their income from non-agricultural activities (PADES, 1999).

The agricultural production system has been rooted hitherto in the respect of the traditional structure where land ownership was passed on to men through generations, thanks to the heritage system. This is being gradually eroded by the growing importance of money in the economy. The consequence is that land can now be bought, unfortunately by non-farmers, but also, fortunately, by rural women and youth.

For these reasons, savings and credit groups are becoming more and more popular in the region among women willing to run their own business. These groups are also very attractive to young people, as access to credit is the best way for them to escape from the traditional domination of parents and elders, and to quickly achieve their financial autonomy, get married and establish their own family.

Therefore, while continuing to promote agricultural production and the emergence of farmers' groups, as it had done during the first period (cf. Section 12.3.2), the project took the option to support, as a priority, the umbrella organisations such as the Mialébouni[53] association, created by the women crop processing groups, and the union of savings and credit groups, UCVEC[54].

This strategy of strengthening farmers' organisations was based on the following five elements:
- the conscientisation of target groups about the development situation of their area, through talks, 'concertation days', seminars and study visits;
- support to farmers' organisations in organisational matters, to help them clarify their objectives and to define their plans of action;
- training, following a method which draws on local indigenous knowledge;
- the establishment of a system of service provision in which the project played an intermediary role between the farmers' organisations and other bodies;

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53 Mialebouni means, in the Adja language : 'We will take care of it!'
54 UCVEC: Union des Caisses Villageoises d'Epargne et de Crédit/ Union of Village Savings and Credit Schemes

- a programme of support in system management, through which the project encourages the emergence of local capacity in self-management and in the adoption of the Five Elements.

Some significant results were achieved in concrete terms in this phase of the project:
- at the level of the CVEC and the UCVEC, several members of the supervisory and credit committee underwent training courses in administrative management, as did their chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers;
- new income-generating activities such as the production of mushrooms, and raising grass cutters and snails;
- several literacy teachers were trained in the *Mialébouni* and the UCVEC;
- despite certain problems, the management of processing activities was improved in Mialébouni member groups;
- video showings were organised to provide information on the issues and goals of decentralisation, together with a sketch which was repeated several times by local actors, as a way to increase awareness amongst other members of the community;
- the development plan was drawn up through an interesting approach which is described later.

The major achievement of this phase of the PADES project remains, nonetheless, the emergence of the two farmers' organisations, *Mialébouni* and UCVEC, even if in the case of the latter achievements are clearly less positive in terms of institutional strengthening and management capacity (PADES/SNV, 1999). It is indeed the institutional strengthening which had made it possible, mainly for the *Mialébouni* association, to build the necessary coalition to link up with the local administration authorities and other development partners, to design a joint development plan for the whole district. It was, therefore, decided to focus on Mialebouni for this exploration.

12.3.4   The Mialebouni Association, an example of local institutional development

For the group of women who initiated the association, the purpose was to contribute to improving the quality of life, in particular through acquiring some financial autonomy. This implied organising a system of production and sales which could strengthen the producers' hands against the domination of traders who try to impose their prices on women working in the small-scale processing of agricultural products.
The association, which was set up in 1995 with support from PADES, brought together small processing groups with similar problems in the following areas: prices, quality, finance and equipment.
Most of the groups mainly produce gari[55], oil, or soap, but they are diversifying with new products such as citronella essence, natural insecticides, and even mushrooms, which are growing in popularity.

After five years of operation, the impact of the association is already quite remarkable. On the financial front, there is already a noticeable change at the level of the activities of grassroots groups: the quality of the products and the sales prices have improved, thus creating higher revenue and encouraging the development of other productive activities. As for the social development aspects, thanks to their active participation and their experience in local, nation-

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55 gari: cassava flour

al and even international meetings, the women have now become more closely and effectively involved in socio-political decisions affecting their locality. In that respect, the literacy programme has been very helpful.

As mentioned earlier, these results have seemingly been achieved due to the strong motivation of the women to achieve their financial autonomy. Egui Kindémè, the current Chairperson, has confirmed this very clearly: 'If you don't work hard you will not get the resources you need to solve your own problems and you will always be begging from your husband!' It is also due to different factors such as the quality of the PADES/SNV intervention (a process approach), to very good local leadership, and to the performance and the cohesion of grassroots groups such as the *Midogbékpo* group in the Hounsa village (Chapter 10, Section 10.2.1).
The dynamism of the current Chair is quite remarkable, and this was also the case with the previous one, Lissodé Hounsoli. The managing committee is assisted by five 'technical' commissions which meet as often as necessary (and possible) to discuss the key issues of concern: outlets, quality of production, financial matters, equipment and the literacy programme.

The main constraints of the association are the power and experience of the 'traditional' traders even when operating individually, and the (difficult) issues of social heritage about the place, role and rights of women in *Adja* society. However, the goodwill of the members and the skills they are acquiring through the various training workshops, study visits, national and international meetings lead one to think that they are becoming better and better equipped to overcome these difficulties.
It is also striking how the *Mialebouni* women have a general desire to make sure that their dynamic remains sustainable: *'We are confident that, even when PADES is no longer involved, the work we have told you about will continue. PADES is already helping us in this direction: at the beginning, we used to meet in their building, but now our headquarters are located in a place we rent ourselves!'*

12.3.5   The evolution of the Project: bridging with local....

The 1999 year of activity ended with the formulation of a new programme, the PADIC, to be implemented from 2000 to 2003, and of which the main objective is to reinforce institutional development.
With the process of democratisation underway in Benin, and in particular with the impending programme of decentralisation, the newly elected representatives are going to have to work on the planning and implementation of development activities in their localities. This is a new task for which local communities are not prepared (PADES, 1998A).
It is for this reason that, during its last phase, as well as seriously strengthening farmers' organisations and preparing its own withdrawal, the Project has set up a framework for local planning. This embraces farmers' organisations and other local stakeholders such as the local representative of the central administrative authority.
The local planning process has consisted in an effective joint learning process with the full participation of the different stakeholders mentioned earlier. This process has been implemented in many steps, mainly the preparation phase, the diagnosis phase, the definition of objectives and strategies, the planning of the activities, the process of adoption and its popularisation among the local community. The first meetings were organised with farmers only, then later with their representatives and other stakeholders. The activities have been planned along four main objectives:

- promoting food security;
- promoting local entrepreneurship;
- improving the socio-economic, cultural and political position of women;
- improving the social infrastructure at community level.

12.3.6 What can we learn from this project?

The essential strength of the PADES project lies in the flexibility of its approach: it is a process-centred approach which aims at supporting the community in its efforts to promote its own development (PADES/SNV, 1994), using and improving services of existing on local and national institutions. This approach is not a common one, since most intervention agencies have always set up their own parallel structures which, quite often, do not survive beyond the end of the project. In the case of PADES, an effort has been made to start with the real needs, interests and aspirations of the local community, and on this basis to use a flexible and open planning process to encourage the emergence of local initiatives at a pace of development which is relevant to each specific target group. The key here is in a consistent programme of training and exchange for the groups: residential sessions, field visits for knowledge and information exchange between groups of similar activities and information days and 'open days' to introduce the activities of technical services partners.

However, according to the PADES Annual Report 1999 some problems are emerging, which could limit the impact of the project:
- no doubt in part due to the suddenness of the event, the collective dismissal of staff (as part of the project strategy for the withdrawal) 'reduced staff motivation, with a consequent fall in the implementation of activities';
- the lack of operational time, principally due to the elaboration of the new programme (PADIC) has delayed some project activities.

Indeed, during the visits we paid to the project, we happened to discuss quite often the devolution of responsibilities as planned for the transition period of the project: three years for local organisations to take over and to find their way with the national and intermediary-level institutions. This does not seems realistic, given the important delay observed at national level in the implementation of the decentralisation programme, and the time necessary to strengthen or prepare the local groups to cope.

The last field visit made in January 2001 seems to confirm that concern. The team of facilitators ('les animateurs') was no longer in place, but they had been established as freelance specialists to be consulted by local groups whenever necessary... There were indications from the field visits that the village groups were not yet ready to function on their own without some level of systematic follow-up. Of course the partner's philosophy to have local people in charge as soon as possible is admirable, but the question is when is the right time to implement this, in order not to lose the good results achieved so far!

12.4 Outcomes: Effective Partnerships for wider impact

Looking back to figure 11 (Chapter 11, section 11.3), we would like to stress the importance of effective linkages to catalyse the potential of local dynamics so that they can contribute to sustainable development.

In current development literature, much emphasis is put on the importance of partnerships, although little work has been carried to elaborate on the issue. Among the institutions which devoted some efforts to develop basic criteria for successful partnerships, it is important to mention CTA (1996) - the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation - from whose reflections the following considerations are inspired.

It is important, first, to point out that not all the relationships between development actors can qualify as partnerships. Some of these relationships, mostly contract-based (which is already good point as this implies commitment), are between *donors* and *receivers*, or *beneficiaries* and *benefactors*. In those cases, what really matters is *equity*.

Effective partnerships require more, they require *equality*. Partnerships are modes of co-operation in which the parties involved share similar or compatible interests or objectives, as well as the relevant strategies, for which they put together the required resources. Compared to other forms of co-operation, partnerships are then more enduring, based on mutual benefits as well as on costs and risks sharing, and on trust.

It has to be stressed however that the equity issue is also indeed a crucial one in building development partnerships. It is important to make sure, that programmes aiming at strengthening local development action, for example through public co-operation resources, do not increase existing inequalities within the community.

Examples in this research have shown different patterns among local groups which have benefited from public resources. In cases such as the Dodome group (Chapter 10, Section 10.2.3), it is obviously questionable whether alternative groups could have not benefited from the same kind of support, or even whether this could have not been more efficiently used by other village organisations. In general, even some of the best examples have shown their limitations on the equity issue. In the Bonou group (Chapter 5), which has got the privilege to benefit from the local administration during the 'revolutionary period' in getting free access to land, the current achievements of the group, mainly the community health centre and the savings union can be seen as a fair compensation. Nonetheless, although membership is open and affordable to the majority, those who belong to the most vulnerable part of the population have 'no guaranteed place in the collectivity and are always liable to expulsion' (Walzer, 1983). In Bonou, on several occasions, this has been clearly confirmed by the members themselves who have recognised that sometimes they 'have to clean the system' - meaning exclude some people in order to improve payment or reimbursement rates. It is a fact that their organisations have to be managed efficiently, but whenever external (public) resources are available, the priority should be to guarantee access to the most vulnerable groups. In many rural parts in West Africa, the egalitarian society is still in place to some extent and could contribute 'to build up a culture of human rights from below' (Richards, 2001). However, external support is more and more needed to achieve this, due to current economic challenges the local populations are facing, and which the 'globalisation push' is worsening.

Another challenging question on the partnership issue is to what extent current development institutions, whether they are national or international, can really lead to the desired change. According to Mayfield (1985), partnerships modes we need today necessarily 'challenge the myopia and rigid perspectives and methods of projectized, blueprinted development' and require a learning process approach. On the same line, while recognising that few of the many village successful development efforts ever led to capacities for sustained action at a signifi-

cant scale, Korten (1980) stressed that those who have achieved this to some extent were based on a bottom-up programme and organisational development, on a learning process. Examples like the PADES case analysed in this chapter seem to confirm this.

It is proposed therefore to follow a learning process approach to connect to local development dynamics whenever justified. For this purpose, and to complete the 'linking' figure launched in the precedent chapter (and mentioned above), a 'Linked Local Learning'-type approach is suggested, based on the experience of the International Support Group[56] in East Africa. Table 12.1 provides the main steps suggested in that approach.

However, connecting to the local development dynamics through a learning approach seems to have little to do with the implementation organisations of the blueprint approach. This requires partners with a well-developed capacity for responsive and anticipatory adaptation to enter into a real process of joint learning with the local community (Korten, op. cit.).

Indeed, from the characteristics of the local dynamics as revealed during this research (Chapters 7 and 11), and from the main messages emerging from the linkages examples explored in this chapter, we can derive, among others, the following indications to take into consideration when assessing the possibilities to link them with other institutions:
- the importance of flexibility;
- the importance of trust and of solidarity spirit;
- the respect of local values and 'local ways of doing';
- the necessity to protect the development rights of the most vulnerable groups of society;
- the necessity to 'go to the people, to learn from them and to build on what they have' [57].

Based on these requirements, a framework is proposed (Tables 12.1 and 12.2) for the assessment of catalytic partnerships as suggested in Figure 12.

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56 A short note or a box will be produced on ISG and the efforts to bridge farmers' communities and central administration in East Africa.
57 This is part of the credo of the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) (Mayfield, 1985).

Key Factors
Explaining the Local
Dynamics (Chapter 7)

Some Key Conditions for
successful Local Organisations...
(Chapter 10)

Linking local dynamics and Potential
Partner Institutions for greater Impact
(Chapter 12)

Triggering Factor

Cradle

Time Factor

Norms and Values

Ownership (Locally owned)

Connecting to
Catalytic Partners
(table 12.1)
through 'Linked
Local Learning'
Type approach
(table 12.2)

Sustainable
Development

Driving Force — Locally-driven

Power Factor — 'Collectively' empowered

Linking Factor — Adequately linked

Figure 12 Connecting Development Partners to Local Dynamics

Steps	Objectives	Action
step 1	Analysing the Past (of a given local community)	Action 1: Assessing the *constraints* and the *resources* in the past Action 2: Assessing the *constraints* and the *resources* at present Action 3: Assessing what changes had occurred and *who brought* about the *changes*
step 2	Visioning the Future	Action 4: Discussing the community's *vision for* a near (better) *future* Action 5: Discussing the *strategies* to arrive at that vision Action 6: Discussing the *activities* required to achieve the vision
step 3	Operationalising the Vision	Action 7: Specifying what could be done at *community level* Action 8: Specifying what could be done by *what partners, how and when* Action 9: Specifying *indicators* of success *and mechanism for monitoring and evaluation.*

Table 12.1 The Linked Local Learning (LLL) Approach: a 3-Step Process (Adapted from ISG[58])

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58   ISG: International Support Group

Dimensions	Criteria
Similarity/ Compatibility in principle areas	Similar or Compatible *development philosophy or vision* (at least for the *joint agenda*) Similar fields of activity Identical or comparable geographical areas Identical or comparable end users Similar or compatible objectives (based on priority needs *expressed* by the local people) Similar strategies
General attitude	*Openness* to joint learning *Willingness* to respect /accept differences *Flexibility* to accommodate local ways Willingness to allocate required resources, including time! Capacity to honour commitments
Efficiency / Management	*Concrete results* *Visible and measurable impact* on development Relationships allowing empowerment of local actors *Transparent procedures* Strengthening local communication capacity
Sustainability	*Sustainability base assured* (potential for self-supporting activities) Required degree of autonomy (development of local capacities)

Table 12.2 Criteria for Partnerships Assessment (adapted from CTA, 1996).

Chapter 13

Anchoring sustainable development in local dynamics

13.1   Overview

I started this research describing how the development hopes which accompanied the wave of independence in many African countries have vanished over time. Those hopes have been eroded by the predominance of 'expert culture' and the lack of consideration for local development initiatives and the associated 'cry from the cradles'. I have argued that local development dynamics are part of the solution to the current African development crisis and that, far from being disregarded whether innocently or deliberately, they acutely merit becoming a centre of attention.

The exploratory tour (Chapter 3) which was made across Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana to initiate the field work revealed that clear signals are coming from the grassroots. They show the need for - and the way to - alternative development strategies and thereby meet the first specific objective of this research.

The second specific objective has been covered by the pilot cases (Chapters 5 and 6) which helped identify the key factors of local development dynamics (Chapter 7). They were assessed further in two additional cases in Burkina Faso and Ghana respectively (Chapters 8 and 9, dealing with specific objective 3). These factors were then used for a number of group observations, showing where local dynamics work and where they do not (Chapter 10, covering specific objective 4).

The analysis of the related outcomes (Chapter 11) led to the conclusion that even the best local dynamics would remain isolated islands of success (Scoones, 1997) unless effective partnerships were designed and implemented to leverage change. Two additional cases were explored, therefore, to assess how links with local development dynamics through such partnerships could lead to wider impact (Chapter 12, dealing with specific objective 5).

The purpose of this final chapter is to summarise these findings in order to clearly see the emerging perspective as well as the implications for learning approaches and methodologies in development programmes.

13.2   Building from local dynamics: a new perspective

13.2.1   Summing up the key factors of the local dynamics

As explained in Chapters 7 and 11, this research set out to identify the main characteristics of local dynamics. It has categorised seven such characteristics: *the cradle, the triggering factor, the norms and values factor, the process or time factor, the driving force, the power factor and the support factor.*

The cradle of the dynamics

It is clear that virtually every local dynamic has a birth place, a cradle, where the dynamics originated, a place where villagers' energies crystallise. That cradle may not be unique; there can even be several or many cradles in the same village: they can be social or cultural clubs, religious places, etc. In some cases, the role of the cradle vis-à-vis the (development) dynamics under consideration might be *hidden*, with the link between the cradle and the social or economic activities observed not being obvious, although it clearly exists. For example, in some of the cases mentioned earlier, the cradles are: the *whistle club* for the Bonou village group and the *Adji club* in Kotokpa, in Benin, the *football club* in Saponé, Burkina Faso, and, in Ghana, the *Funeral Group* of the Yamfo village.

The triggering factor

The triggering or originating factor is the starting point of the development dynamic. It can be a shock arising from an 'unacceptable' situation as in the case of the Savings group of Kinwédji, in Benin (Chapter 3), which was established after the village had to pay a penalty for a loan default to the local rural bank ('In future the money will stay in our village'). Another example of a trigger was the collective reaction of feeling rejected by a purely political decision, as in the case of the implementation of a rural health centre of Bonou, in Benin (Chapter 5). This motivated the population to build an alternative which today is a success story.

The process or time factor

A historical perspective is important in the study of local dynamics, especially from the perspective of tracking and analysing the several dimensions of their evolution. In fact, in terms of understanding the volume and complexity of issues at play, what we now see as local dynamics are in fact the *tops of icebergs*. The real determining factors lie hidden in the invisible part below. It is the invisible part which embodies the whole process of the dynamic building up and its evolution through many trials, successes and failures, conflicts, negotiations and compromises. The visible part is simply the tangible result of the underlying energies and forces, both positive and negative. The visible dynamic is thus composed of thrusts which are sometimes in harmony and sometimes not, and which have unseen origins.

The norms and values factor

The ways in which local people manage and control their development dynamics are based on local realities and cultures. In the village of Bonou (Benin), the farmers' association set up a council - the *'Haut Conseil Villageois'* - composed of representatives of various sub-groups, including the elders and the village authorities, which they refer to in case of conflict. They thus use the traditional wisdom of the elders who are very pleased to be involved in the current life of the village. However the same case also shows the social dilemmas facing such an institution in really assuring transparency and accountability (Wade, 1988).

The driving force
It has been observed that even when the genesis of two development dynamics has been similar, their further growth -or, on the contrary, their stagnation - will depend on the existence (or not) of a *driving force*. This may or may not be physical or material. In Benin, in the cases of Kotokpa and Lagbavé, it is the sale of cotton, a cash crop which has been selling well, which has provided enough money (strength) to drive the dynamics; in another case, Bonou, the leadership of the members of the management committee is a key determinant. The driving force may also be linked with social recognition, pride and honour. In Ghana, one of the farmers, an old village chief, declared that in Yamfo (their village) *'people have always been driven by love, peace and understanding'*.

The power system
This factor, or at least one aspect of it, can be illustrated with two examples observed in Benin, two organisations operating in the same fields of activity: agricultural production, savings system and community health centre. In the first group (Group A), savings deposits dropped by more than 50% from 1997 to 2000 while in the second one (Group B) they almost doubled. In analysing the management and power system of the two groups we found that in Group A, power is concentrated in the hands of one person, the president, whom nobody can really contradict because he is also the *Voodoo chief* with all the power and influence attached to that position. In Group B, power is relatively well shared within the management committee.

The support factor
The support factor is relevant to the broader environment of the local dynamic, including possible support systems and the *Diaspora* and possible links with external potential actors. This factor illustrates to what extent that environment enables or hampers the development of local initiatives. In some cases support services have been crucial and helped to develop the local dynamic. In others, too much support - for example too much credit - has effectively blocked the dynamic of the groups, whose only objective came to be the reimbursement of loans... There are, it is tempting to say, similar cases at macro level!

13.2.2 Catalysing local dynamics through a learning approach

One of the key questions in this research was how to build upon local dynamics or how to link them to different support systems in order to achieve wider impact. In other words, 'can these local groups contribute to 'development'? (Schmale, 1993).

The findings of this research suggest that this process is already underway. In many places, local people are innovating to improve their production systems, to set up their own financial institutions or to create communal health facilities. This is the case in Bonou and Kotokpa (Benin, Chapters 5 and 6), it is also the case in Saponé (Chapter 8). Other cases discussed in Chapters 11 and 12 clearly indicate that these development initiatives can have significant impact under certain conditions.
More and more local successes suggest that the cry from the cradles today is indeed a cry of hope. This impression is made stronger by failures at macro level. All in all, the wisest course of action for development partners would be to listen to them, in order to build upon what they are already doing.

As explained in Figure 13, the cases discussed in this book suggest that four of the basic characteristics (the triggering factor, the cradle, the norms and values factor and the process factor) provide the basis for the *'start going'* and for local ownership of the development dynamic (Part I). The existence of one or more driving forces makes the dynamic to grow (Part II). Then collective empowerment makes it 'grow bigger for collective benefits' (Part III). Furthermore, very often, as in the case of Saponé in Burkina Faso or the Bonou and the PADES cases in Benin, effective or truly catalytic partnerships have helped the dynamics to keep growing for collective benefits. In the case of Bonou and Saponé this has been achieved in quite a sustainable way (Part IV). The PADES programme in Benin (Chapter 12) can also be seen as a real success. However, in that case it is still questionable whether the current process of devolution can really assure the sustainability of the good results achieved so far, given the current stage of local ownership.

Part I
4 factors make it 'start going' with 'local ownership'

Part II
'Driving force 'makes it grow bigger...'

Part III
'Collective empowerment makes it 'grow bigger for collective benefits'

Part IV
Catalytic partnerships allow it to 'keep on growing in a sustainable way...', through a learning process maintaining local ownership and collective empowerment and reinforcing internal driving force(s)...

Figure 13.1 Building from local dynamics for sustainable development

In reality, of course, the steps between the different phases (Parts I to IV) of the evolution of the local dynamics are not so clearly distinguished. In some cases, and PADES (Chapter 12) is one, the development partner has played an important role in triggering the organisations and has been present virtually from the beginning to help design, implement and monitor the whole learning process. This is not always the case, however, and the 'timeliness' of partners' support is a crucial issue in these relationships, or catalytic partnerships. The questions are *when, where* and *for what* is a particular activity needed, as well as for how long.

13.3   Theoretical and methodological implications

13.3.1   Local organisations revisited

The objective here is not to provide a new typology of local organisations, but to suggest, by building upon my remarks on Esman and Uphoff's typology (1984), that a development orientation is not in itself a sufficient entry point to a typology of local organisations. Indeed, with some specific exceptions, most local African organisations deal with development issues, to varying degrees. In many parts of West Africa, there are local religious or cultural organisations which are involved in education or health programmes. Furthermore, I have already mentioned the Lonlonhoun group in Ghana, which can appear to be a 'purely cultural' organisation although it is, in actual fact, 'drumming for development'!... (Chapters 3 and 4). Alternative entry points to local organisations can be their specific activities (agriculture, culture, crafts, social function, religion, etc..., or their mode of initiation (endogenous or exogenous). Further studies are certainly needed to draw upon these suggestions and contribute to the development of a more elaborated typology.

13.3.2   Collective cognition, collective energy and collective action

In broad lines, this research confirms what has been identified by Haslam (2001) as the 'the cognitive paradigm', with the 'quest to identify general cognitive processes that might underpin important aspects of social life'.
Furthermore, Douglas (1986) has clearly pointed out that 'the theory of rational choice has severe limitations' and stressed 'the role of cognition in forming the social bond'.
Many cases in this research have indeed shown how, with impressive creativity, building from endogenous capacities or on external resources, local people are able to set up and efficiently run development institutions for collective benefits, overriding selfish behaviour.
In that respect, the role played by the Adji game, the cradle of the Kotokpa group in Benin, in the collective cognition system of the members has been questioned (Chapter 2) and confirmed (Chapters 7 and 11). Also, the role of the annual Adji feast in mobilising social energy has been explained (Chapter 6). The link with their collective action has been first suggested by one of the members when questioned about the solidarity spirit and the high performance of the farmers' group: '...it might have to do with that game!...' (Chapter 11).
It is a fact that their strong cohesion indeed enables them, for example, to act in concert as a group to efficiently deal with social key issues such as financing a drinking water system and organising village security (Chapter 6).
Indeed, the Adji place is not only a game place, it is also a local platform for learning and socialisation. As confirmed earlier by Benoît Vigan (Chapter 11, Section 11.1), 'when (they) are

playing Adji, (they) chat about everything, that's how (they) learn about everyone'. It is this permanent flow and sharing of information which helps them to learn to check each other, build trust and strengthen their coherence over time, and progressively develop as a collective cognitive agent.

Going back to the cognitive system (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2) as illustrated by Maturana and Varela (1992), it is possible to imagine, as suggested by Figure 13.2 (below) that this learning and socialisation platform helps brings them closer and closer, the members' individual perceptions (Pi) and Emotions (Ei), guiding them, in given contexts, to act in the same direction.
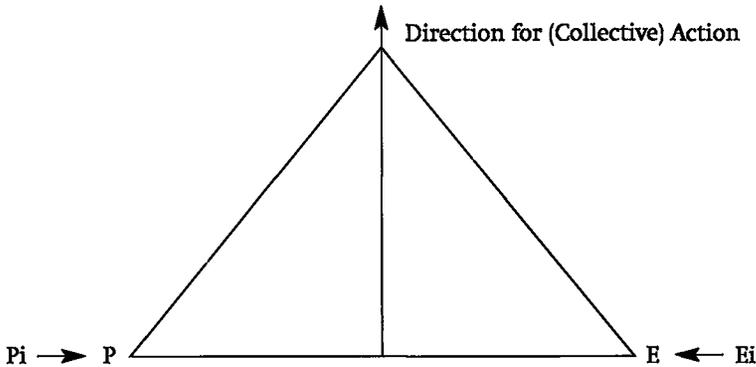
Figure 13.2 Collective cognition and Collective action

Furthermore, this confirms, as King (2000) has suggested, that the ways people learn and make decisions are not only linked to their cultural systems, but that they are inseparable from them. 'Cultural values, socialisation practices and cognitive styles can be viewed as synergistic systems'.
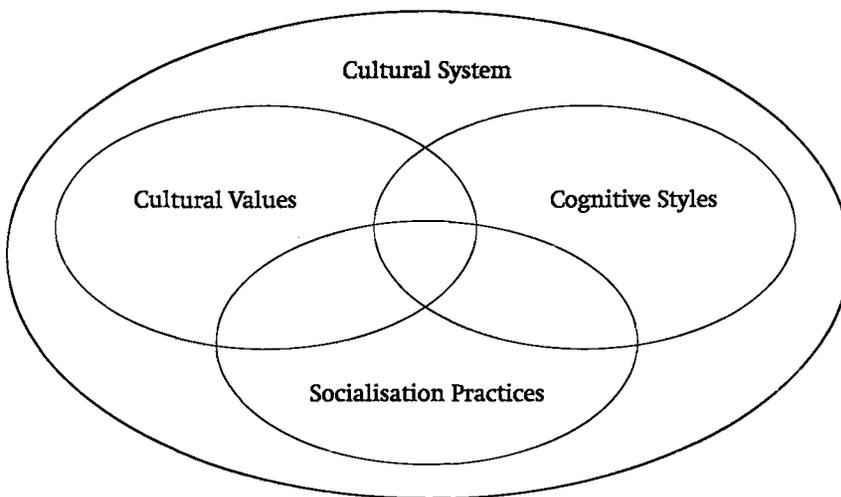

Figure 13.3 Cultural values, socialisation practices and cognitive styles as synergistic systems (King, 2000).

13.3.3 Suitability of the methodology

This research has been based on the general principles of the Grounded Theory coupled with Experiential learning cycles, using *participant observation* as the main research method. This was suggested by the option 'to look at the reality without any preconceived ideas' (Chapter 2), due to the limitations - described in Chapter 1 - which have prevailed so far in development approaches and practices. Moreover, this methodology gave the necessary freedom to further question, analyse and document successive findings, and led progressively to the perspective suggested.

It also provided the flexibility to fully accommodate local people's contribution as they could easily follow the research path and get adequately involved. This was indeed facilitated by the use of *participant observation* which proved to be crucial for this type of study, together with interviews and focus group meetings.

As explained earlier (Chapter 3, Section 3.1), in most cases, the basic information was gathered through open interviews where the main aspects of the descriptive framework were traced through stories told by the villagers. This was very useful to reconstruct the processes of the dynamics studied, which were again tested in focus groups meetings and with additional interviews. In that way, this research has also confirmed the importance of storytelling in revealing interests and needs, values and options and the play of power in organisations (Forester, 1999).

13.3.4 The 'insider versus outsider' concern and the role of 'partnerships catalysts'

As a general feature being an 'insider' to one of the areas of the pilot studies has indeed helped me to easily connect to the local people and to always obtain the information required[59].

The observation made that at least three of the Western visitors I received during the field work could connect to the local reality much easier than many natives I have tried to convince for some time, had led me to question the usual distinction of 'insider versus outsider'. This opposition should not be overemphasised as, in fact, multiple identities can apply (*Aarts, 2001, personal communication*), certainly depending on the networking opportunities outsiders have within the community through their local contacts. This is where 'partnerships catalysts' as envisaged in Sections 12.4 and 13.3.4 can play a key role as 'connectors'.

During this research, I experienced myself the importance of this role, working with local connectors identified through a personal network of relationships established over years.

13.3.5 A model for an overall audit of local organisations

The various cases studied in this research provide the four main dimensions suggested in the diagram below: local ownership, the quality of partnership, power system and collective benefits.

As discussed in Chapter 11, whether local development organisations are conceived and born locally or whether they are initiated through intervention, what is really crucial is assuring local ownership. When development action has been triggered by an intervention, local own-

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59 The research assistant who helped me in that area could also, as a native of the same province, connect quite well to the population, although the relationships (finally quite strong), took more time to establish as his village does not belong to the same ethnic group. As an illustration of this, in the beginning, farmers were always asking me - talking about him - 'Where is your other guy?', but they now ask 'How is Dossa?'(using his name!).

ership is achieved through a learning process that takes the steps (and time) which are necessary to fully involve the local people, with adequate integration of appropriate local norms and values into the management system. It is important to recall that the discussion on partnerships (chapter 12) should take a realistic position, debating and agreeing on the various facets of *multiple ownership*, including stated agendas and uncovering the (usually) hidden agendas, in order to progressively build and strengthen trust and finally arrive at true partnership.

As shown in the diagram below, there are very clear links between local ownership *(LO)* and partnership quality *(PQ)*. The ideal situation (i) is when development partners keep at adequate distance from the level of (daily) action - with *PQ = PQi=100%*. They then rather ensure that local people, through an effective learning process, take full charge of the activities of the organisation - with *LO = LOi = 100%*. Some of the village groups studied are quite close to that situation. This was clearly so in the case of Bonou in Benin (Chapter 5) and in the Saponé case in Burkina Faso (Chapter 8). The villagers had been getting support from the partner institutions at various steps of the process, but in both cases - as well as in several others of the same nature - the local people have always been the ones 'in the driver's seat'.

On the contrary, the more their partners are directly involved in (daily) action, the less local people drive or own the process (with LO minimal, *or LOm*, and partnerships quality then having the minimal value, *PQm*).

The same goes for the two other dimensions of the diagram, the power system (PS) and the Collective Benefits (CB): the ideal situation (i), when the local organisation's members feel collectively empowered *(PSi)*, corresponds to the maximum Collective Benefits *(CBi)*. The opposite is observed in such cases as those of Dogbo Ahomê in Benin, and the Tantili self-help group in Burkina Faso. In those cases, detention of power by some individual members over the rest of the group (with Power System minimal = *PSm*), reduces Collective Benefits (to CB minimal or *CBm*) and leads to the decomposition of the development dynamic.

LO   Local Ownership
CB   Collective Benefits
PS   Power System
PQ   Partnerships Quality
Index 'i' for ideal and 'm' for minimum
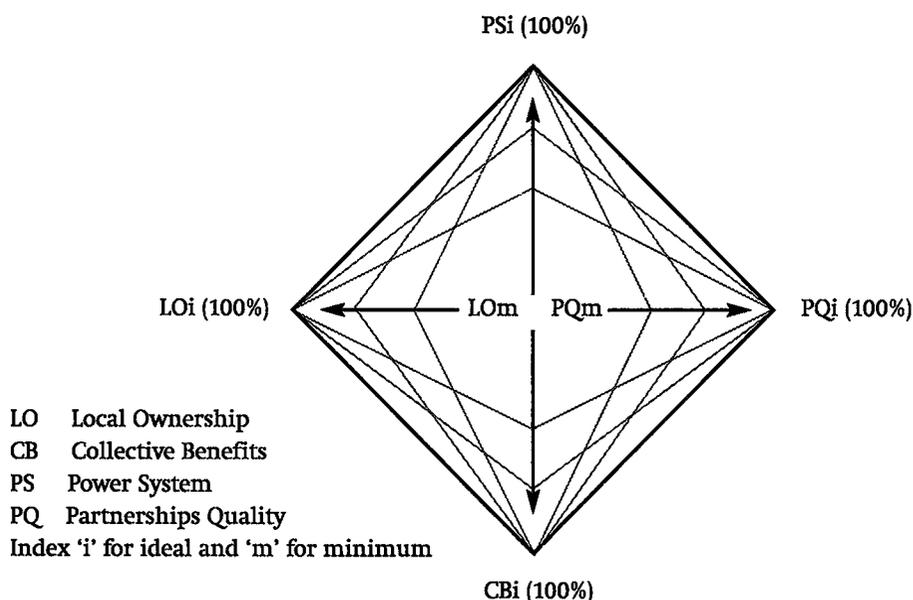
Figure 13.4 A model for an overall assessment of local development organisations

On the basis of the above diagram, a diagnostic framework is proposed for consideration (in Annex 9) as a methodological tool for an overall assessment of local organisations. It is important to stress that the questionnaire in the framework is indicative and a design procedure is suggested to allow potential users to adapt the model to their specific situations.

It is recognised that the power system, for example, is a 'black box' for an outsider, or even for a 'non - resident native' like John in the case of Dogbo Ahomê (Chapter 10, Section 10.2.1). The framework then allows to question the power system through the assessment of the level of collective benefits.

The same way, as it is difficult to evaluate objectively the partnerships quality, the questionnaire helps assess the level of involvement/autonomy of local people, then giving clear indications on the partnerships in place.

13.4   Contribution to sustainable development programmes

13.4.1   Some indications deriving from the key factors of the local dynamics

At this stage, I will not elaborate further on the norms and values factor, and on the driving force. Also, as discussed in Chapter 11, depending on the cases, the triggering factor can be quite important, but it can also evaporate over time. The power factor is reasonably covered in development literature, and specific aspects of it in the cases studied have been mentioned in Chapters 7 and 11. The point which is worth mentioning here in particular is that some cases have indicated that the reduction of traditional power which is often regretted in the general context of cultural erosion can help release development resources and energies for the benefit of some (otherwise) disadvantaged groups (mainly women and youth). The support factor, whose special strength depends on judicious timing and positioning has been discussed with the partnerships issue (Chapter 12).

Instead, at this stage, I wish to revisit just two of the seven suggested characteristics of local dynamics: the cradle and the process factor.

The interest of the cradle: the right activities, in the right places, with the right people...
The indications deriving from this research, as illustrated, for example in the cases of Bonou and Saponé, help to pinpoint the essential importance of the cradle. They argue that taking the trouble to discover or identify the cradles can help lift or catalyse development initiatives and lead, in the long run, to their greater cost efficiency.

This necessity of paying attention to the cradle is often, unfortunately, passed over. In the initiation phase of time-budgeted development projects, time is a rare commodity, and many *development interveners overlook the village cradles.*
As a result, more resources are allocated than is really necessary to the wrong processes. Much of the time, sadly, it is a question of casting too many seeds on stony ground.

The right person in the right place is also a key factor for efficiency in any activity. Very often, at local level we rely on the so-called 'group leaders', but the question remains: how do we select them? Many development projects have gone no further than having experimentation

plots started in the field of some already privileged people. Taking the trouble, and the time, to learn about the villages and to connect to their cradles can help identify the right partners, the right things to do (as far as the support activities are concerned), the right places and the right ways to do them.

The interest of the process or time factor: following the village path
The value assigned to time in development projects is often skewed: too little in preparation, too much in the rush of implementation. It often seems as if strategies which have been (and still are in many cases) implemented in development projects in Africa or elsewhere in the Third World have been inspired by the post-war reconstruction strategies in the middle of last century. Then it was not really important to take time to involve the 'beneficiaries'; it was much more important to 'pay the experts and they'll fix it'! The consequences of such strategies are plenty in Africa, from small failures to the well-known 'white elephants'.

As an illustration, combining these two factors...
Figure 13.5 summarises the discussion above, showing the difference in the results, over time, between the (classic) results-driven approach and the people- or cradle-driven approach. In the beginning of the process envisaged, for the same resource level (Rs1), the (linear) results-driven approach achieves higher results (Rb1) than the second approach (which gets Ra1). However, at the resource level Rs2, the people (or cradle) approach is much more efficient; spending some time to discover the village cradle and to go through it, leads to the result Rb2, much higher than Ra2.
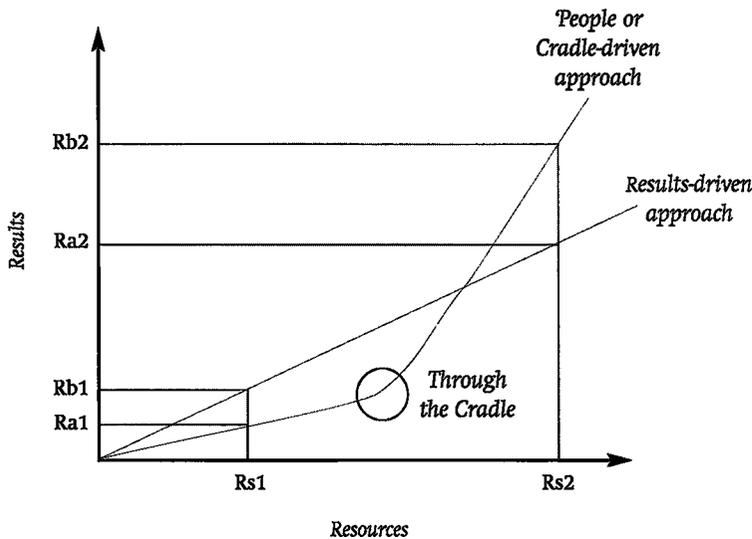

Figure 13.5 Cost-effectiviness of the 'people' or craddle-driven approach

13.4.2   Revisiting the Project Cycle: towards a development spiral

Recognising the importance of local ownership in the whole process suggests that the (classic) project cycle should be revisited in such a way that a new step could added to it: 'Assuring

Ownership Basis'. As stressed in Section 13.3.5, it is indeed important at the initial phase in the beginning of the process to openly discuss with all the actors - mainly the local people or the often called 'endogenous users' in order to build, with as much realism as possible, *the foundations of multiple ownership*.

It is important, furthermore, to recognise that many development workers and other partners have for long questioned why projects should be 'locked into a circle' (Figure 13.6), although it is obvious that the project activities are not locked but repetitive! However the connotation has always been there... Most of the people see the current project cycle as a donor-oriented tool to evaluate 'their' projects.

Therefore, and taking into consideration the evolution described and illustrated in Section 13.2.2 *a development action spiral* is suggested instead of a circle (Figure 13.7). This is to clearly symbolise the fact that new orientations would be possible in order to allow the necessary adaptation to the (rapidly) changing context of development, especially in Africa. What is required is an attitude of flexibility, and a willingness to really learn from the process and its successive evaluations. The result is that different or new energies and strengths (e.g. creativity of local people, or of new staff) can help to reshape programmes in ways which would have been considered in the past as 'deviations from the main line of the project'! In that respect, as an example, the frustration of new staff members in institutions is a very well known fact: they are not seen as possibilities to (re-)energise institutions with their creativity and experience; they are rather forced to 'identify' themselves with the corporate image, -means- with the on-going routine!
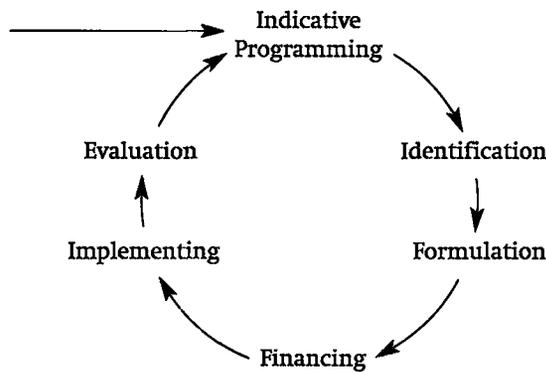

*Figure 13.6 The classic project cycle*

Other Possible
Orientations

Indicative
programming

| Evaluation Phase 1 (Ev 1) | Indicative Phase 1 (Id 1) | Evaluation Phase 2 (Ev 2) | Indicative Phase 2 (Id 2) |

Implementation Phase 1 (Imp 1)   Formulation Phase 1 (Id 1)   Implementation Phase 2 (Imp 2)   Formulation Phase 2 (Id 2)

Assuring
Joint Resources
Phase 1 (AJR 1)

Assuring
Ownership Basis
Phase 1 (AOB 1)

Assuring
Joint Resources
Phase 2 (AJR 2)

Assuring
Ownership Basis
Phase 2 (AOB 2)

Figure 13.7 The Development Action Spiral

13.4.3 Additional challenge: 'technological hammer' versus 'priming the pump'

I presented the interim results of this research for the first time at the CGIAR centres' meeting on poverty alleviation organised by CIAT in Costa Rica in 1999. The key message I stressed was that the main development problems of most African villages seem not to be technological.

In many of the cases visited, it is notable that among the broad range of constraints expressed by the villagers, very few are directly linked with technology. Many constraints concern general welfare, social and other support services (drinking water, health centres, microfinance services), needs of small equipment, marketing problems, etc. When agricultural research is specifically concerned, the constraints are, for example, more related to farming systems and institutional aspects than to high yields of crops.

Unfortunately, in most development programmes we seem to have made a (hidden) credo out of the well-known saying 'when the only tool we have is a hammer, everything we see looks like a nail'. Because many development partners are technology-driven, very often - even when they are able to discover more fundamental issues, they keep to technological problems in order to 'plug in' the solutions they have[60]...

It is my contention that development will not happen if we do not have the courage to invest adequately in priming the pump, (that is) helping the local people to solve the basic problems which have been hampering their (own) development activities for decades. If we fail to do that, we will continue to encourage the development of individual coping behaviour or individual survival strategies which will not lead to an overall sustainable development.

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60 'I am a livestock dairy specialist; every time I see grass, I see opportunity for cattle project' (Kijne, 2001, personal communication).

It is useful here to mention the high degree of interest shown by the villagers in this research which they really ended up transforming into action research. Having helped them to assess the main constraints of their development activities, it simply was not possible to avoid being involved in identifying possible solutions and potential partners. The usual argument 'I am just doing some research' could not stand up more than two visits... The closing workshop held with the development partners of the Bonou group lead to the setting up of an annual, informal forum of development partners. Commitments were made directly in the meeting by a number of partners to resolve some of the constraints identified. Subsequent visits to the village have indeed confirmed that these pledges are being met.

It is the same process which helped us introduce the AGEFIB in the Kotokpa village in order to provide the necessary support to scale up the credit system (Chapter 6).

13.4.4   The requirements for change

A lot has been written about the need for change and about alternative ways to development, but the extent to which we can 'pour the new wine in the old bottle(s)' is still questionable. Indeed, to paraphrase a philosopher[61] who wrote that 'things do not change (but) we do', current trends in development action force to believe that things will not change unless we do!

As explained earlier (Chapter 12), according to Korten (1980), in order to abandon the myopia and the rigidity of current perspectives (Mayfield, 1985), development partnerships need to enter a learning process together with the local people.

Therefore, it seems that both sides, for mutual profit, should try to go through a kind of deconstruction / reconstruction process which can lead to bringing them closer and closer, and to progressively agree on a common set of reference values or principles on which basis they could adopt a minimum agenda for concerted action. This process is similar to the one described by Cohn (1987) in the following box:

> '(We) have a dual task before us - a deconstructive project and a reconstructive project that are intimately linked. Our deconstructive task requires close attention to, and the dismantling of, technostrategic discourse. The dominant voice... and decontextualized rationality speaks so loudly..., it will remain difficult for any other voices to be heard until that voice loses some of its power to define what we hear and how we name the world - until that voice is delegitimated.
>
> Our reconstructive task of creating compelling alternative visions of possible futures, a task of recognizing and developing alternative conceptions of reality, a task of creating rich and imaginative alternative voices - diverse voices whose conversations with each other will invent those futures'.
>
> Carol Cohn (1987:717-8), quoted by Jack Kloppenburg Jr (1991)

It would be the role of the partnerships 'catalysts' as defined earlier (Sections 12.4 and 13.3.4) to help the 'outsiders' in this process.

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61   Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

13.4.5   The price of change

Given all the barriers of the bureaucracies involved in development action, the change required is not a small challenge (Korten, 1980), otherwise, the *status quo* is likely to be more expensive financially, as this will imply 'a continuing record of failure... no matter how much money is committed' (Korten, *ibid*).
I tend to believe that the resources needed to prepare and launch the change process could certainly be partly drawn from the regular funds available for current development, given the possibility of clear compensation thanks to the additional efficiency to be gained.

Above all, it is the political will and the increase in solidarity spirit which can really lead could make it!

Some initiatives are showing the way. The new approach - 'Convergence of sciences' - developed by Wageningen University with its partners in the South is an innovative way for joint technology design, building from existing local situations. Partnerships are currently being established with Benin and Ghana; other countries will follow. In this approach, 'the focus is not on developing the best technical (or technological) means, but on generating learning systems to deal with (some) intractable problems...' local farmers are facing in West Africa (Röling, 2000).
Furthermore, the current development challenges in Africa are of such a complexity that it is imperative for new partnerships to emerge between national research institutions, universities, NGO's, the private sector and farmers' associations (Hounkonnou and Paquot, 1998).

The need to transform the education system to match development requirements and to help revitalise and sustain local values is guiding a new educational programme like the one being experimented on in Dridji, in Benin. This programme is launching new partnerships for better integration of schools in farmers' communities, and promoting, with a high level of success, the access of young rural girls to primary education.

Many more initiatives can be cited as additional 'reasons for hope' (Krishna, Uphoff and Esman, 1997), among those the farmers' association and unions building on the Naam tradition in Burkina Faso, and the 'PADES programme' (briefly assessed in this thesis, Chapter 12). The activities of the African Development Centre in Ghana, and those of the Community Development Centre and of the CEDA in Burkina Faso follow the same line.

13.5   Suggestions for further research

It is a fact that more (quantitative) research is needed to further assess the characteristics of the local dynamics in many more places.
Also, it is important to further assess the role of the potential 'partnerships catalysts'. However, as explained in this research, they should (only) act as process facilitators - which normal catalysts do - and not operate as many of the current 'development brokers'. The latter have rather an enzymatic behaviour, often or at times 'taking (a substantial) part in the reaction' - that is, retaining part of the resources available to the local population or to local projects. Meanwhile, it is assumed that connecting to the cradles will help identify the right people.

13.6 The final message: listen to the cradle

Before closing this book, it is important to stress the main message emerging from this research. While many development projects are failing and failing expensively, some local dynamics are moving ahead anyway, driven by the local people themselves and succeeding with very modest resources. The direction they are going is the direction they have chosen for their 'own development'.

It is time to consider that this is the only way that development co-operation should go if the intention is indeed to support them. Instead of continuing to follow the logic of 'finding problems to fit the solutions'[62] which we know best, we should enter into effective partnerships with such local dynamics. We should do so in order to learn about their priorities and objectives and the ways they organise themselves to attain them. We can then identify where and for how long and even if our effort is needed to strengthen what is going on. Sustainable development - the one which can keep going at the end of an intervention - is only possible if we can connect to the people, listen to their cradle and understand what they are doing, in order to act with them, in the same direction.

Listening to the cradle does not cost more. On the contrary, linking effectively with the local dynamics helps to improve the efficiency of development action, allowing adequate use of the available resources. The most difficult, however, will be to deconstruct and reconstruct our frames and mentalities, and to help local people regain the confidence they have lost in their own capacities and creativity due to the 'expert culture'.

Furthermore, although this study has recognised that 'tradition is not always beautiful', listening to the cradle also allows the necessary revitalisation of the reference values needed for African Renaissance, thus assuring that this concept be rooted in local realities. Failing to do that, we will continue witnessing the situation that development action is guided by means - like money - instead of being value (or people)- oriented.

This book will be closed now, but not the learning process. In fact, the interest shown by the local people who were visited during this research gives endless encouragement to continue... so that the end of the current learning phase is only the beginning[63] of a new one, forming a spiral of learning, a spiral which began in a cradle.

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62 Twenty Years of Aid to the Sahel: Finding Problems to Fit the Solutions, by J-D Naudet, OECD/Club de Sahel, 2000.
63 'The end is only the beginning. What dreams may come', a film by Vincent Ward.

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Summary

The development strategies implemented in most African countries after the independence period - in the 1960s in most cases - were guided by the option to achieve 'rapid modernisation' through a development process based on industrialisation and on 'expert culture'; without exception these dominant strategies overlooked grassroots initiatives. The marginalisation of traditional institutions created a vacuum 'between the macro-bureaucracies and giant corporations and the micro-structures of more or less extended families' (Klein-Goldewijk and de Gaay Fortman, 1999).
The failure of this development approach resulted in the long-lasting economic crisis which drove most African countries to adopt structural adjustment programmes; unfortunately these programmes did not bring about the desired change. Today, without mentioning the social problems related to their implementation, there is even a growing recognition that structural adjustment policies, despite their implications in the mid-term, seem to have neglected Africa's long-term needs (Stewart, Lall and Wangwe, 1992).

Meanwhile, in different parts of Africa, despite the (expensive) failures of many national programmes or projects, local development dynamics, - although often with limited impact - are achieving tangible and substantial results with very little resources.

The notion of *local dynamics* is used in this research to describe the various *forces on the move at local level, in the continuously changing environment* of Africa, struggling to help local communities to meet some of their priority needs. Such forces are in general small associations or groups, or even individuals, both social and/or business-oriented. Some of those dynamics are old or long-established, others are emerging only now, but in their entirety they form part of the basic constituencies of the emerging civil society in Africa.

The purpose of the research was:
* to get an insight into the reality of local dynamics, to assess their main characteristics;
* to examine the conditions for anchoring development action into local dynamics in order to achieve wider impact.

As for the theoretical and methodological approach, a set of concepts (such as Soft Systems Approach, Collective Action, Sociology of Organisations, Cosmovision and Development) was explored at an early stage as an initial 'pair of glasses' to help frame a first insight into the local dynamics. Following this, the available literature was examined with the clear goal of shedding light on the issues emerging from the field visits. The Grounded Theory was chosen as a general methodological approach, together with a series of iterations based on Experiential Learning.
The first indications from the exploratory tour undertaken in three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana) led to an in-depth study of two pilot cases (Bonou and Kotokpa in Benin) and then to the identification of what can be considered as the main characteristics of local dynamics. Two other cases - one in Burkina Faso and one in Ghana, were used to further assess their main characteristics which are: the originating factor or *triggering factor*, the *cradle*, the time factor or the *process factor*, the *norms and values factor*, the *driving force*, the *power factor* and the interface or *support factor*.

The *originating factor* or *triggering factor* is the starting point of the development dynamic. It can be a shock arising from an 'unacceptable' situation, or just a crucial need felt by the local group concerned. However, the development initiative can also be triggered by an outsider or by a newcomer.

The *cradle* is either the birth place of the local development dynamic or where this has been nurtured; it is a place where villagers' energies crystallise. Cradles can be social clubs, cultural clubs, religious places or similar places. Several cases have shown that these pre-existing associations played a key role in the setting up and the development of new (economy-oriented) groups.

The *process* or *time factor* (or the *roots factor*) confirms the importance of a historical perspective in the study of local dynamics, especially the necessity to track and analyse the several dimensions of their evolution. In fact, what we often observe as local dynamics are the small *trees* - not the *roots*, they are just the *tops of icebergs*. The real determining factors lie hidden in the invisible part below which reveals the construction process of the dynamic, its setting up, and its evolution through many trials, successes and failures, conflicts, negotiations and compromises.

The *norms and values* factor illustrates the ways in which local people manage and control their development dynamics, based on local realities and cultures. The cases studied have uncovered some limitations, but have also shown some specific aspects - such as the involvement of elders in conflict resolution - are quite important.

It has been observed that even when the genesis of two development dynamics has been similar, their further growth - or, on the contrary, their stagnation - will depend on the existence (or not) of a *driving force*, which may be material (a cash crop selling well) or immaterial (good leadership, understanding and solidarity spirit, etc.).

As for the *power factor*, it is a fact that local creativity and initiatives are permanently confronted with consequences of 'obstructing power' (Luhmann, 1979) from various origins. Far from romanticising the local level institutions, this research stress that local organisations are also arenas for conflicts and power struggles. The individual strategies within the village groups, as discovered during the visits, confirm that power is experienced both at the interface between organisations and/or institutions as well as inside these systems. Another aspect of this factor is the power relations between the local organisations and other institutions in their environment.

The *support factor* is relevant to the broader environment of the local dynamic, including possible support systems and the *Diaspora* and links with external potential actors. This factor illustrates to what extent that environment enables or hampers the development of local initiatives.
In some cases support services have been crucial and helped to develop the local dynamic. In others, too much support - for example, too much credit - has effectively blocked the dynamic of the groups...
The relative importance of these different factors have also been discussed. For example, despite the importance of the triggering factor in some cases,, it seems, in general, that it is not the fact of initiation itself which matters, but the *ownership*. It is the result of the full pro-

cess of change and the way this is implemented, allowing real capitalisation by the local actors. Apart from the triggering factor, ownership then involves three other key factors of the local dynamics: the *process* (or *time factor*), *the cradle*, as well as the *norms and values factor.*

On the whole, the *cradle* and the *process factor* appear to be quite crucial. As the concluding discussions illustrate, for people outside to take time to discover the cradle helps to make better connections to the people and thus to discover their real priorities and the way they organised themselves to deal with them, which in turn makes it possible to build upon what they are doing.

The *process factor* suggests that sufficient time should be taken 'to build the scene' for development action to really happen... and yield results. The lack of (joint) preparation can definitely be confirmed as one of the key reasons for the failure of development projects, with the usual rush from two- or three-month feasibility evaluations to four- or five-year implementation!

With regard to the issue of linking, although it has seemed in certain circumstances that, 'linking can be killing', it is also clear that without support, even the best local dynamics can remain 'isolated islands of success' (Scoones, 1997). Appropriate catalytic partnerships are needed to achieve wider impact.
It is a fact that more and more studies are stressing the need for alternative development approaches, with better involvement of local people. The cases in this research help to argue that this is not enough. It is time to go further, and to consider that the direction chosen by local people for their own development is the direction in which development co-operation should go if the objective is really to help them. It is time to listen to the cradles in order to anchor development support into the local dynamics. That is the perspective emerging from this research. Based on this, a model and a framework for an overall assessment of local development organisations have been suggested, including the ownership and the partnership issues. A crucial question is how to build effective partnerships and achieve local ownership, assuring that the activities benefit the majority of the local population. In other words, those institutions which support local dynamics have to make sure that their activities do not increase existing inequalities among the different sub-groups of the local communities, and assure, in particular, the (development) rights of the most vulnerable part of the society.
Due to the importance of the ownership issue, it is also suggested that the project cycle be revisited, in order to effectively add two additional steps to the process: *Assuring Ownership Basis*, and *Assuring Joint Resources*. To better symbolise the flexibility needed, a development action spiral is proposed instead of the current project cycle.
More research is certainly needed to further assess the role of the potential *'partnerships catalysts'*. However, as explained in this research, they should (only) act as process facilitators - which normal catalysts do - and not operate as many of the current *'development brokers'*. The latter have rather an enzymatic behaviour, often or at times 'taking (a substantial) part in the reaction' - that is, retaining part of the resources available to the local population or to local projects. Meanwhile, it is assumed that connecting to the cradles will help identify the right people.
On the whole, listening to the local people and to their cradles will not cost more, financially. On the contrary, it will improve the efficiency of development action, thus assuring a better use of available resources. It requires, however, the deconstruction of current mentalities and frames of thinking.
Listening to the cradle will also help root the necessary vision of African renaissance into local realities.

Samenvatting

Listen to the Cradle*
Building *from* Local Dynamics for African Renaissance
(Case studies in rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana)

De ontwikkelingsstrategieën die ten uitvoer gebracht werden in de meeste Afrikaanse landen na de onafhankelijkheid – in de meeste gevallen in de jaren zestig – werden gevormd door de keuze om 'snelle modernisering' tot stand te brengen met behulp van een ontwikkelingsproces gebaseerd op industrialisatie en een 'cultuur van experts'; deze dominante strategieën zagen, zonder uitzondering, lokale initiatieven van de autochtone bevolking over het hoofd. De marginalisering van traditionele sociale infrastructuren veroorzaakte een vacuüm 'tussen de macro-bureaucratieën en grootschalige bedrijven en de micro-structuren van minder of meer uitgebreide familieverbanden' (Klein-Goldewijk en De Gaay Fortman, 1999).

Het falen van deze ontwikkelingsstrategieën heeft geresulteerd in de langdurige economische crisis die de meeste Afrikaanse landen ertoe dwong zich te conformeren aan Structurele Aanpassingsprogramma's; helaas brachten deze programma's niet de verandering waar men op hoopte. Vandaag de dag groeit zelfs de erkenning dat het Structurele Aanpassingsbeleid, ondanks de effecten op de middellange termijn, de lange termijn behoeften van Afrika heeft verwaarloosd, nog afgezien van de sociale problemen die gepaard gaan met de uitvoering van deze programma's (Stewart, Lall and Wangwe, 1992).

Ondanks de (dure) mislukkingen van veel nationale programma's of projecten, levert de dynamiek van lokale ontwikkeling in verschillende delen van Afrika – hoewel vaak met beperkte impact - tegelijkertijd tastbare en substantiële resultaten op met zeer weinig middelen.

Het begrip 'lokale dynamiek' wordt in dit onderzoek gebruikt om de verschillende dynamische krachten op lokaal niveau te beschrijven in de continu veranderende omgeving van Afrika. Zij worstelen om lokale gemeenschappen te helpen bij het voorzien in hun belangrijkste behoeften. Deze krachten zijn veelal kleine verenigingen of groepen, of zelfs individuen, met een sociaal en/of zakelijk doel. Sommige van deze dynamische krachten zijn oud en diepgeworteld, andere ontstaan nu pas, maar samen vormen ze de basisbestanddelen van Afrika's opkomende *burgermaatschappij*.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is als volgt omschreven:
- inzicht te krijgen in de realiteit van lokale dynamiek en de belangrijkste kenmerken ervan in kaart te brengen.
- de voorwaarden te bestuderen die het mogelijk maken om ontwikkeling te verankeren in lokale dynamiek, zodat grotere impact wordt verkregen.

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* Nederlandse vertaling van de titel:
  Het oor te luisteren leggen bij de wieg
  Voortbouwen op lokale dynamieken voor een Afrikaanse renaissance
  (Case studies uit Benin, Burkina Faso en Ghana)

Voor de theoretische en methodologische aanpak is in een vroeg stadium een aantal concepten verkend (zoals de Soft Systems Approach, Collective Action, Sociology of Organisations, Cosmovision and Development). Deze concepten waren de 'bril' waarmee een eerste aanzet geformuleerd werd voor een raamwerk om lokale dynamieken te bestuderen. De volgende stap was het bestuderen van beschikbare literatuur met het eenduidige doel om onderwerpen die naar voren kwamen in het veldwerk in perspectief te plaatsen. De 'Grounded Theory' werd gekozen als de algemene methodische aanpak, samen met een serie van herhalingen gebaseerd op de theorie van Experiential Learning.

De eerste aanwijzingen die naar voren kwamen tijdens een verkennend bezoek aan drie landen (Benin, Burkina Faso en Ghana) hebben geleid tot een uitgebreide bestudering van twee praktijkervaringen (Bonou en Kotokpa in Benin) en tot de identificatie van wat gezien kan worden als de belangrijkste kenmerken van lokale dynamiek. Twee andere praktijkervaringen – één in Burkina Faso en één in Ghana – werden gebruikt om de belangrijkste kenmerken verder in kaart te brengen. De belangrijkste kenmerken van lokale dynamiek zijn: de aanleiding of *uitlokkende factor*, de *wieg*, de tijdsfactor of *procesfactor*, de *normen-en-waardenfactor*, de *drijvende kracht*, de *machtsfactor* en de bemiddelende of *ondersteunende factor*.

De *aanleiding of uitlokkende factor* is het startpunt van ontwikkelingsdynamiek. Het kan een schok zijn als gevolg van een 'onacceptabele' situatie, of gewoon een cruciale behoefte die door de betreffende lokale gemeenschap ervaren wordt. Een initiatief tot ontwikkeling kan echter ook uitgelokt worden door een buitenstaander of nieuwkomer.

De wieg is ofwel de geboorteplaats van lokale ontwikkelingsdynamiek, ofwel de plaats waar de dynamiek gevoed wordt; het is een plaats waar de energie van dorpelingen zich kristalliseert. Een wieg kan een sociale of culturele club zijn, een religieuze of gelijksoortige plaats. Een aantal praktijkvoorbeelden heeft aangetoond dat deze reeds bestaande instituten een sleutelrol gespeeld hebben in het opstarten en ontwikkelen van nieuwe (economisch georiënteerde) groepen.

De *proces- of tijdsfactor* (of de *wortelfactor*) bevestigt het belang van een historisch perspectief in het bestuderen van lokale dynamiek, met name de noodzaak om de verschillende dimensies van de ontwikkeling te volgen en te analyseren. Wat wij in feite vaak zien van lokale dynamiek zijn kleine boompjes – niet het wortelstelsel. Wat we zien is slechts het *topje van de ijsberg*. De ware beslissende factoren liggen vaak verborgen in een onzichtbaar deel, waarin het bouwproces van de dynamiek, het begin en de groei als gevolg van vele pogingen, successen en mislukkingen, conflicten, onderhandelingen en compromissen ontsluierd wordt.

De *normen-en-waardenfactor* laat zien hoe de lokale gemeenschap de dynamiek van haar ontwikkeling stuurt en controleert op basis van de lokale realiteit en cultuur. De praktijkervaringen hebben enkele beperkingen blootgelegd, maar hebben ook het belang aangetoond van bepaalde aspecten, zoals de betrokkenheid van ouderen in het oplossen van conflicten.

Het is duidelijk geworden dat zelfs wanneer de oorsprong van twee dynamische ontwikkelingen vergelijkbaar was, de verdere groei – of, in tegenstelling, de stagnatie – afhangt van het (niet) bestaan van een *drijvende kracht*. Dit kan zowel een materiële kracht zijn (een goed verkopend gewas) als een immateriële kracht (goed leiderschap, een begripvolle houding en solidaire geest, etc).

Met betrekking tot de *machtsfactor* is bewezen dat lokale creativiteit en initiatieven voortdurend opbotsen tegen de gevolgen van 'belemmerende krachten' (Luhmann, 1979) van verschillende oorsprong.

Dit onderzoek houdt zich verre van romantisering van lokale sociale infrastructuren. Het benadrukt eerder dat lokale organisaties evengoed arena's zijn waarin conflicten uitgevochten worden en waar gestreden wordt om macht. Individuele strategieën laten zien, dit werd bevestigd tijdens het veldwerk, dat in groepen op dorpsniveau macht ervaren wordt zowel in de contacten tussen organisaties of instituten onderling als binnen deze systemen. Een ander aspect van de machtsfactor is het feit dat er machtsrelaties bestaan tussen lokale organisaties en andere instituten in de omgeving.

De *ondersteunende factor* is relevant voor de wijdere omgeving van lokale dynamiek, inclusief de mogelijke ondersteuningsstructuren en de 'dorpelingen overzee' en relaties met potentiële externe actoren. Deze factor laat zien in hoeverre de omgeving de ontwikkeling van lokale initiatieven steunt of hindert.

In een aantal gevallen zijn ondersteunende diensten bepalend geweest en hebben zij geholpen om de lokale dynamiek te ontwikkelen. In andere gevallen heeft te veel ondersteuning – bijvoorbeeld te veel krediet – de dynamiek van de groepen effectief geblokkeerd...

Het relatieve belang van deze verschillende factoren wordt ook besproken. Ondanks het belang van een uitlokkende factor in sommige gevallen, blijkt bijvoorbeeld in het algemeen dat niet de aanleiding zelf doorslaggevend is, maar wie de *eigenaar* is van de ontwikkeling. Het resultaat van het volledige veranderingsproces en de manier waarop het uitgevoerd wordt bepaalt of de lokale actoren in staat zijn om de ervaring te kapitaliseren. Behalve de uitlokkende factor beïnvloedt eigendom drie andere sleutelfactoren van lokale dynamiek: de *proces-* of *tijdsfactor*, de *wieg*, en ook de *normen-en-waardenfactor*.

Alles overziend kan gezegd worden dat de wieg en de procesfactor behoorlijk doorslaggevend zijn. De concluderende discussie geeft aan dat wanneer buitenstaanders tijd nemen om te ontdekken waar de wieg staat zij betere relaties kunnen aangaan met de lokale gemeenschap. Dat maakt het op zijn beurt weer mogelijk om verder te bouwen op wat de lokale gemeenschap al doet.

De procesfactor suggereert dat voldoende tijd genomen moet worden om 'de juiste omgeving te creëren' waarin ontwikkeling daadwerkelijk plaatsvindt.... en ook resultaat oplevert. Het gebrek aan (gezamenlijke) voorbereiding kan zonder twijfel genoemd worden als een van de belangrijkste redenen voor het falen van ontwikkelingsprojecten, met de gebruikelijke haast van een haalbaarheidsstudie van twee of drie maanden naar een implementatieperiode van vier of vijf jaar!

Hoewel in sommige situaties 'samenwerkingsverbanden dodelijk kunnen zijn', kan over samenwerken met anderen duidelijk worden gezegd dat zonder ondersteuning zelfs de meest dynamische lokale initiatieven 'geïsoleerde eilanden van succes' zijn (Scoones, 1997). De juiste katalyserende partners zijn nodig om een grotere impact te hebben.

Het is een feit dat steeds meer studies de noodzaak tot alternatieve ontwikkelingsstrategieën, met grotere betrokkenheid van de lokale gemeenschap, benadrukken. De praktijkervaringen in dit onderzoek dragen bij aan het besef dat dit echter niet voldoende is. Het is tijd om verder

te gaan en onder ogen te zien dat de richting die de lokale gemeenschap kiest voor haar eigen ontwikkeling de richting is die ontwikkeling ook moet volgen als het doel is om de lokale gemeenschap werkelijk vooruit te helpen. Het is tijd om te luisteren naar de wieg om zo de ondersteuning van ontwikkeling te kunnen verankeren in de lokale dynamiek. Dat is het perspectief dat uit dit onderzoek naar voren komt. Gebaseerd op dit perspectief wordt een voorstel gedaan voor een model en een raamwerk voor het in kaart brengen en beoordelen van lokale ontwikkelingsorganisaties, inclusief eigendoms- en samenwerkingsaspecten. Een cruciale vraag is hoe effectieve samenwerkingsverbanden te bouwen en het eigendom te leggen bij de lokale gemeenschap, waardoor zeker is dat de activiteiten ten goede komen aan de meerderheid van de lokale bevolking. Met andere woorden, die instituten die lokale dynamiek ondersteunen moeten er zeker van zijn dat hun activiteiten niet de bestaande ongelijkheid tussen verschillende subgroepen van de gemeenschap vergroten, en met name moeten zij de (ontwikkelings)rechten van de meest kwetsbare groep in de gemeenschap veilig stellen.

Omdat het eigendomsaspect zo belangrijk is, wordt ook voorgesteld om de projectcyclus nog eens nader te bestuderen, om nog twee stappen op effectieve wijze aan het proces toe te kunnen voegen: *Veiligstellen van een Eigendomsbasis* en *Veiligstellen van Gemeenschappelijke Middelen*. Om de benodigde flexibiliteit beter te symboliseren wordt het gebruik van een spiraal van ontwikkelingsactiviteiten voorgesteld in plaats van de gangbare projectcyclus.

Meer onderzoek is zeker nog nodig om de rol van potentiële *'katalyserende partners'* in kaart te brengen. In dit onderzoek wordt echter gesteld dat deze organisaties (slechts) zich zouden moeten beperken tot een rol als facilitator – wat gebruikelijk is voor katalysatoren – en niet zouden moeten functioneren als de huidige *'ontwikkelingsbemiddelaars'*. Deze laatste groep vertoont vooral een enzymachtig gedrag, waarbij zij vaak of soms 'voor een (aanzienlijk) deel de reactie bepalen'. Dat wil zeggen dat zij een deel van de middelen die beschikbaar zouden moeten zijn voor de lokale gemeenschap of lokale projecten voor zichzelf houden. Tevens wordt verondersteld dat luisteren naar de wieg zal helpen bij het identificeren van de juiste mensen.

Alles in ogenschouw genomen zal het luisteren naar lokale mensen en hun wiegen in financieel opzicht niet meer kosten. In tegendeel, het zal de efficiëntie van ontwikkelingsactiviteiten verbeteren, waardoor beter gebruik van beschikbare middelen gewaarborgd wordt. Het vereist echter wel een deconstructie van de huidige mentaliteit en denkramen.
Luisteren naar de wieg zal tenslotte helpen om de noodzakelijke visie op de Afrikaanse renaissance te doen wortelen in de lokale realiteit.

Résumé

Listen to the Cradle*
Building *from* Local Dynamics for African Renaissance
(Case studies in rural areas in Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana)

Les stratégies de développement mises en œuvre dans la plupart des pays africains après les indépendances - obtenues en général dans les années 60 - étaient guidées par une option pour une modernisation rapide basée sur l'industrialisation, et sur une culture poussée de l'expertise. Dans leur ensemble, ces politiques avaient marginalisé les initiatives de base et les institutions traditionnelles. Il s'est ainsi créé, progressivement, un vide entre les bureaucraties nationales et les grandes compagnies d'une part, et, d'autre part, les microstructures de familles plus ou moins élargies (Klein-Goldewijk et de Gaay Fortman, 1999).

L'échec de cette approche de développement a abouti à la longue crise économique qui a conduit la plupart des pays africains à adopter les programmes d'ajustement structurel qui malheureusement n'ont pas apporté les changements souhaités. Aujourd'hui, hormis les problèmes sociaux liés à leur mise en œuvre, il est de plus en plus reconnu que les politiques d'ajustement structurel, malgré leurs implications à moyen terme, semblent avoir négligé les besoins du long terme (Stewart, Lall et Wangwe, 1992).

Dans le même temps, dans différentes parties d'Afrique, malgré les échecs très coûteux des programmes et projets de développement, les dynamiques locales de développement - bien qu'avec un impact souvent limité - enregistrent des résultats à la fois palpables et substantiels.

La *notion de dynamiques locales* se rapporte ici aux diverses forces en œuvre au niveau local, dans un contexte africain en perpétuel changement, et qui se démènent pour aider les populations de base à satisfaire au moins une partie de leurs besoins prioritaires. Il s'agit en général de petits groupes ou d'associations, à orientation sociale ou commerciale, ou même d'entreprises individuelles. Certaines de ces dynamiques existent de longue date, d'autres ont émergé plus récemment, mais dans leur ensemble elles constituent les éléments de base de la *société civile africaine naissante*.

L'objectif de cette recherche était:
- de tenter de cerner la réalité des dynamiques locales et de définir leurs principales caractéristiques ;
- d'examiner les conditions nécessaires pour un ancrage réel de l'action de développement dans les dynamiques locales, dans le souci d'atteindre un plus grand impact.

Sur le plan méthodologique, dans un premier temps quelques concepts clés ont été explorés afin de cadrer une première lecture des dynamiques locales : l'approche système, l'action collective, la sociologie des organisations, la cosmovision et le développement. Par la suite, l'analyse de la documentation scientifique disponible a permis d'éclairer les principales inter-

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* Titre provisoire de la version française à paraître ultérieurement:
  A l'écoute de nos sources
  Dynamiques locales, base de la renaissance africaine
  (Etudes de cas en zones rurales au Bénin, au Burkina Faso et au Ghana)

rogations issues des premières visites de terrain. L'approche méthodologique suivie a été celle de la 'Grounded Theory', avec une série d'itérations basées sur 'l'apprentissage par l'expérience'. Les premières indications obtenues de la visite exploratoire dans les trois pays (Bénin, Burkina Faso et Ghana) ont conduit à l'étude de deux cas pilotes (Bonou et Kotokpa au Bénin), puis à l'identification de ce qu'il est suggéré de considérer comme les caractéristiques principales des dynamiques locales. Deux autres cas, l'un au Burkina Faso et l'autre au Ghana, ont permis d'évaluer, dans d'autres contextes, ces principales caractéristiques qui sont: le *facteur de déclenchement*, le *berceau ou* la *source* de la dynamique, le facteur *processus* ou facteur *'temps'*, le facteur *normes et valeurs*, la *force motrice*, le *système de pouvoir* et l'interface ou le facteur *support*.

Le *facteur de déclenchement* est le point de départ de la dynamique. Il peut s'agir d'un choc né d'une situation jugée inacceptable ou simplement d'un besoin crucial ressenti par le groupe local concerné. Toutefois, l'initiative de développement peut tout aussi bien avoir été déclenchée - comme c'est souvent le cas - par une intervention extérieure.

Le *berceau* de ou la *source* de la dynamique est soit l'endroit où elle a pris naissance, soit là où elle a mûri. Il s'agit en général d'un lieu où les énergies villageoises se cristallisent : clubs sociaux ou culturels, lieux de culte ou autres. Plusieurs cas ont révélé que ces 'associations préexistantes' ont joué un rôle clé dans la mise en place et le développement de nouveaux groupes à orientation économique.

Le facteur *processus* ou facteur *temps* correspond au cheminement ou à l'enracinement de la dynamique, et confirme l'importance d'une perspective historique quant à l'étude de ces organisations, afin de cerner et d'analyser toutes les dimensions de leur évolution. En fait, ce que nous considérons souvent comme dynamiques locales, ce que nous observons réellement, ce ne sont que 'les tiges et les feuilles ', et non les racines, ce ne sont que des sommets d'icebergs. Les aspects les plus déterminants sont dans la partie inférieure ou cachée, et représentent le processus véritable de construction des dynamiques locales: leur mise en place et leur développement, avec des périodes d'essais, d'échecs et de réussites, de conflits internes, de négociations et de compromis.

Le facteur *normes et valeurs* illustre la manière dont les populations locales gèrent leurs dynamiques de développement, sur la base des réalités et cultures locales. Les cas étudiés ont révélé quelques limites, mais également des aspects spécifiques intéressants tels que la mise à contribution des anciens (ou des sages) dans le règlement des conflits.

Il a été également observé que pour des dynamiques nées dans des conditions similaires, la croissance ultérieure (ou la stagnation) est déterminée par l'existence (ou non) d'une *force motrice* réelle dans leur environnement. Cette force peut être matérielle (par exemple une culture de rente se vendant bien) ou immatérielle (leadership efficace, esprit de compréhension ou de solidarité, etc.).

A propos du facteur *pouvoir*, il est un fait que la créativité et les initiatives locales sont en permanence confrontées aux effets de 'pouvoirs inhibiteurs' de diverses origines (Luhmann, 1979). Loin de 'romantiser' les institutions locales et traditionnelles, cette recherche a permis de confirmer que les institutions locales sont aussi des arènes de conflits et de luttes de pouvoir. Les stratégies individuelles au sein de groupes villageois, telles que révélées par les visites de terrain, illustrent que la réalité du pouvoir est effective tant à l'interface de ces organisations avec d'autres institutions qu'en leur sein.

Le facteur *support* est relatif à l'environnement global de la dynamique locale, et comprend tous systèmes d'appui, la diaspora et les liens avec tous les acteurs extérieurs potentiels. Ce facteur illustre dans quelle mesure le développement des dynamiques locales est favorisé ou freiné par leur environnement. Alors que dans certains cas les structures d'appui ont eu une

contribution déterminante dans le développement des groupes locaux, dans d'autres cas un appui excessif a abouti à l'étouffement de leur dynamique.

L'importance relative de ces différents facteurs a été également discutée. Bien que, par exemple, le facteur de déclenchement ait été marquant dans certains cas, il semble qu'en général, l'essentiel n'est pas le fait même de l'initiation, mais l'appropriation effective du processus de changement, la manière dont sa mise en œuvre a permis une réelle capitalisation par les acteurs locaux. Mis à part le *facteur de déclenchement*, l'appropriation met donc en jeu trois autres facteurs : le facteur *processus* ou facteur *temps*, le *berceau* ou la *source* de la dynamique, ainsi que le facteur *normes et valeurs*.

Dans l'ensemble, le *berceau* de la dynamique locale et le facteur *processus* sont d'une importance cruciale. Comme l'illustre la discussion finale, il est nécessaire, pour les intervenants extérieurs, de prendre le temps nécessaire de découvrir les berceaux ou les sources des dynamiques locales afin de pouvoir 'se connecter' plus effectivement aux populations. Ce faisant, ils découvriront non seulement les priorités réelles, mais aussi la manière dont les populations s'organisent elles-mêmes pour y répondre, ce qui leur permet de mieux soutenir les efforts en cours.

Le facteur *processus* suggère d'investir également les ressources nécessaires, y compris le temps, pour 'monter la scène afin que le développement puisse effectivement se produire'... et donner des résultats. Le manque de préparation (conjointe) se confirme comme une des principales raisons d'échec des projets de développement, caractérisé par la précipitation avec laquelle l'on passe habituellement des études de faisabilité de deux à trois mois, à des périodes de mise en œuvre de quatre à cinq ans !

Quant au facteur *support*, bien qu'il soit apparu que, dans certaines circonstances, trop d'appui peut être fatal, il est aussi clairement ressorti que sans support, même les meilleures dynamiques locales peuvent demeurer des 'îlots de succès isolés' (Scoones, 1997). Des 'partenariats catalytiques' appropriés sont donc nécessaires pour un impact plus grand.

C'est un fait que de plus en plus d'études soulignent la nécessité d'approches alternatives de développement, avec une plus forte implication des populations. Les cas étudiés au cours de cette recherche permettent de soutenir que ceci ne suffit pas. Il est temps d'aller plus loin et de considérer que la voie choisie par les populations locales pour leur propre développement est celle que doit suivre l'appui au développement, si l'objectif est réellement d'aider ces populations. Il est temps d'écouter les sources ou les berceaux des dynamiques locales afin d'y ancrer les efforts de promotion d'un développement durable. Telle est la perspective qui émerge de cette recherche. Sur cette base, un modèle est suggéré pour une évaluation globale des initiatives locales de développement, qui inclue les aspects essentiels que sont l'appropriation locale et la qualité du partenariat. Une question cruciale est comment mettre en place des partenariats efficaces, avec une appropriation effective par les acteurs locaux, tout en assurant que les activités bénéficient à la majorité de la population. En d'autres termes, les institutions d'appui aux dynamiques locales doivent s'assurer que leurs activités ne renforcent pas les inégalités existantes entre les différents sous-groupes des communautés locales, en veillant en particulier aux droits (au développement) des couches les plus vulnérables de la société.

Etant donné l'importance de la question de l'appropriation, il est suggéré de réviser l'actuel cycle de projet de manière à y inclure deux étapes additionnelles: *'Assurer les bases de l'appropriation'* et *'Assurer des ressources conjointes'*. Par ailleurs, pour mieux symboliser la flexibilité nécessaire, une *'Spirale de l'action de développement'* est suggérée à la place du cycle de projet actuel.

Il est nécessaire, à coup sûr, que des recherches ultérieures explorent davantage le rôle des *'catalyseurs de partenariats'*. Toutefois, comme il est expliqué dans cet ouvrage, ceux-ci devraient

se comporter comme de véritables facilitateurs de processus - que sont les catalyseurs - et non comme bon nombre de 'courtiers de développement' actuels. En effet, ces derniers ont parfois des 'comportements d'enzymes', 'prenant une part trop active à la réaction', c'est-à-dire retenant une part substantielle des ressources destinées aux projets locaux. Pour l'instant tout porte à penser qu'une liaison adéquate avec les berceaux des dynamiques locales permet d'identifier les personnes susceptibles de mieux jouer ce rôle de catalyseurs.

Somme toute, être à l'écoute des populations locales et des berceaux de leurs dynamiques ne coûte guère plus, financièrement. Bien au contraire, cela permet d'accroître l'efficacité de l'action de développement, avec une meilleure utilisation des ressources disponibles. Toutefois, ce changement nécessite la '*déconstruction*' des mentalités et des modes de pensée actuels. Se mettre à l'écoute de nos sources permet également d'ancrer la nécessaire vision de la renaissance africaine dans les réalités locales.

Acronyms

ABAC	Association d'Action Communautaire
ADDS	Association pour le Développement du Département de Saponé
AGEFIB	Agence de Financement des Initiatives de Base
AJSD	Association des Jeunes pour le Développpment de Saponé (Youth Association for the Development of Saponé)
APAD	Association Euro-Africaine pour l' Anthropologie du Changement Social et du Développement
ASIP	Agricultural Sector Improvement Project
AVLP	Association Vive Le Paysan
BTEC	Banques Traditionnelles d'Epargne et de Crédit
CA	Conseil d'Administration
CAD	Centre Africain pour une pratique culturelle du développement
CAETS	Coopératives Agricoles Expérimentales de Type Socialiste
CARDER	Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural
CCS	Centre communal de santé
CDR	Comités pour la Défense de la Révolution
CEDA	Centre d'Etudes pour le Développement Africain
CGIAR	Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research
CLCAM	Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuelle
CNCA	Caisse Nationale de Crédit Agricole
COMPAS	Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development
COOPEC	Coopérative d'Epargne et de Crédit
COVEC	Caisse Villageoise d'Epargne et de Crédit
CREP	Caisse Rurale d'Epargne et de Prêt
CRL	Conseil Révolutionnaire Local
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU
ENDA	Environnement Développement Action
FENACREP	Fédération Nationale des CREP du Bénin
GRVC	Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative
GV	Groupements Villageois
GVC	Groupement à vocation coopérative
HCS	Haut Conseil des Sages
HCV	Haut Conseil Villageois
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDE	Intercooperacão e Desenvolvimento, Lisbon, Portugal
INRAB	Institut National des Recheches Agricoles du Bénin
INSAE	Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique
ISG	International Support Group
LLL	Linked Local Learning
MEP	Mutuelle d'Epargne et de Prêt
MSR	Mutuelle de Sané Rurale (Rural Health Credit Union)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ONG	Organisation(s) non-gouvernementale(s)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity

PADES	Projet d'Appui au développement de Sous-Préfecture
PADIC	Projet d'Appui au Développement Institutionnel (niveau) Commune
PALO	Local Administrative Process
PDRI	Programme de développement rural intégré
PEMR	Poursuite des Etudes en Milieu Rural
PNGT	Programme National pour la Gestion des Terroirs
PSAN	Projet de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SONADER	Société Nationale pour le Développement Rural
SPONG	Secrétariat permanent des ONG
UCVEC	Union des Caisses Villageoises d'Epargne et de Crédit
UDP	Union Départementale des Producteurs
USPP	Union Sous-Préfectorale des Producteurs
UVA	University of Amsterdam
WFP	World Food Programme

Annexes

Annex 1 General descriptive framework

Descriptive features	*Identification of the dynamic*
Basic problem or aspiration	Basic economic, social or cultural aspiration / problem at the origin of the dynamic
Initiation / History	• endogenous (embedded in tradition or collective initiative of local people) • by local people with external support • by external support but 'capitalised' by local people
Activities	Description of all types of activities (economic, social, cultural...)
Comparative advantages	Resources and constraints
Leadership / Management	Based on the strong personality of an initiator or on collectively organised management
Evolution	Progress to date
Scale	• small-scale (home village) • small scale but progressive diffusion to other villages • large-scale (involving many villages)
Impact	• evidence of success / failure • apparent indicators • key factors of success / failure
Other characteristics	• characteristics of the main actors (traditional, historical or familial links, homogeneity, trust, interdependence) • characteristics of the beneficiaries (some can be outside the main actors' group)

Annex 2 General analytical framework

Features	Relevant questions
Formal relationships	What is the ' official ' definition of the dynamic? Who are the institutional partners? How are the relationships formalised? Who is supposed to do what?
Informal relationships (networks)	What are the individual interpretations (by the stakeholders) of the dynamic? Who is close to who? Who is in charge of negotiation (and with whom?) Who is really doing what? How is the social atmosphere?
Uncertainty areas	What are the main uncertainty areas (organisational, cultural, economical, technical, contextual) where the actors' attitudes are unforeseeable? Who holds the information? How does the information circulate? Who can fix the rules ? Who can interpret the rules?
Goals	What are the individual goals of the members? What are the collective goals?
Resources	What resources do the various actors have (to achieve their goals)?
Constraints	What are their main constraints?
Alliances	Which actors really have common interests? Why?
Oppositions	Which actors really have different interests? Why?
Strategies	What are (then) the individual strategies of the different actors? What are the collective actors of (the sub-groups and) the group?

Annex 3 Additional Analytical frameworks

Locations visited	Emerging features (from the description)	Similar /Comparable Features = Nodes for Reflection	Results
Location 1			
Location 2			Broad Categories of Characteristics
....			
Location 3			
Location X			

Table 1: Learning cycle 1 (LC1)

Pilot Cases	Loose Categories from LC1 (analysed through the main components of the cases)				Results
	Category 1	Category 2	....	Category X	
Pilot Case 1					Key Existential Factors (KEF)
Pilot Case 2					

Table 2: Learning cycle 2 (LC2)

Key Existential Factors (KEF)	Ways to check	Level of test	Emerging Patterns
Factor 1	Participant observation / Focus group meetings / Additional interviews / Actors biographies or Combinations of different methods...	Local, Or Country level Or both	1. About the KEF 2. About the Limiting Factors
Factor 2			
....			
Factor X			

Table 3: Learning cycle3 (LC3)

Cases / Characters	Case 1	Case 2	Case 2	....	Case Y
KEF 1	+	++	+++		
KEF 2	-	- -	- - -		
...					
...					
...					
... KKEF X					

Table 4: LC3 - Emerging Patterns / KEF

+	Relevant and positive impact
++	Relevant and very positive impact
+++	Relevant and highly determinant (positive) impact
-	Relevant and negative impact
- -	Relevant and very negative impact
- - -	Relevant and highly determinant (negative) impact

Annex 4: Current Chiefs in Yamfo

Title	Host Family	Responsibility
Omanhene	Nyinasinase	General overseer and head of the traditional council, was the commander in chief of the traditional army in the olden days
Krontire-hene	Atanofiem	Second in command to the Omanhene and deputies in his absence.
Akwamu-hene	Nyomase	Third in command after the Krontire-hene
Akyeame-hene	Atanofiem	Chief linguist and head of the team of about seven linguist of the Omanhene. His office is signified by the wearing of a special head-gear. He is also the only linguist who can parade round a ceremonial ground with the large umbrella over him. Also as the chief spokesman and adviser to the chief he moves with him always.
Gyaase-hene	Nyinasinase	Keeps the paraphernalia (jewellery, costumes, state swords, keys to the stool house, etc.) of the palace
Nifa-hene	Nyinasinase	Currently plays an advisory role but traditionally used to be the commander of the armed forces to the right-wing ('Nifa') of the chief during war time in the olden days.
Benkum-hene	Asonomaso	Also currently plays an advisory role but traditionally used to be the commander of the armed forces to the left-wing ('Nifa') of the chief during war time in the olden days.
Ankobea-hene	Matino	Regent of the chief in times of war. He stays behind to take care of home affairs when others have gone to war. Where it is necessary to take him to war, he is part of the rear guard of the Omanhene.
Adonten-hene	Gyeduako	Force commander of the royal forces. He leads the town to war. Usually the first sub-chief to comment in the court after the chief linguist has set the agenda at a meeting
Twafuo-hene	Akonkodease	Serves as signal officer during war
Kyidom-hene	Asonomaso	Commander of the rear-guard of the chief in times of war
Sanaa-hene	Nyinasinase	Treasurer of the palace
Akyempim-hene	Nyomase	In-charge of conflict resolution in the palace. He is also responsible for the allocation of stool lands and used to be part of the rear-guard of the chief at war.

Title	Host Family	Responsibility
Dabe-hene	Nyinasinase	Serves as the director of protocol at the palace, receiving state visitors, accommodating them if necessary. He also sees to the dressing of the Omanhene on occasions.
Apegya-hene	Pankrono	Head of the palanquin bearers/carriers. Also responsible for the decoration and maintenance of the palanquin.
Baamu-hene	Nyinasinase	The in-charge of royal burial grounds
Atipim-hene	Ohwim	Rear body guard of the Omanhene
The Queen-mother	Nyinasinase	Special adviser to the Omanhene especially on female issues. As the head of all the female family heads, the queen mother handles all conflicts involving females at the traditional council level in the town. She organises the performance of puberty rites and advises on marriage. Traditionally the queen mother and the Abakoma-hene nominate a candidate during en-stoolment of the Oman-hene. In the absence of the Dabe-hene the queen mother may act in that capacity. As the mother of the state, the queen mother also receives state guests.

Annex 5: Additional profiles of village groups

(cf Chapter 10, Sections 10.2.1 and 10.2.3).

Miniffi (farmers' group, Zou province, Benin)
- Triggering factor: not explicit, but the village's landlocked status apparently played a role.
- Evolution process: Started in 1983, the group is led by several dynamic young people, who discuss their projects in advance with elders for advice. A village development committee set up in 1998 involves many stakeholders: farmers, craftsmen, traders, women, elders, youth...
- Cradle: the majority of people in the village belong to the ethnic group Mahi.
- Norms and values factor: (cf: Evolution factor).
- Driving force: very good leadership and solidarity; people who are sick get money from the group to cover medical fees and pay back when they start their activities again!
- Linking or Support factor: no special support institutions are helping them apart from the extension service and some other public services.
- Power system: a key Miniffi characteristic is collective empowerment: 'everything is transparent; any member who represents us anywhere has to report back to the whole group.'

Hêjamê (village savings and credit group, Mono province, Benin)
- Triggering factor: the shock of a fine on the villagers by the local agricultural bank.
- Evolution process: the group has benefited from the PADES process which gives local actors the time necessary to take charge of their initiatives.
- Cradle: not really relevant in this context.
- Norms and values factor: little impact (slightly in management style, through the negotiation and dialogue process to convince members of traditional societies, for example, to join).
- Driving force: no special force, unlike some similar cases (e.g. health union in Bonou).
- Linking factor: the PADES project which financed the construction of the headquarters.
- Power system: it took some time to realise, during the study, that power issues might be behind the group's limited impact: apparently its location is contested by nearby villages.

Aplahoue (Farmers' Group for production of forest plants, vegetables and livestock, Benin)
- Triggering factor: a reaction of young school-leavers finding themselves unemployed.
- Evolution process: at first, the group made slow but steady process with interesting results, but that changed when they started getting important loans.
- Cradle: 'We are all classmates (from primary school) or from the same neighbourhood'
- Norms and values: not relevant
- Driving force: strong motivation
- Linking factor: because of the group's success, it got loans from three different sources, worth more than their capacity to repay. Now, most of their income goes to pay them off.
- Power system: the decision process is genuinely participatory: 'we dialogue until we find solutions to the problems...', and 'responsibilities are well shared...' .

Avamè (savings group, Benin)
- Triggering factor: not relevant
- Evolution process: activities started in 1992, then peaked in 1995 and have declined since.
- Cradle: not relevant

- Norms and values: because of the respect devoted to traditional values, members did not dare to challenge the authority of the main leader, who is also the local *voodoo* chief.
- Driving force: not relevant
- Linking factor: The main partner - the Sasakawa project - drew back because of the group's unsatisfactory development. The extension service maintains some professional links.
- Power factor: the group's main problem is that no member challenges the main leader.

Lagbavé (Farmers' group, Benin)
Main activity is crop production, mainly food crops and cotton.
- Triggering factor: not relevant
- Evolution process: as explained by the group's secretary:
  'When they started in 1972 they faced many problems: no drinking water, no storage facilities for fertilisers, no health centre, lack of classrooms in the primary school, etc.
  They then used their earnings from cotton and first put in two hand-dug wells. With the help of a government grant, they installed two tube-wells. Later, they built five sheds, two school classrooms, as well as a health centre with accommodation for the nurse and the midwife.'
- Cradle: basically same ethnic origin
- Norms and values: decision-making is based on traditional consultation and dialogue
- Driving force: goodwill and the will to work, mutual solidarity and assistance. Further, important earnings on cotton (2 to 3 million FCFA a year for the last five years) have made a social role possible.
- Linking factor: no special support from outside.
- Power factor: Lagbavé people feel collectively empowered with much transparency.

Kongo (farmers' group, Ghana)
Main activity: farming (mainly maize and a few other crops), but also animal production (by the *Fulani*). Contribution to village development activities: building of schools (through communal labour) and construction of a dam.
- Triggering factor: not really relevant;
- Evolution process: started as a Sasakawa-supported group in 1990, they were quite successful until 1993. In 1994 a flood destroyed all their seeds and fertilizers. They explain: 'despite that, SG 2000 insisted on each of us repaying our debts of 33,500 cedis, so that was the end with Sasakawa. However, extension officers continued to come and advised use of manure instead of pesticides; we use Neem trees and it works. This year, three of our farmers have been rewarded. During the SG 2000 period, we only got two rewards, both in 1992'.
- Cradle: their common roots are in being settlers from some 20 years ago, looking for land.
- Norms and values factor: solidarity
- Driving force: Motivation, discipline and leadership: 'Our Chief, Noumoudégbé Adjokatchè whom the different ethnic groups (Ewés, Adans, Aïgbés and Fulanis) obey; we have had the same Chief since the beginning'.
- Power system: the village chief's authority is decentralised to different activity committees.

Bagblé (women's group, Ghana)
- Triggering factor: started back in 1992 by a group of women whose regular meetings as a 'mothers' club' (Red Cross) led to discussions of common issues of concern.
- Evolution process: the club gradually evolved into a crop-processing group.
- Cradle: the mothers' club

- Norms and values factor: not relevant
- Driving force: here lies the problem of the group. Their production activities are not very successful, and apparently nothing else drives them.
- Power system: not a specific issue.

Asaam (farmers' group, Ghana)
- Main activity: crop production.
- Triggering factor: not relevant.
- Evolution process: the group started in 1997 and whilst not getting much external assistance, it stayed together as a co-operative. They mainly get loans from rural banks, and they have developed a 'mutual assistance system' for members who lose relatives ...
- Cradle: quite an homogenous ethnic group.
- Norms and values: prevailing local values strongly influence the way the group is managed.
- Driving force: the group is very much driven by their co-operative spirit.
- Linking Factor: links mainly with extension services and rural banks.
- Power system: 'Here everyone has a say, we like each other and we need everybody to develop our village.'

Annex 6: Framework for a basic Assessment of Local Development Initiatives

Dimensions	Questions (to be completed) (*)	Scores
Ownership		+ or ++ or +++ - or - - or - - -
Partnerships Quality		+ or ++ or +++ - or - - or - - -
Power System		+ or ++ or +++ - or - - or - - -
Collective Benefits		+ or ++ or +++ - or - - or - - -
Total Score		X+ / Y -

(*) *Note*

1) On the design of the framework (to adapt to each local context)

The main step for the design of the framework could be a workshop with representatives of the key institutions/groups involved in the local organisations/projects. The task of the workshop is to define measurable indicators for the four dimensions above. To arrive at this point, participants will explain and record their perceptions of the ideal situation of their local dynamic, in terms of satisfactory degrees of ownership, partnership, power system, collective benefits. These records (written on cards) are then further discussed until the indicators are filled in (in form of questions) for each of the four 'boxes'.

For example, for (local) ownership the question could be: 'Do we have (in the village), a part from the management committee members, more than 5 persons who can explain to visitors the main activities of the development dynamic?' (The idea behind the question is that, very often, only a few committee members are pulling the group...).

2) On the use of the framework

It is important to stress that the final score could just give an overall idea of the local organisation. What really matter are the individual '+'s indicating how 'healthy' are some specific aspects of the organisation, or - more useful - the individual '-'s, indicating action points or specific aspects to improve.

It is also possible to give 'weights' to the specific factors of these four dimensions...This could help bring more clarity into the discussion. However, it is still important to maintain the individual scores of the different as this is the way to clarify the most relevant action points.

About the author

Dominique Hounkonnou, a native of Benin, obtained his *Ingénieur Agronome* degree (specialising in Agricultural Engineering) in 1974, at the State Faculty of Agronomic Sciences, Gembloux, Belgium, and a degree in Business Administration at the *Centre d'Etudes Financières, Economiques et Bancaires (CEFEB)*, Paris, France, in 1983.

He worked in agricultural extension in Benin, as Head of a District Agricultural Extension Service (Savalou District, 1975-1977), and as Director General of CARDER-Atlantique, a governmental institution for rural development (1977-1984).

In December 1984, he joined the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU (CTA), Wageningen, the Netherlands, where he held successively the position of Chargé de Mission, then that of Technical Advisor (1984-1994), and finally of Head of the Operations and Regional Activities Division (1994-1996). These posts, alongside headquarters duties, comprised extensive travel - and thus interaction with various rural development actors - in many countries in Africa, as well as within the European Union, the Caribbean, and in some American countries.

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