

**Marie REDON\***

**THE MODEL'S LIMITATIONS  
WHAT 'URBAN SUSTAINABILITY' FOR PORT-AU-PRINCE?  
EUROPEAN URBAN PROJECTS PUT TO THE TEST  
BY THE HAITIAN CITY**

**Abstract.** In 2010, the capital of Haiti was devastated by an earthquake that seemed to provide the opportunity for the country, as well as foreign donors, to put Port-au-Prince on the track of an ordered, planned urban policy, in line with its multi-risk context. Prior to the earthquake, the lack of a legal framework for urban planning was called into question. In its wake, speeches making the capital the emblem of a new 'sustainable' start have flourished. The European Union, the main donor of funds for Haiti, has embarked on a programme of support for reconstruction, but with what results three years later? The paper proposes to approach the limitations of the 'sustainable city' model, conditioned by spatiotemporal continuity. The systemic functioning underlying urban sustainability clashes with the context of Port-au-Prince, where spatial division and temporal discontinuity are determinant. In spite of itself, aid and its operation by projects, seems to enforce urban fragmentation and dissonance.

**Key words:** Port-au-Prince, Haiti, urban sustainability, state, NGO, governance, emergency, development, model, European Union.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We loved her in spite of her misery. Despite death which depending on the season walks openly through the streets. Without remorse. Without even a blink of the eyes. We loved her because of her boundless energy, of her strength that could devour us, swallow us up. Because of school-children in uniforms that blazed at noon. Because of her overflowing flesh and images. Because of the mountains that seem to constantly try to advance in order to engulf her. Because of always too much. Because of the way she had of holding us and never letting us go (Lahens, 2011, p. 107).

---

\* Marie REDON, Université Paris 13-Nord, 99 av. J. B. Clément, 93430 Villetaneuse, France, e-mail: marie.redon@univ-paris13.fr

On 12th January 2010, the capital of the Republic of Haiti was devastated by a deadly earthquake that seemed to provide the opportunity for the country as well as foreign donors, to put Port-au-Prince<sup>1</sup> on the track of an ordered, planned urban policy, in line with its multi-risk context. More than 220,000 deaths were counted, with around 300,000 wounded, 1.5 million homeless, and some 660,000 people having fled the capital.<sup>2</sup> A large part of this disaster could have been avoided if the city had been rationally planned according to at least basic, if not sustainable, precepts of urban anticipation.

The island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic is, in fact, located in a seismically active area, between the North American and Caribbean tectonic plates. The country has suffered from numerous high-intensity earthquakes in the past: the historian Moreau de Saint-Méry recounted that in Port-au-Prince, in 1751, ‘only one of the masonry houses was not toppled over’, and in 1770, ‘the entire town was knocked down’. The 2010 earthquake was caused by the rupture of a known fault (called Enriquillo), running east-west across the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, which in 2009, according to the estimates of the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information Technology (IHSI), had nearly 2.3 million residents. Seismic risk was thus well identified, and its human impact would have been much less if prevention campaigns had been conducted, the population made aware, and constructions made more safe (Hou, 2011).

The historical lack of a legal framework for urban planning in Haiti was called into question prior to the earthquake. In its wake, speeches have flourished making the capital the emblem of a new start for this country that is among the world’s poorest. ‘We want to make Port-au-Prince a sustainable city that meets the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, that provides the necessary services and economic resources to its residents’, the capital’s mayor at the time Jean-Yves Jason (Allix, 2010), thus affirmed in February 2010, as did the Minister of Interior and Territorial Collectivities (MITC): ‘I believe that this is an opportunity to finally have a modern city that is adapted to today’s requirements’ (*Haiti Libre*, 2011). These speeches about the capital largely echoed those of the international community regarding the entire country, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, thus declared in March 2010: ‘Our ambition today is to rebuild the country from the bottom up’ (Ban Ki-moon, 2010).

At the same time, funding for relief and reconstruction flowed in. Some 4.3 billion euros were pledged by donors for 2010 and 2011, to which was added

---

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1749, ‘on the old Randot house, increased by that of Messieurs Morel and Breton des Chapelles [...] [Port-au-Prince] owes its name to the boat Le Prince commanded by Monsieur Saint André who had anchored it in [this] port [...] commonly called the Hôpital’ (Mathurin, 1976, p. 17).

<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), December 2011, [www.haiti.humanitarianresponse.info](http://www.haiti.humanitarianresponse.info).

3 billion in private donations collected worldwide after the catastrophe (Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, Bill Clinton). In early 2012, over 50% of donations pledged for 2010 and 2011 had been disbursed by the donors (Caroit, 2012), who had also forgiven almost a billion dollars of debt owed by the country. But the Haitian authorities, NGOs and local businesses have received only a tiny part of the international aid, managed mainly by UN agencies and the major international NGOs. The mistrust of many of those involved in the reconstruction toward local authorities has transformed Haiti into a 'republic of NGOs',<sup>3</sup> which have taken over large parts of not only state but also urban action without any coordination.

In 2011, the European Union (EU), Haiti's main financial donor, announced a 'Support Programme for reconstruction and development of neighbourhoods to facilitate the return of affected populations'. With an amount of 33.7 million euros, the programme should permit the reconstruction of some 11,000 homes in two priority neighbourhoods of the capital.<sup>4</sup> 'This will be an integrated approach including the construction of urban infrastructure and the establishment of basic services such as access to drinking water, sanitation, electricity, and social services, like health and education', explained the EU representative at the project's launching (Caroit, 2012). What about the sustainability of this approach? The European Union, whether as an institution via organizations such as the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), EuropeAid or through bilateral aid (French Development Agency) or else as NGOs coming from European countries (GRET for France, COOPI for Italy, CORDAID for the Netherlands etc.) is omnipresent in the country and holds a specific responsibility in an international reform effort working to make the global humanitarian aid effort, notably urban, more effective.<sup>5</sup>

But what does the city of Port-au-Prince have to say to us three years after the earthquake? What does the term 'sustainable city' mean in Haiti, there where the international community has been massively established for decades, and particularly since the January 2010 earthquake? Here it's a question of approaching the limitations of the precept of the sustainable city to show, by mirror effect, that the model is influenced by spatiotemporal continuity. The systemic functioning of the city underlying the idea of urban sustainability clashes with the Port-au-Prince context, where spatial division and temporal discontinuity have been determinant up until now. In spite of itself, humanitarian action and its operation by projects seems, for the time, to be further enforcing urban fragmentation and dissonance.

---

<sup>3</sup> Already in 1997, Pierre Etienne (1997) spoke of 'the invasion of NGOs' in Haiti; these days the term 'republic of NGOs' is frequently used in the country's media.

<sup>4</sup> Press Release (2012).

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/consensus\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/consensus_fr.htm).

## 2. SPATIAL DIVISION

In Europe, the spread of the precept of ‘sustainable city’ incites urban actors to perform at every level of urban production in a concerted manner, from design to maintenance and management. But in a country so clearly characterized by the informal (e.g. Paul *et al.*, 2011), global operation comes up against a spatial partitioning that is a result of both property confusion and the coexistence of different levels of governance.

### 2.1. Property Confusion and European Judicial Influence

Haitian urban demography is set in a typical context of developing countries. The capital grew rapidly, going from 140,000 inhabitants in 1950 to nearly 2.5 million in 2010. Nationally, the rate of urbanization is about 47%, the Ouest Department, where Port-au-Prince is located, being the most urbanized with a rate of 60%. During the period 2005–2010, the average annual growth was about 1.64% and more than double that concerning the urban area (3.2%).<sup>6</sup> In terms of the process of urbanization, informal occupation is predominant; people settle on land without titles and build their housing by self-construction. Although the extent of these new slums or ‘cities’ is difficult to accurately assess, Georges Anglade refers to it as a dimension of the Haitian space ‘by far the most important for our future in the 21st century’. For the year 2007, he estimates that these city spaces represented ‘more than 90% of a population of 2.5 million people, thus more than 2 million slum dwellers’ (Anglade, 2008).

While the affected landowners usually remain passive, the State without appropriate means of control is also unable to prevent this self-organized and illegal occupation (CIAT, 2010). The land question,<sup>7</sup> especially farmland, has long been a problem in the country and makes very tricky any spatial management of the whole, any policy for developing the territory. It also increases the vulnerability of the Haitian context.<sup>8</sup> The Haitian legal system, like that in France, is based on the Napoleonic Civil Code. Despite a ‘modulated judicial creolization’ (Cabanis, 1996), we find a common monistic conception of the law and of justice inseparable from the representation of state, which emerged in Europe after 1789. The erection of

---

<sup>6</sup> Data IHSI, Millenium Development Goals, State, Trends, and Perspective.

<sup>7</sup> Understood as ‘the set of relationships between individuals, the land, and natural resources. It includes both the concepts and the rules that are applicable to them as well as the uses associated with different products and activities (crops, pastures, and buildings) that are normally attached to it’ (Dorner and Oriol, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Briefly recall that risk is the conjunction of hazard and vulnerability. While hazard refers to the probability of the occurrence of an event, vulnerability is a notion that refers to the fragility of societies in the face of destructive phenomena. It is thus very closely linked to a society’s various characteristics, and the land situation is incontestably among them.

the modern state postulates, in fact, that there can only be one authority and therefore only one law (Pierre Louis, 2002). In the aftermath of Haitian independence (1804), in accordance with the legal positivism of the French system, customs ceased to have force of law. This has led to a double structure of the country into a legal country and a real one, into a territorial state and a segmented state, the administration and the people, the power and 'outsider country' (Barthélémy, 1990), and so on. The various existing legislative codes thus refer to French texts and this historical influence is still valid according to the professionals of the sector: 'urban planning is marked by European conceptual influence and especially French'.<sup>9</sup> But next to the law, customary practices exist and it is precisely this parallelism between state order and customary order that can be crippling (Pierre Louis, 2002).

Development projects, infrastructure work, strategic zoning etc. cannot be implemented without land expropriation, which means a recourse to the principle of public utility as being superior to the right of individual property rights. Article 39 of the 1987 Constitution foresaw entrusting land management to local collectivities since it was decided that 'the communal sections have a pre-emptive right for the use of private land in the state' and designates the 'communes as privileged land managers of the state's private domain situated in their local area'. But due to the vagueness concerning the cadastre, property disputes are the rule. Therefore, the slightest land transaction must be endlessly negotiated and socio-economic inequalities inevitably play in the power struggles: it is easier to pre-empt land from disadvantaged citizens.

The European influence, especially that of France, regarding property is still current in the country through a concern for property clarification, as seen in the AFD's project for establishing a cadastre. Noting that many land disputes appear in cases brought before the courts, the goal is to improve the security of land rights, as much for the population as for the investors, in order to promote sustainable development and a territorial planning policy. One of France's commitments is thus the creation of a property cadastre covering one fifth of Haiti's territory, carried out 'with the technical expertise of France along with human and material support from the Haitian National Office of Cadastre (ONACA)' and support from the Interministerial Committee for Territorial Development (CIAT).<sup>10</sup>

## **2.2. Multiples Levels of Governance, and the European Projects 'Quartier'**

This land rights confusion, already crippling urban planning before the earthquake, has been further reinforced since 2010 due to the multiplication of parties involved: it is currently impossible to have an overview of ongoing projects in the metropolitan area, since at the present time there is no map that would show precisely

---

<sup>9</sup> Interview consulting firm LGL, Port-au-Prince, December 2012.

<sup>10</sup> See the page 'Cadastre et sécurisation foncière' on the site <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/>.

what is happening in terms of (re)construction. Entire sections of the city are being rebuilt but without any real oversight or centralization of information, in spite of the initiatives of those involved, including Europeans.<sup>11</sup> Among them, following the earthquake, the Overseas Collectivity (COM) of Saint Barthélemy launched the worksite 'Bay kout men Haiti'<sup>12</sup> for the reconstruction of a school located in the commune of Delmas, on the property of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint-Paul de Chartres. Finished in September 2011, the school includes twelve classes and welcomes five hundred students, a far from negligible number. This operation was financed by the Collectivity, for the amount of 160,000 euros, and conducted jointly by the Red Cross, the Lions Club and the Rotary Club of Saint Barthélemy.<sup>13</sup> For this project, which is intended to be 'sustainable' (use of wood materials, rainwater recuperation, solar panels etc.), an attaché from the French Embassy in Haiti was present at the inauguration, while Haitian municipal authorities were not represented. Volunteers acted rapidly and without administrative concern, 'otherwise nothing would have been done!'<sup>14</sup>

The more important the aid providers are, the greater is their concern to report their presence to the local authorities, but the very heterogeneous nature of the local actors of (re)construction induces a 'lack of coordination between the different international actors and the absence of interaction with the national actors [Haitians], or even the exclusion of these latter, notably due to the systematic use of English as the working language', criticized a report by the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH, 2010). Hundreds of construction, rehabilitation and relocation projects are thus underway in the capital, but a general misunderstanding prevails, in part due to the fragmentation of the different levels of territorial management. According to the 2009 census of the IHSI (2010, p. 62), the 'Metropolitan Area' comprises the communes of Port-au-Prince, Delmas, Cité Soleil, Tabarre, Carrefour and Pétion-Ville, but this is a statistical breakdown and not a level of governance; at the end of 2012, no institution formally assembled the mayors of each of the cited communes. It can be mentioned that the fragmentation of the city of Port-au-Prince was triggered in the 1980s, with the accession of suburbs to the status of communes.<sup>15</sup> As for the 'Arrondissement of Port-au-Prince', it is one of the five arrondissements of Haiti's Ouest Department, established around the city

---

<sup>11</sup> A representative of the Minister of Public Health and Population (MSPP) explained: 'it's a real battle with the NGOs to get them registered [with the government]. The MSPP has said [that you ought] to register to inform them that you are in the area, but they do not do it. Imagine that you are the representative of the MSPP in the area and you notice that this person is not registered. It is then very difficult to sit down with this person!' (Martel, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> 'A helping hand for Haiti'.

<sup>13</sup> See in particular the website <http://bkmhaiti.blogspot.fr> and *Le Pélican* (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Interview BKMH, Cap-Haitien, December 2012.

<sup>15</sup> The creation of City Halls in Carrefour and Delmas in 1982 and those of Tabarre and Cité-Soleil in 2003 increased the number of entities, without having a decisive impact on the services provided

of Port-au-Prince, which is today the administrative seat. In 2009, it was the most populous Haitian arrondissement with a population of 2,509,939 inhabitants (with over 90% of the population in the metropolitan area of the capital), for an area of 735.78 km<sup>2</sup>. This arrondissement includes eight communes, namely the six of the metropolitan area, plus Kenscoff and Gressier. Departmental representatives (representatives of executive power, Courts of Appeal and departmental ministers) serve in each of the administrative seats of the department. At the level of the arrondissements are found Executive vice-delegates, Civil Courts and District Ministries. Communes are headed by mayors and municipal councils, while each of the communal sections<sup>16</sup> that compose them is directed by an Administrative Council of the Communal Section (CASEC).

On top of these local actors come European actors, predominant in matters of urban planning, not only from a conceptual viewpoint but also from a practical one, via reconstruction and planning projects. The level of intervention of the projects financed by EuropeAid is the 'quartier', which does not fit within any of the cited divisions. In addition to being a social and political issue (Miller, 2002), the notion of quartier overlaps that of the lived-in space, and some projects begin with the delimitation of their quartier by the residents themselves, as in the community planning project supported by the NGO Solidarités International in the area of Christ Roi, with more than 20,000 inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> Among other projects supported by European Union, we can mention:

- that of Cordaid, a Dutch NGO specialized in emergency aid, which has provided permanent shelters to over a hundred vulnerable families in the Villa Rosa quartier;<sup>18</sup>

- the Emergency Architects project concerning the Delmas 32 quartier, which is characterized by the presence of informal housing and where 30,000 people lived before the earthquake. It proposes 'modular houses';<sup>19</sup>

- the project of the Haitian NGO, FOKAL, in the Martissant quartier; contracting authority delegated by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport, Communications and Energy (MTPTCE), FOKAL is working on a development plan for the Concerted Development Area of Martissant;<sup>20</sup>

- the project of the French NGO, GRET (Research and Technological Exchange Group) for the Baillargeau quartier. This project named AREBA (Development of the Reconstruction of Baillargeau), funded by the AFD, the Foundation de France

---

for citizens, the initiative having rather 'cut the means and the capacity to act of the principal mayor' (Noel, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> For example, the commune of Port-au-Prince includes three: Turgeau, Morne l'Hôpital and Martissant

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Port-au-Prince, December 2012.

<sup>18</sup> <http://cordaidhaiti.org/>.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.archi-urgent.com>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.fokal.org/>.

and in negotiations with European Union, also concerns a quartier described as precarious.

Among the goals listed for this last project led by GRET, figures ‘strengthening the connection between the quartier and the rest of the city’.<sup>21</sup> The multiplicity of projects at the quartier level in fact poses the problem of their articulation both horizontally and vertically, due to the lack of effective governance at higher levels.

The weakening of urban management institutions has become a constant over these last decades, and seems positively correlated with the deterioration of the situation. State and territorial institutions cannot meet their missions. [...] The massive influx of hundreds of organizations mainly threatens to further stifle the acting capacity of local authorities (Noel, 2012).

However, on the side of the Haitian authorities, attempts are being made to ‘re-assemble the levels’ as with the creation in 2011 of the Unity of the Construction of Housing and Public Buildings (UCLPB), whose function is to coordinate and ensure monitoring of the various reconstruction projects. The starting point of the UCLPB is indeed to collect data from various actors in the sector with the establishment of a database divided, precisely, by quartier. We thus see the emergence of a new level of governance, spurred on by foreign donors.

The case of downtown Port-au-Prince is very symptomatic of the splitting of perspectives created by the multiplicity of actors. This part of the capital is a strong symbolic issue, as evidenced by debates on the reconstruction of the National Palace, which is at the heart of it. Demolition of the building began in September 2012, undertaken by J/P Haitian Relief Organization (J/P HRO), a humanitarian organization established by the American actor Sean Penn, Goodwill Ambassador to Haiti. As for the role of France in its reconstruction, it does not yet seem clear, in spite of the proposition of the French Ambassador, a few weeks after the earthquake, to help rebuild this seat of power... Various development projects exist for the reconstruction of the city centre, including that of the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment founded by Prince Charles and based in London along with the Miami firm Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), commissioned by the Haitian government to develop a reconstruction plan for Port-au-Prince and to make proposals for the spatial organization of the perimeter, declared to be of public utility in 2011. To this can be added the Nouvilvea project of the Ministry of Planning and External Cooperation (MPCE), for the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. As for Port-au-Prince’s City Hall, they have turned to a working group of the Haitian Centre for Planning and Development Research (CHRAD); a project was presented in August 2011, including a totally renovated city centre, the installation of tramways, the redevelopment of the waterfront into a tourist and recreation area etc., at a total estimated cost of

---

<sup>21</sup> Brochure presenting the project AREBA–GRET.



3.3 billion dollars (*Haiti Libre*, 2011). Jean-Yves Jason, the mayor at the time, saw in it the opportunity for a 'new Port-au-Prince', but he has since been ousted by order of the government.

Recently elected (April 2011) President Michel Martelly, in fact, appointed in February 2012 a three-member commission to administer the municipality of Port-au-Prince until the next municipal elections. In the year 2012 alone, four different municipal teams have succeeded each other; this is a telling example of spatial fragmentation combined with a phenomenon of temporal discontinuity that once again runs contrary to any 'urban sustainability'.

### 3. TEMPORAL DISCONTINUITY

#### 3.1. Emergency Temporality, Development Temporalities

The Haitian political climate is broadly marked by instability, whether at the national level or for local political teams. These unstable rhythms of governance come into resonance with the temporality of emergency actions that followed the 2010 earthquake. 'We spent too much in the transitory and did not invest enough in the long term', regretted the programme coordinator of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (PNUEH); 'in the matter of housing, there is a widespread tendency to want to do it in the place of the Haitians. We spent 500 million dollars for emergency shelters, while importing everything, without any contribution to the Haitian economy, nor to job creation' (Caroït, 2012). At first, as a stopgap measure to relocate the homeless, the international aid trend was to build standardized shelters. The earthquake had destroyed 80% to 90% of the buildings in the town of Léogâne, located some 30 km from the capital, leaving thousands homeless. In response, dozens of NGOs involved in the city's reconstruction (including CARE, Habitat for Humanity, the Spanish Red Cross) embarked on the construction of transitional shelters or 'T-shelters'. But these T-shelters, as their name suggests, are temporary structures designed to last for a limited time (three to five years). These shelters are usually designed for rural and non-urban areas, and are often too large for city plots. In addition, they are made with materials that are not easy to recycle or reuse.

Criticism focused on the construction of T-shelters is appreciable on the side of European actors, even if ECHO has also financed this type of programme. In the present patchwork of (re)construction activities, some NGOs are building permanent houses (since October 2011), while others continue to build transitional shelters. Entrepreneurs du Monde, the NGO supported by the UNDP (among others contributors), has, for example, developed a construction method based

on a wooden framework filled with masonry, which is inspired by traditional Haitian architecture and which has been approved by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport, Communications and Energy (MTPTCE). The originality of this method of construction is the reuse of rubble to fill in the walls and to produce tiles. The NGO initiated the project when they realized that, due to the short life of T-shelters, they could build permanent constructions at almost the same cost and that T-shelters did not contribute to creating long-term employment, nor to train workers in earthquake-proof techniques.

If the money used to produce shelters had been directly allocated to sustainable construction, at the same time as the process of clearing up rubble, the investment would have had more impact in the long term. In any case, we cannot go backward, but our role is to raise the awareness of all of the actors in reconstruction, so that when the next catastrophe happens (such as a major storm), we might turn to more sustainable solutions that are available in Haiti.<sup>22</sup>

Here is another example of this gap between temporalities and the logic of emergency actions in relation to those of development: in one of the quarters whose rehabilitation is now being studied by NGO and financed by EuropeAid, latrines were built by an international organization after the earthquake, but located in a place intended to be a major traffic artery in the new project. These some 200 latrines, built in a hurry, will undoubtedly be destroyed for the development. This example sadly reveals another aspect of spatiotemporal rupture: emergency constructions were momentarily allowed to respond to the problem of land ownership by ignoring it, since they were supposed to be temporary, but they have now made the property situation even more complex, since certain areas born as temporary emergency housing have lived on, *de facto*.

In the perspective, no longer of emergency relief but of development, European actors are predominant in Haiti, where the EU is the main financial backer.<sup>23</sup> In January 2013, ECHO posted 213 million euros of humanitarian assistance in the country since 2010, but now they have a view of linking relief, rehabilitation and development<sup>24</sup> to facilitate the transition between emergency aid and development. In this context, ECHO and EuropeAid fund various projects concerning quarters (see above), but it is interesting to see how these quarters for intervention are chosen. Whether it is the case of GRET in Baillargeau, FOKAL in Martissant, Solidarités International in Christ Roi, COOPI in Tabarre, or Emergency Architects

---

<sup>22</sup> Interview, Port-au-Prince, December 2012.

<sup>23</sup> According to the Press Release (2012), overall EU aid to Haiti for the period 2008–2013 will total more than 750 millions euros. To help rebuild the country, more than 1.2 billion euros were pledged in New York during the international conference on rebuilding Haiti in March 2010. The European Commission's contribution to this commitment is 522 million euros. This makes the European Union since 2010 the largest donor in favour of Haiti.

<sup>24</sup> Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) programme.

in Delmas 32, these are areas where the NGOs involved were already established before the earthquake, some for a very long time. It is, in fact, easier to set up long-term projects in places where there is a pre-existing relationship, a familiarity with the presence of this foreign actor. More sustainable sections of the city are thus going to emerge in the quarters where these European NGOs had started working long before the earthquake. Anteriority is often even highlighted by humanitarian workers as a token of seriousness: having been there for a long time leads to a better understanding of the local context, and thus of more permanent results.

The common point of all the humanitarian discourse is community outreach, valuing participatory planning. It is not possible to carry out projects over time if they come from 'above', so it has to be the inhabitants that take charge of their urban strategy. In this 'bottom up' concept (as opposed to 'top down'), the city is only 'sustainable' if the citizens are part of the decision-making. It is thus necessary to create urban citizens, and to accomplish that one can rely, for example, on a cartography also presented as 'participative', in which the mastery of the tools of city representation allows the population, in its entirety, to participate in the construction of development projects, or to oppose them, or even to resist them. But this participatory urban planning arrives here in a context of high socio-economic insecurity where the NGOs account for a significant source of income in a country whose gross domestic product (GDP) *per capita* was 672.9 dollars in 2010 (WB, 2013) with a very unequal income distribution: 'with nearly half of the national income going to the top decile of the population, while the last two deciles receive less than 2% of the national income' (Haiti PDNA, 2010, p. 30). Haitians, two-thirds of whom are unemployed or underemployed, are faced with a paltry compensation for their labour.

The minimum daily wage is about 200 gourdes (less than 5 dollars), while the country massively imports consumer goods, especially food, from the United States. The cost of living is disproportionate to the purchasing power of most people, who survive thanks to international aid, and even more so thanks to the massive transfer of income from the diaspora. When you are part of the 71% of the population living on less than 2 dollars per day, or the 50% who have less than one dollar per day (Haiti PDNA, 2010, p. 23), how can you look into the future and plan for the 'ability of future generations to meet their own needs'?<sup>25</sup> There is a temporality to an emergency, there are temporalities in development, but the reality for most Haitians is day-to-day survival. And among the possible sources of income are the funds of the NGOs active in reconstruction, the most obvious being the system of 'cash-for-work' (CFW) which refers to short-term employment for unskilled labour. One of its main objectives is to get money circulating in order

---

<sup>25</sup> According to the classic definition of sustainable development from the Brundtland Report, published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987.

to ‘restart’ the economy with jobs like street sweeping, removing debris by hand, construction of latrines in camps and so on.

### 3.2. The Urban Planning of Humanitarian Projects in Question

Allowing projects to be implemented at their own temporality depends on timely funding, without long-term operational costs. However, ‘the project as urban ambition cannot lock itself into a purely functional and introverted temporality; thus in a process of ‘denial’ in relation to the long term and the future of society’ (Chesneaux, 2001). In the 1990s, the principles of ‘planning’ and of ‘strategic management’ found in all of the multinationals became prevalent in NGOs, especially Anglo-Saxon ones. The trend is, in fact, to a professionalization of structures that resemble more and more development agencies, a professionalization that brings with it new management methods in the field; mission leaders had to learn to deal with powerful decentralized regional structures ‘that manage budgets instead of just supervising projects’ (Verna, 2007, p. 30). And these budgets are allocated for set periods, and must be spent within the allocated time. One fear of those bringing participatory projects is to create the impression of waiting that only increases the discontent of the beneficiary population, with a weariness that this Haitian student voices:

I can honestly tell you that I have no bad feelings toward foreigners [who are in my country]. However, I don’t understand it and I feel bad, when I see someone use his position to enjoy privileges at the expense of this [Haitian] people, moaning in boundless misery. As for the NGOs, I think it’s a very complex subject. Sometimes I wonder why so many NGOs work in the exact same area...<sup>26</sup>

Encouraging beneficiaries to express their needs, to get them involved in the reconstruction or the rehabilitation of their quartier, can become problematic when their expectations are not quickly met. There, once again, the temporalities of development actions and those of need are not necessarily congruent.

The various discrepancies mentioned sometimes lead to ‘shopping list’ behaviour by residents who have trouble understanding the ongoing actions, but who see very well that there is money, and bags of rice, tents etc. to recuperate. This instrumentalizing relationship with NGO projects is also part of perpetual local structures. Take the case of Morne à Cabri, a project financed 100% by the Haitian government and being overseen by the UCLBP (Unit for the Construction of Housing and Public Buildings), with a process that is the opposite of the participatory logic usually advocated, precisely to avoid the effects of expectation: first of all the housing is built, then in a second step creditworthy beneficiaries are looked

---

<sup>26</sup> Interview, Port-au-Prince, August 2010.

for in the hope of 'creating the urban'. At the end of 2012, the goal was to identify groups of people already accustomed to living together and moving them to Morne à Cabri, and in the long term, filling some 3,000 projected housing units, intended for about 18,000 people. To ensure regular payment of the rents, the UCLBP plans to recruit the services of a private institution or a NGO specialized in the management of rental housing, since

[...] the Public Enterprise for the Promotion of Social Housing (EPPLS), being a State service, cannot force people to pay; they say 'it's the State, we're not paying!' so it's easier for us to go through this intermediary institution which could be a financial institution or a NGO.<sup>27</sup>

We see very well here that even when national and local structures exist, they outsource some of their functions and assign them to international actors, who not only know how to 'do it better' but also provide funding. The sociologist Sabine Manigat (2011, p. 60) sums it up as, 'the weak State is caught between the anvil of project economics and the hammer of electoral and legal aid'.

A common concern of governing structures and donors, however, is the visibility of actions carried out in the urban space, in a logic sometimes electoral and/or clientelist on the one side and regarding budget renewal on the other. In the case of T-shelters, mentioned earlier, a report noted that certain agencies preferred building this type of shelter rather than repairing houses or paying the rent of the homeless, because 'based on prior experience, the ease of implementation, project control, and visibility are greater'. The same concern was highlighted by the EU, whose report by a delegation of parliamentarians from the Budgetary Control Committee in February 2012 'points out the lack of visibility of EU aid in Haiti; believes that to increase visibility, not only the initials but also the name of the European Union should appear on public relation documents, rather than that of the Commission or of the DG ECHO, which are much less identifiable to the average Haitian citizen' (Feedback Report, 2012).

While one of the issues of reconstruction projects is thus visibility, a risk often mentioned is the lack of evaluation and traceability in the country for, among other projects, those of the EU. This point was raised in the above-mentioned report, which points out a lack of coordination between the EU delegation and representatives of ECHO but also among all of the EU actors in the country. The Delegation also noted, 'that the control systems for EU funds spent through government channels in Haiti are generally inadequate and that accountability for EU expenditures remains at an unacceptable level' and 'insists on the need for Haitian authorities to make significant improvements regarding the control of expenditures and their efficiency' (Feedback Report, 2012). The responsibility thus lies, in a large part, with the recipients of European aid.

---

<sup>27</sup> Interview UCLPB, Port-au-Prince, December 2012.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

There is no urban sustainability without spatiotemporal continuity. The model of the ‘sustainable city’ clashes with the reality of geographical fragmentation and temporal division, which by the very form of its participatory urbanism and projects, it helps to sustain. The risk highlighted by the case of Port-au-Prince is thus to end up with a cacophonous city, a dissonant city, a patchwork city – not due to lack of planning but, on the contrary, because of disjointed planning that atomizes urban space. In addition, there is a sort of forced decentralization, which then again reinforces a form of oligarchic and clientelistic centralization.

The Haitian State has been functioning without the notion of sustainable development for over two hundred years and that’s where the problem lies, since from 1986, at the moment when the international community seriously considered its standardization, the Haitian State has also been prey to lasting attacks from the population demanding participation, inclusion, and the satisfaction of its needs – its fundamental rights (Manigat, 2011).

The NGOs have come to fill the gap, but operate according to their own spatiotemporal systemic loop, their own territory and their temporality, combined with a low level of genuine decentralization, which renders municipal administrations practically inoperable in the areas of urban planning and development. This all gives way to a chaotic urbanization, driven by individual initiatives dictated by strategies either of survival or of getting rich quick. Among the private actors, a consulting firm, such as LGL, works on the development plans of almost all of the (re)construction projects funded by EuropeAid: in that, it helps to homogenize the urban cacophony.

In terms of vulnerability, the Haitian capital is as fragile now as before the earthquake. Year zero has not happened and while urban planning was lacking before 2010, it infers a spatiotemporal uniformity that cannot emerge in such a short time. The sustainable city, in the European sense of the term, is very far from Port-au-Prince, the precept is doubtlessly applicable only where state, economic and social structures pre-exist. But what Port-au-Prince reveals to us, is also what can be expected in all urban systems where the state is not able or is no longer able to supervise the process of urbanization and to coordinate numerous actors, including public ones. This example incites us to change our viewpoint when looking at the urban world from these cities of the south, which are faced with dynamics that might foreshadow what could happen in European cities. The logic of privatization, financialization, fragmentation and exclusion is at work in all of the world’s cities and it is perhaps Europe and America that tend to evolve according to the logic identifiable in the cities of the south, and not the opposite (Choplin, 2012; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2011). At the same

time, the model to which the majority of the population aspires is that conveyed by the huge 4x4 vehicles that drive through the rutted and traffic-jammed streets of the capital, carrying the actors of (re)construction.

## REFERENCES

- ALLIX, G. (2010), 'It Will Be up to the Citiznes to Decide the Future of Port-au-Prince', Interview, *Le Monde*, 25th February.
- ANGLADE, G. (2008), *L'hebdo de Georges Anglade. Chronique d'une espérance*, Port-au-Prince: L'Imprimeur II.
- BARTHEL, P.-A. (2011), 'Premiers quartiers urbains "durables" dans les pays arabes: enseignements sur une génération spontanée', *Espaces et sociétés*, 147, pp. 99–115.
- BATHÉLÉMY, G. (1990), *L'univers rural haïtien: le pays en dehors*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- CABANIS, M. (1996), 'Un exemple de créolisation juridique modulée: le Code civil haïtien de 1825 et le Code Napoléon', *Revue Internationale de Droit Comparé*, 48 (2), pp. 443–456.
- CAROIT, J.-M. (2012), 'A Haïti, la reconstruction avance "à pas de tortue"', *Le Monde*, 11th January.
- CHAVEAU, J.-P. and Le MEUR, P.-Y. (eds.), (2004), 'Gouverner les hommes et les ressources. Dynamiques de la frontière interne', *Autrepart*, 30, pp. 3–150.
- CHESNEAUX, J. (2001), 'Mémoire et projet urbain', [in:] PAQUOT, T. (ed.), *Le Quotidien urbain*, Paris: La Découverte, pp. 107–127.
- CHOPLIN, A. (2012), 'Désoccidentaliser la pensée urbaine', *Métropolitiques*, 2nd November, <http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Desoccidentaliser-la-pensee.html>.
- CIAT (2010), *Haïti demain. Objectifs et stratégies territoriales pour la reconstruction*, Port-au-Prince: Comité Interministériel d'Aménagement du Territoire.
- COMAROFF, J. and COMAROFF, J. (2011), *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa*, Boulder: Paradigm.
- COMITÉ TECHNIQUE FONCIER ET DÉVELOPPEMENT (2009), *Gouvernance foncière et sécurisation des droits dans les pays du Sud. Livre blanc des acteurs français de la coopération*, Paris: GRET, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/gouvernance-fonciere-et-securisation-des-droits-dans-les-pays-du-sud-livre-blanc-des-acteurs-francais-de-la-cooperation.pdf>.
- DORNER, V. and ORIOL, M. (2009), 'L'indivision en Haïti. Droit, arrangements sociaux et agriculture', communication présentée lors des 3es journées de recherches en sciences sociales INRA-SFER-CIRAD, session *Les droits sur la terre: catégories juridiques, représentations et temporalité*, Montpellier, 9th–11th December.
- FEEDBACK REPORT (2012), *CONT Delegation Visit to Haiti*, 22th–26th February, unpublished.
- FIDH (2010), 'Haïti: une nation ébranlée', May.
- HAITI LIBRE (2011), 'Haïti – Reconstruction: 3,3 milliards pour un Nouveau Port-au-Prince!', 11th August.
- HAITI PDNA (2010), *Haïti – PDNA du tremblement de terre. Évaluation des dommages, des pertes et des besoins généraux et sectoriels. Annexe du Plan d'action pour le relèvement et le développement national d'Haïti*, Port-au-Prince: Gouvernement de la République d'Haïti.
- HOU (2011), 'Haïti et les crises', Document de travail.
- IHSI (2010), *Les comptes économiques en 2009*, Port-au-Prince: IHSI, <http://www.ihsi.ht/>.
- KI-MOON, B. (2010), 'Vers un nouvel avenir pour Haïti', *LEMONDE.FR*, 31st March.
- LAHENS, Y. (2011), 'Il était une fois une ville', *Conjonction*, 223.

- LE PÉLICAN (2010), 'Bay Kout Men Haïti a commencé la construction d'une école', 23rd July.
- LITTLE, S. (2003), 'Globalisation, Europeanisation and Metagovernance: Society, Space and Technology', *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 10 (2), pp. 9–24.
- MANIGAT, S. (2011), 'Le séisme et quelques questions relatives à la gouvernance', *Conjonction*, 223, pp. 57–62.
- MARTEL, A. (2012), 'La coordination humanitaire comme lieu d'exclusion et d'affaiblissement des capacités locales', *Lettre de l'Observatoire Haïti*, 1, pp. 3–7.
- MATHURIN, A. (1976), *Bi-centenaire de la fondation de Port-au-Prince: 1749–1949. Exposition Internationale*, Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie.
- MILLER, M. J. (2002), 'Le "quartier" comme enjeu social et politique: Alma-Gare dans les années 1970', *Genèses*, 48, pp. 77–99, [www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2002-3-page-77.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-geneses-2002-3-page-77.htm).
- NOEL, R. (2012), 'Deux thématiques fondamentales et indissociables dans la carte de la reconstruction de la ville de Port-au-Prince', *Lettre de l'Observatoire Haïti*, 2, pp. 3–5.
- PAUL, B., DAMEUS, A. and GARRABE, M. (2011), 'Le processus de tertiarisation de l'économie haïtienne', *Études Caribéennes*, 16, <http://etudescaribeennes.revues.org/4728>.
- PETERS, D. (2005), 'How Different spatial contexts result in Different Sustainability Discourses. A Case Study of North East England', *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 12 (1), pp. 69–88.
- PIERRE ETIENNE, S. (1997), *Haïti: l'invasion des ONG*, Montréal: CIDIHCA.
- PIERRE LOUIS, P. (2002), 'Le système juridique haïtien: entre ordre étatique et ordre coutumier', *Sistemas Judiciales*, 4, pp. 104–110.
- PRESS RELEASE (2012), 'The European Union Announces New Support for Reconstruction in Haïti – (11.01.2012)', [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/haiti/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2012/2012\\_01\\_11\\_2\\_fr.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/haiti/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/2012_01_11_2_fr.htm).
- REDON, M. (2010), 'Mobilis in mobili: des vies "en mobilité" au Sud: les "expats" de l'humanitaire au Timor-Leste et en Haïti', *Espace, Populations, Sociétés*, 2–3, <http://eps.revues.org/index4098.html>.
- VERNA, G. (2007), 'Le comportement des ONG engagées dans l'aide humanitaire: selon leur culture d'origine et les pressions politiques subies', *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 31 (2), p. 25–44.
- VITTRUP, E. (2010), 'Haïti – Reconstruction: Les problèmes fonciers entravent la reconstruction', Interview, *Haïti Libre*.
- WORLD BANK (WB), (2013), <http://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>