

LOMÉ



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The political capital of Togo, Lomé, is by far the largest city in the country, with a population of 1 million in 2005. It is the political capital of what can be defined as a poor country – Togo has been classified by the UN among the world's least advanced countries since the beginning of the 1980s. In 2005, Togo's GDP was \$1 500 per inhabitant, its literacy rate 50 per cent and its life expectancy at birth 54 years. There are no sufficiently reliable statistics available that would make it possible to compare these national figures with those of Lomé, but it is a known fact that it is in the capital that Togo's economic potential is concentrated. This has particularly been the case since Lomé's industrial and harbour free zone was created in 1989, which has benefited from the favourable situation at the crossroads between the maritime outlet of the landlocked states of West Africa and the coastal axis between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire.

Situated on a lagoon occupied by Éwé farming villages, Lomé was founded in 1874 by African, British and German traders. The Germans established a protectorate in 1884, of which Lomé became the capital in 1897. The German colonial power developed a large administrative district next to the commercial district that centred on the central market. This original double city-centre core still exists today, but is being challenged by the extensive developments in the northern part of the town. In 1920, Togoland was divided between the French and British colonial powers. The western part was integrated into the Gold Coast colony (today Ghana) and the eastern part became a French territory (today Togo). Lomé became a frontier town and the capital of the new French colony. The French developed the facilities and affirmed the power of the Éwé chiefs and the Mina traders, who were important, influential landowners in the various municipal 'councils' of the colonial period.

Experiencing two colonial powers in succession is the main characteristic that distinguishes Lomé from other African capitals. However, there are two other aspects that are of fundamental importance: the pre-colonial character of the city, which was founded before the establishment of the German protectorate, and its location on the border between a French and a British colony due to the division of the German protectorate in 1920. Another, albeit less distinguishing, feature is that the city saw disproportionate spatial expansion over a large area in relation to its population growth. This is due to the lack of vertical development.

From the 1950s onwards, the city expanded beyond the lagoon towards the Tokoin Plateau. After independence in 1960 and for about 20 years after that, population growth increased at a rate of 7.5% per year. The population started to diversify owing to the arrival of migrants from the northern part of the country. Urban sprawl accelerated

owing to the expansion of public land banking (University, Presidential Palace in Lomé II, military fields and airport). Where the city is blocked by the border to the west and the harbour area to the east (the limits of which were defined after construction of the deep-water harbour in 1969), it spreads to the north up to 20 kilometres from the sea, well beyond the borders of the district of Lomé (see Figure 4.1).

In 2002, the population growth rate was still high, at an estimated 6.1% per year. This implies that low-density residential development in the peripheral suburbs continues to take place, partly as a consequence of speculative investment. The growth is also associated with the quest for 'a place to call one's own' – being the owner of a plot is a deeply meaningful social symbol (Gervais-Lambony 1994), which impels city dwellers to seek out available land further and further from the city centre.

This urban expansion corresponds to patterns that are common in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Lomé has shown marked anomalies for a long time, namely a high level of homogeneity in the suburbs and, consequently, low levels of social segregation. However, recent trends are showing heightened contrasts.

Besides providing a background to Lomé, this chapter aims to show the relationship between the entity of the political capital and the city itself. A capital city is also an ordinary city, one that is influenced by external forces that are particularly linked to the processes of the current phase of globalisation. However, in the case of a capital, the impact of politics on the urban landscape is particularly strong: political powers mark space, as do political conflicts. Hence, urban space itself becomes conflictual in political struggles. This chapter proposes to expand on this by taking into consideration the local specificities of the city and the country.

Urban geology: The history of an African capital

A colonial city?

As the capital of Togo, Lomé is historically an African and commercial city that developed from the middle of the 1870s. Even in its pre-colonial era, it was nevertheless largely foreign. The German protectorate in Togo goes back to 1884, but it was not until 1897 that the German colonial administration chose Lomé as its capital over Aného, a city situated further east on the coast. Therefore, Lomé was actually founded before the protectorate was established. Indeed, when the British colony on the Gold Coast (currently Ghana) was established in 1874, a group of traders from different origins (German, Mina, Haoussa, Afro-Brazilian) wanting to escape customs controls and taxes came to settle on the site of Lomé – especially from 1879 onwards – because no colonial authority was to be found there. In Lomé, it was possible for traders to trade freely. They mainly exchanged palm oil, but were also involved in smuggling. The Ahoulan, a subgroup of the Éwé, were the first to settle in Lomé, then the Mina,¹ who came from the east, and the Haoussa from the north. Finally, German trading companies (and one English company) were established at Lomé, which was initially met with protests from the British, followed by calls for German protection.

The site of Lomé was occupied by Éwé villages, whose people, it is believed, had come from Notsé in the 16th and 17th centuries. Living in the villages of Bè and Amoutivé, the Éwé farmers were not attracted to the coast, but instead cultivated the rich lands of the Tokoin Plateau and practised subsistence fishing in the lagoon. The commercial establishments next to their villages did not concern them. From 1880 onwards, therefore, the main groups of city dwellers found in Lomé today were already in place: the indigenous Éwé and the foreign traders. The latter were the real founders of the city of Lomé, which is ‘neither an autochthonous [indigenous] city – old villages that would have grown – nor a colonial city created by making a clean sweep of the former rights’ (Marguerat 1987: 82). The German colonial power established itself next to the existing city (the current trading quarter), in the current administrative quarter (150 hectares), and recognised land ownership by the inhabitants of Lomé from the outset. This ownership was in fact made official from 1904 onwards by the introduction of the first land register. From the beginning of its history, Lomé was, therefore, a city with a double urban core based on private land ownership. The Germans recognised all former land rights and only intervened in matters where they had earmarked land for administration. And this low-key state intervention in matters of small-scale urban space has been a constant trait of Lomé’s history – although this is not the case for large-scale urban space.

Between 1914 and 1920, Lomé was annexed by the British from the Gold Coast. However, this short period did not leave any traces on the urban landscape. Only from the French period onwards was it possible to notice a change in urban policy. The 1920s were crucial in the history of Lomé. These years corresponded to an extensive development programme, including the completion of the *Boulevard Circulaire*, extensions to the hospital, construction of the law courts and the town hall and the construction of a new wharf in 1928 (Lomé is not a natural harbour and the colonial wharfs played a vital role in the economic development of the city). At the same time, the French focused on the properties that had been recognised by the Germans. The ‘concession’ system of plots, commonly used in numerous cities of French West Africa, was only implemented in the quarter of Hanoukopé in 1928 to house civil servants.

As far as land was concerned, the French reaffirmed the power of the two city-dwelling groups that had already been recognised by the Germans: the customary chiefs and the Mina traders. Both groups were the real owners of the city. The chiefs Adjallé d’Amoutivé and Aklassou de Bè had succeeded in having huge plots of land registered in their names and had received the status of canton chiefs from the Germans and the French, making it possible for them to evict other Éwé families. The Adjallé possessed land on both sides of the lagoon between the border and Amoutivé; the Aklassou owned land south-east of the city. The Mina traders owned hectares of coconut plantations south of the lagoon, which they had purchased from the natives and had registered by the Germans. Both groups also wielded political power because they were represented in the various ‘councils’ that were created by the French and in which a number of seats were reserved for the Togolese. The council of notables was created in 1922; the municipal council, chamber of

commerce and economic and financial council were created from 1933 onwards. The important Mina trading families carried well-known names (e.g. Olympio, De Souza, Anthony), which have today been given to the suburbs built on the coconut plantations that they owned. As traders, planters and landowners, the Mina notables were the main negotiators with the colonisers and contributed politically and financially to the development of the city.

Lomé's post-independence development and markings of urban space

Four 'strata' of political symbols can be identified in the urban landscape of Lomé: the colonial stratum; the stratum of the first Republic of Togo from the beginning of the 1960s (the old presidential residence of the republic, parliament, the independence monument); the stratum of the authoritarian regime of General Eyadéma from 1967 to the beginning of the 1990s (rich in statues and official buildings, such as the building of the *Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais* [RPT]² and the presidential palace of Lomé II); and, finally, the drafting of a new symbolism since the beginning of the era of 'democratisation', which saw statues toppled (in the true sense of the word).

It was in the administrative district of Lomé that the independent power of Togo chose to place its symbols of success, just as the colonial power had done. Independence Square was the first site (see Figure 4.2). Where the German town planners had initially intended to lay out a park, the political regimes of Togo imposed their marks. A monument was erected in the square at independence: a statue of a man breaking his shackles, representative of freedom from the symbolic shackles of slavery and colonialism. Later, this square was also chosen by the Eyadéma regime to create a symbolic statement. It was there that General Eyadéma's regime wanted to pay respect to the 'miraculous survivor of Sarakawa'³ rather than independence. The name Independence Square was kept, but the original statue commemorating independence now finds itself surrounded by constructions that have henceforth dominated the landscape of the square. The colonial town hall has also been demolished and replaced by new buildings. The municipality no longer has great power or great importance. Independence, which this square celebrated until the beginning of the 1990s, is no longer the highlight of Togolese history. The site was used to affirm the power of the RPT (the monumental building of the Communist Party stronghold was built in the beginning of the 1970s, on one side of the square, with the financial and technical help of North Korea) and General Eyadéma (whose statue dominated until recently the esplanade of the Communist Party stronghold). Independence Square is also home to the single skyscraper of the city, the imposing *Hôtel du 2 Février*. CASEF (the Administrative Centre for Economic and Financial Services) is a modern building that was constructed not far from there in the newly baptised *Avenue de Sarakawa*. It houses the Department of Finance. Lastly, another new building – also a tower – can be found near the Central Bank. Since the end of the 1980s, it is not so much the state that is being symbolised there, but the power of an ethnic group and family: the Evala Convention Centre, situated in front of the *Hôtel du 2 Février*, has imposed a Kabyè name⁴ in the heart of the capital. A statue

was erected of General Eyadéma's deceased mother behind the hotel in 1988 and a small square was named after her, Mama Ndanida.

Since 1991, Independence Square has become a contested space (see Table 4.1). When the Eyadéma regime was at its lowest point, demonstrations by students and secondary schoolchildren in March 1991 often ended in the square. In April 1991, young demonstrators attacked each other in front of the general's statue, but in an attempt to pre-empt more trouble around this symbol (as happened in the city of Kpalimé, 120 kilometres from Lomé, where a statue of the general was toppled by protesters), the powers that be decided to dismantle the statue after the opening of the national conference held in the main Evalas conference room at the *Hôtel du 2 Février* in July 1991. In August of the same year, the RPT had to disinvest from Independence Square. Its headquarters became a convention centre and the RPT head office was moved north of the lagoon to Tokoin Wuiti.

In March 2005, the funeral ceremony of General Eyadéma took place in Lomé (although he is actually buried in Pya, his village of birth in Kabyè country). His coffin was displayed on the esplanade of the convention centre, after which his body was carried inside the building before being taken to the airport (not before the funeral procession had taken two symbolic detours via Lomé II and the military base). During the presidential electoral campaign in April 2005, Independence Square was still being used for competing demonstrations of the 'RPTists' (the local term for the partisans of the RPT) and the opposition. Yet symptomatically, in announcing their respective routes, the organisers did not use the same terminology to refer to the square. It was called Independence Square by the opposition, whereas the RPT referred to it as the Convention Centre Esplanade.

Table 4.1 Chronology of important political events in Togo

Year	Event
1880	Foundation of the city of Lomé
1884–1914	German colonisation
1920–1960	French colonisation
1960	Togolese independence
1963	President S. Olympio assassinated
1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coup d'état</i> • The <i>Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais</i> takes power • Général Gnyassingbé Eyadéma becomes head of state
1990–1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic transition • Violent political conflict and general strike
1998	General elections; Eyadéma stays in power
2002–2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New constitution • General elections; Eyadéma 'elected' again • Political violence
2005	Death of General Eyadéma; the army impose his son, Faure, as new president
2009	Faure Eyadéma re-elected

Watching the news on national television is enough to confirm the symbolic importance of Independence Square in the national imagery. The news bulletin opens with four photographs in the background: the conference centre, the Dove of Peace (discussed below), an aerial view of Lomé and the *Hôtel du 2 Février*. An illustration of this building also appeared on the cover of the official map of Lomé that was published by the municipality in 2001.

Over and above its political message, the Dove of Peace is systematically integrated in the RPTists' routes in the city (see Figure 4.3). A statue of a dove was constructed in 1988 (and inaugurated in 1989) in Tokoin at the intersection of the Atakpamé and Airport Roads. Standing on a pedestal, it holds a branch in its beak. The weight of the statue and its lack of aesthetic qualities did not deter the authorities from valorising this new monument and trying to turn it into a symbolic urban focal point. The intersection was well chosen. The Airport Road – renamed Boulevard de la Paix (Peace Boulevard) – is the main road of political symbolism, the route used by the state to 'show off' its primary exhibits. And the Atakpamé Road (renamed Boulevard Gnassingbé Eyadéma) is the busiest main road serving the northern part of the city. Commenting on the Dove of Peace, *La Nouvelle Marche* (a daily newspaper in Lomé) provides the following heading: 'The Dove of Peace at the entrance to the city of Lomé, expression of man's politics on 13 January in Togo, Africa and the world.'⁵

These sites of RPTist power in Lomé are complemented by the feared and shunned military base, and by the distant Presidential Palace in Lomé II, which personifies political power (although Faure, the current head of state and son of General Eyadéma, actually lives in the residence of the National Social Security Fund,⁶ not far from there). Lomé II, situated in the middle of a vast space, cannot be seen from the road. It remained undeveloped for a long time, as there had been plans to construct an exclusive residential estate. The most extraordinary rumours about the palace do their rounds. It is even said that there are rooms packed to the ceiling with banknotes. What is certain is that 'if you go to Lomé II, you will eat',⁷ meaning that you will be part of the corrupt system that is in power: no place has better symbolised the power of President Eyadéma.

The insignificant impact of international players on Lomé's urban space

From the end of the 1980s, one could observe that the state was withdrawing funding from the city, especially in terms of urban services and facilities. Concomitantly, international donors also withdrew, in particular the European Union and France, both of which interrupted their cooperation to show their disappointment at the failed transition to democracy. The privatisation of urban services has in the meantime been completed. However, as is the case elsewhere, privatisation policies in Lomé were accompanied by a decentralisation policy spurred on by the World Bank and aid donors. However, without political autonomy, does this decentralisation mean that the government is giving up or making real changes? The official halting of international cooperation programmes in Togo in the beginning of the 1990s stripped the state of a large part of its resources, while the slow process

of democratisation called into question the possibility of true decentralisation. Since 1990, no large-scale projects have been successfully completed except for the renaming of streets, a project funded by the World Bank and the French Cooperation. Similarly, private investments have been extremely low, which means that there have been no urban developments in Lomé, such as large shopping centres or enclosed residential suburbs (except for the Fund estate and its extensions, but those are relatively old developments). However, this phenomenon has not prevented the appearance of trends that are linked to globalisation: the shifting of centrality to the northern suburbs, more pronounced socio-spatial segregation (Biakouyé 2007) and growing numbers of land property investments by Togolese nationals living abroad.

Lomé in the Togolese national fabric

A dominant capital in an ethnically diverse country

There are about forty ethnic groups classified into a few main groups throughout Togo. Two dense population centres can be distinguished. Kabyè territory in the northern part of the country was a place of refuge for the ethnic group of the same name. They practised intensive agriculture on the hill slopes. The Kabyè (the Kabyè-Tem group) make up about 30% of the country's population. In the south is the other dense population centre made up of the Éwé/Mina/Ouatchi (the Adja-Fon group). They represent more than 40% of the country's population. The history of Togo was played out between these two groups. Even though the Éwé people were favoured during the colonial period because of their greater proximity to the authorities, better access to the education system and assimilation into the economic system, they were discarded from political, but not economic, power after General Eyadéma took over power in 1967 with the help of the army. In the extreme northern parts of the country, between the Kabyè Mountains and the border with Burkina Faso, 16% of the Togolese belong to the Para-Gourma group (with the Moba and the Gourma being the main ethnic groups). The country's other ethnicities are minority groups.

This ethno-linguistic division is roughly adhered to by the country's administrative division into five regions (which are themselves subdivided into prefectures) from south to north: Maritime, Plateaux, Central, Kara, Savannah. The population distribution among these regions is out of proportion: close to 50% of the 6.2 million Togolese (2006 estimates) are concentrated in the Maritime region, 1 million of whom live in Lomé, situated in the far south-western corner next to the border with Ghana.

These regions also experience enormous socio-economic inequalities. The Maritime and Kara regions are the wealthiest. Indeed, Maritime essentially encompasses the entire national economic potential – the capital, Lomé, the economic hub of the country; the Kpémé phosphate mines, the long-standing main source of national wealth (until phosphate prices fell at the end of the 1970s); the coffee and cocoa plantations (Kpalimé region); and the coconut plantations and palm groves on the coast. The Kara region corresponds to Kabyè country and benefited from all the

attention of General Eyadéma's regime. The city of Kara was richly endowed with infrastructure, particularly since 2002, including a university and an international airport (at Niamtougou), and received private investments from dignitaries of the regime. This, of course, had a negative impact on Lomé. This impoverished state was withdrawing its investments from the national capital and attributing its scarce remaining resources to another city. On the other hand, the centre of the country, and even more so the far north (Savannah region), are two less populous regions and can be regarded as being far more underdeveloped.

It must be added that this unbalance in the socio-economic strength of the country's different geographical regions translated into a poorly organised urban network. Lomé is both the political and economic hub of the country, as well as the entry point to Togo, thanks to its harbour to which an industrial zone is linked (modest by international standards, but without competition in Togo). The other cities in the country are comparatively speaking small towns – all with fewer than 100 000 inhabitants. Apart from Kara, their functions are essentially administrative and their markets local. Sokodé is the second largest city in the country, followed by Kara, Atakpamé and Kpalimé.

The dynamics of Lomé's population and spatial growth

The pre-eminence of Lomé over the other Togolese cities was established very quickly because of two factors. On the one hand, unlike its rival towns, Baguida, Agbodrafo and especially Aného, Lomé's function was focused more on redistributing imported goods towards the interior than on exporting. On the other hand, the fact that the Germans chose Lomé as the capital in 1897 was the main driving force behind its growth. Indeed, the Germans put in place infrastructures which no other coastal city enjoyed: the coastal railway line, Lomé–Aného, was completed in 1905; other routes into the interior were subsequently developed (to Kpalimé in 1907 and Atakpamé in 1911); and, in particular, the first wharf began construction in 1900. By 1905, Lomé had the monopoly over maritime trade.

Thus, Lomé's supremacy was guaranteed from before World War I. At that time, its population was more than 10 000 inhabitants; the current centre of the town was already in place; and its functions were already those of a political, commercial and also religious capital (with the construction of the Catholic cathedral in 1902 and the Protestant church in 1907). There was also industry – a printing house, an oil factory and a soap factory were constructed before the war. Besides the Éwé villages, the city dwellers during that period were traders of different origins (Mina, Haoussa and Ahoulan) and there were already 186 white people living in the city by 1912 (civil servants, traders and missionaries).

The war of 1914–1918 marked a period of confusion during which Lomé changed administration twice. After the Germans left in 1914, the city was governed by the British, but it was taken over in 1920 by the French when they were allocated two-thirds of the territory of former Togoland by the League of Nations. The entire western part of the country was attached to the British Gold Coast, which still

causes tensions today between Togo and Ghana. The 1920s saw a phase of economic prosperity and demographic and spatial growth of the city.

This growth was halted from 1931 onwards by the Great Depression. Reduced trading and public expenditure caused much unhappiness. Lomé, and Togo in general, only came out of this slump after World War II.

Lomé's population increased by approximately five times between 1938 and 1959, from 18 000 to 90 000 inhabitants. This was also a period when the city underwent development, including the tarring of main roads, electrification of the city centre and construction of a new airport, schools and main teaching establishments. Independence in 1960 came at a time of growth and development that was maintained for a decade and accompanied by an annual population growth of 7.5%. A new phenomenon after independence was the diversification of the population due to the arrival of migrants from the northern, and especially central, parts of the country. Until then, Lomé had remained a city of 'southerners.'

Until today, population growth has not been interrupted, even though it may appear to have slowed down slightly (6.5% annual growth from 1970 onwards). Lomé's spatial growth took place in a pattern of progressive expansion, with the city centre as its starting point. As the densification of one suburb was completed, so another one started further away from the centre. A suburb's construction is slow and many years are needed for it to reach considerable density. As building plots are rarely up for sale, particularly in the centre, heads of households looking for properties must find plots where they are available, i.e. on the outskirts. The absence of upward densification (except for an upper floor on villas) and the large size of plots (mostly 600 m²) make for high consumption of space and disproportionate spatial growth in relation to population growth.

It can be said that when Lomé's population more or less doubles, its surface area triples. This phenomenon must not be repeated. The most northern suburbs are already more than 20 km from the sea. The topographical constraints of the city's location alone prevent further spreading to the north and north-east because the marshy region of the Zio Valley, which is difficult to manage, has already been reached. Since the city was founded, the spatial growth stages corresponded to the stages of population and economic growth. Starting from the old city centre, the city spread up to the *Boulevard Circulaire* in the 1920s. That part of the city is characterised by Lomé's typical hallmark urban features. Indeed, it is in these suburbs that one can best find the typical Lomé house with its gate (Brazilian influence, freed slaves), four-sloped roof, rectangular shape and ochre colour.

After World War II and through the 1950s, the city extended beyond the *Boulevard Circulaire* towards the north, then past the lagoon to the Tokoin Plateau (in 1958, Tokoin was in fact integrated into the district of Lomé), first around the hospital (Tokoin Hospital) and the Gbadago suburb, where the plots of land were blessed by Chief Adjallé. The Nyékonakpoè and Octaviano Nétimé suburbs south of the lagoon (on plots of coconut plantations belonging to the Olympio family) were developed

in the 1950s, as were the areas surrounding the village of Bè. It was at this time that the contrast between the east and west of the city became apparent and this has been consistent ever since. Fewer villas are to be found in the eastern suburbs, which are considered to be working class.

The 1960s were a major turning point for the urban landscape. Stone became the predominant building material replacing the clay bricks (extracted from quarries on the edges of the Tokoin Plateau) that had been used up to that point. The building style also changed, from the smallest homes to the most upmarket villas. At that time, and particularly at independence, the city's spatial growth suddenly accelerated. The 1960s marked the beginning of the rush for property, with people hunting for their own home. The 1970s were to confirm this trend. The city spread even more rapidly, as those years were marked by increased public land banking: the grounds of the University (255 hectares), Lomé II (800 hectares), the army and the police force (300 hectares), in addition to the airport grounds (180 hectares). Spatial growth was channelled towards the corridors that were left between the cracks, which quickly became built up, from Agbalopédogan and Hedzranawoé in the north to Akodessewa Kpota in the north-east. The process south of the lagoon was the same, but the vast industrial harbour zone (measuring 550 hectares, with the boundaries drawn after construction of the deep-water harbour of Lomé in 1968–1969) temporarily blocked Lomé's growth in that direction.

Spatial growth in the 1980s took place at a distance from the centre. Once public spaces now find themselves incorporated in the built-up space. Moreover, Lomé's average population density has continued to decrease in relation to the city's spatial sprawl. It went from 235 inhabitants per hectare in 1920, to 85 in 1959 and to 64 in 1981 (Le Bris 1987). The number of Lomé inhabitants living north of the lagoon has recently exceeded the number of inhabitants living in the south. This shift from the demographic centre of the city has resulted in secondary business centres emerging north of the lagoon, in particular the newly established market of Hedzranawoé.

Sites of power and counter-power in Lomé

Spatial demonstrations of power: Opposition between north and south

Urban space today is often interpreted by Lomé's inhabitants through the distorting prism of ethnic distribution. This is the main consequence of recent political events. The politically troubled period that started in 1990 and stopped for a while in 1994, before flaring up again at the death of President Eyadéma, seems initially to have been gradually caused by the reinforced partition between the suburbs situated north and south of the lagoon. The latter are alleged to be the bastions of political opposition, whereas the former are said to be the RPTist strongholds. This distinct intra-urban boundary is one of the legacies of a political regime that always preferred displaying symbols of its power in the northern suburbs. The military base,⁸ and even more so the Presidential Palace of Lomé II (two sites of Eyadéma's power), are situated north of the lagoon. As former symbols of a failed democracy, the prime minister's office, the presidency and the assembly are, however, to be found in the

so-called administrative quarter south of the lagoon. It was also here, long ago, that the German and French colonial powers were concentrated.⁹

The ethnic opposition superimposed on the city dweller can be found at this political and spatial intersection. The lagoon is considered to be the dividing line between suburbs belonging to the opposition and those supporting Eyadéma. Hence, the suburbs situated north of the lagoon are regarded as northern Togolese neighbourhoods. This reputation of being from the northern suburbs is recent. They involve specifically Tokoin Adewi, Agouényivé, Nukafu, Agbalopedogan and Djidjolé. However, northern Togolese far from dominate in terms of numbers here; their number is greater in some neighbourhoods, but this was, until recently, only for practical reasons. Having migrated from the north to Lomé during the last decade, these people settled where there was space, namely in the northern outskirts.¹⁰ However, the southerners are in the majority everywhere here. By the same token, some suburbs south of the lagoon, especially in Nyékonakpoe and Kodjoviakopé, have a high number of people from the north of the country. In short, a number of institutions that are politically hostile to the powers that be are situated north of the lagoon: the University, the Technical Secondary School at Adidogomé (from where the opposition movement left in 1990) and the Tokoin Secondary School.

Territorial identifications that mix ethnicity, regionalism and political adherence are simply the basis of competing identity discourses. These discourses are subsequently projected onto urban space. The artificial division between the north and south of the city is a practical way of making spatial reality conform to the image of a divided country. The issue here is not about the opposition between 'ethnic' territories, but about territorial control by minority groups on the one hand, and the production of identity discourses about the city's suburbs on the other. This is clearly expressed in a leaflet by pro-RPT militias handed out in November 1991, itself a 'producer of territories':

The legitimate defence, guerilla war re-affirms its existence and is from now on called 'Ton' Mog'...For that reason, I would like to remind Ekpémog¹¹ that his area of command is situated between the beach and the lagoon. I am the one who commands the area going from the lagoon up to Togblékopé past Agoényivé and Adjidogomé; knowing full well that my base is in Adewikomé,¹² called 'red base' by the history of democracy.

Suffice it to say that the lagoon has become the main boundary with regard to the manner in which space is represented in Lomé. It constitutes a material division that is easy to transform into a demarcation line. In 1991/92, it was along the lagoon that gangs confronted passers-by and attacked people from the north. It was in the lagoon that the bodies of Lomé inhabitants were found in 1991, assassinated by the military. And in 2005, military barricades controlled the traffic around the lagoon after nightfall.

Besides the opposition between the north and south of the lagoon, it is possible to detect much stronger political divisions in Lomé in terms of 'strongholds'. Bè is a stronghold of the opposition which was impossible for the police and RPT militants

to break into, as well as for the people putting up posters of Faure in 2005. Tokoin Adewi, a suburb situated north of the lagoon, close to the university campus, is a bastion of the RPT. Adewi is a suburb consisting of a large number of people coming from the north, and can also be regarded as a stronghold because it has been controlled by local pro-RPT militias. With regard to Bè, there is strictly speaking a relative corollary between its ethnic homogeneity and political opinion. Bè is made up of a number of suburbs around the sacred forests and the old villages of Bè (which existed before the city of Lomé). The Bè residents are indigenous Éwé from Lomé. As owners of land far up into the north (Adewi, Klikamé), this community played an important role in the city's history. The people from Bè have always been the most sensitive and hostile to the dominance of the military and the 'northerners'. From their dense, popular suburbs, Bè families have been able to play on their land power, but have also linked their reputation of power to magic and religion. With its two sacred forests, Bè is the heart of voodoo worship in Lomé. Since the 1990s, 'being from Bè' has taken on a very precise political meaning, but the symbolic association of Bè in terms of political opposition also has a message: it stands for conflict between indigenous people and 'foreigners'.

Yet, if one is to consider the demographic evolution of the Togolese capital, it can be noted that the relative proportion of the population of the suburbs south of the lagoon has reduced as a result of the urban extension towards the north. Out of Lomé's 1 million inhabitants, hardly a quarter live south of the lagoon. When one looks at the city's long history, the extension towards the north is a major feat. The fact that the population density has swung to the suburbs north of the lagoon is indicative of the shifting of the site of political power and the out-of-town economic hubs (e.g. the new Central Market and the commercial development of the far northern suburbs such as Agouényivé). To affirm, therefore, that the 'real' Lomé is south of the lagoon no longer makes sense, except to say that the real Lomé is a colonial and pre-colonial city.

Politicisation of urban space

Since the 1990s, the image of Lomé as a peaceful capital or an oppressed and frightened capital – depending on the point of view – has been shattered. Representations and practices seem to have been profoundly transformed by recent history. In 1990, the march towards a multi-party system was undertaken in an atmosphere of violence that was to last. The state opposed partisans of the opposition and movements of young schoolchildren and students opposed to the single political party in power, the RPT, its militias and army. Violence invaded the city, or, more precisely, it became visible: beatings, insults, attacks and murders. Violence of the military against city dwellers was omnipresent. Politically or ethnically based violence between residents of Lomé exploded on occasion. There was violence in day-to-day encounters, this no doubt more long term. This violence, added to the effects of a general strike that lasted several months, suddenly turned Lomé into a tougher city. On different occasions, there were mass exoduses of people (in the beginning of the 1990s, and again in 2005) when many city dwellers left for the rural areas and neighbouring countries.

The first anti-government demonstration in Lomé took place on 5 October 1990, after judgement had been passed on some young people accused of having circulated political leaflets. Starting out from the suburb of Bè, but also from secondary schools and the University, this demonstration was the first phase of protests and repression that ended in July 1991 at the opening of the National Conference. Marked by strikes and demonstrations, this first phase was followed by a surge of urban violence that culminated in the army murdering Lomé residents in April 1991. The discovery of about twenty bodies in the lagoon was a shock to the Togolese and international communities, and had a considerable influence on the atmosphere in which the National Conference took place. Assembled on 8 July 1991, the National Conference ended on 28 August with the nomination of an interim prime minister, Joseph Kokou Koffigoh.

The second phase of the Togolese crisis hinged on the power struggle between the prime minister and part of the opposition, the army and the former single political party (the RPT) close to General Eyadéma, and, lastly, the radical members of the opposition who recognised neither of the two leaders. After several violent interventions by the army, one of which was the attack on the Prime Minister's Office¹³ on 3 December 1991, this phase ended in a compromise that was favourable to Eyadéma. On the decision of the High Council of the Republic on 28 August 1992, Eyadéma regained the most important privileges that had been removed from him by the National Conference. This period was marked by political attacks against members of the opposition, military violence against civilians and confrontations between political militias of the opposition and RPT militants (or 'security agents'). The suffering and fear of the Lomé residents were such that an exodus began in April 1992 out of the capital towards Ghana, Benin and the Togolese rural areas. This exodus characterised the next phase of the crisis, when it escalated massively, especially from January 1993 onwards. In the night of 31 January, the military and police invaded the city, murdered, pillaged and sowed terror in a 'reprisal' against the hostile population. About a third of the population allegedly left the city within a couple of months. The situation subsequently calmed down in a deserted and terrified city where people were living in anticipation of the coming elections that were continually postponed. Elections were organised in August 1993 without participation of the opposition. The results were a *fait accompli*, with Eyadéma taking 99% of the vote.

The 1994 elections were followed by the end of the general strike, then by a succession of elections that were marred by serious ballot rigging (the 1994 legislative elections), boycotted by the opposition (the 1998 legislative elections), or the results of which were not published (the 1998 presidential elections). Lastly, after an imposed revision was made to the constitution in 2002, authorising the head of state to seek a third term, General Eyadéma organised his re-election in 2003. His death in February 2005 interrupted this term.

After this event, the army immediately and illegally conferred power to the general's son, Faure Gnassingbé, causing a chain reaction of anger from the opposition and international condemnation. This did not prevent Faure from staying in power as

was confirmed by the April 2005 elections, which were marked by obvious ballot rigging. Elections had taken place in an atmosphere of military violence and near daily demonstrations by the opposition that were violently suppressed.

Public space: A political challenge

During the period 1990–2006, the struggle for control over public space was characterised by actions of demonstrators aiming to be as visible as possible in public spaces and to conquer symbolic places.

The typical routes of the political demonstrations illustrate both the will to control public space and the actual symbolic sites of the city.

A demonstration by the political opposition usually starts out near the market of Bè, follows the *Boulevard Houphouët Boigny*, then the *Rue du 24 Janvier* and goes past Fréau Garden in order to try to reach Independence Square (see Figure 4.4). Finally, the demonstration splits into *Boulevard du 13 Janvier* (the old *Boulevard Circulaire* which surrounds the old city in a semicircle) to take the administrative quarter in a pincer movement. This route is eminently symbolic. Leaving Bè also means leaving the old city, the Éwé city and bastion of the opposition. There are also practical reasons: it is a known fact that the police will not bother a gathering and departing procession in Bè. From that point onwards, and this is still symbolic, the demonstrators rush to reconquer the administrative and colonial city. Having said this, it is always out of the question for the demonstration to pass the lagoon and go in the direction of the real sites of power (i.e. the military base and presidential palace of Lomé II). Far removed and heavily guarded, these places remain inaccessible.

The turbulent period immediately following the death of General Eyadéma shows to what extent the political life of the city had taken hold south of the lagoon. In the north, ‘we saw nothing,’ say the city dwellers! The first demonstration after Eyadéma’s death (which cost the lives of three people) took place on 12 February 2005. It had been announced by the opposition press, which had called for a gathering at Bè Goka Kodjindji (a small piece of land situated along the *Notre Dame des Apôtres* Street not far from Bè market) at 7 o’clock in the morning. It was intended to end at Fréau Square. That same day, barricades were raised in the suburb of Bè to prevent a possible intervention by the army. Hardly two months later, on 5 April 2005, two opposing demonstrations were organised to openly compete for visibility in the public space. One was a demonstration by the opposition demanding the postponement of elections,¹⁴ the other was an RPT demonstration to show support for Faure’s government. The opposition’s demonstration followed a habitual route (Kodjindji, *Boulevard Houphouët Boigny*, *Boulevard Circulaire*, *Fontaine Lumineuse*, LONATO, *Avenue Nicolas Grunitzky*, Town House of Lomé), led by young people wearing yellow T-shirts bearing a palm tree (the colour and symbol of the UFC,¹⁵ the main opposition party). The RPT demonstration had selected its symbols differently: it departed from the Dove of Peace and finished at the esplanade of the Conference Centre (the former head office of the RPT). Everyone thus converged on Independence Square.

With regard to the symbolic spatial deployment of power, the Togolese political opposition has a network of places that is more limited than the state forces, but can nevertheless potentially mobilise the previous strata of national history. Fréau Garden,¹⁶ named after the Commander of the Circle and Administrator-Mayor of Lomé in 1933 and 1935, is an urbanistic legacy dating back to the colonial period. It is at the intersection of *Avenue de la Libération*, the major road linking the town centre to the northern suburbs, and *Avenue du 24 Janvier*. Surrounded by a parapet, planted with trees and lined with public benches, this Céline-style colonial square boasts a bandstand that is typical of a park of the French prefecture.

A number of spatial factors have turned Fréau Garden into a vital place of political geography in the city. Being excellently placed on the main roads from Bè, the square is easily accessible. Rarely found in a dense city centre, it is an open space, which makes it possible for a large crowd to gather. In the event of a demonstration heading towards Independence Square nearby, the crowd is able to stop en route and gather at Fréau Garden or, which is more often the case, remain there when access to Independence Square is blocked by the police. A few hundred metres from Fréau Garden on *Avenue du 24 Janvier*, the UFC head office can be easily spotted by the many mopeds and yellow T-shirts of the militants that guard it. This colonial square has thus become the ‘natural’ meeting point of the opposition, and it is possible to observe a near permanent military presence around the square.

Another favourable aspect is the fact that the Fréau Garden is free from any political markings of Eyadéma’s regime. Instead, the square speaks of the French colonial regime. The main surrounding places include the Central Post Office of Lomé, the old Gouverneur Bonnacarrère Secondary School and the French Cultural Centre on *Avenue de 24 Janvier*, the latter being in a sense the ‘protector’ against military aggression because it is frequented by the foreign French-speaking communities.

From October 1990 onwards, there were confrontations in Fréau Garden. During a prohibited demonstration in January 1993, some young members of the opposition gathered there – only to be shot at by the army, claiming at least 20 lives. Panic was running particularly high because it was said that military helicopters were going to come and pour burning fuel over the square. In March 2005, the first anti-Faure demonstration after the death of General Eyadéma ended with speeches at Fréau Garden.

In a sense, the Togolese political opposition has its political centre outside of the suburb of Bè – Fréau Garden, a colonial public space converted to another use, a vital core of local political geography.

Conclusion: A capital that reflects national territory?

In conclusion, it is important to reflect again on the regional and national levels in order to have a better understanding of the city of Lomé. Indeed, there are two possible readings of Togo’s geography and, therefore, of Lomé’s positioning in that geography. In terms of the economic flux, the country lies along a north-

south axis. The national road that crosses the country from Lomé to Burkina Faso is an international transit axis that leads to the harbour of Lomé. As one of the rare deep-water harbours in West Africa, it is a hub port for regional trade and a lung for the landlocked Sahelian countries. Another advantage of Lomé's port is that it is integrated into an industrial port zone that was given free zone status in 1989. Perpendicular to this north-south axis, the coastal road makes this southern region of the country a true corridor of regional communication because it links Nigeria to Côte d'Ivoire. Customs duties and levies on illegal trafficking are a real godsend for Togo. Speculating in Nigerian and Ghanaian currencies in relation to the CFA franc makes cross-border trafficking very profitable. It is beneficial for the simple reason that the Éwé group is a cross-border community. Besides, the Éwé have long dreamt of constituting an Éwéland State, which explains the frequent periods of political tension between Togo and Ghana. This crossroads situation made it possible for an economic elite to emerge in the south of the country, the most emblematic representatives of whom are the famous female fabric traders, the so-called Nana Benz's (Cordonnier 1982). Their business enabled them to diversify their investments, making them a real politico-economic force. The international exchanges also benefited the strong Syro-Lebanese community of traders in Lomé.

Another geographical reading of the country, however, is the one that places north and south in opposition. This pseudo-division of the country goes back to the German colonial period, during which the north was excluded from colonisation. This reading corresponds to cultural differences (for example, groups and regions can be distinguished in terms of their traditional dietary habits: millet in the north, yam in the centre and maize in the south). This division was subsequently reinforced and politically exploited by the Eyadéma regime.

These different readings of Togolese space are in competition: space of exchange or space of isolation? Politics leans towards the second, economics towards the first. Lastly, the city's history can only be understood as an oscillation from one to the other over time, depending on the historical period. It is, therefore, because of Lomé's double status as a political and economic capital that it experiences strong territorial contradictions. In other words, it is neither possible to describe Lomé without considering its status as a political capital, nor possible to do so by only considering that status.

Notes

- 1 Marguerat (1987: 84) defines this group as follows: 'A group of traders of different origins (including the people repatriated from Brazil between 1835 and 1850) that conducted commercial activities in the region of Aného.'
- 2 The single political party founded by General Eyadéma in 1969.
- 3 On 24 January 1974, the plane that was carrying the head of state crashed in Sarakawa, in the north of Togo. He came out of the 'accident' unscathed, but it was suggested that it was a colonialist attack which he 'miraculously' survived (see Toulabor 1986, on the political construction of a 'myth' following this incident). After the Sarakawa incident, General

- Eyadéma launched a ‘triumphant return’ to Lomé where he announced on 2 February that the phosphate mines would be nationalised. This was to mark his victory over the old metropolis and to take possession of the country’s main source of revenue.
- 4 The *evala* is a form of traditional Kabyè wrestling that represents the initiation rite for young men and was revived by the Eyadéma regime. Every year, the general attended these celebrations in the Kabyè region and was reputed to select the most vigorous men as his personal bodyguards.
 - 5 *La Nouvelle Marche*, 30 August 1989. During the 1980s, peace was the main theme of the Eyadéma regime propaganda. It was presented as having brought peace to Togo by protecting it from ethnic violence, and to Africa by means of diplomatic missions.
 - 6 Situated north of the city, this secure housing estate is practically the only luxury residential enclave in Lomé.
 - 7 Interview with a group of Lomé inhabitants, November 2005.
 - 8 The army, of course, provided major support to the Eyadéma regime. The general very often spent the night at the base rather than at his Lomé palace situated further away north of the suburbs. He chose to do this either because he feared ‘terrorist’ attacks or because he preferred to do so.
 - 9 Hence the popular name of the suburb, Yovo Komé (‘white suburb’ in Éwé). Developed in German colonial times, this suburb was reinvested in by the French colonial power and distinguished itself clearly from the African commercial suburb that centred on the central market.
 - 10 This is also because they always seem to have preferred to settle around the main routes leading to the north of the country and because they wanted to remain close to the bus stations that made it possible for them to go there. This is why they are not found in great numbers in the eastern outskirts of Lomé.
 - 11 ‘Stone throwers’, an expression designating the group of activists from the opposition.
 - 12 Namely, the suburb of Tokoin Adewi.
 - 13 This is where the offices of the prime minister’s cabinet and his residence are situated. The Prime Minister’s Office is on the seafront on the boundary of the administrative quarter and the suburb of Kodjoviakopé. It used to be the old palace of the colonial governor, then became a residence for foreign guests and finally became used as the Prime Minister’s Office at the beginning of the 1990s.
 - 14 The opposition rightly felt that it was disadvantaged by the hasty and undoubtedly manipulated drawing up of electoral lists.
 - 15 The *Union des Forces du Changement* (Union of the Forces of Change), party of Gilchrist Olympio, son of the first assassinated post-independence president.
 - 16 Sometimes called Fréau Square, this typical colonial square was named Fréau Garden by the city dwellers. It became its official name, and the name of the small suburb that surrounds it. As part of President Faure Gnassingbé’s policy of appeasement, the square was recently renamed Amarré Santos Square, after a former lawyer and leader of the *Jeunesse du Comité de l’Unité Togolaise* (JUVENTO) (Youth Movement of the Committee of Togolese Unity).

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