



# The West African Urban Planning Workshops of Porto-Novo

## 1st Session

July 30 to August 20, 2010

### Sustainable recovery of lagoon banks in urban environment

Preserve sensitive natural area against the anarchical sprawl of housing:  
Urban planning of a new district and of an eco-friendly university within the lagoon ecosystem in Porto Novo.



International meeting of students and young professionals from Africa and other continents. Four international and multidisciplinary teams make proposals to the actors of the territory.

### Workshop overview



# Preamble

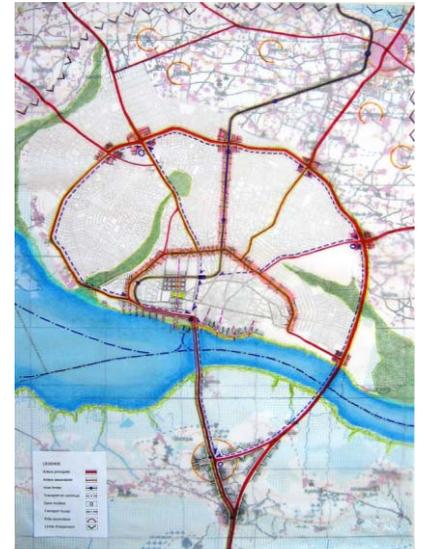
## Birth of the Porto-Novo Workshops

Developed since 1982, the original method of Les Ateliers allows for bringing together students and professionals from different countries and having them work in multidisciplinary teams on a town-planning topic proposed by local authorities.

In November 2005 in the framework of decentralized cooperation with the Urban Community of Cergy-Pontoise is organized in Porto-Porto an International Workshop of professionals to reflect on urban projects in the capital of Benin, its strategies of development and of promoting its territory.

In June 2009, at the request of the new mayor Mr. Océni, Les Ateliers returned to Porto-Novo for a brief workshop to propose a guide-plan directed to the construction of banks.

At present, by help of les Ateliers, the City of Porto-Novo wants to develop its own cycle of international workshops of town-planning management for students and young professionals.

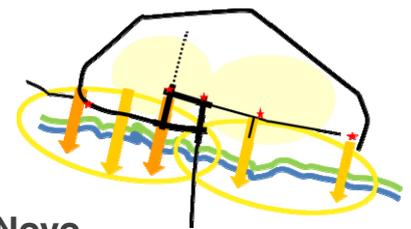
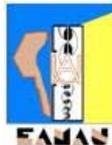


Prospective outline of Porto-Novo made during the 2005 workshop

## Partners

Cergy-Pontoise: The Community of Agglomeration of Cergy-Pontoise and the city of Porto-Novo have been partners since 1995 in the framework of an agreement on decentralized cooperation especially on reinforcing the capacity of African capital in terms of urban development. The Urban Planning Workshops held in Porto-Novo contribute to this objective.

EAMAU: L'Ecole Africaine des Métiers de l'Architecture et Urbanisme (The African School of Architecture and Urbanism) of Lome in Togo is a partner of Porto-Novo Workshops. They contribute to the scientific steering of the workshop and suggest students and young professionals as participants.



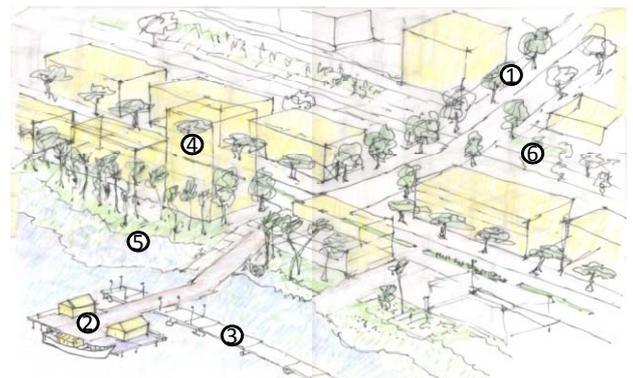
## Models of West African Urban Planning Workshops of Porto-Novo

3 weeks of work managed by a mixed team Les Ateliers / Porto-Novo, according to the method Les Ateliers  
4 mixed teams of 6 international participants, including 3 Africans in each of them.

Selection of 24 participants by dossier. Young professionals or final year students.

An international jury presided by the Mayor of Porto-Novo and composed of representatives of local authorities and international experts in urban planning.

Textured images at the workshop on the lagoon banks in June 2009.



# The subject

For their first edition, The West African Workshop Porto-Novo put at the heart of their thought a subject that should echo the problems of other cities in West Africa:

**How to avoid the sprawl of housing in an environmentally sensitive area, and to propose a controlled urban planning to host the new urban populations in an area sustainable and respectful of the balance of the ecosystem?**

Subject to be combined, in the proposed case study, with the following :

- Programming a green campus integrated with the city,
- Valuing lagoons banks and freedom of access for local people
- Economic development to create jobs sustained by the lagoon ecosystem,
- Proposals for an integrated and respectful housing
- Integrating floods risks in the design of this new neighbourhood
- Ambition of a modern urbanization extending the identity and cohesion of the city.

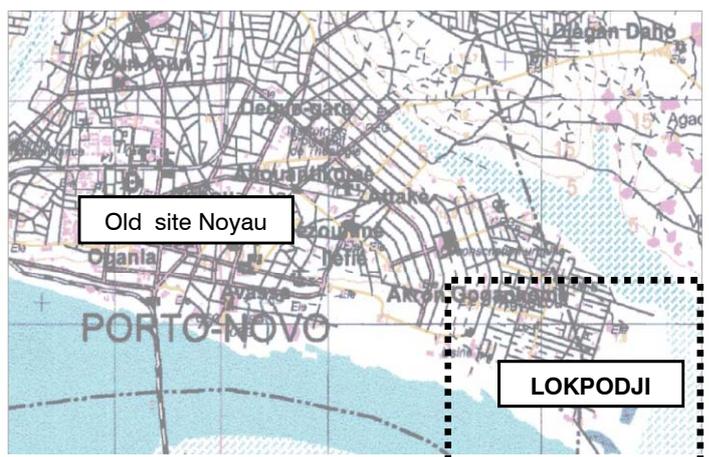
## The site study

To the east of the city, the neighbourhood Lokpodji is a vast land, mainly wet and largely flooded in rainy season. Characterized by ponds and areas not suitable for construction, it is an area that in recent history was neglected partly because of its remoteness from the city but also because of its low topography with the presence of alternating areas of mudflats and sand columns, due to its proximity to the lagoon of Porto-Novo.

With the demographic pressure and increasing need of land of a growing city today, Lokpodji is becoming a coveted market for transactions and strong land speculation, by both people with low revenues and notable people who invest in large areas without any urban planning rules on unbuildable land.

The Municipality wants to prevent the consumption of land by individual housing exposing its inhabitants to the danger of flooding and protect a strategic area: a lagoon bank with a spectacular landscape which is an essential asset for the city.

The Mayor wishes that the workshop could provide suggestions on how to inhabit these exceptional banks, preserving the natural potential of the ecosystem while best serving the people and the capital city of Benin.



# The stakes

## **Preserve the natural outlet and the ecological environment**

The branch of Donoukin, main rainwater drainage channel of the city, and other collectors performing the same function, is flowing into the lagoon across the study area. The soil is characterized by a very weak capacity to retain water. The varying vegetation is composed of location of ferns, common tropical trees, fields of culture and raffia, indicators of wetlands. In rainy season, the entire area is hardly accessible. The anarchic occupation poses the risk of destroying this fragile ecosystem and its ecological niche.

## **Install the university center**

In view of turning the city of Porto Novo into a truly attractive university city, the municipal council, aware of the stakes involved in this project, decided to allocate an area of 100 ha to benefit the construction of a university center which should be funded by the Kuwaiti partners in collaboration with the Beninese government. This project is not yet operational.

## **Land action and property**

The town of Porto-Novo has not got any guidance document on area management yet. Population growth puts great pressure on the peripheral areas not yet occupied such as Lokpodji. A subdivision operation has begun. It consists in a fragmentation of unbuildable areas. With this production of housing not developed within an elaborate public program, there will inevitably emerge a housing area without basic urban services, at risk of permanent flooding.

## **The social and functional mix**

The entire area is separated from the lagoon by a 25m road while the surrounding areas are gradually purchased by more or less well-off households. Today a significant part of the bank is occupied by luxury houses. Thus the lagoon becomes partially inaccessible. There emerges a form of housing that isolates the bank from the rest of the neighborhood. It is important to keep the possibility of uses and current economic activities and avoid this space being monopolized by the wealthy for private use.

## **Anticipate the risks**

Currently, Lokpodji is weakly occupied by dwellings and it is important to consider and think about the type of settlement or the type of town, the best town-planning scheme to put in place to prevent unplanned occupation of this area and disastrous cyclical floods as is regularly the case in Cotonou.

### **Lokpodji in History**

Following the protectorate treaty concluded with France in 1890, Hogbonou (currently Porto-Novo) was ruled simultaneously by the King Toffa the 1st and the colonizing power. Porto-Novo was a rural area; therefore the urban core then emerged around colonial settlements. At that time, the neighborhood of Lokpodji was considered the royal property: the production farm providing for the Gbèkon palace.

With the end of dynasties in the '70s and the proclamation of independence of Dahomey, the recently-proclaimed capital city of Porto-Novo met an unprecedented urban development and, like other African cities, without planning tools.

# Current state of occupancy of lagoon banks



The Eastern bank of the lagoon is still relatively free and offers an attractive land potential. The locals buy the land under customary law, but outside the framework of municipal property management. Thus flourish in these virgin areas signs announcing the recent acquisition of land.



Then, over the course of the owners' wealth, the land is backfilled and separated by fences.



In Lokpdji, there are many popular houses (left) as well as luxury houses (right).



The luxury houses built along the banks are often surrounded by extensive grounds protected by a wall which cuts the physical and visual access to the lagoon.

# The economic activities in Lokpodji



Here is the main road.



Agriculture is a little bit developed.



Is fish farming a promising activity?



The extraction of freshwater sand and its export by trucks.



The transportation of people is still undeveloped, but there are plans with local and regional lines (Cotonou, Lagos ...).



Finally, it may be a place for socializing and recreation for the people of Puerto-Novo!

## Forward-looking program of the workshop

<i>Friday 30 July</i>	Arrival of foreign participants. Accommodation in the houses. Welcome dinner with the steering team. Participation in the golden jubilee of Independence.
<i>Saturday 31 July</i>	Morning: Presentation of Workshops of Porto Novo and the course of the session. Presentation and oral presentation of participants (1 / 3). Afternoon: Walk around town and participating in festivities.
<i>Sunday 1 August</i>	Morning: Free. Afternoon: Guided tour of the site. Evening: Presentation and oral presentation of participants (2 / 3).
<b>Monday 2 August</b>	Morning: Presentation and oral presentation of participants (3 / 3). <b>11am: Opening ceremony with speeches of authorities</b> Afternoon: Visit Cotonou + Conferences.
<i>Tuesday 3 August</i>	Morning: Conferences (Porto-Novo). Training, methodological reminder and work launching.
<i>Wednesday 4 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Thursday 5 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Friday 6 August</i>	Workshops
<b>Saturday 7 August</b>	<b>9am-12pm: Exchange Forum No.1, Workshops</b>
<i>Sunday 8 August</i>	Day off. Planned trips
<i>Monday 9 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Tuesday 10 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Wednesday 11 August</i>	Workshops
<b>Thursday 12 August</b>	Workshops. <b>2pm-5pm: Exchange Forum No2 .</b>
<i>Friday 13 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Saturday 14 August</i>	Day off
<i>Sunday 15 August</i>	Workshops
<i>Monday 16 August</i>	Workshops <i>Arrival of jury members. Welcome dinner.</i>
<i>Tuesday 17 August</i>	Workshops - Render 8 A4 pages at 8 pm <i>Jury: Introduction to theme and site in the morning. Then conferences of jury members for the local authorities of Porto Novo.</i>
<i>Wednesday 18 August</i>	Render A0 panels at 12pm. Rehearse oral presentations. <i>Jury: Visits and half-day work of preparing the jury.</i>
<b>Thursday 19 August</b>	<b>9am: International Jury. Team presentation, debate and deliberation by the jury.</b> <b>Gala evening with final results and prize-giving ceremony.</b>
<i>Friday 20 August</i>	Tour group in Ouidah and departure of participants and jury.

# Workshop Organization

The workshop will be held in Porto-Novo from July 30 to August 20, 2010, bringing together 24 participants who will be working in 4 teams of 6 members, framed by a joint team composed of City Services and representatives of International Workshops: 2 or 3 assistants + 1 or 2 reference experts.

Participants will be accommodated in colonial style or Afro-Brazilian houses of high architectural interest, newly renovated by the City. The workplace will be equipped with hardware and required drawing material. A collection of paper and digital documentation material will be available to teams. A buffet lunch will be served daily for lunch. Participants will be responsible for their dinner.

The workshop will be launched during the festivities celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Independence of Benin.

Similar to the other workshops, the jury will create the opportunity of privileged encounters between policymakers, experts and teams' participants. The jury will decide the ranking of the four teams.

## How to participate

This workshop is aimed at young professionals and students from all disciplines related to urbanism: architects, geographers, landscape architects, engineers, economists, artists ...

A minimum of 3 years of study is required.

Approximate age: between 22 and 30 years

Composition of the application:

- CV on 1 page. Filename: NAME\_first name\_CV
- Research work on the topic of the workshop applied to a different site (preferably in your home country). Analysis text + graphics, preferably produced by the candidate. Format: 6 A4 pages or 3A3 pages. Filename: NAME\_first name\_RW

- Registration form completed. Filename: NAME\_first name\_ID

The complete dossier will be sent by email (attachments accepted up to 10 MB) to [portonovo@ateliers.org](mailto:portonovo@ateliers.org)

Deadline for receipt of applications: April 26, 2010.

The results will be announced in early May

## Financial Terms

Registration fee: 25 000 CFA francs for the Africans and 150 euros for non-Africans.

The participants themselves take charge of their travel expenses, personal insurance and visa.

Scholarship applications will be considered on a case by case basis according to potential partners: Foundations, French Ministry.

## Contact

For application information, visit the website [www.ateliers.org/en](http://www.ateliers.org/en) on the page "Workshop of Porto-Novo, 2010", or email us at [portonovo@ateliers.org](mailto:portonovo@ateliers.org)

Workshops: Nicolas Détrie, director.

Porto-Novo: Daniel Zinsou Hounkpévi, services director.



Benin in West Africa



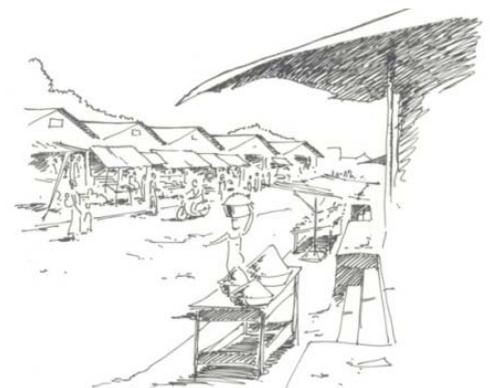
Urban Network in the Gulf of Guinea



Downtown



Mud Houses



Daily life