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SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN BANALIA TERRITORY (DR CONGO)

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ABSTRACT

This reflection aims to identify the economic and social consequences of underdevelopment in the Banalia Territory.

At the methodological level, the research uses the dynamist method of George Balandier supported by the technique of disengaged direct observation, the documentary technique, the free interview technique, the sampling technique and the data processing technique was carried out by content and statistical analysis. Thus, the results of the study show that the deterioration of basic infrastructure (roads, schools and hospitals, etc.), the poor access to drinking water and energy, the poor state of housing (straw houses, etc.), the difficult access to primary health care for the local population, unemployment, the low rate of schooling as well as the weak initiative of self-care by the local population at the root of the economic and social consequences of underdevelopment in the Banalia Territory.

KEYWORDS: Consequences, economic, social, development, underdevelopment and the Territory of Banalia

1. PROBLEM

Underdevelopment is a social phenomenon characteristic of the countries of the South. The countries that make up this periphery have common characteristics. Their economy is still largely dominated by agricultural activities. Industry is in its infancy, their population is growing rapidly, which can be a spur

for development, which is all the more essential as their standard of living is lower than that of the industrialized countries of the North. Finally, almost all of these countries have been colonized.

Despite the intervention of bilateral partners (World Bank, IMF, etc.) in the development environment, the problems of underdevelopment are still acute in Third World countries in general and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, particularly in the DRC, which is why we have to carry out this study.

Banalia is a territory and locality in the Province of Tshopo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is of agricultural, forestry and mining affiliation. In this entity, rice, cassava, groundnuts, maize, plantains are grown as food agricultural products and as perennial products, oil palm, rubber, cocoa, coffee and, in the forest, there is wood and game with several species of wood and non-wood forest products. These products have made this territory, in the past, a lung of development of what was the district of Tshopo, now a province. This territory was better known for its many groups of peasantry and its palm, rubber and coffee plantations. In each group, there was a peasantry. This Belgian policy gave each group the chance to develop its potential and improve its living conditions. However, this territory has various ethnic groups with different cultures. It is mainly populated by tribes: Manga (40%), Ngelema (35%), Boa (10%), Popoyi (10%) and Baboro (5%). Each of these stands has its own culture and practices. In addition to these tribes, there are also lokele, topoke, tetela, ...

But in general, all these peoples are hardworking. Paradoxically, for more than two decades, whatever the agricultural, mining, forestry, wildlife and socio-cultural potential of these peoples, they have still not been socio-economically emancipated, even though they are only 125 km from the capital of this province. This territory is crossed by the RN4 which offers business opportunities in terms of evacuation and supply of its forestry, wildlife and agricultural products.

The discovery of the diamond mines, which has attracted thousands of economic operators from different backgrounds, has not been able to benefit the local populations. While economic operators have earned millions of dollars, the territory and its people have remained underdeveloped and not emancipated.

Agricultural feeder roads are impassable, the forest is devastated by both artisanal and industrial loggers, the bed of the Aruwimi River is polluted by the exploitation of minerals without the territory benefiting from it, rubber and oil palm plantations are abandoned. The iron deposit is still unexploited.

The Bengamisa cocoa plantation still does not offer enough job opportunities to young people and local populations. The Higher Institute of Agronomic Studies of Bengamisa does not have a positive impact on the socio-economic environment of this territory.

This study aims to identify the economic and social consequences of underdevelopment in the Banalia Territory.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *Method and techniques*

To analyse the information collected, the study used Balandier's dynamist method supported by *documentary technique*. Electronic documents, especially Internet browsing, have been a useful help to us in completing documentary technology. Direct observation disengaged, semi-structured interview techniques allowed us to observe the consequences of Banalia's underdevelopment.

The focus group was carried out to obtain verbal information from the respondents concerning their economic practices aimed at their emergence and development. Data were collected in Swahili and Lingala on the basis of an interview guide.

The application of these techniques in the field requires the constitution of a representative sample of the population concerned by this study. Muchelli defines sampling as "the action of choosing a limited number of individuals, objects, or items applicable to the entire population from which the choice was made."¹ In doing so, a selected sample of 100 social actors of social forces in the Banalia Territory randomly chosen from the space of the entity concerned by this study was constituted for this purpose. These are territorial leaders, religious denominations, academic and educational establishments, customary authorities, chief doctors of zones, heads of NGOs, women leaders.

The choice of these 100 social actors takes into account the undetermined number of people involved in production activities for the development of the Banalia Territory. The constitution of the sample was made possible thanks to snowball sampling techniques. It was a non-probabilistic choice of the target persons to be submitted to the questionnaire, from which several others of the same characteristics were produced.

2.2. Study environment

The Territory of Banalia is a decentralised entity in the province of Tshopo in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Located about 128 km north of Kisangani, it covers an area of 24,430 km² for an estimated population of more than 490,000 inhabitants.

The capital, Banalia, is located at 1°33'0" N latitude and 25°12'60" E longitude, at an altitude of 432 m. It is connected to Kisangani by a track that can be used by vehicle (about 2 hours of travel).

¹ Muchelli, R., quoted by Bolinda wa Bolinda, *Impact of the Topoke-Lokele ethnic conflict on the development of Isangi. Search for sociological antidotes*. Doctoral thesis in sociology, UNIKIS/FSSAP, 2000, p.22.

The Territory is characterized by a humid equatorial climate, typical of the Congo Basin, with alternating dry and rainy seasons. The dominant vegetation is dense equatorial forest. It consists of 4 sectors (Bamanga, Bangba-Banalia, Popoyi, Baboa de Kole) and 1 chiefdom (Baboro), bringing together nearly 402 villages. It is also home to the Yakpa Game Reserve.

The soil is particularly suitable for agriculture and the subsoil is full of mining potential (Kibalian geological formations). The latest estimates put the local population at between 464,416 and 493,697 inhabitants, for a low average density of about 20 inhabitants/km².

The Territory is inhabited by several distinct communities. The main ethnic groups are the Ngelema, the Bamanga (who occupy the Bengamisa sector), the Boa and the Popoy. The Territory of Banalia was officially founded on 15 March 1933, by Ordinance No. 40/A.I.MO.

Historically attached to the district of Tshopo, it has become a decentralized administrative entity of the new province of Tshopo since Ministerial Circular No. 001 of 2015. The territory benefits from modernization projects, such as the construction of its new administrative building financed by the Local Development Program of the 145 territories.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1.Level of education

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by children's level of education.

Level of education	f	%
Primary	42	42
Secondary	40	40
No level of education	18	18
Total	100	100

It appears from this table that our respondents, the large proportion of 42 (42%) have a primary level of education; compared to 18 subjects, or 18%, who have not even attended primary school. The level of school or academic training and education of the respondents determine the development of the environment or an entity.

The low level of education in the Territory of Banalia (Tshopo Province) limits the adoption of agricultural technical innovations and hinders the development of its potential (forests, arable land, diamonds). This underdevelopment can be explained by the lack of infrastructure, isolation and an untransformed local subsistence economy.

Our results are not far from those of Gary Becker², who has argued that education and training are direct investments. According to him, a low level of education limits the productive capacity of individuals and nations, thus constituting the main source of inequality and underdevelopment.

In the same sense, Yves Lacoste³ also considered the illiteracy and lack of culture of the masses as "constitutive characteristics" of underdevelopment. He even said that the low level of education prevents the assimilation of technological progress and perpetuates poverty.

Other researchers relativize the weight of education alone, arguing that it is the mechanisms of economic domination, structural inequalities or the poor quality of institutions that keep countries underdeveloped, sometimes making education ineffective. Among these authors, we retain Lant Pritchett, author of the *Liberal Father*⁴, who demonstrates the absence of an automatic relationship between the expansion of education (the number of years of study) and economic growth. He explains that in a failing institutional environment or when the demand for skilled jobs is stagnant, a low level of education is not the primary trigger for underdevelopment, but rather a consequence of a structurally blocked economy.

Samir Amin⁵ argued that underdevelopment is not caused by internal shortcomings such as low levels of education, but by mechanisms of economic domination, dependence and plundering of wealth by countries from the centre (capitalists) to the periphery. For him, illiteracy is a symptom of this unequal system, not its source.

3.2. Knowledge of underdevelopment

Table 2: Knowledge of underdevelopment

Are you familiar with f	%
underdevelopment?	
Yes	19
Not	31

² Becker, G., *Human Capital : A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education (Traduit en français sous le titre L'Investissement en capital humain)*, New York, Columbia University Press Année de publication, p. 1964, pp. 15-28

³ Lacoste, Y., *Géographie du sous-développement*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1965, p. 74

⁴ Lant Pritchett, *Where Has All the Education Gone ? Washington D.C.*, The World Bank Economic Review, Vol. 15, n° 3, 2001, pp. 367-391

⁵ Samir Amin, *L'accumulation à l'échelle mondiale: critique de la théorie du sous-développement*, Paris, Éditions Anthropos, 1970, pp. 112-118

I don't know	50	50
Total	100	100

It emerges from this table that the majority of respondents, i.e. 50%, have no idea about underdevelopment, compared with a minority of 19 people, i.e. 19% of respondents, who confirm that they have knowledge of underdevelopment. This deficit of underdevelopment is justified by the low educational or scientific level of the social actors in the entity under study.

Rostow Walt Whitman⁶ offers a linear vision of development in five stages. According to him, underdevelopment is simply the early phases (the traditional society and the prerequisites for start-up). Any country can get out of it by following the Western capitalist model, provided it accumulates enough savings and investments.

André Gunder Frank⁷ firmly rejects the idea that underdevelopment is simply backwardness. They claim that it is a historical creation brought about by the expansion of world capitalism, where the developed countries (the Centre) exploit the poor countries (the Periphery). He argued that underdevelopment is not a state of nature, but the historical result of colonialism and capitalism. The development of the countries of the North has been made possible by the active creation of underdevelopment in the countries of the South.

3.3. Consequences of underdevelopment

Table 3: Consequences of underdevelopment

Consequences	f	%
Deterioration of basic infrastructure (roads, schools and hospitals, etc.)	20	20
Low access to drinking water and energy	15	15
Poor condition of the housing (straw house, etc.)	14	14
Difficult access to primary health care for local people	13	13
High unemployment rate	12	12
Low educational attainment	10	10
Weak initiative of self-care by the local population	9	9
Undecided	7	7
Total	100	100

⁶ Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (French translation)*, Paris, Éditions Seuil, 1963, pp. 11-25

⁷ André Gunder Frank, "Le développement du sous-développement", in *Capitalisme et sous-développement en Amérique latine*, Paris, Éditions Maspero, 1972, pp. 27-35

The deterioration of infrastructure in Banalia is mainly attributed to the underfunding of local entities. The survey shows that (20) of the respondents (probably (20%)) point to this deterioration, compared to a minority of (7%). This blockage is accentuated by the centralization of revenues and the non-retrocession of provincial funds to decentralized territorial entities.

The difficulties of developing the territory are structured around several key aspects:

- *Landlocked infrastructure:* Roads (such as the RN4), schools and local hospitals suffer from a glaring lack of maintenance.
- *Revenue Capture:* The non-transfer of funds generated by the province prevents decentralized entities (Sectors, Chiefdoms and Territories) from financing their own needs.
- *Socio-economic consequences:* Lack of social investment hinders development and limits access to essential services.

To enrich our analyses, we compared our field data (the 20% approval rate and the problem of retrocession to Banalia) with the theories of great authors from the DRC:

- *The illusion of financial decentralization:* Mukoko Samba, who demonstrate that the retrocession system in the DRC remains largely theoretical. The retention of resources at the provincial (or Kinshasa) level suffocates Decentralized Territorial Entities (DTEs) such as the territory of Banalia⁸. *This blockage of provincial retrocession, observed in Banalia, corroborates the author's analyses who describe the financial system of Congolese ETDs as "disguised centralism", where local entities bear the burden of underdevelopment without budgetary compensation.*
- *The failure of infrastructure by the "summit" :* our results also confirm that the World Bank on governance in the DRC is the result of the glaring deficit of health and school infrastructure in rural areas is a direct result of the breakdown of the local financing circuit⁹.
- *The concept of "capture" of revenues:* This phenomenon is widely theorized in African political sociology under the concept of the predatory state or the "politics of the belly" (Jean-François Bayart). Provincial or national elites confiscate local taxes at the expense of the grassroots¹⁰.

⁸ Mukoko Samba, D., *Decentralization in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Institutional and Financial Challenges of the New Provinces*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2012, pp. 115-130.

⁹ World Bank, *Report on Poverty and Infrastructure in the DRC: Breaking the Landlocked Territories of the Province of Orientale*, World Bank Rural Development Department, World Bank Rural Development Department, 2018, pp. 78-81.

¹⁰ Logo at al, *Problematic of financial retrocession and autonomy of management of Decentralized Territorial Entities in the Province of Tshopo: Case of the Territory of Banalia*, *Revue Congolaise de Gouvernance et de Développement (RCGD)*, Presses Universitaires de Kisangani (PUKI), Vol. 4, n°2, 2021, pp. 45-62.

CONCLUSION

This scientific reflection aimed to identify the socio-economic consequences of the Banalia Territory. Through a qualitative survey conducted among 100 social actors of social forces in the Banalia Territory randomly chosen from the space concerned by this study. These are territorial officials, leaders of religious denominations, heads of schools and academics, customary authorities, chief doctors of health zones, heads of NGOs, women leaders. These results explain the deterioration of basic infrastructure (roads, schools and hospitals, etc.), poor access to drinking water and energy, the poor state of housing (straw houses, etc.), the difficulty of access to primary health care for the local population, unemployment, the low school enrolment rate as well as the weak self-care initiative by the local population. These are the main factors that explain the socio-economic consequences of underdevelopment in the Banalia Territory.

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