The Community-based Approach in Haiti: clarification of the notion of “communities” and recommendations

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Provides support to the humanitarian and post-crisis sector. It aims to help improve humanitarian practice in favour of crisis-affected people through a number of activities, such as operational research, programme evaluation, the development of methodological tools, institutional support and training both in France and abroad.

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**CONTENTS**

ACRONYMS .......................................................................................................................... 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..................................................................................................... 5

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 8

COMMUNITIES IN HAITI ..................................................................................................... 15

1. The three levels of basic solidarity: kinship, neighbourhood and religion ...................... 15
   1.1. Family solidarity or the foundation of the social community ........................................ 15
   1.2. The essential neighbourhood relations ........................................................................ 16
   1.3. Religion as a cross-category social cement in Haiti ....................................................... 16

2. Taking the disconnected nature of society into account: individuality or individualism? .. 19
   2.1. The fundamental individualism of Haitian society ......................................................... 19
   2.2. The silent mass: Si timoun nan pa kriye, li pa bezwen tete ........................................... 21

3. Vertical social structure and the emergence of leaders with or without legitimacy ....... 23
   3.1. The verticality of a hierarchical society ........................................................................ 23
   3.2. Access to religious power as a way for community leaders to emerge ....................... 24
   3.3. The emergence of gangs and mafia groups: an ambivalent system ............................... 24
   3.4. Access to the leadership of an association or a committee ........................................... 26

4. Adapting to fluctuating community mobilisations .......................................................... 30

5. What is the reality of community-based and community? ............................................. 32
   5.1. De facto communities in rural environments ................................................................. 32
   5.2. The creation of « administrative communities »: outdated policy decisions ............... 33

CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................................... 38

ANNEXES ........................................................................................................................... 41

Annex 1: A concrete example: Canaan, two community itineraries .................................. 41
Annexe 2: Sol, sabotay, konbit and escouade: economic exchange as the basis of solidarity ................................................................................................................................. 45
Annexe 3: People met during the field study ....................................................................... 46
Annexe 4: Confidence in social relations and in institutions .............................................. 48
Annexe 5: Bibliography ....................................................................................................... 49
ACRONYMS

ASEC : Assemblées des Sections Communales
ATL : Agence technique locale
CASEC : Conseils d'Administration des Sections Communales (exemple-CASER)
CASER : Conseils d'Administration des Sections Rurales
CFW : Cash for work
CRC : Centre de ressources communautaires
FOKAL : Fondation connaissance et liberté (Haïti)
GRET : Professionnels du développement solidaire
MICTDN : Collectivités territoriales et de la défense nationale
MPCE : Ministère de la planification et de la coopération externe
MTPC : Ministère des travaux publics, transports et communications (Haïti)
MTPC : Ministère des travaux publics, transports et communications
OIM : Organisation internationale pour les migrations
ONU-Habitat : United Nations Human Settlements Programme
PAD : Semaine de Préparation au départ
PCD : Plan communal de développement
PIM : Plan d'investissements communal
PRODEPUR : Projet de Développement Participatif en Milieu Urbain (Banque Mondiale)
SODADE : Société d'aménagement et de développement
UCLBP : Unité de Construction de Logements et des Bâtiments Publics (Haïti)
UNHCR : Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés
WASH : Eau, assainissement et hygiène
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study presented in this report is based on one month of field research in Port-au-Prince, from 19 August to 21 September 2012. It aims to define what the community-based approach is in urban contexts. To do this, the research aims to clarify the notion of community in Haiti, and look at operational issues related to the community-based approach. The study therefore focuses on the different solidarity relations and community-based ties which exist in Haiti and makes a number of recommendations to improve the way this approach is applied in the field.

Communities in Haiti are based on three main areas: family, neighbourhood and religion1. The family is a necessary community foundation: its rhythm is organised around the head of the family and the lakou2, a communal living space where everyday activities take place. Neighbourhood relations, which are necessary both socially and economically, sometimes lead to relations of solidarity which are so important that “vwasen se fanmi / vwazinay se janmi”3. Lastly, religious practice creates a community of belief with its specific social events and common practices. But these solidarity relations are generally relatively loose: communities of belief do not always signify actual solidarity.

In urban environments, these three levels are fragmented: family relations are spatially restricted and gradually break down as internal migration takes place; neighbourhood relations are limited to neighbours living adjacent to each other, between whom relationships of trust are built over time; and churches, though still full, create spiritual ties rather than genuine community ties. City communities are therefore based on different criteria than in rural environments. There is a permanent tangle of interwoven communities: the community of proximity (the neighbourhood), the community of leisure (which often takes the form of an association), the religious community, the political community, etc. These can overlap or they can be separate.

Each person can therefore consider themselves to be part of several communities, on the basis of attachments which are not always locally-based (such as the provinces for urban emigrés) and in relation to which they are often on the margins. For example, some people know of the existence of a committee but do not take part in it. Operations in urban neighbourhoods therefore should always consider that communities fluctuate and sometimes overlap with a community of interests and sometimes are separate or even contradictory. The implementation of a community-based approach therefore has to take into account this fragmentation by means of a mixed field team that is as representative as possible. Information and communication are the keys which make it possible to avoid manipulation or misunderstandings.

The atomisation and individualism of Haitian society affects the notion of the community. This can be explained by a variety of historical and cultural factors, but also by the extreme poverty of a large section of society which is constantly struggling to survive. The Haitian state has effectively abandoned part of the population and these people’s opinion of the authorities ranges from indifference to rejection.

This is why any « community-based » project needs to try to bring together individual interests rather than base itself...
on an idea of the ‘common good’, which does not have a great deal of influence in Haiti. Indeed, people get involved more in collective projects if there is a rapid and direct advantage for them. In this sense, involvement through training workshops is often the most effective and productive in the long term.

Today, we can say that, though basic social equilibrium has been broken by the recent turbulent history of Haiti, scattering solidarity ties (notably throughout cities) and favouring individual enterprise, the shock of the earthquake nevertheless showed that people had the ability to reorganize based on intrinsic Haitian cultural and social patterns. Thus, camps had to quickly establish a balance which, even if it was fragile or based on mafia systems, made it possible to carry out collective projects in order to overcome individual problems.

The community-based approach, which is sometimes systematically used, needs to be used with caution. Does it create problems in the long term by shaping communities – which otherwise are dissolved in the urban environment – and giving power to actors (field staff or committees) who are not always legitimate and who are no longer supported after the NGO leaves? The community approach is not always indispensable, and other forms of participation are possible. In addition, the notion of ‘community-based’ in Haiti should continue to be questioned, notably in relation to varying contexts: what are the differences between the communities in spontaneous camps, in formal camps (created and consolidated by NGOs), in shanty towns, in the new neighbourhoods and in historical neighbourhoods?
Canaan (Metropolitan Port-au-Prince, September 2012)
INTRODUCTION

Outline of problem

The earthquake of 12 January 2010 caused enormous damage leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless. As a result, a very large number of IDP camps were set up. These camps of varying size – from under a hundred to several thousand people – and with varying status – whether supported or not by NGOs – lasted several months. Still today, there are 541 camps listed in metropolitan Port-au-Prince\(^4\), with a population of 369 353 people (93 748 households)\(^5\). This represents a decrease of "76% compared to the figures of July 2010 when the areas affected by the earthquake had 1555 camps providing shelter to 1.5 million people"\(^6\). Some of these camps were gradually closed and rehousing aid was provided to their inhabitants, while in other cases landowners cleared the people off their land, and in others still, the people stayed and settled in these new neighbourhoods which became more and more like shanty towns.

The presence of these camps nevertheless only reflects the housing crisis which was already stifling the city before the disaster: with the capital continually becoming more densely populated and spreading, the camps are in keeping with precarious forms of housing and informal neighbourhoods which are dotted around the city, whether these are poor neighbourhoods or shanty towns (known as "cités" or "ghettos", or even "invasions"). Indeed, most of the neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince are faced with recurring problems: increased population density, informal housing, instability, housing shortages and rising rent prices, etc.

Despite the apparent anarchy that appears to characterize these informal neighbourhoods, a broad form of social organization is actually in place: some of the shanty towns have existed for a long time and have their own social history; the informal neighbourhoods and the camps produce new forms of sociability to enable cohabitation and the organization of everyday life; the evolution of the camps aided by NGOs are determined by the aid organisations’ standards and activities but their inhabitants also develop various tactics for “living together”. All these situations have seen the emergence of various levels of “community”. Involving varying degrees of solidarity, these allow individuals to conduct certain shared activities while continuing to “survive on a day-to-day basis” (in a country where 65% of the population lives below the poverty line\(^7\), people “get by” by procuring what they need each day to survive\(^8\)).

In this context, many external operators who have wanted to run projects in neighbourhoods have had to adopt participatory methods, generally referred to as “community-based approaches”, in order understand better the population so that they can work more effectively with them and for the projects to have a better impact.

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\(^4\) In the metropolitan zone of Port au Prince (which includes the municipalités of Port-au-Prince, Pétion-village, Gressier, Tabarre, Delmas, Croix-des-Bouquets, Cité Soleil, Carrefour and Ganthier), 20% of the built-up areas in 2005 were occupied by ‘informal’ neighbourhoods, a figure which has probably increased since the 2010 earthquake. See the Institut haïtien de statistique et d’informatique (IHSI), and Simon Deprez, Eléonore Labattut, « La reconstruction de Port au Prince », Solidarités International, 2011.

\(^5\) OCHA, Bulletin humanitaire, number 22, September 2012, p1.

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) Figures established by the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), in 2001, we can suppose that this has increased since the earthquake.

\(^8\) « se demele » is the Creole term which means ‘to get by’.
But what is a community approach? And what is a community in Haiti? If we assume that ‘like attracts like’, what is the reality in places which appear homogenous, notably rural areas; and what is the reality in urban areas, where there are greater disparities between standards of living? What constitutes a community today in the metropolitan zone of Port-au-Prince? How are ‘communities’ formed? What is their internal logic and what interaction, if any, do they have with the State and NGOs? Answering these questions will improve our understanding of the social complexity of Haiti, particularly with the aim of clarifying how to interact with these ‘communities’.

**Framework of the field study**

The present study focused on metropolitan Port-au-Prince, and in particular on the Canaan zone located to the North of the capital (see Annex 1). Canaan is an emblematic site in relation to the reconstruction of Haiti following the earthquake of 12 January. The territory, which covers around five thousand, more or less barren, hectares was declared a “public interest zone” to “relocate the victims of 12 January” in March 2010. People began to move to Canaan particularly when the camps of Port-au-Prince were being closed from the end of 2011. Since then, it has grown each day with the arrival of new people so that it now constitutes a vast grouping of informal houses.

As a result, on this very arid piece of land, between the town of Croix-des-Bouquets and the area called Titanyen, there are currently several thousand people who hope they will be able to gain access to property (the inhabitants believe that living in Canaan is supposed to give the right to land ownership even though nothing has been implemented since the declaration of March 2010 and even though the concept of ‘public interest’ is legally obscure). But as the situation has not been officially resolved and the property question has not been clarified, the site has been abandoned by NGOs and all governmental infrastructures. The displaced therefore organise themselves, generally through their community leaders.

This is the case of the Cité Mosaïque camp, a small camp which was set up in Delmas 30a after the earthquake. This is a very densely populated urban area and the camp was subjected to various kinds of pressure before finally being cleared at the end of April 2012. Half of the inhabitants of the camp moved to Canaan, led by the small committee who ran the camp.

Cité Mosaïque is on the margins of Canaan (among the last to be set up, a long way from the city), but this is not the case of the second site that was studied, Canaan III. Situated near the National 1 road, a few pioneers settled in Canaan III just after the earthquake, before its population began to increase as of April 2010. It is one of the oldest and most urbanized areas of the zone. The area is organised by a variety of committees have settled there.

Finally, the study was complemented by visits to two other neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince: Ti Cajou and Bristout-Bobin. Ti Cajou is a completely new neighbourhood of Carrefour: the displaced settled on the mountain side and the establishment of a health centre confirmed the definitive nature of the occupation of the land. Bristout-Bobin is an old neighbourhood of Péguyville neighbourhood which was transformed by the development of informal camps for earthquake victims. It has been the object of a large number of humanitarian projects. Having been destabilized, it is currently in the process of being re-adapted.

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*Thoughts shared during the Groupe URD study on “Environment and Reconstruction: the case of Port-au-Prince”.*
Methodology

This report is the result of knowledge management and a desk review which focused on the notions of "community" and the "community-based approach". It is based on a field visit of one month to Haiti, from 19 August to 21 September 2012. The research was further added to by a research workshop at Groupe URD headquarters on 14 September which brought together a variety of actors to discuss the main issues in question (Annex 3).

In Canaan, the anthropological method was adopted (though very limited in terms of time). One of the conditions for the field approach was establishing a relation of trust between the researcher and the people met. The interlocutors accepted this approach when they saw that better understanding of Canaan, via the Groupe URD research, could be useful to other aid organizations or even the government.

The method chosen in "the field" was to discuss with and question the majority of the people met in an informal manner, while trying to ensure that there was a variety of profiles among the interlocutors, from "official representatives" to street sellers.

In addition, various interviews were carried out with NGOs, people working in Canaan and international actors, on the theme of camps and communities. 84 people were met, the questions and conversations generally beginning with a review of knowledge about a particular subject (the community-based approach and/or the notion of community), and about the implementation of participatory approaches, before focusing on questions about the notion of community in Haiti. The people interviewed included:

- 12 institutional actors (NGOs, government);
- 4 social science researchers who are Haiti specialists;
- 12 people from the new neighbourhood of Ti Cajou, in Carrefour10;
- 36 people from camp Mosaïque (North of Village Grâce de Dieu)11;
- 19 people from Canaan III;
- 1 person from Corail Cesselesse.

We can therefore say that this study is qualitative, based on observation and interviews, with the aim of understanding the complexity of the issues involved and of the environment in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods.

* Warning: The recommendations drawn from the study apply essentially to operations in an urban environment. Though communities in rural environments are weak structures which can nevertheless be supported by NGOs, in cities communities are more complex as they are more recent and are often imagined or created based on the needs of NGOs, etc. The community approach therefore needs to be adapted to this complexity, by being more flexible and more 'neutral' vis-à-vis institutional or local leaders.

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10 23 people were interviewed in another part of Ti Cajou in July 2012.
11 34 people from the Mosaïque camp in Delmas were interviewed in May 2010, but they were not all found again in the Canaan site so the corpus is partially different.
What is the ‘community-based approach’?

The notion of the ‘community-based approach’ was developed at the end of the 1980s. There have been several attempts to define it, one of the earliest of which was by Marie Drolet, a Canadian social worker, in an article analyzing the different interpretations of this emerging notion: “the community-based approach means showing concern for the community when providing services or during interventions which aim to produce social change. [...] This view defines the community-based approach as one which involves mobilizing values and using relations of interest on three levels: family/neighbours, social groups, and the State, which correspond to an individual’s three levels of social interaction.”

The community-based approach gradually was used more and more frequently, notably in developing regions, and often in connection with health issues (community-based approach in medical practice in particular). In recent years, it has been used in all kinds of contexts. It has notably taken on a new dimension in humanitarian environments, and particularly in post-crisis contexts: in Haiti before the earthquake, and particularly since the earthquake, it has been used to gain access to certain “difficult areas” (certain neighbourhoods) and “new areas” (IDP camps).

But each organisation has its own definition of this notion: for the UNHCR it is “a way of working in partnership with persons of concern during all stages of UNHCR’s programme cycle. It recognizes the resilience, capacities, skills and resources of persons of concern, builds on these to deliver protection and solutions, and supports the community’s own goals.”

Central to the community-based approach therefore is the participation of the people concerned in the implementation of a project initiated by an NGO. In Groupe URD’s Participation Handbook, “participation is understood as the involvement of crisis-affected people in one or more phases of a humanitarian project or programme: assessment, design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation.”

For Solidarités International, who conducted a study on the community-based approach, it is defined as follows:

“The approach...
We speak of an “approach as it deals with how an NGO should approach the population with which they work. The relations between NGOs and affected communities are far from simple, and they are often very vertical.

... and the community

“Community here refers to what is shared by the members of a particular group of people”. This group of people recognizes that it shares an identity, values and common goals, or is recognised as having these. However, what can be perceived from the outside as a community can in fact include numerous sub-groups.”

Ideally, “the community-based approach aims to improve the quality of operations carried out by NGOs, by making projects address needs as closely as possible. Needs analysis is handed over to the affected population. They also have the ability to make complaints about problems, and

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the NGO is then able to re-adapt their programme. This requires a certain amount of flexibility in programme implementation. The goal is to build the capacity of a community so that they are able to appropriate the project and run it autonomously: the community-based approach should not limit itself to allowing an NGO to do better work; it should establish a genuine form of exchange and support communities in their own projects.

Though the majority of organizations agree that a community-based approach is necessary to improve the effectiveness of programmes, the subtle differences between the definitions given are the result of different philosophies: for some, the main issue is to improve the programme, for others, it is a way of providing support to pre-existing social forces and organizations; and for yet others, the community-based approach is purely functional, a tool which allows the NGO to hand over to the population. What is more, there are differences between the methods used for implementing these different approaches, the only similarity being the setting up of “community-based approach teams” who are in direct contact with the population and act as intermediaries with the NGO. These teams can be recruited by an NGO and can be an integral part of these or they can be based on committees or community mobilisers who come from the population; they can be itinerant in the field concerned or simply represented by a local office.

Aid organizations have often been faced with ethical questions, such as how to gain access to a difficult neighbourhood, what type of relations to maintain with violent groups who dominate a neighbourhood and whether ignoring groups of this kind would not mean leaving out a whole section of the population? Also, how should the people who make up the community-based approach teams be chosen? Many organizations are faced with recruitment problems and adopt different tactics. Some of them work solely with the representative committees of the areas in which they want to run a programme. Others spend a lot of time implementing a staff selection process with exams and individual interviews, in order to choose them based on their centres of interest and diversity criteria. They all try to avoid the “official” leaders of gangs and other groups, by diversifying their contacts within churches, schools, and sometimes by setting up mixed committees on the basis of pre-existing structures.

Indeed, organizations which implement a community-based approach are often faced with leaders who interfere in their operations, who appropriate organisations’ actions for themselves, or oppose them to increase their power: for the person, cooperating with an NGO is in their interest economically (if they are paid, if there is misappropriation of funds or if they are paid for “services”), but also in terms of equipment (the NGO’s equipment is available to them) and in terms of prestige (they are seen to be interacting with the “whites”)… Many organisations have realized, too late, that they have become a stake in the neighbourhoods where programmes have been run, and that they have consequently destabilized the areas.

Faced with the diversity of interpretations of the community-based approach, and faced with the many different areas and contexts in which NGOs try to implement it, there is some doubt about whether this approach is always appropriate and should be systematically applied. We will therefore begin by looking at the experiences of Solidarités International before moving onto the question of what constitutes a community in Haiti in a second section. The report will conclude with a series of reflexions and recommendations about the community-based approach today.

RECOMMENDATION I: IS THE COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH REALLY INDISPENSIBLE?

Is the community-based approach always necessary? Should this tool be systematically used? Is there not a danger of “the” method becoming standardized? A community-based approach requires a great deal of investment both in terms of human resources and in terms of time... it should not and cannot be used systematically, everywhere and for everything, running the risk of NGOs losing credibility: for example, certain technical services can do without a community-based approach which tends today to be a means for the NGO to acquire moral and ethical credentials regardless of its actual effectiveness or whether it is implemented correctly.

Details of the recommendation

- Whether regarding an emergency or not, it is essential to ask a certain number of questions before embarking on a community-based approach, the first of which is: Is it necessary for this project and, if so, why?

- As a community-based approach is neither systematic nor standardized, its objective in a given context should be clearly spelled out from the start, as well as the expected community committee or platform, the operational methods, the conditions and commitments with regard to the members, etc.

- Inhabitants always take part! Even though the community-based approach aims to take all local opinions into account, the majority of projects already take them into consideration. Indeed, NGOs are so important for individuals that they often participate of their own accord. In such circumstances the community-based approach can appear to be unnecessary, a “duplication”, or an added “complication”.

- The community-based approach should not be implemented merely as a way to help the NGO feel good about itself\textsuperscript{18}: this can lead to an incompletely implemented approach or insufficient time spent... In such cases, it is only a way of confirming the ideas already envisaged by the NGO. If the NGO is alone in being able to run projects and provide funds, it may even manipulate the participation so that the participants’ requests correspond to the NGO’s strategies\textsuperscript{19}.

- Relief NGOs do not have the time to put in place the long process of a community-based approach. They therefore need to take particular care with the different actors that they meet and with whom they carry out their projects. If it is not possible to implement the community approach, taking the time to organize public meetings with mixed groups of people from the neighbourhood should nevertheless improve the effectiveness of their operations. The approach can also be sequenced depending on the context, the timescale of the crisis and the type of operation, but the objectives of the community-based approach need to be clear from the earliest stages of the implementation, so that it can be coherent and effective despite its sequencing. Indeed, if there are different expectations about this platform or the basis of the collaboration (such as the issue of remuneration), they need to be decided and clarified very rapidly.

- In emergency contexts, « passive participation » when the population is informed of what is taking place\textsuperscript{20} is often enough. But depending on the constraints, it is necessary to target one’s strategy in relation to the community-based approach and participation, because there should be a gradual increase in people’s participation and involvement in

\textsuperscript{18} Solidarités international, L’approche communautaire en milieu urbain, capitalisation de l’expérience de Solidarités International à Port-au-Prince, internal document, April 2012, p34.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Typology of participation developed by Groupe URD : Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers, 2009, p42.
the community-based approach: with time, the approach should even dissolve into support and complete handover to the community concerned. Thus, it is important to be careful about abuses: is cleaning streets a distortion of the community-based approach? Yes, if the preceding stages have been short-circuited, but possibly no if people feel involved in the project or if there is continuity with local initiatives.

Having looked at definitions of the community-based approach in this preamble, in the next section we will focus on what the notion of community means in Haiti.
COMMUNITIES IN HAITI

1. The three levels of basic solidarity: kinship, neighbourhood and religion

1.1. Family solidarity or the foundation of the social community

The first level of solidarity is kinship, which is often embodied by the lakou (from the French, "la cour", meaning "the courtyard"), which is a central housing unit around which there is a shared communal space, where social exchange takes place. Haitian kinship is based on a variety of principles: possessions are transmitted equitably between people who are married and their children (which explains the sub-division and reduced size of agricultural plots, even though nowadays the privatization of plots and their purchase is becoming more and more common), but the overall system is patriarchal. In the lakou, it is a patriarch (generally the first owner of the lakou property or his direct descendant, who is respected for his magico-religious knowledge or abilities) who commands or is the symbolic leader to whom one goes if one has problems. The women often focus on everyday household tasks (house maintenance, cooking, children) and on local trade, while the men focus on the outside, for work. Even though the Haitian state only recognizes monogamy, polygamy is the norm (customary marriage is referred to as “plaçage”). However, with the difficulties involved in ensuring the survival of several women and children, this essentially rural custom is becoming less common.

Though the people who live in the same lakou have closer relationships because they see each other on a day-to-day basis, the notion of family-based solidarity is not based on a geographical area: those who emigrate stay in contact with the family. However, someone who settles close to the lakou will remain outside relations of solidarity until they have established strong neighbourhood relations.

A veritable status quo exists within family communities: no one should be (or should be able to be) above the others in order not to destabilise solidarity ties, particularly from an economic point of view (Barthély’s ‘ambiguous egalitarianism’). This shared ideology which takes form in a variety of activities such as the many individual storage areas rather than a collective storage area, is a way of preserving cohesion which allows the group to survive on social as well as economic levels. Nevertheless, the breaking up of families and urban emigration as well as the increased presence of western codes and new contemporary issues, means that the rule of equality is losing ground to the promotion of personal enrichment at the expense of others.

In cities, kinship relations are sometimes restricted to a minimal unit, but family cohesion remains strong with the place of origin and the family which has remained in the provinces. This said, concrete mutual help (the exchange of services and money) is restricted to the nuclear family (parents and children). City lakous, reduced to their simplest form (a communal area used by several people: often around the kitchen space, located outside, or around the area for washing clothes), are reconstituted as much as they can be in order to strengthen these relations which have a tendency to break down due to the turpitudes of life in the city.

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21 Based on an anthropological approach, Gérard Barthélémy follows the theory of Pierre Clastres in observing how Haitian society regulates itself, in order to control the emergence of economic inequality which would create social problems, and also the emergence of a state which would monopolise certain activities which would then no longer be controlled by the collective. Barthélémy speaks of a ‘culture of resistance’ and a ‘strategy of contention’ which produces a ‘social consensus’. See L’univers rural haïtien, le pays en dehors, L’Harmattan, 1991.
During the 20th century the *lakou* appears to have become less fixed and has increasingly absorbed neighbourhood relations: this explains why people speak more and more of their *localité* rather than using the term *lakou*.

1.2. The essential neighbourhood relations

Neighbourhood relations, which are favoured in cities, are very important. They allow people to create a solidarity network for mutual help such as exchanging chores, babysitting and favours. They are given even more importance as genuine kinship is weak. Thus, a close neighbour will be considered to be someone on whom one can depend, to the extent that they will be referred to as "*paran*". They become part of the family solidarity network ("*vwasen se famni/ vwazinay se jannmi*"\(^{22}\)). Expressions for "our kin" are "*moun pa*" in the South and "*moun kin a*" in the North. This notion of kinship which is broadened to include neighbours, close to that of the *abitasyon*, is also referred to as "*bourg-jardin*"\(^{24}\).

In cities, shared geographical origins strengthen certain relations but do not bring any specific relations of mutual help, even though people sometimes settle in the same area depending on their origins, as in Carrefour where people from the South tend to settle (two factors draw new arrivals to this area: knowing people from the same village or region and the ease of access, as the road to the south is nearby). Whereas in rural areas, neighbourhood relations can spread out to the area of an *abitasyon*, in cities, and particularly in poor neighbourhoods, they are limited to the people who live just next to you: this is often the people who live next door, or the two shelters visible from your own house.

1.3. Religion as a cross-category social cement in Haiti

The notion of religious community is omnipresent in Haiti. It is very important as it structures social rhythms, and brings almost the whole of the population together for various symbolic events. Whether Catholic, Protestant or Vodou, spiritual leaders have a great deal of influence, and relations to God are both relations of submission (God is the superior power who controls the world) and are dynamic (believers implore God or his representatives and there is interaction with the invisible world). However, relations of solidarity between believers are weak, each person having their personal relation to God. The religious community is therefore not synonymous with solidarity.

Only certain Vodou rites involve actual symbolic sharing and economic reciprocity at the family level. For example, during certain ceremonies, donations are made to those most in need within the kinship group by means of donations to the *loas* (spirits). Thus the *loas* who are satisfied fulfill the wishes of those who make the donations, and the people who receive the donations (in kind) promise to do favours for their benefactors. But the religious tensions which have emerged since the 1990s have tended to reduce this kind of practice.

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\(^{23}\) *Le voisin c'est la famille / le voisinage c'est les amis* (The neighbour is family/the neighbourhood is friends).

\(^{24}\) According to Anglade, there has been a change from relations of servitude (the *atelier* of the fragmented space) to family groups (the *lakou* of the regional space) and we have now reached neighbourhood relations (the *bourg-jardin* of centralised space) in *Atlas Critique d’Haïti*, Montréal: ERCE, p89.
We can therefore conclude that family and neighbourhood communities are islands of proximity, which bring together people who share different ties and who can come together and organize themselves due to their flexibility and their small size. Family and neighbourhood relations allow individuals to have a modicum of stability via the solidarity relations which allow mutual help and regulate the roles of each person. Religious communities are essentially symbolic and involve less direct and concrete reciprocal exchange between people.

These three levels of solidarity are used for a variety of problems depending on needs: the resolution of conflicts takes place primarily with the patriarch of the lakou/ the local neighbourhood chief (in rural contexts)/ the religious authority; in terms of health problems, preventive healthcare is administered within the lakou/ are resolved by the medecin fey or the docteur zo in the neighbourhood / are cured by the hougan or by the mambo in the houmfor, etc. Thus, all conflicts or problems are resolved in these trusted, private and informal community-based structures.

Other solidarity ties can take place in the economic realm, via sol, sabotay, konbit or escouade, as described in Annex 2. These relations are either absent in urban environments (konbit and escouade), or only take place exceptionally, such as sol, which allows day-to-day survival by giving a person in the morning some money to buy something to eat in the evening.

But in cities, these mechanisms are broken up. Families are scattered and neighbourhood relations are more important but can fluctuate, and the general level of poverty tends to destroy solidarity ties. This trend seems to have been accentuated by the increased number of camps and new neighbourhoods. How can the community-based approach be implemented in such an undefined urban context?

**RECOMMENDATION II: SETTING UP THE FIELD TEAM: THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH**

The community-based approach always involves the setting up of a “field” team who are present in the neighbourhood. But how should the members of these teams be chosen in order to limit the risk that part of the population will be excluded (exclusion or self-exclusion)? How should a community-based approach be implemented in concrete terms?

In the post-crisis context that followed the earthquake in 2010, few organisations seem to have taken the time to select a broad range of participants when making up their community-based approach teams. Often the people selected belonged to the same networks, and the organisation subsequently found itself in a position where they were supporting those in power rather than achieving the goal of effective neutrality over the whole area concerned. Others were so established and well-known that they were unable to promote change. To resolve these problems, many NGOs created local teams made up of individuals selected on the basis of strict criteria. Others worked hand in hand with members of committees present in the neighbourhoods which they judged to be representative. Most of them tried to make up teams with only people from the neighbourhood, so that they would be accepted more easily.

- The members of the community-based approach team should not only come from committees because, as we have seen, they do not necessarily represent the whole population, and because they can become involved in issues of power. A “mixed” group
including people from all circles, who make up a more legitimate “committee” is preferable. This diversity guarantees the neutrality of the approach. However, choosing this mixed group of people who represent all circles and interests takes a long time: it is necessary to know the context, gather CVs, organize written tests and, above all, conduct individual interviews.

- But is it really better to make up teams of people only from the neighbourhood? It is recommended that there should also be people from outside the local context, in order to add an external and critical point of view. This makes it possible to take a step back in the analysis carried out in the field and means that there is not too much unilateral thinking on the part of people who are too “caught up in the context”. What is more, the members of the community-based approach team can be subjected to pressure on the part of the population and people who are not from the neighbourhood can resist this pressure more easily.

- Not everyone is part of a community or feels represented by committees! There are people who are overlooked by the community-based approach, but there are also those who make themselves invisible and do not show themselves: only the team can actively go to find these people and get their point of view.

- The messages delivered need to be similar and coherent within the NGO and between the teams (WASH, Nutrition, etc.). Meetings also need to be organised regularly to inform the population about the progress being made on the project and give the population the possibility of expressing their opinions. Again, the messages need to be clear and transparent.

- In order to ensure that all the actors and all the members of the community feel they can go to see the staff of the NGO, a neutral location is advised. Setting up an office in the premises of a committee blurs the lines between the committee and the NGO and runs the risk of excluding certain people who might feel intimidated about going or might not want to go.

- Should the members of the associations and committees who help or collaborate with the NGO, and particularly with the field teams, be paid? It is important to remember that people often have another activity to help their families in their daily lives. Their availability, their time, their support favouring integration in the neighbourhood and their advice and contacts should not be seen purely as the result of devotion to the common good. Though the question of paying certain actors should be very clear in relation to the community as a whole, and though it is important to avoid allowing certain people to accumulate goods or money with the sole objective of personal enrichment, anything other than short-term, one-off “help” should be considered genuine “work” and deserves to be paid accordingly.

Basic solidarity systems are therefore disturbed in cities and in times of crisis. People respond more to individual approaches. These deserve to be explored in order to improve our understanding of the dynamics of Haitian society.
2. Taking the disconnected nature of society into account: individuality or individualism?

2.1. The fundamental individualism of Haitian society

The symbolic and religious world view of Haitians has a disempowering dimension, as the individual is only the work of God, that is to say, the work of a super-human force which controls the actions of humans on earth. Thus the notion of individuality is difficult to conceive for those who have been created by and answer to superior powers: people are given a “situation” at birth which they have for life, submitting them to a whole system of social hierarchies. The idea of social climbing, for example, is often not even considered.

This natural and hereditary position in the social hierarchy explains how relations of domination are produced and reproduced, each person positioning themselves in terms of superiority or inferiority in relation to others, depending on the attributes of power that they have: indeed, in Haïti, appearances count a lot. Suits are a sign of success and power, as are cars and chauffeurs, skin colour (mulattos are highly regarded25), elocution (a high level of French impresses and reflects a good education), surname (if a surname is a first name, it is often associated with a slave heritage, whereas other names are associated with the western model), social status (heads of departments, of police, judges, etc. have a great deal of influence and prestigious titles), and close ties with the “white” world (trips to the United States are highly regarded). Certain people, at the bottom of the social ladder, have an extremely negative view of themselves: *tou moun pa moun* (some people are nobody26). Social distinction also applies to the most disadvantaged: being poor (*malere*) is still better than being destitute (*pôv*). This acceptance of the status that one is given and of the social system which reproduces patterns of domination (even relations of master and slave) and the difficulty of seeing oneself as an individual and as an active subject rather than a subjugated actor is reflected in the way institutions function as they are organized in a fixed and vertical manner.

Though this perception of individuality is innate (determined at birth by social position: either self-effacing or above the others), it is also maintained by behaviour which leads a person to look after their own interests first. Thus the notion of individualism, which is implicit in the absence of an idea of the common good, is often recurring in Haiti. However, in approaching this question, it is important to remember that each person is adopting a strategy, not of positioning (their place is already given), but of maintenance or reinforcement of their position. For men, it is not a question of trying to change their social position, but of staying at the “level” that they have despite the daily adversity of Haitian life. Thus, people in Haiti only attempt to change their lives (*aventure*) when poverty is too great, or when family pressure is too inflexible: for example, young people trying their luck in the city, which in part explains rural emigration.

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25 "In a society where the possessors and the possessed were divided into bourgeoisie and proletariat, the bourgeoisie all considered themselves to be Mulato, regardless of their skin colour, while the poor, regardless of the colour of their skin or how fine their hair was, were labelled black: this attribute is still a sign of social class": *Office de protection citoyenne, État de Droit en Haïti, Bilan des 50 dernières années*, Port-au-Prince: Henry Deschamps, p.13, quoted in Pierre Eudras Delva, *L’État Haïtien et la répression des actes de violence populaire contre les biens privés immobiliers*, Université Publique du Sud Aux Cayes : UPSAC, 2005.

26 “*Tou moun PA moun*” recalls the relationship between master and slave, where the former takes the role of the subject (…) The submission of the peasant man and woman to the imperative form [a way of speaking about someone who feels superior and who possesses the attributes of power] is expressed through resigned agreement (…). The look of submission is directed at the ground, staring into the void of a who-knows-what that is missing, which places this “pas moun” in a “nowhere”. The peasant man and woman who are nothing in the hierarchical table, obey and keep their revolt secret forever, for tomorrow. The fear of words, of weapons and of magic maintains them in their silence for now, for yesterday”, in Johanne Tremblay, *Mères, pouvoir et santé en Haïti*, Karthala, 1995, p158.
This attitude both of renunciation to one's relation to the world for certain sections of society, and of promotion of “strong” characters, encourages the emergence of precarious structures based on belief in individuals rather than institutions, which limits, controls or prevents the emergence of opposition forces. Thus, there is often a single leader who organizes his system around several actors who are subjected to him and whose trust and loyalty he maintains.

Relations of dominance are always based on the same absolute and practically non-negotiable criteria: thus, violent groups or gangs are consolidated by violence on the one hand and fear on the other, relations between teachers and students and between doctors and patients are consolidated by education and knowledge on the one hand and need and ignorance on the other, the mystic influence of religious leaders is consolidated by their magic/religious powers on the one hand and religious beliefs of the other: every sphere of society is impregnated by these fixed power relations which allow a person in a particular position to keep their power and their authority without having to justify themselves or to accept their domination without rebelling against it. This closed system of social classes makes numerous abuses possible such as the sidelining of certain categories, which is often the result of acceptance of their designated role (there is both invisibility and self-imposed invisibility, the result of both rejection and the feeling that one cannot legitimately show oneself), corruption, threats and the exploitation of weakness, or power over people’s bodies (sexual services in exchange for a service or as a form of “tolerance” for unpaid rent, or to establish a relation of domination).

Blending into the crowd is also a way of increasing the number of personal opportunities that are open to you: for example, in the camps where there was humanitarian aid the people felt privileged (because they belonged to a specific group), but were also constantly on the lookout for any advantages they might have over the others (thus looking after their own individual interests).

In addition, different social classes have their own histories and economic and power relations, all of which is expressed in the form of ideologies linked to skin colour: in cities the traditional “mulatto” bourgeoisie and a black petty bourgeoisie overlook the “black” proletariat; in rural contexts these classes take the form of wealthy farmers, middle class farmers (or “independent plot-owners”) and poor farmers. The black population is “naturally” poor and “unrepresented”. This is a new Haitian paradox: though African origins are still idealized, being “black” or “nèg” nevertheless carries a social stigma.

Finally, Haitians have a quasi historic desire for individual freedom, but as a consequence, they do not see the benefit of collective action, nor even of democracy which appears to some to be a means for the collective to exert control over each individual when what they want is to be able to move forward autonomously if they have the chance. The very weak relations of confidence visible in the results presented in Annex 4, at all levels (people/neighbours/society/state/Minustah and even NGOs) highlights this distance in relation to others. Indeed, in Haitian society, people continually try to get round their civil responsibilities, due to the desire for individual freedom which is nevertheless in contradiction to living conditions which give very little room for personal initiatives. This permanent “marronage” by the state is both the consequence and the result of this desire for individual freedom and has repercussions throughout society, which differentiates Haiti in terms of the notion of the state and the common good.

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27 Micheline Labelle, *Idéologie de couleur et classes sociales*, Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1987, p58. These class ideologies are directly inherited from colonial classifications: for example, the classifications from the censuses of 1697 and 1787 which can be found in Jean Price-Mars' essay, *Ainsi parla l'oncle*. Essais d’ethnographie, New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1928.

28 Only the Church has a positive level of confidence: Charlier Doucet Rachelle, Gilles Alain, Regards sur la violence : Survey results, 2012, p19; Annex 5.

29 According to Arendt, societies agree on a common good which regulate them via norms, dominating individuality in the name of living together: The main thing is that society at every level excludes the possibility of action, which in the past was excluded from the household. From each of its members, on the contrary, it demands a certain type of
Some say that this has allowed capitalist techniques to take a firm hold in Haitian society. Thus, the idea of “every man for himself” exists at every level: *chak bètafè ka kléré pou lanm yo*\(^{30}\).

### 2.2. The silent mass: *Si timoun nan pa kriye, li pa bezwen tete*\(^{31}\)

A common Haitian expression is “*moun sa yo*” (those people). It refers to the poorest people who are at the very bottom of the social ladder, who the other spheres do not meet and do not want to see and who, effectively, are very difficult to see (they are seen from a distance). In Haiti, people do not go into the slums or camps: they go past them or they see them on the other side of the mountain… People have a low opinion of them, but do not really know anything about them. There is a veritable mental integration of these class differences, and “those people” often do not feel they have a right to exist or to be visible. They are sometimes ashamed to say where they come from, whether this is a provincial region (those who are too “rural” are often made fun of), a “cite”, a “ghetto” or a camp. This silent mass, mired in its submission, rarely revolts, and therefore receives little attention from politicians, nor from urban developers (improving slums), nor legal circles (for the legalization of housing), etc.

This phenomenon of self-exclusion, which comes on top of and reinforces the phenomenon of rejection, disqualifies, banishes even, certain groups from society and makes taking them into account as a whole very difficult. It also reinforces the recurring problem caused by the fact that not seeing them confirms their “non-existence”: one of the biggest problems in Haiti is the denial of reality which prevents any reflection about the existing situation in order to find solutions. This means that a lot of well-intentioned projects are detached from the material and human circumstances which exist. This explains the discrepancy between people’s needs and many of the projects which are put in place. For example, certain urban projects are planned for Canaan, despite the fact that the area is already occupied\(^2\)…

The earthquake and the visible presence of IDPs spilling out of neighbourhoods ended this phenomenon of the invisible making themselves invisible and observers not seeing. IDPs were suddenly everywhere and those who were normally ignored and shunned suddenly became visible. However, they were soon expelled from the areas that were too visible\(^{32}\), and the camps became like their neighbourhoods: omnipresent and always nearby, but never met and always rejected. This said, some of them understood that showing themselves in public spaces could be a means of protesting if there were any problems: this was the case during camp expulsions. In Haiti, demonstrations sporadically bring social inequality to the fore in a more or less violent way. But this only lasts for a time and society quickly returns to a rigid hierarchy in which the largest proportion is the least vocal.

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**Recommendation III: Support local initiatives rather than take their place in order to give individual interests a collective dimension.**

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\(^{30}\) Each firefly creates its own light.

\(^{31}\) “If the child is not crying, it means it does not need to suckle. Another common expression is “*Chen grangou pa jwe*”: the dog does not play when it is hungry.

\(^{32}\) “It is shameful for us Haitians”, declared a woman who was a client in a commercial bank on Place Boyer, Pétionville, as she looked at the tents covering the public square which, before the earthquake, was one of the most popular for a stroll, quoted by Jonas Laurince, in *Des villages urbains qui dérangent*, Haïti Press Network, juillet 2010.
The sometimes rigid methodology of NGOs can lead to pre-existing local dynamics being overlooked. The community-based approach should therefore consider that individual actions should generally take priority. Training and supporting personal initiatives leads to greater acceptance of a programme, and better results on a wider level. This makes it possible to promote initiatives, but also to join private and collective interests.

Though the camps throughout the city have made the poorest people visible, and the setting up of Centres de Ressources Communautaires (CRC), where committees have been omnipresent, have given them a representative body, the paradox is that the committees do not always represent the poorest people. Indeed they can create the illusion that the poorest people are being represented by creating a category which depends on what the body is supposed to represent, rather than creating a body which refers to and represents reality. In addition, though the enthusiasm of local committee representatives seems to validate a project, it is often because they do not have any other choice and they sometimes adapt what they say to the NGO’s wishes or projects.

**Details of the recommendation**

- Rather than seeking out communities, the objective should be to seek out ways of federating individual interests and areas of collective interest.

- Supporting projects implemented by neighbourhood associations should be favoured: rather than creating initiatives, the objective should be to help and consolidate existing initiatives. Different forms of participation should be promoted, such as: passive participation, where the NGO shares information about its activities with the affected people; participation by giving information, whereby the population gives the NGO information; participation through consultation; or interactive participation, where “the affected population participates in the needs analysis and the project design and can influence decision-making”.

- The involvement of the population can vary and seem difficult to perceive: the general fragmentation of society and the difficulties of everyday life should serve as a reminder that individual interests are given priority over the idea of the common good. For example, in order to replant trees, there needs to be an immediate advantage for the person to plant a tree rather than to burn it to make charcoal. The new tree needs to grow quickly and provide the person with a direct profit in the place of the profit they would have made from the charcoal: in all cases, the person has to consider that they are able to make a quick profit for themselves in order for them to take part in a collective project.

- Working with committees does not remove the need to enter into direct contact with the population: they can make it easier to establish links, but should never replace direct contact completely.

- If a mixed committee is created or if strong actors are identified within the neighbourhood, once the objective has been defined, these actors should be trained so that they are able to use precise methods and are clear about the principles which should guide their activities (such as resolving problems) within the given area.

- In general, training workshops should be provided directly to the population on issues such as human and economic management (for example, training on micro-credit, or on hoarding), health standards and construction (hygiene, anti-earthquake or anti-cyclone recommendations), or on land use (in Canaan, the people want to learn how to cultivate...)

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33 These terms are drawn from the typology of participation developed by Groupe URD in the Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers, 2009, p42.
their kitchen gardens). Two phrases heard at Canaan were: “Our real problem is not eating, it is getting organized, and having work so we can eat”, and, “We want to be trained more so that we understand better what the NGOs are doing and so that we can be their partners: we do not want help, if it is badly done, but we want to understand so that we can do it for ourselves”.

Thus, communities in urban environments have a dimension which comes from an assembly of individual interests rather than collective awareness-raising. This is accentuated by the compartmentalisation of social classes, which favours individual attempts to seize power.

3. Vertical social structure and the emergence of leaders with or without legitimacy

3.1. The verticality of a hierarchical society

Haiti stands out because of its social capital (particularly the absence of social capital) while its history is remarkable and its cultural and artistic riches are exceptional: there is a veritable paradox between the history of the Haitian nation and the absence of national sentiment.

Haitians have common origins (Africa, the founding original reference) and their Republic was created due to the independence movement of 1804. This revolution of slaves against their masters initially began with the Bois Caïman Ceremony in 1791. This ceremony is currently very present in Haitian art (for example, it is a recurring theme in paintings and metalwork sculptures) but a large portion of the population do not know about it. This mixture of admiration and rejection is to a large extent the consequence of the population’s lack of education, and the influence of Christian churches who have literally demonized vodou, and particularly this ceremony34. What might otherwise be a basic founding relation is dissociated and numerous obstacles (ignorance, rejection, etc.) prevent the building of national unity.

In addition, following the revolutionary movement which led to independence, there was no social renaissance: groups began to structure themselves based on the same rigid hierarchies from the master-slave era. Social differentiation increased between people, based on skin colour (mulattos are considered to be “different” due simply to the colour of their skin), their ability to impose themselves as leaders, whether they had been trained abroad, etc.

Put simply, despite the revolution against the colonisers in 1804, this did not call into question power as such nor the dynamics of social structure. A Haitian State exists, but a Haitian Nation does not exist yet35.

What is more, the Haitian motto, l’union fait la force, is constantly repeated but always ignored, like a kind of virtual ideal. Whereas the feeling of belonging to a “nation” and a cultural group in its widest sense could be developed, individualism – which has become necessary to survive – has favoured the emergence of leaders and prevents any questioning of absolute power (over life and death, master and servant, rich and poor). This continues to exist in Haiti where exploitation has become a means of functioning. Thus, society continues to be fragmented between fixed classes, and foreign actors have to continually oscillate between irreconcilable opposites: black and white, rich and poor, Christian churches and vodou practices, the State and

34 Since the earthquake, the Muslim religion appears to be spreading in Haiti: preachers claim that Islam is returning to the island, because Boukman was Muslim (Boukman was a Jamaican slave who is a well-known character connected to Haitian independence. He initiated the Bois-Caïman ceremony, and was a hougan (priest) and is an emblem in Vodou). Trenton Daniel, L’islam fait de nouveaux adeptes en Haïti depuis le séisme, AP, 10 October 2012.
the working masses... The vertical relations of social hierarchy reflect the functioning of numerous institutions in Haiti: local, communal and even state functioning. Together these make up a vertical and enclosed system.

3.2. Access to religious power as a way for community leaders to emerge

Religions, which are present everywhere in Haiti, should also be seen as a way to gain access to power. Indeed, many cultivated and charismatic people become pastors or priests as soon as they have the means to establish a small church. Often situated in poor areas (such as the “new neighbourhoods” established after the earthquake), the success of these churches is based, to a great extent, on the oral and charismatic capacities of their leaders, as well as certain promises and initiatives which maintain hope among the believers and establish their loyalty. Thus, every newcomer to a church is given a “little gift” such as a loaf of bread, events are organized during religious festivals, etc. All these things are funded by the believers themselves, who are constantly asked to make donations (to be charitable) on the basis that the more a believer gives the more God will be grateful to him.

This is how certain religious leaders become rich quite quickly: the money is used to maintain their church (which sometimes becomes the most beautiful building in the neighbourhood), to continue to organize events (many include musical groups in their ceremonies, which creates a party atmosphere) and also to enrich themselves personally. This strategy of personal enrichment is also often directed towards the creation of a small school close to the church: thus the priest becomes a teacher. His clients entrust him with the schooling of their children, being loyal to the church and being encouraged to do so during the sermons. Yet these schools are fee-paying: enrolment fees, monthly fees, money to buy books (from the priest-teacher) and possibly fees to validate the children’s exams... In addition, influential as they are, these priest-teachers are not always good teachers or even able to teach, their quality being extremely variable.

For example, in Canaan, numerous churches have emerged, following the same pattern: the founder/leader of a church emerges, they become popular and have a captive audience, then they open a school. Before coming to the area, the vast majority of priests were unemployed or made a living from something completely different. Other religious leaders organize reasonably large ceremonies in Canaan as well as summer camps for the children: they are given support in this by external evangelical groups, principally from the USA. These groups, who have generally been contacted through the diaspora, bring a lot of money to the churches. This money is not controlled as it is left to the pastor/priest to use as he pleases.

This relatively common way of gaining access to power explains the links between churches and schools and helps to understand why there are so many different types of school. We also see that behind the religious community, there is, above all, an individual strategy.

3.3. The emergence of gangs and mafia groups: an ambivalent system

Different organizations become established in neighbourhoods: some manage to force themselves upon the local people through power and fear. This is made all the easier by the fact that whole areas of cities have been abandoned by the state which has not been able to establish the feeling of a social contract based on mutual confidence and respect, and is not able to maintain law and order throughout the territory. Indeed, away from any transcendent national feelings made up of rules and norms, there are few limits to shape individuals who are left to their own devices. Some of the poorest neighbourhoods are administered by mafia networks,
imposed by and dependent on a violent base, but also sometimes accepted and supported by the population.

Gang leaders are often from the neighbourhood. They gain a certain form of legitimacy through their knowledge of the area. But they gain their position mainly due to their skill in organizing a group of people whose devotion and loyalty they continually reinforce. Thus, the “commander” is surrounded by “lieutenants”, his friends who assist him and help to take control of the area he dominates. At the bottom of the ladder are the “soldiers”: these are often recruited young, and generally do not have any close social relations. They become socially subjugated to the leader who looks after them as a “son” and who manipulates them because of their religious fears (often vodou-based: the resolution of problems within the gang is often symbolic and mystical, based on beliefs, prayers, or on magic), who looks after them if they are in trouble, and who organizes their funeral for thousands of dollars in order to make sure that the other “soldiers” can see his attachment and consideration for them, which stabilizes any thoughts of contestation at the base of the hierarchy. Gang “soldiers” often join by means of a violent event: for example, they have to show their resistance and their submission through an initiation, which often involves being beaten up by the others. This creates very strong hierarchical relations of domination within the group, which are accepted in exchange for the feelings of consideration and protection which the gang provides. Thus, the “soldiers” are caught up in very strong relations of submission/respect, under the constant control of the two-faced leaders: the face of intransigence and violence, and the face of paternal feelings and recognition.

Gangs use the poorest neighbourhoods as reservoirs for labour, and as secure areas where they can develop their activities and take refuge if they have any problems. Though fear and violence are part of the methods they use to become set up, on the other hand, they also act as parallel social forces, sometimes even replacing the role of municipal agents in the neighbourhoods that they dominate. Thus the gang leaders increase their prestige and negotiate acceptance in the neighbourhood by distributing money and resolving conflicts... while at the same time establishing strict controls by means of norms which are parallel to the neighbourhood. Each family is personally known and has a particular relationship with the local “authorities”. Often this functions by means of reciprocity: “I will find you work, therefore you will owe me something in exchange”, “I will resolve your conflict therefore you will accept my domination”, “you accept me and I will take care of security in the neighbourhood”, “you pay me ‘rent’ for your shop and I will make sure that no one tries to compete with you”, etc. Thus this creates relations of exchange, but mostly dependence, which is why the gang system is sometimes described as a form of “social protection”.

These power- and wealth-grabbing systems function on a variety of bases, which could be described as mafia-based, and which define themselves generally as a form of illegal internal social regulation of a given territory with relations of dependence. This kind of system functions on the basis of specific rules which are always informal but sometimes marginally legal.

This way of functioning can also be found in all spheres of society, which is rife with clientelism and corruption. For example, the owner of a piece of land will impose taxes for the installation of water or electricity, which is neither his property nor his initiative and towards which he has not paid anything. In neighbourhoods, those who own most houses therefore become reference people, but they also take on a decision-making role: they are often called neighbourhood leaders (mèt katié36). The mèt katié takes money from the small shop owners in his territory; doctors or administrative services give priority to those who pay in advance; teachers only validate exams when they receive a small ‘contribution’; a priest is more merciful if his church has received a donation, etc.

36 Grammont Vincent, Rapport d’enquête sur la zone de la Ravine Pintade, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1988: qualitative and quantitative study which shows the complexity of precarious areas.
There are of course some people who do not function in this way, but it is a survival mode. Again, personal interest is fundamental and essential, and again, this strong hierarchy is a reminder of the colonial period and the master/slave relationship, that is to say, a structural system throughout society in which authority is never challenged: in Haiti, *chak chyen ni nèt yo* (each dog has its master).

### 3.4. Access to the leadership of an association or a committee

Heads of committees, often called ‘presidents’, as well as the majority of committee members, are rarely elected (except for official or legal structures, such as the Community Resource Centres, which were only recently created, are not very well known, and it is not clear whether they will continue to exist in the long term). Though this is the case, they become leaders by general consensus, almost the same consensus that allows them to gain power without elections.

Indeed, to be a head of a committee, popular support is not so important: the person has to impose themselves, in everyone else’s eyes, as the representative... even if they are not really. Once again, appearance and authority allow a person to impose themselves as the member of a committee: because of their charisma, their elocution, their power, or their ability to understand codes and interact with the NGOs.

Certain heads of committees already had a role in the neighbourhood (generally they were part of associations), which allows them to get known. Sometimes, this legitimacy comes from the length of time that the person has been in the area, which gives them a certain amount of knowledge of the area and symbolic legitimacy (particularly as the people who have been there longest are those who organized the space, taking control, for example, of water, or distributing land, and therefore they also have real economic power). In the new neighbourhoods (camps or areas invested following the earthquake), the leaders are often priests, school teachers or, sometimes, people from the outside.

Though these leaders do not represent the whole population and are not recognized by everyone, they nevertheless contribute to establishing genuine social balance in being the only ones able to communicate the needs of the population or able to provide the neighbourhood with something. Their position is strengthened by this role, and further strengthened when they work “hand in hand” with NGOs. This is when “screen leaders” are able move in. This type of leader, who may on the surface appear “ideal” in terms of their presentation and their ability to interact with outside bodies, can “hide” the community in several ways: they may make a very good impression on the NGO but, in reality, are only interested in their own affairs and not those of the community or they may only represent a small section of the group they say they represent, or they may have been “placed” by other actors and may only be the “presentable” façade of other powerful people. The NGO or any external operator therefore needs to be conscious of these risks of instrumentalisation.

What is more, these leaders or groups who are supposed to “represent” communities are often contested. Indeed, the population sometimes loses confidence in these people who claim to represent them and who interact with external people and institutions (including the “whites”). They may not see the point of their actions if they are unable to perceive any direct impact on themselves. One of the most common suspicions is that the committees or their representatives get all the aid because of their privileged position. Other actors, who often want to take over from these committees, stir up these feelings (which are sometimes justified: the members of the committee keeping part of the aid for themselves or their neighbourhood), which can create a lot of tension. Generally, this kind of manipulation is fuelled by the two opposing groups, one to keep its position, the other to try to take over, on the basis of lies proclaimed to the gullible population eager for hope and justice. For example, the presence of a foreign car is associated
with donations of money in cash, which the population never “sees” and which they think has been misappropriated by committee leaders (sometimes even in cahoots with the NGO).

These manipulations, which are reasonably representative of the tactics used in Haiti to gain power (where each actor attempts to gain the most power possible to the detriment of any notion of social equilibrium or collective ethics), raise questions about the activities of NGOs in Haiti. Indeed, they raise the question of why the presence of an NGO or just a visit by a “white person” can be interpreted as a donation of money. Is this not due to poor communication on the part of NGOs, to let people believe such things when they do not know anything about the NGO’s mandate or the way it functions and see it interacting solely with a “representative” group of actors? Is it not also the consequence of the distribution of money by different aid organizations, sometimes cash in hand via different cash-transfer and cash-for-work programmes, to a specific group of actors (such as very rich and influential religious organizations, through pastors), which blurs the lines between organizations and leads to widespread abuse? Or, also the confusion which is maintained between distributions (food, health kits, tarpaulins, etc.), and development projects? In this context, the community-based approach is one more form of aid for the population who are already saturated with acronyms and do not always understand the related mandates or developments in ways of functioning.

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The different ways of gaining access to power therefore explain why mafia-type systems constantly emerge, based on a strong personality around which a hierarchy is put in place, and on the redistribution of power to increase control over the system and the territory in question: almost exclusive redistribution to close relations, often family relations (or people with whom family-like relations have been built). This clientelist structuring of power exists at every level: from the microsocial to the macrosocial.

The leaders are both recognized and contested and are continually redefining and re-affirming their role either by means of arms and fear, manipulation, effective legitimacy (by persuading their entourage that they are the right person and ensuring that they have a base of support), corruption or by providing goods... Most of the people who manage neighbourhoods or groups of people have a political role and this disenchanted image of politics is the result of the lack of a social pact and the never-ending quest for individual survival.

It is important to note, once again, that the emergence of these leaders only reproduces what happens at every level of Haitian society (and even at the national level). This said, access to power via assurance, promises, or demagogy has a very high social price: in effect, people are disappointed to see that all the hope they placed in the person who represented them, whether elected or not, have not been satisfied. This leads to disinterest in those who have a political role, and in all communal action: why continue to have hope and trust in others when everything shows that you can only count on yourself?

**RECOMMENDATION IV: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND KEEPING DIFFERENT PARTIES INFORMED TO AVOID MANIPULATION**

Many NGOs went into the camps or the neighbourhoods thinking that they would meet « a community ». And yet, even if people live in the same area or their neighbourhood appears from the outside to have a strong identity does not mean that the whole represents a community! How should people be taken into account in an urban environment where the social fabric has been broken up? And how can attempts to reinforce or grab power be avoided, and manipulation be minimised?
In Port-au-Prince, where the notion of community is not easily accepted, it is essential that there is coherent communication about the role of NGOs, their mandates and their methods and they must deal with all the different people in the context and not “screen leaders”.

Indeed, it is important to know about the different social structures within the area, all the different community-based actors, etc. In parallel to this investigation of the operational field, the NGO needs to communicate clearly and coherently in order to underline its neutrality in relation to the different actors that exist, explain its project, and avoid future manipulation. Finally, the NGO must not forget that there are already a great number of projects of different kinds in Haiti, and that the “field” already has a “humanitarian” history; NGOs cannot act as if they were the first to conduct operations in a place or to apply a community-based approach. What is more, “the perception of the NGO is closely bound up with the perception of foreigners”\(^{37}\): individual roles need to be clarified and the key issue of local staff needs to be seen as a priority in order to avoid the dichotomy of “Haitian beneficiaries / foreigners bringing aid” which is the object of a great deal of criticism today in Haiti, even though it reflects a certain reality: the relations of power intrinsic to aid.

Certain NGOs have had problems related to the limited circulation of information: sometimes the population did not understand the role of the NGO, which led to tensions; at others, it was within the NGO that the communication did not take place, which led to errors of judgement, to information obtained too late, to issues revised too late... In the community-based approach, the field should “decide” what direction the project will take and therefore information needs to circulate perfectly well, both within neighbourhoods and within NGOs. It also helps to reduce the risks of aid being sequestered, which appears to be a structural problem in Haiti.

The community-based approach requires a great deal of flexibility and adaptability and careful attention to information rising back up from the grass roots level to the management. Unfortunately, the over-rigid structure of NGOs is not always open to this kind of functioning.

**Details of the recommendation**

- The majority of NGOs conduct field assessments before a programme is launched, which has the double advantage of preparing the arrival of the NGO (from the point of view of the local people) by informing them about its wishes and objectives, and also of “grasping” the atmosphere and the key issues of the neighbourhood to prepare the programme (from the point of view of the humanitarian staff). This fundamental step is sometimes carried out too quickly (for example, only one “focus group” organized). The sharing of previous field experiences also deserves a great deal of attention: reviewing what has happened before, what has been done, what worked and what did not, and grasping the population’s general perception of the activities of NGOs.

- During this whole process during which the NGO learns about the context, and the population learns about the NGO and its project, great care should be taken with the messages communicated: these should be accessible, clear and coherent. If the NGO does not know what to answer on a particular subject, it is better to wait and reply after consultation within the NGO rather than to answer immediately, as this creates confusion which can lead to misunderstanding. Also it is necessary to be very clear on subjects which can subsequently cause tensions: is the NGO going to distribute goods directly to the population (shelters/ healthcare/ food)? Will money be distributed, and who will be paid? Everyone needs to know who they are dealing with, what is going to be put in place, and for whom? Information and communication, as well as visibility so that it is clear who is carrying the message should be given priority. This will avoid, for

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\(^{37}\) “The White man has a symbolic charge, the source of all their frustrations and all their hopes”, in Solidarités international, *L’approche communautaire en milieu urbain, capitalisation de l’expérience de Solidarités International à Port-au-Prince*, internal document, April 2012, p 17.
example, attempts to manipulate aid and in comprehension in relation to a project that is not understood and is attributed to the wrong organisation. Indeed, beware of blurring lines between types of actor: even if it is well explained, the community-based approach can find itself embroiled in issues which destabilize the project. Therefore it is important “not to have programmes which mix activities with a high level of direct distribution (CFW, distributions) in the field with a “community-based” approach”.

This work before the community-based project begins requires time, but is essential for it to go well as it increases understanding of the context and allows the NGO to be known. In addition, cases of manipulation and populations being « overlooked » to the advantage of others are avoided. “Committees”, which are sometimes legitimate, do not feel like they have been short-circuited if, as soon as it arrives, the NGO does not consider them to be its only interlocutors. Everyone should feel that they are taking part in the project/carrying it out with the NGO, and should not feel that they are just being ‘given’ a project that has been organised ‘above’ them. Also, the community-based approach should be applied at the level of the population, so it is difficult to know in advance what is going to be done/what is going to emerge. A project should not be imposed in order to be accepted, but should be decided with the people – there should be coherence between the original idea and what is carried out. The NGO therefore has the role of facilitator.

Relations of power are complex: leaders have different roles - religious, moral, political… It is important to take these different roles into account.

The community-based approach needs to be continually nourished by the transmission of information from the bottom up and the top down. As has been put in place a lot in Haiti since the earthquake, a “complaints” office should be set up so that the population can express itself at any time: this office should also be a space to present the project, to meet, to consult, to exchange, etc. Care needs to be taken not to manage everything from a distance (especially when problems are communicated by mobile phone to a team which has been recruited specifically for this purpose). Indeed, new operational methods have been developed on a large scale, such as the transfer of money by mobile phone. There is a risk that this system will remove all direct relations if it is not accompanied by a parallel presence in the field with the local people. It is very easy to manage this system remotely, without any physical presence, but it is well-known that following a disaster, or during a conflict, relations and exchanges are just as important as the aid itself. Thus, the community-based approach should constantly involve and be strengthened by direct contact with the NGO on a day-to-day basis to establish a tangible link between the population and the NGO: spaces for exchange are essential.

The notion of power is intrinsically linked to that of the community-based approach in a society which favours the emergence of leaders. To take into account local dynamics and changes, information and communication are of primary importance.

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38 Solidarités international, L’approche communautaire en milieu urbain, capitalisation de l’expérience de Solidarités International à Port-au-Prince, internal document, April 2012, p33.
4. Adapting to fluctuating community mobilisations

According to a study on the community-based approach, "a community is [...] what is common to members of a particular group; it is based on solidarity or social ties. This solidarity has two sources: values and interests. These are the two ways for a human being to develop their belonging to a community". In Haiti, are the values and interests involved not more a case of survival rather than belonging?

In Haiti, communities are mobilised on the basis of needs, in a way that could be qualified as 'opportunistic'. Thus, a person will join a community only if they know they can gain a direct advantage from it. They will call on community representatives only if they have demands to make, for example, vis-à-vis representatives of "neighbourhood committees": the latter will be very solicited when they act as a relay between an NGO and IDPs (for example, during the selection of families concerned by a rehousing project), or when a road is to be asphalted, or when water and sewage pipes are to be cleaned as these things create a real problem for inhabitants and require the support of the committees for projects improving collective... and individual... living conditions.

These temporary mobilizations show that people become involved in collective action (for example, NGO projects) when there is a direct personal advantage for them. They also show that certain committees only make sense as a group of people who come together with a specific objective and the rest of the time are not invested by the population.

This also explains the major volatility in terms of community involvement: if there is not a relatively quick result, the person loses hope in the institution, and even begins to contest it. The interests of a person and the "community" or the "committee" which represents it either converge or diverge, fluctuating over time and from event to event. In addition, people belong to a variety of communities rather than one single community: there is therefore a mixture of more or less mobilized communities which people come to or leave depending on their needs.

RECOMMENDATION V: THE COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH HAS TO BE FLEXIBLE: IT IS A STATE OF MIND RATHER THAN A METHOD

Aid operations are not neutral; they can destabilize, they can become the centre of manipulations and tensions, they can topple leaders and impose others (even involuntarily), etc. And yet, though NGOs exist to bring assistance to beneficiaries, to whom they are accountable, in practice the accountability exists mainly towards donors. The appropriateness of the community-based approach should always be questioned from the perspective of the beneficiaries. This adaptability is one of the foundations of an approach in a complex and evolving environment.

Details of the recommendation

- The community-based approach interacts with 3 levels: the local authorities (who are sometimes distant and difficult to integrate), ad hoc organisations, with their leaders who have imposed themselves (who help to exchange with the population and area able to listen, but who can also block the project and who do not always represent the whole population), and the population (who sometimes are not interested in the project or do...

not feel they have the legitimacy to take part). It is often difficult to enter an environment-system with its own history and social dynamics. This means that the NGO needs to be very firm about what it is proposing, and at the same time very flexible and in a state of constant negotiation/explanation with each actor.

- Sometimes the people who work in neighbourhoods, such as the leaders, feel unhappy about or short-circuited by the NGO: it must not be forgotten that the NGO can be used either to reinforce a particular force, or can be denigrated because it opposes this force. NGOs must try to work round these overbearing stakeholders, basing their approach on more neutral and varied criteria. However, they must not cut off relations with them, as they often have a lot of influence and have a significant capacity to mobilise people (as was seen in Corail).

- The notion of the community-based approach requires the NGO to question its preconceived ideas and operational methods. Furthermore, operations by NGOs involve a relation of power, with those who "bring" and those who "receive". Adapting a programme by integrating the population’s wishes requires a lot of flexibility and is sometimes destabilizing for the humanitarian staff. This is why Solidarités International recommends that general preparation for departure training should include a humanitarian philosophy module on “Power and Ethics”40.

- Teams on the ground often include people who are doing this work for the first time. Despite training, meetings and adaptations in the middle of the programme, they can make mistakes, or can get caught up in potentially dangerous power games. The fact that there is no recipe for the community-based approach also means that sometimes it does not work. Furthermore, staff can sometimes be confronted with collective or individual problems, for example, if they are rejected by a neighbourhood, or if they feel uncomfortable with extreme poverty... They should be able to express their own feelings, worries or problems to the NGO, but also give their opinion about what the NGO is asking in relation to the reality in the field.

- In addition, “there is concern about the lack of experience of the people who carry out some of these tasks. There is also the serious risk of raising hopes within the community that measures will be taken to resolve the priority problems identified during these community assessments whereas in the absence of funds their application remains uncertain”41.

The notion of “community” in urban environments is therefore fragmented, fluctuating and closely linked to power relations. But what about official or administrative community groups?

40 Solidarités international, L’approche communautaire en milieu urbain, capitalisation de l’expérience de Solidarités International à Port-au-Prince, internal document, April 2012, p32
5. What is the reality of community-based and community?

5.1. De facto communities in rural environments

The abitasyon (habitation: a term from when slaves lived together in the plantations) is the minimal unit of territorial organisation in Haiti. Above this is the localité and then the zone. In administrative terms, the abitasyon belongs to a sub-section of a commune: it can refer to either an administrative division of a given agricultural area, either a localité or a number of lakous which form a localité. Today, the term abitasyon therefore refers to various situations of varying size and composition.

In general, people associate an abitasyon with an area that has at least a school, a church and a gaguerre (cock fight arena). Abitasyons are very spaced out in Haiti, including several families and are of varying sizes. These groupings of small entities form a single community of people who, according to Anglade, are linked by “territorial links which are expressed in terms of production and commercialization as well as in terms of social and cultural activities”\(^{42}\): they are made up of kin, neighbours, people with economic ties... There is therefore a social aspect which is more important than the spatial aspect, and which is reinforced by a symbolic aspect which unifies the community (such as the loas [spirits] who are inherited and respected from one generation to the next with the abitasyon).

The space between abitasyons preserves the conditions for economic survival and harmony and preserves the local balance. Indeed, each abitasyon aims to be autonomous, not independent: a product of the colonial period, this form of community reproduces a way of functioning that the state has never federated. When someone wants to emancipate themselves from an abitasyon to have a more active role and be less subjected to the authority of the lakou chief, they leave to set up another community nearby. Sometimes there is a formal consultation space within the abitasyon’s general lakou for this purpose. This is why there is a continual creation of small communities (church/school) which, when they last, are referred to as “en haut” and “en bas”.

The origin of these names is therefore not geographic but related to community fragmentation. However, this multiplication of abitasyons currently poses a problem as land has been divided into too many plots with separate authorities and is saturated. This also shows us that in rural areas there are several leaders and never just one leader.

Furthermore, there is often competition over land, or even in terms of prestige, between abitasyons. This creates real problems in terms of administering the territory: thus each abitasyon wants to have its own school, which prevents grouping pupils together in one large, geographically central school. The same problem affects the setting up of health centres, as each abitasyon vies to be the chosen site. Setting up any infrastructure in an area is therefore complicated, because “geographical rationality” is not a priority for each community present.

What is more, rural communities are in flux. They are multidimensional: they can be established on the basis of a basic unit (the family), the market or a religious ceremony. This said, abitasyons often come together around a “carrefour” where weekly markets take place: these are the real centres around which local communities are built\(^{43}\).

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5.2. The creation of « administrative communities » : outdated policy decisions

Authorities to represent communities were created as part of the decentralisation brought in by the Constitution of 1987 by François Duvalier, and which was applied around ten years later. Administrative boundaries therefore had to be established “based on the ideal set up for the grouping, mobilisation and participation of the population, with a view to development”.

The territory was divided into nine departments (today there are six), which were sub-divided into arrondissements and then communes made up of neighbourhoods, and ‘sections communales’, which were previously called ‘sections rurales’. Both the definition and legal status of a ‘commune’ are vague. The term can refer either to a town or a grouping of villages. ‘Sections communales’ can be of varying sizes and are divided into sub-sections: it is these structures which correspond most closely to people’s preoccupations. Each ‘section communal’ was led by a section committee and a ‘conseil d’action communautaire’. It should be noted that small groupements, often supported by churches, were created in opposition to these bodies imposed by a dictatorial leadership. It was through these that resistance to those in power took place.

Though community councils have now been dissolved, the same idea has remained in subsequent bodies.

In 1962, Duvalier had already created the Conseils d’Administration des Sections Rurales (CASER), which were subsequently transformed into Conseils d’Administration des Sections Communales (CASEC), whose members were elected by direct suffrage. According to the rural code, the aim of these organisms was to establish ties with ‘communities’. But the CASERs were established in parallel to political structures, the ‘Conseil Communautaires’, and these institutions overlapped, and sometimes contradicted each other. These bodies disappeared in 1995, with the end of the ‘chefs sections’ who were unelected soldiers who were criticized for abuse of power and running their territories in their own interests.

It was not until 1997 that the CASECs took on real importance and began finally to fulfil their role, as the representatives of the other administrative divisions did not have any defined responsibilities in relation to community management. Though, according to Michèle Oriol, this move towards decentralization made it possible to bring the national apparatus closer to the people, she soon noticed that grassroots structures were the “privileged interlocutors of international aid organizations and [...] the national institution for democracy and development par excellence”. The CASECs were then supplemented with the ‘Assemblée des Sections Communales’ (ASEC), whose participation meant that “the population could control the management of the administrators and express itself in relation to decisions involving local...”

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47 Today there are 10 départements, 41 arrondissements, 133 communes and 565 sections communales.
48 This form of political resistance connected to a religious authority resemble liberation theology which was taking place at the same time in Latin America.
49 Sanon, Nixon, Diagnostic des potentialités et vulnérabilités du milieu naturel à la commune de Gressier face à la pression démographique liée à la périurbanisation de Port-au-Prince (Haïti) comme base d’une planification du développement de son habitat, DEA Dissertation, University Faculty of Gembloux (Belgium), 2006, p9. The author adds : Today in the administrative centres of the départements, there are departmental delegates (representatives of the executive), and ministry departmental managers. At the arrondissement level there are executive vice-delegates and ministerial districts. The communes are run by mayors usually called communal magistrates, whereas each of the communal sections is run by a Conseil d’Administration de Section Communale (CASEC).
areas. Only the assemblies can act as the eyes, ears and voice of the people at the different levels of Public Administration. (…) They will guarantee that public funds are properly used (without accusing elected representatives); they will allow the population to take part in national planning; they will block the bad elements in public office51. The CASECs and ASECs are supposed to balance each other and avoid abuses, while permitting a community-based approach.

These complementary systems could make us think that the section communale is a type of laboratory for democracy… but many communal sections are criticized because they do not apply to real communities. Are the communal sections based on abitasyons not a continuation of arbitrary colonial boundaries? And what legitimacy do they have when all abitasyons are different and include several levels of community?

“There is a huge gap between these administratively recognised units and the real groups of people in which rural Haitians live”52. “Territorial boundaries, which we have inherited from the colonial past, do not take into account the demographic weight or the level of activity in the territories. Thus, as there is not real hierarchical organisation of the territory, certain sections communales, for example, are much bigger than a commune; certain entités territoriales which, theoretically, are lower in the hierarchy, have greater demographic and economic weight than those that are supposed to be above in the hierarchy”53.

Nowadays, the CASECs are governed by an elected chef section, a mayor and a small group of people entitled aides CASEC or aides chef section. These people are “bénévoles” (they are not paid, but gain in prestige, in payments in kind, etc.). They are spread out over the whole territory (50 to 150 per communal section) and resolve small conflicts, notably rural conflicts54. We can therefore say that governance is in the hands of informal structures: this vast “invisible” body which is not recognized by the state, is nevertheless one of its most effective hands.

What about territorial organisation in urban environments (communes, neighbourhoods and sections communales)? The same discrepancies exist between reality and administrative definitions: “though urban neighbourhoods as entities have a geographical and sociological basis, they do not have any legal value. Their limits are not defined and there is no territorial body to manage them. No specific administrative body other than the Mairie and the délégués has been established in cities. The term “community authorities” therefore appears inaccurate in legal terms”55. This explains the emergence of associations in the 1980s/1990s which, though they are legal, do not have a legal mandate in terms of their role in urban management.

In a study carried out in 2011 in disadvantaged neighbourhoods located in a variety of urban areas in the South (the four départements of Sud Est, Sud, Nippes and Grand’Anse), it is noted that only 12.4% of those questioned said they were part of an association. However, these associations are one of the normative frameworks of social participation56, as they define objectives and allow knowledge networks with joint projects to be set up. In the neighbourhoods visited in Port-au-Prince, these associations are either synonymous with ‘comités’ (which are

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53 Sanon, Nixon, Diagnostic des potentialités et vulnérabilités du milieu naturel à la commune de Gressier face à la pression démographique liée à la périurbanisation de Port-au-Prince (Haïti) comme base d’une planification du développement de son habitat, DEA Dissertation, University Faculty of Gembloux (Belgium), 2006, p.9.
54 Essentially conflicts over land or roaming animals.
55 Richener Noël, Reinforcing the capacity of communities to manage the environment in the neighbourhoods of Bristout-Bobin : the issue of the legal status of communities in urban territorial management, in the Haiti Observatory Newsletter – Groupe URD, October 2012.
officially declared associations) or are mainly concerned with leisure activities (particularly football associations).

Yet, a large number of NGOs are present in Haiti. Due to the difficulties involved in working in urban regions and neighbourhoods, most of these have tried to find interlocutors who are able to establish contact with the local population. This is why, particularly in the cities, there has been a lot of attention on institutionalized “neighbourhood committees”. But these committees and centres have often either been directly created by external actors, or have been created on the basis of these actors’ expectations. They have gradually become established as key actors who are met systematically in urban areas. However, they did not use to exist in their present form (they gradually began to emerge in the 1990s) and they have become much more common recently, notably because interaction with NGOs has become very important in Haiti. NGOs and their way of functioning have therefore been integrated into local ways of managing power, with community-based structures encouraged but not really controlled.

This tendency increased spectacularly after the earthquake of January 2010, with committees appearing constantly, as is illustrated by the creation of Centres de Ressources Communautaires (CRC) in the context of part 3 of the Reconstruction Support Programme, to promote communities. CRCs gradually became “ideal” (or idealized) structures for interacting with the population which are supposed to fit into the following configuration: neighbourhood/CRC/ONG/government.

CRCs are neighbourhood level relays with the Agences techniques locales (ATL) which are established at the level of the commune. They have a variety of roles, including facilitating dialogue between community leaders and actors involved in the reconstruction (the state, NGOs, etc.). This said, their impact is mainly technical, and they have not always managed to become genuine relays between the population and the municipal authority in terms of local demands and needs, notably in relation to the question of integrating neighbourhoods into broader urban management.

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To summarise, we can say that the “administrative communities” and the “committees” that currently exist throughout Haiti come, for the most part, directly from projects by international aid organisations or have been created in reference to these bodies, and particularly in urban environments. They have therefore become established in the landscape to such an extent that they have become systematically involved when actions are carried out by people from outside the neighbourhood and have become institutionalised like the CRCs. Some have given rise to effective long-term projects such as the “komite dlo” established by the GRET57.

It is also important to remember that sometimes informal actions take the form of “official” data (for example, when a public fountain has been appropriated by someone). These informal subtleties should not block the NGO who cannot “rewrite” certain effective historical processes. Power relations in Haiti are complex, oscillating between the official system, the effective system

57 The GRET has been present in Haiti for a long time. One of its projects from 1995, which has been reinforced since 2010 is to allow access to potable water in poor neighbourhoods, in partnership with the Centrale autonome métropolitaine d’eau potable (Camep). This system is based on the distribution of water from paying public water points, supplied by the constantly developing public network, and managed by neighbourhood committees. These “komite dlo” involve and reinforce local capacities and participation, and have become essential bodies in the neighbourhoods where they have been set up, notably in terms of the relay with international organisations: http://www.gret.org/les-pays/representations/haïti/.
and the informal system. Some powers have existed since before the arrival of a crisis or an NGO, others evolve because of them and yet others are shaped by them... 

These “communities” shaped in urban environments do not have the same historical roots as those from rural environments. This makes them less stable and leads to unclear objectives or tension. They always remain dependent on those who organise them rather than being subject to general constraints, as there is no constant social pressure on the urban community. In addition, they are at the centre of issues which need to be considered lucidly, as they help to understand the advantages or tensions which can come from these platforms.

**Recommendation VI: Relations with official institutions: when administrative entities do not correspond to field realities**

Is the NGO taking the place of the municipal authority? Are local authorities being strengthened or short-circuited? The NGO should not structure, build or destroy official institutions. The risk is that official institutions disengage completely from their role because “an NGO is here”... The action of the NGO should not replace that of official bodies and if these are not present, the NGO should, as far as possible, stay in contact with them and try to establish links between them and the neighbourhood. The official authorities should be informed of what is going on, even if they appear uninterested.

Finally, it is a paradox that the notion of the community-based approach is becoming more and more institutionalised and is included in almost all projects, notably those in collaboration with the government, particularly with the creation of community-based structures. Should it not be the opposite that takes place? Should the community-based structures not be working with the government? What is more, the community-based approach must not reinforce the vicious circle whereby the absence of the state results in the emergence and promotion of leaders who more or less legitimately replace the official authorities, thus further reducing the legitimacy of the government.

**Details of the recommendation**

- Attempts should be made to build ties between the neighbourhood and public services, for example, by extending the waste collection area. However, for this to happen, the neighbourhood needs to be recognised as part of a broader entity (the problem is made worse by the camps), and the Minister of Public Works, Transport and Communications (MTPC) should be provided with greater resources and should have increased organizational capacity.

- Encourage associations and committees to be involved in the general development of the area by bringing them as into contact as much as possible with the neighbourhood decision-making bodies in their communes.

- The organisation of the Haitian territory and the related legislation are based on the 1987 Constitution. But this legislation is now out of date, notably due to the increase in the urban population. Associations and communities do not have any official legitimacy in terms of territorial management, while communes and municipal authorities are struggling to cope with the increased area over which they assert prerogative and other

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58 The community leader belongs and evolves in the informal urban system moved by the same individual interests and logic of survival as the communities affected by the crisis. Understanding a population therefore depends on the development of a systemic and dynamic vision, Solidarités international, *L’approche communautaire en milieu urbain, capitalisation de l’expérience de Solidarités International à Port-au-Prince*, internal document, April 2012, p.20.
areas are not considered in urban terms whatsoever! Neighbourhoods have a genuine territorial unity and spatial identity, but they are not managed by any legal structure, and associations and communities do not have the resources or the mandate to impose their will administratively. Therefore, there are often cases where the municipal authority does not want to take care of certain areas (like in Bristout-Bobin), and other cases where areas either “do not exist” or only partially in the eyes of the neighbouring communes (such as Canaan). It is therefore “indispensable to make legally binding the decisions made by communities as long as they are representative […]. Giving communities a legal basis in managing the neighbourhood environment would be a first step in a process towards establishing neighbourhoods as an administrative division of the city”59. This would also avoid the population and humanitarian organizations running a neighbourhood outside legal structures, and would create an additional intermediary manager within the organisation of the territory, who would be a relay between the population and the local municipal authority so that urban space could be managed more effectively. The neighbourhoods concerned, whether old or new, would thus be integrated into urban projects and affected by all cross-cutting decisions by the state at all levels of society and the territory. But these efforts should be an incentive and cannot be limited to certain areas where NGOs are present (such as the areas where RCCs are present or the new neighbourhood of Ti Cajou) to the exclusion of others where the government or the humanitarian sector are not present (such as Canaan). This recommendation calls for reform and is made to incite action on the part of Haitian leaders, but it cannot be implemented by aid organizations who are not there to replace the state or create structures that the state should create.

- How should the limits of an operational area be established in an urban environment where neighbourhoods are not an administrative entity? Efforts need to be made to clarify the differences between camps and neighbourhoods at both legal and social levels, and also the differences within neighbourhoods. Are the dynamics different and to what extent can operations be adapted to these, depending on the context? Often, inhabitants distinguish between areas on the basis of factors which are not officially known, for historic or geographical reasons, and also depending on the areas of influence of leaders… Only the inhabitants can reveal these “unofficial” distinctions which sometimes correspond to other realities.

59 Richener Noël, Reinforcing the capacity of communities to manage the environment in the neighbourhoods of Bristout-Bobin : the issue of the legal status of communities in urban territorial management, in The Haiti Observatory Newsletter – URD, October 2012.
CONCLUSION

Entangled communities

In rural environments, family structures are reproduced autonomously from the state: independence ensures subsistence – it is a coping strategy. The informal sector and the multiplication of solidarity structures of the same form and more or less the same size prevent one from being harnessed by the other, and therefore the power being harnessed to the detriment of the other. As a consequence, citizens are kept on an equal footing.

In cities, social foundations are imbalanced. Communities are fragmented, leaving individuals isolated. They consequently find themselves within a tangle of communities: families are spread out, neighbourly relations take time to become established, churches provide a base but not solidarity... With time, networks grow but are mobilised according to needs. In addition, as we have seen, committees do not include everyone. Not everyone necessarily feels concerned by communities or some may only call on them in times of need.

Each person can therefore see themselves as part of several communities, referring to different affiliations which are not always local (for example, the provinces for numerous urban migrants) and with whom they are often only marginally involved (for example, they know of the existence of a committee but they do not take part in it). Operations in urban neighbourhoods should always consider communities to be fluctuating, and sometimes superimposed on a community of interests, sometimes not associated and sometimes opposed to other communities... The notion of community reveals the atomization of urban society in Haiti.

Are communities a counter weight to the inequalities in Haitian society or do they reproduce them?

Though basic, rural and family-based social balance has been disturbed due to Haiti's turbulent recent history, scattering solidarity ties (notably throughout cities) and favouring individual enterprises, the upheaval of the earthquake showed people's capacity to organize. Thus, the camps quickly had to find a balance which, even though it was fragile and based on mafia-type systems, provided the opportunity to establish a collective project and go beyond individual problems. Though there are sometimes tense relations between leaders of committees and communities, notably because the latter are not properly represented by the former, the issue is different in neighbourhoods where leaders are often more accepted because there is an older context and there is territorial history. Camps which are created in the rush of a crisis situation, favour the emergence of improvised but necessary hierarchies whereas neighbourhoods, transformed over the years, have a more time-based, contextualized structure. Both are the result of complex strategies, which sometimes bring different parties together, and sometimes are contested. For example, in Bristout-Bobin, the neighbourhood has had a long history and is made up of a variety of social classes, which has given it a level of diversity which contributes to its stability. The different standards of living and the diversity in the neighbourhood have given it a strong identity and have created solidarity ties between similar groups. But the arrival of displaced people after the earthquake destabilized all this and broke the urban fabric60. On the other hand, in the little camp of Mosaïque, which was spontaneously created after the earthquake, relations of mutual help were very quickly established as people found themselves in the same situation, at the same time and in the same place.

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60 See the work of Noël Richener for the Groupe URD study "Environment and Reconstruction: the case of Port-au-Prince".
But communities that are organised in the form of associations or committees fill the gaps of the state. They function in a vertical and hierarchical manner, as happens everywhere in Haiti. Whether they are representative or not, they provide a normative framework that institutions do not give: by controlling the security of an area (sometimes because they have a monopoly on violence), by distributing land (which does not belong to them), by making inhabitants pay taxes, etc., but also by organizing roads, electricity relays or defending the cause of the neighbourhood, etc.

However, though these systems can appear to be parallel to state structures, they are nevertheless similar in form. What is more, the state in Haiti seems to function with the received idea that the informal sector will take up its decisions. And yet, the official sector needs to deal with reality if it is going to function properly: it needs to take the whole informal sector into account. What is more, the formal sector cannot function without the informal sector, which in concrete terms often means a much higher cost than establishing a formal system\textsuperscript{61}. The state therefore depends on the informal sector, but, paradoxically, has a “laissez faire” attitude to it: the state abandons part of the society without which it would not be able to survive. Systems of inequality are reproduced, but there is also complimentarity, and even compensation for inequalities via community-based entities.

The specific characteristics of urban environments

Basic rural community structures have been broken when people have arrived in cities, despite attempts to gather around a particular person or on the basis of a place of origin. That said, collective action is possible in an organizational context such as water management. This circumstantial coming together does not take place with the goal of the “common good”, but rather of “shared private interests”: it is not possible to succeed alone, so a collective project is established bringing together immediate and personal interests.

In cities, the idea of a “community” which belongs to a given territory, which is close-knit and solid and is organized collectively under a banner which is supposed to be devoted to the “common good”, is an idea which has been invented by foreigners. Some try to conform to this image but “communities” do not exist as a social structure of society, apart from as “limited basic community organizations”, run by a leader that people support locally for a period of varying length, but without any democratic process or moral commitment to mutual help or exchange. Though “communities” exist in the forms described in part II, they are very complex and deserve to be considered case by case, with an in-depth analysis of contexts and the different stakeholders involved in order for the community-based approach to be effective.

Many organisations arrived in Haiti with the preconceived idea that communities existed in the cities, particularly in the poorest neighbourhoods. For example, some considered Martissant to be a community... and tried to interact with Martissant on this basis. But it is not because a neighbourhood has a strong identity that it necessarily constitutes a community, or even several communities. On the contrary, neighbourhoods are made up of individuals around whom people occasionally come together without sharing solidarity ties. There are “associations” and “committees” rather than “communities”: organizations who arrive in Haiti should not therefore take for granted that communities in the sense of coherent groups exist in urban environments, in order to be able to understand the complexity of environments and adapt to them case by case.

When there are no shared values due to the fragmentation of groups and individualism, communities, above all, reflect a shared idea of collective interests.

\textsuperscript{61} For example, the system of buying water in units (the most common being the 18 litre \textit{bokits}) ends up being much more expensive than if water was bought from a state agency who distributed it.
The involvement of people in projects and the recognition of their capacities (as underlined by the definitions cited in the first part of this report) are fundamental features of the community approach, but on the condition that individuals and their environments should be identified in all their complexity and diversity. The focus on communities should not mean that individuals and their specific strategies are overlooked, whether these make them invisible or are aimed at gaining power. Without being able to remove the vertical relations between NGOs and the population, the community-based approach should therefore be a process of understanding and support, rather than a process whereby projects devised "by those above" are implemented "by the grassroots".

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The notion of the community-based approach, which is sometimes systematically used, should be treated with a lot of care. Will it create long-term problems, on the one hand because it forms communities which are spread throughout an urban environment, and on the other hand because it gives powers to stakeholders (field staff, committees, etc.) who are not always representative and are no longer supported after the departure of the NGO? In addition, the notion of "community" in Haiti should continue to be investigated, notably in terms of different contexts: what are the differences between communities in spontaneous camps, in formal camps (created and consolidated by NGOs), in shanty towns, in new neighbourhoods and in historical neighbourhoods? It would appear that there was some social cohesion in the camps created after the earthquake, which some people consider to be "unique", as if the "community of misfortune" caused by the earthquake, with whom a large number of people found themselves involved in a very short space of time, had led to the creation of new ways of living together. These new forms of solidarity could be studied in relation to the current breaking up of camps (whether closed, integrated into neighbourhoods, etc.), which, once again, is scattering what could have been the foundation of a post-earthquake community-based social climate.
Annex 1: A concrete example: Canaan, two community itineraries

Canaan is located to the North of Port-au-Prince. Before the earthquake, this area, partly known as Titanyen, along the Nationale 1 road, was practically uninhabited, with only a few small houses scattered over the territory, essentially along the roads (Nationales 1 and 3), near the sand mines and near a few small churches or places of worship, including the one located at the top of a morne\(^{62}\) from which Canaan takes its name. The area has a very specific climate: situated to the South of the mornes of the Matheux hills, there is very little rain and the area is qualified as a “desert”, with only a few bushes growing (cacti, which are the most adapted to the environment, grow here and there). During the dry season the soil gets very dry and the landscape burns: most of the time the earth is arid and dusty. In addition the topography of the area is dangerous as the plain floods: the mornes, which have been cleared of trees and dried out, easily flood the plain which has poor soil which cannot absorb any surplus water. This is why this area, which people pass through rather than settle in, has never been considered habitable, or suitable for agriculture due to the lack of water and the absence of nutrients for growing vegetables\(^{63}\).

It is nevertheless this area, extended to the North of Croix-des-Bouquets, that President Préval decided to declare a “public utility area” on 22 March 2010, in order to provide those displaced by the earthquake with houses outside the city where demand for housing was very high due to all the destruction. Corail camp, which was created to house the IDPs from Pétionville Gulf, was set up in the heart of Canaan - despite the reticence of the government - on the basis of advice from outside Haiti.

Though certain pioneers, anticipating what the area was going to become and happy to find a free space, settled as early as February 2010 near the Nationale 1 road, it was Préval’s declaration which led to the major population displacement to the area, which was known as Canaan, from the name of a local church. People arrived along with their families and neighbours, often because they had heard that it was possible to settle in Canaan and that it would be possible to gain access to property. A lot of people also settled in Canaan as “explorers”: first of all, the head of the family would mark out the area that he wanted, then he would build a temporary shelter into which his family would then move. Lastly, certain people also took over plots, not out of real necessity, but out of opportunism, in order to have a large house and, even if there was uncertainty about the future of the area, to get a stake in the area that they anticipated would be transformed into a fully integrated neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince (and the future may prove them right). This is why the profiles of the people met in Canaan are very varied: some people are very poor and their houses reflect this, while others are from the middle class and have been able to build concrete block houses quickly.

As the months passed, the NGOs withdrew due to the lack of perspectives on the site and because they did not know if they had the legitimacy or legal right to carry out long-term action (beyond the emergency mandate) on an undetermined site, and local associations took over in setting up installations for site infrastructure (electricity illegally tapped from the road, water cisterns, etc.). Private investment added to this consolidation of the site. Churches were set up, followed, a few months later, by adjoining schools. A lot of aid was provided by evangelical churches, mostly from the USA, who supported local priests, came to run “summer camps” for

\(^{62}\) Morne: mountain in créole.

\(^{63}\) It seems that a variety of plans to develop this area have been considered, one by the consortium of construction companies, Nabatec, which was begun in 1997 and presented in 2000. But these plans were not being implemented in 2010.
the children, etc. A private health centre, which was set up very early on, became the only health structure in the area (it prompted some people to settle, because it has scanners, but as it is very expensive, most people prefer to go to the city for healthcare).

People settled, created little businesses, developed the spaces around the increasing number of roads being marked out (the inhabitants moving into the *mornes*), etc. A number of attempts to implement collective actions met with varying degrees of success: for example, due to a donation from a German Protestant NGO and through a pastor who was very involved in Canaan, hundreds of fruit trees were distributed to the inhabitants in March 2011. These fast-growing trees encouraged people to develop their little gardens and, even though Canaan is on very dry land, it was replanted with several trees and bushes which bring colour, cool shade and particularly, fruit, leaves and vegetables. Very close to Canaan III football field, a little community restaurant (called the “*cantine populaire*”) operated by selling access cards for 50 gourdes, which then allowed the card holder to eat a meal for only 25 or 15 gourdes and provided work for around five people. Unfortunately, the storm, Isaac, which crossed Haiti in August 2012 blew away the restaurant tent and all these efforts were reduced to nothing. Lastly, a variety of attempts to set up micro credit systems were made but these failed due to the lack of training of the creditors and because the debtors did not pay off their loans.

Canaan is currently split into a number of areas (Canaan I, II, III, IV, V, Corail, Onaville, Source puante, Village Grâce de dieu… these names are not official and are not spatially marked out, but allow people to divide up the area). There are more and more associations: these are local organizations, with coordination which is ideally global. Thus, each neighbourhood has several community levels, brought together under a representative committee which cooperates with the other committees, but which also serves as a platform with the external operators to deal with shared problems (for example, the municipal authority64, or a possible project by an NGO): one interlocutor said: “*we made associations to be stronger. We decided to make peace with the associations rather than go to war*”. These organizations act in parallel and can sometimes clash in specific field contexts, despite coordination efforts. They are also often contested and associations often emerge, behind a charismatic leader who brings a group together for a given cause.

A cross-sector group, the “*Commission présidentielle pour bâtir Canaan*” (Presidential Commission to build Canaan), was created. It sought to manage all of Canaan, not by distributing the land to new arrivals but by imposing itself as the interlocutor to go and see before settling in the area. Thus each newly arrived person asks this commission where they should set up and in return they give a sum of money for “collective installations” (roads, electricity, etc.). But this commission, which distributes false papers attached to legal ones (such as the Préval decree) to each person that pays it, then explains that it does not receive means from the government” and therefore does not carry out any of the expected works...

The study focused on two main areas of Canaan: Canaan III and the Mosaïque camp. Canaan III is not far from the Nationale 1 road and is also accessible by Canaan’s main entrance (near Corail, along the Nationale 3 road).

In January 2010, the area was virtually uninhabited. But a few people arrived, settling there due to the lack of space in the city following the destruction of their house. They “organized” the space principally by appropriating plots and distributing land. It was at that point, during the first weeks, and in parallel to the intervention of a few NGOs (one of which was building

64 Par exemple, lors de la tempête Isaac de 2012, ce sont les chefs de comités qui ont communiqué avec la mairie de Croix-des-Bouquets pour organiser la distribution de kits de premiers secours (avec les moyens de la Digicel). Ainsi, la municipalité passe par les acteurs non officiels pour accéder à un terrain qu’elle néglige pourtant.
“shelters”65), that mafia-like systems began to develop: land grabbing, redistribution of plots by selling them or renting them out, attempts to gain the advantages of NGOs, etc.

Some organised themselves into associations in order to manage the area via an “official” representative body having understood the opportunity that the site represented. This trend of establishing groups, which rapidly took the form of « committees », had two types of motivation: ensuring personal survival and gaining access to power and preventing the area from being too disorganized by regulating the influx of people and their organisation66.

Canaan III is now very urbanized. Even though the houses vary, with some masonry houses and others made out of sheet metal and tarpaulins, the people occupy the site as if in a new neighbourhood. The people drawn to Canaan appear to be essentially people who were displaced by the earthquake, but also people from the poorest neighbourhoods. What is more, as there was very little aid provided in Canaan, we can assume that there was no pull factor in this area, contrary to other camps situated in cities where humanitarian aid may have attracted certain people67.

The Mosaïque camp was one of the hundreds of spontaneous camps created on the night of the earthquake. Located at Delmas 30a, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood whose houses had collapsed gathered on this piece of waste ground. Having been brought together by a disaster, without knowing each other previously, the inhabitants of Cité Mosaïque organized themselves so that they had shared toilets, a water point, etc. Solidarity born of necessity.

In a silent consensus, the displaced persons accepted to be represented by one of their number: this individual, who was well-educated and had himself lost his house, was accepted due to his ability to organize relations with the NGOs and also because he had been “introduced” by a singer who was well known in the neighbourhood. On the basis of his moral standing and intellectual authority, the camp leader organized a “committee” made up of several people from the camp: this said, the members of the committee changed as people lost interest or left.

When the camp was cleared in April 2012, the inhabitants followed the leader. Pressure had mounted on the camp to the extent that several tents had been destroyed by “commandos” during the night in 2011. Threats from “landowners” had become more and more precise and violent. Relations within the camp were also deteriorating due to the large number of inhabitants which, despite attempts to organize the space, made living conditions difficult.

In 2012, the municipal council of Delmas offered 5000 gourdes (approx. 125 US dollars) for people to leave the camp. On 22 April, a group decided to move to Canaan, about which the leader had heard. Initially they set up camp at the top of a morne, where there was available space, but the camp was destroyed during the night by a “landowner”. The “public utility” area is not clearly marked out and the area that had been chosen was at the edge of the space, though previously unoccupied68. In the end they set up camp near the route Nationale where they had to

65 Un techo para mi pays, ACF (Action contre la faim), etc.
66 “We do not want Canaan to become a ghetto like other places” said a leader, “we are helping the state to decongest the city”. People are very conscious of the issues at stake in the area, with its advantages but also the dangers of its urbanisation.
67 This phenomenon is difficult to quantify and would require an in-depth study. Were people attracted to the camps from the provinces? Have rich people installed tents in the camps to benefit from international aid (ghost tents)? These seem to be marginal phenomena and, more than two years after the earthquake and faced with the gradual withdrawal of NGOs, only seem to concern the poorest people.
68 It is difficult to know who the land around camp Mosaïque belongs to: two “landowners” intimidate people who settle in the area, without presenting papers which validate what they say. But camp Mosaïque is situated very close to the first communal grave which was dug after the earthquake of 2010 and these graves were dug on state-owned land. Is this not a sign that this land had been completely abandoned before issues came along to encourage land ownership claims?
cooperate with the « presidential commission » which distributes land all over Canaan and takes 300 Haitian dollars per family for them to settle (1500 gourdes, or 35.5 dollars). This money was provided with the help of an American evangelical organisation who knew the leader and the singer (who had worked with them at religious events).

The leader rapidly organized the area with the help of the singer who is held in esteem by the people. The camp was situated on a site that had previously been a dump for medical waste and the land was covered with blood test tubes, syringes, etc., so the most dangerous waste was put into a pile and the area was fenced off with barbed wire. A church, which was not far away, was brought closer to the site. A "committee" (which does not really have a name) was re-established, made up of 12 people who live in the camp and wish to invest in it (it seems that anyone can be part of the committee). Within the committee, made up of both men and women, each person took on a specific role. One person looked after the micro credit project (which had problems developing because people did not repay their loans). Another person looked after supplying the camp with fish as they were located near the sea. To do this they hired a fisherman and bought a boat, with the help of the committee and money from the American organisation. Camp Mosaïque seems to reflect what Canaan was initially: the population settles in a hostile environment and tries to survive. Far away from everything and in very precarious conditions, the displaced nevertheless form a "community" in their daily efforts to survive together.

It should be noted that, though the leaders of the committees in Canaan III were hostile to aid if it was not well done in order to protect the community more effectively and carry out action to regulate and manage the area themselves, the context in Camp Mosaïque was different. As it is very isolated, the representatives are open to all possible aid and protection. This shows the complex diversity of the site, but also highlights the fact that, in all cases, people organize themselves and create social ties and means of survival despite everything, and notably, despite the environmental problems which exist (ecological damage, the impact of waste, the development of illnesses, storms and cyclones, etc.).

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The creation of Canaan is therefore the result of the pressure on land which is so prevalent in the Haitian capital, its implosion following the earthquake of January 2010 and its invasion after the declaration of "public utility". It has not been developed due to the installation of state infrastructure or NGO programmes, but through the ad hoc settlement of people looking for land (and hoping to own it), shelter (in a context of high population density) and stability ("everything is possible" and all hopes are permitted). It was therefore not a question of taking what NGOs were offering but of taking over the territory out of necessity and interest, with the instigation of endogenous land-grabbing systems which are the norm in Haiti (land redistribution systems, internal taxation, etc.). The occupation of land and its transformation into a living space takes place at both individual and collective levels. At the individual level, for example, there is the restoration and construction of houses in masonry, the creation, maintenance or improvement of small gardens, etc. At the collective level, there is the setting up of bodies to "represent" neighbourhoods, the creation of associations and committees which sometimes cover the whole of Canaan, the organisation of Canaan into zones which allows the area to be split up... This verticality of levels of responsibility, despite all the possible ways it can be diverted and despite all the different interests that actors implement, are remarkable and similar to an official structure which is missing in the area.

To summarise, Canaan can be seen as the "far west", where a few settlers came and organised the area. The scale of the phenomenon cannot be established clearly, for a variety of reasons: some people do not have papers and therefore "do not exist". Canaan is not always considered to be one entity (only the "public utility" area is taken into account even though the occupation of
land spills over its limits); certain “inhabitants” registered in Canaan do not live there, or only one person is registered (the others will join them when the shelter is viable). Nevertheless, an urban development plan carried out by SODADE$^{69}$ in 2012 that the UCLBP wants to use to develop the area show that the authorities are interested in Canaan. These plans and projects have not yet been made public but they show that the area is becoming a concern in terms of urban planning. In addition, estimates were made at the end of 2011 by the IOM that approximately 54 045 people were living on a particular area of Canaan (including only Canaan III, IV, V, Jerusalem and Onaville$^{70}$).

All the organisations which have emerged in Canaan have created a very dynamic environment which brings structure to the area, which has otherwise been “forgotten” by the state. Thus, the informal sector has effectively taken over from the formal sector. Within two years, this previously deserted and marginal area has become a place which draws people and where there are opportunities. The displaced have re-inhabited the desert and planted trees as they have settled. Canaan now functions as a complete entity, and even if life there is still based on getting by from day to day (as is the case everywhere in Haiti), and though there are specific problems and uncertainties related to the area (particularly the lack of clarity about the government’s view of Canaan for the future), Canaan has nevertheless, become a new neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince. Thus, even though the “common good does not exist” in Haiti, the appropriation of land, the settlement and the organisation of displaced people in Canaan represents collective action. Indeed, the invasion of the land in Canaan reflects a spirit of initiative and should be considered a way of reducing the demographic pressure on the congested urban centre and an opportunity to gradually create small businesses (fabrication of concrete blocks, car repairs, tailors, launderettes, etc.) [...] The scale and nature of the activities carried out at the community level is impressive$^{71}$.

Annexe 2: Sol, sabotay, konbit and escouade: economic exchange as the basis of solidarity

Sol is a traditional system, similar to African “tontines”$^{72}$, which give access to both savings and credit, in a solidarity network where everyone is committed: which makes it possible to limit the risks of economic monopolization.

This system brings together a certain number of individuals who are often concerned with the same problems, which allows them to meet and agree on the amount to give for the circulation of money, the duration, the order of stakeholders, etc. It principally involves people with small businesses. Once a week (or every fortnight, or month), each person deposits a certain sum of money with a member of the sol. In this way, one person, who changes each week for another person in the association (this is referred to as giving the person “the hand”), receives a large amount of money at the end of the week, which allows them to invest if they need to. By going round, the initial collective sum becomes a saving and personal loans are made interest-free. This system allows the members to get relatively large sums of money, using an informal system,

$^{69}$ Société d’aménagement et de développement (Planning and Development Company).

$^{70}$ These estimates were made on 23 August 2012 for an area defined on the basis of the Préval decree. The census counted: 36010 people in Canaan for 7203 households (sectors are not considered individually), 14605 people in Jerusalem for 2921 households, 3430 people in Onaville for 1004 foyers. In addition, the two Corail are accounted for (probably more precisely, because people are fixed there by the formal camp structure: that is 5035 people for 1187 households in Corail Cesselesse (sector 4) and 3974 people for 927 households in Corail sector 3. OIM : figures from August 2012 provided thanks to the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). This is a monitoring tool used by the cluster E-shelter and CCTM for camp management and coordination.

$^{71}$ Ian Davis, What is the Vision for Shelter and Housing in Haiti ? Summary Observations of Reconstruction Progress following the Haiti Earthquake of 12 January 2010, Summary document, UNHabitat, November 2011, p6.

$^{72}$ This is known as “tontine rotative” as the money circulates, or “soussou” in Martinique and “lotri” in Guadeloupe.
and making it possible to avoid having to go to the banks for a loan, their criteria being too complicated and strict.

These financial circuits are autonomous and totally informal, and this kind of association is based on trust and the sharing of risks, even though an "accountant" ensures that each member deposits the expected amount and that no money is stolen. The sol is therefore based on a system where everyone controls everyone else in order to be able to monitor their own investment, which encourages a certain form of cohesion. This demands a certain moral investment and a sense of solidarity, even though each member commits themselves to a sol circuit to have a safety valve to fall back on in difficult times, or possibly for a particular investment (for example, to buy a fridge to sell cold drinks). Thus, an individual can gain access to "maman l'argent", which allows them to start an activity, without the constraints of a loan. This is often currently used in September to contribute to children's school fees.

"Sabotay" (or sabotage) works in the same way as the sol, but the association lasts for a very short time – a working day. The "sabotay", for which 10% interest is paid, highlights the extreme economic instability of Haitian families.

The konbit is a temporary association, which essentially lasts a day, between several workers in rural environments. Organised by a neighbor, this system brings together all those of able body to help mainly with an agricultural task in exchange for drinks, food and entertainment. This system has two advantages: firstly, it allows the work to be carried out in a shorter time, which is important in rural environments (for example, during harvests). And secondly, it allows the person who benefits from the konbit to increase in importance and prestige as they spend a lot of money on hospitality.

In contrast to konbit, which is a one-off event, the escouade is a rural mutual help system where work is rotated between the members. The members take turns each day on a different site, particularly during the harvests, in order to meet the challenge set by the climate. The activity is continuous and is evidence of a solidarity system. The notion of prestige for the person who receives the escouade is less important than for the konbit, and the economic risk is smaller.

**Annexe 3 : People met during the field study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.8.2012 and throughout the stay in Canaan III</td>
<td>Jean Rodrigue</td>
<td>General coordinator of the CDCSC, President of the football championship committee (association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.8.2012 and throughout the stay in Camp Cité Mosaïque</td>
<td>William Louissaint</td>
<td>Head of Camp Mosaïque committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.8.2012 Delmas</td>
<td>Sandra Jean-Gilles</td>
<td>Coordinator of the initiative for adolescent girls in Haiti, World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.8.2012 Oxfam Quebec</td>
<td>Tony Joseph</td>
<td>Head of advocacy and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.8.2012 URD</td>
<td>Annalisa Lombardo</td>
<td>Independent consultant with Oxfam GB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.8.2012</td>
<td>Vincent Grammont</td>
<td>Advisor in Social Mobilisation, UNHabitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.8.2012</td>
<td>Geraldy Nogar</td>
<td>Head of capacity building, Solidarités</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
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<td>29.8.2012</td>
<td>Solidarités International</td>
<td>Eléonore Labattut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant architect for Solidarités International</td>
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<td>29.8.2012</td>
<td>UCLBP</td>
<td>Odnell David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>UCLBP Architectural Engineer</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.8.2012</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Ali Alwahti</td>
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<td>Projet national de développement communautaire participatif en milieu urbain (PRODEPUR), World Bank</td>
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<td>31.8.2012</td>
<td>Mairie Croix-des-Bouquets</td>
<td>Carl Thélémaque</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mayor of Croix-des-Bouquets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.2012</td>
<td>URD</td>
<td>Hudson Michel</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Action Aid</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.9.2012</td>
<td>CCGBB</td>
<td>Orival Aurilus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-head of CCGBB</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.9.2012</td>
<td>URD</td>
<td>Lucie Cauet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Developer, Martissant Project, Fokal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9.2012</td>
<td>Ti Cajou</td>
<td>Staff of the psycho-social department of the former MdM dispensary, currently the dispensary of the Haitian Ministry of Health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9.2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>Laennec Hurbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociologist specialising in religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9.2012</td>
<td>Pétionville</td>
<td>Paul Émile Simon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Architect and Urban Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9.2012</td>
<td>Corail</td>
<td>Clotaire Louis</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Head of Corail Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.9.2012</td>
<td>Pétionville</td>
<td>Glenn Smucker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant Anthropologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21, 23, 28, 30 August, 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20 September, Canaan III</td>
<td>Several inhabitants of Canaan III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21, 23, 28, 30 August, 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20 September, Mosaique (Canaan)</td>
<td>Several inhabitants of Mosaique</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.9.2012</td>
<td>Ti Cajou (Carrefour)</td>
<td>Several inhabitants of Ti Cajou</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**People present at the workshop of 14 September 2012**

William Louissaint, Head of Camp Mosaïque Committee

Jean Rodrigue, General Coordinator of CDCSC, President of the football championship committee (association).

Giovanna Salome, CERI PhD student

Nolex Fontil, Head of Programme, Echo

Caroline Broudic, Coordinator of Haiti Observatory, Groupe URD

Blanche Renaudin, Environment Researcher, Groupe URD

Vincent Grammont, Social Mobilisation Advisor, UNHabitat
Annexe 4: Confidence in social relations and in institutions

Tableau 6
Confiance dans les rapports sociaux et dans les institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rapports sociaux et institutions</th>
<th>Modalités</th>
<th>Pourcentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confiance aux gens</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>28.1% (1670)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance entre gens du quartier</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>11.1% (1575)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance dans la société</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>16.6% (1528)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance dans l’État</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>27.2% (1609)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance dans les ONG</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>12.8% (1606)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance dans la MINUSTAH</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>11.9% (1615)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confiance dans l’Église</td>
<td>Beaucoup</td>
<td>68.4% (1632)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un peu</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pas du tout</td>
<td>15.6</td>
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</table>

Source: Charlier Doucet Rachelle, Gilles Alain, Regards sur la violence : Résultats d’enquête, 2012, p19
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- Observatoire national de la violence et de la criminalité (ONAVC): http://www.onavc.ueh.edu.ht/
- Observatoire Haïti du Groupe URD: http://www.urd.org/haiti
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The European Commission (ECHO)

DFID, Department for International Development

Irish Aid, Department of foreign Affairs