



Informal practices and social conflicts in the bus stations of Mvan and Foréké Dschang in Cameroon: an analysis of relational dynamics

BIEGUE SOP Vanessa*

PhD student in Sociology, University of Dschang Cameroon.

***Corresponding Author**
BIEGUE SOP Vanessa

PhD student in Sociology,
University of Dschang
Cameroon.

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Abstract: This study focuses on Informal practices and social conflicts in the Mvan and Foréké Dschang bus stations in Cameroon: an analysis of relational dynamics. The economic activities that develop in the bus stations are the main element responsible for the different relationships, interactions and construction of social relations between the different actors in the travel agencies. At first sight, these relationships are marked by collaboration, peaceful coexistence and collective efficiency, but in reality, they are linked to informal practices and rivalry of interests. While it's true that these activities contribute to the construction of social ties and the development of informal entrepreneurs, they are also the driving force behind a number of conflicts between the different strata involved. To carry out this study, we used qualitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews, observation and documentary research were used to collect data. The results reveal that these activities have "unexpected effects" unexpectedly as they are sources of conflict (verbal and physical aggression) between competitors and others, but this nevertheless contributes to the consolidation of social ties.

Keywords: Informal practices; social conflicts; bus stations; hidden solidarity; social cohesion; unexpected effects; social ties.

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Introduction

Travel agencies are places of high human concentrations that provide transport services interurban and interregional. These services are intended for people who travel for work, for visits, for health reasons, for business or for ceremonies. This is the case of Cameroonian bus stations where the dynamism of travel agencies comes from the culture of mobility of their populations. Indeed, bus stations as geographical spaces are places of production and reproduction of interactions, relationships that end up sedimenting over time to the point of becoming normal. These interactions are of several orders: power relations, domination relations, control relations, ... The choice made on the bus stations of Mvan and that of Foréké Dschang is explained by their strategic importance, their diversity of informal practices, their contrasting relational dynamics between urban and rural environments, and their potential to analyze social conflicts in varied socio-economic contexts. This work provides a more global understanding of the dynamics of social relations in bus stations.

The objective of this article is to understand the conflict dynamics in the bus stations of Mvan and Foréké Dschang, between informal practices and social organization. Indeed, there are tensions and conflicts between the actors of informal activities,

which most often arise from the relationships mentioned above, which contributes to what S. Bulle, (2021) calls "the fragility of the social bond"¹. But the entrepreneurs of travel agencies being in a specific framework develop solidarity mechanisms which are built around their activities.

These reports are analyzed in light of the qualitative method and the writings of authors who have already addressed the issue of relationships and interactions between entrepreneurs, and the writings on bus stations. We used documentary research and qualitative research to exploit the life stories of the actors.

1. Methodology

The method used is the qualitative method. In qualitative, the tools used are: interviews, observation, focus groups, etc. Indeed, it is the research that produces and analyzes descriptive data, such as written or spoken words and the observable behavior of people (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). It is a research method that focuses on the meaning and observation of a social phenomenon in a natural environment. It deals with data that are difficult to

¹This concept is taken from the book "sociology of conflict" by Bulle, S., co-written with Tarragoni, F., where they show how conflict allows societies to change over time.

quantify. It does not reject figures or statistics but simply does not give them too much importance. All research must be rooted in "rich" descriptions; each theoretical proposition must be rooted in observations (DK Schneider, 2007)

This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the conflict dynamics of bus station stakeholders. Indeed, this method highlights the meaning that stakeholders give to their actions and interactions in an environment marked by informality. To do this, we explored the following themes: solidarity mechanisms and sources of tension between stakeholders, with informal entrepreneurs with diverse profiles, including 31 at the Mvan bus station and 40 at the Dschang bus station. We also conducted interviews with staff from urban communities responsible for these spaces.

The choice of actors was made through the convenience sampling technique due to the difficulty of identifying the target population before the field phase. In order to have good information, we went to travel agencies to meet the actors in their workspace, as well as in the urban communities responsible for the management of these bus stations.

After transcribing the recordings from the interviews, we used content analysis in its empirical-inductive variant which aims at an understanding of individual and social phenomena. To do this, we constructed the different information necessary for the understanding of our theme in order to confirm and/or refute our hypotheses.

The documentary research made it possible to compile the literature review.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presents the literature review which consists of the interactions between informal entrepreneurs and the management challenges and socio-economic impacts of bus stations on their environment.

2.1. Interactions between entrepreneurs

R. Tefe Tagne in his article notes that in the working relationships between the different actors, a central concept comes up in the interactions, that of "association"² which translates a privileged relationship between these actors. For him, the term "Asso" or associate translates the relationships of trust and intervenes here as a revealed dimension of the market routine. He shows how the actors through this expression live a perfect collaboration.

Along the same lines, I. Alioum presents the interactions between motorcycle taxis in Cameroon in general and in Yaoundé and Douala in particular as a form of "solidarity network". Indeed, they are organized through structures such as the national union organization of motorcycle taxi transporters in Cameroon. The author describes this solidarity as "blind", because there is a form of support between these actors in the face of daily difficulties, the police, and their main competitors ("taxi men"). After study, he notes that there are few motorcycle taxi men in the city of Yaoundé who are not part of solidarity mutuals outside of their activities.

According to Mr. Madoui, (2007, p302)³, "the search for social recognition, the acquisition of social status, the need for sociability and social cohesion, the maintenance and strengthening of social ties" are the primary motivations of some entrepreneurs. For him, belonging to the same community allows the strengthening of this "feeling of trust and community solidarity", to the extent that they "are not motivated a priori by material or economic considerations, but aim at the construction and strengthening of strong or weak social ties of a non-economic nature, even if in reality, people also come there to "do business" ...". He shows by this that between economic operators, there is always an economic and personal interest under appearances.

All these authors mainly value the positive aspects of social motivations (recognition, solidarity, cohesion), without exploring the tensions or conflicts that can also emerge in community interactions. This article, by studying bus stations, shows the diversity of interactions in these places considered to be "informal spaces".

Ngouyamsa, et al. (2019), present the relationships between entrepreneurs, agency managers and agency drivers as partnerships. They distinguish two types between "bus pharmacists" and travel agency managers, which are formal and informal. Regarding the "formal contract", "the sellers sign a written agreement for a renewable period of one year", regarding informal agreements, they put the agency manager, who has room for maneuver, in contact with the seller and the bus driver. This type of agreement is reserved for solo entrepreneurs.

This article focuses on partnership relationships, but it does not address the tensions or conflicts that can emerge in these interactions. This article, instead, explores the conflict dynamics that are essential for understanding social relations in spaces such as bus stations. Some studies challenge this hypothesis according to which relationships between entrepreneurs are like "a quiet river".

Indeed, V. Fofana et al., in their study on the "Solidarity networks and development of the informal women's sector in Côte d'Ivoire", first demonstrate how through "forms of collective solidarity or social networks", women's informal activities develop to a significant level thanks to systems of mutual aid and support. In short, these solidarity networks "make the productive activities of informal operators more efficient". Subsequently, they show that "Although they are relatively effective in supporting the activities of their members, social networks are not immune to tensions". They distinguish several forms of conflict within these networks, the most visible of which is that linked to leadership which precedes that linked to the management of funds. With a percentage of 77.5% of confirmation of conflict situations.

They focus exclusively on women's networks in the informal sector, which limits the scope of their analysis to a gender-based perspective. This thesis includes a diversity of actors (men and women, youth) in a specific setting (bus stations), allowing a more global analysis of interactions and tensions.

More radically, A. Toure (1986), in investigating small trades in Abidjan, describes the relationships as all conflictual while noting the creative imagination of individuals in times of

²The term "Asso" is a term which designates in the jargon of commercial exchanges the affinity, the trust and the loyalty between commercial partners, traders and customers...

³Mr. Madoui investigates small entrepreneurs from Maghreb immigration, and shows through Granovetter's network theory how these immigrants need to build links with their more experienced colleagues, to obtain information, work, and more.

somewhat difficult economic conditions. This means that the actors of informal activities in the exercise of their profession are in perpetual competition with their colleagues.

2.2. Management challenges and socio-economic impacts of bus stations on their environment

G., Fouthe Wouintchoua et al., (2020), in assessing the "environmental and socio-economic impacts of the main bus station in Yaoundé" come to the conclusion that despite its role in reducing unemployment and developing the locality, "the activities carried out there, the current state of its operation and management contributes significantly to the deterioration of the quality of the environment and the health of its assets and its local population" Because this environment is marked by insalubrity.

Aba Nkasse, A., et al, (2024), in proposing a sustainable redevelopment of the Dschang bus station, conclude after surveys of users of the said station that insalubrity is one of the problems affecting the environment and the stakeholders.

Although these authors highlight the problem of unsanitary conditions in bus stations, they do not analyse its effects on the dynamics of the conflictual relationships discussed in this article.

While many authors recognize the increasingly conflictual nature of relationships between entrepreneurs in the informal labor market for some, and for others the consequences of informal activities on the environment and human health, few research studies are focused primarily on the conflictual dynamics that result from the problem of structuring and regulating interactions in an informal economic space. This study focuses on conflictual dynamics in the context of the Mvan and Foréké Dschang bus stations.

3. Search results

The results of this study show that there are a variety of relationships that are built around the economic activities of the Mvan and Foréké Dschang bus stations. They involve both entrepreneurs and agents of urban communities responsible for the management of these spaces.

3.1. Types of relationships between the different actors

Several actors intervene in informal activities around travel agencies apart from entrepreneurs. These actors are agency managers, agents of urban communities responsible for bus stations and customers. The latter being in permanent contact with entrepreneurs, have specific relationships with them. This article is structured around the conflicting relationships that exist between the different actors (mainly entrepreneurs and agents of urban communities) whose work environment is the travel agencies of Mvan and Dschang.

3.1.1. Relationships maintained between entrepreneurs.

The actors around travel agencies interact on a daily basis as part of their activities. After approaching these actors, we identified several types of relationships maintained by the actors depending on the situations. The multiplicity of interviews allowed us to identify these different relationships which are structured around economic activities.

According to the interviews, there is a diversity of relationships between entrepreneurs. These relationships most often depend on the circumstances in which the actors find

themselves on a daily basis. According to the data obtained in the field, we distinguish two types of relationships: harmony, and conflicts arising from competition. But these relationships, as we have mentioned, depend on the situations in which they are confronted all day long. In this work, we focus on relationships structured around conflicts.

3.1.1.1. Rivalry between entrepreneurs: unfair competition

Rivalry between entrepreneurs around travel agencies in Mvan and Dschang is a common phenomenon, fueled by the search for profits in a highly competitive economic space. In these areas, income opportunities attract a large number of economic actors, specifically in the Mvan bus station, which intensifies competition, often to the detriment of fair business practices. Unfair competition, in particular, emerges as a striking form of rivalry, shaping relationships between actors while exacerbating social tensions.

These unfair competition practices manifest themselves in various ways. Some entrepreneurs resort to certain strategies, such as underestimating prices to attract customers, even if this compromises their profit margins. This is generally seen among the fresh food sellers at the Dschang bus station who are keen to sell off their stock before it decomposes. Following the same path, traders sell certain products at the purchase price, to resell others at double or even more than the normal value, which is detrimental to some of their colleagues who are absolutely determined to have a profit margin on each product. This is the case of a seller of jewelry and beauty accessories who expresses it in these terms: "sometimes when the market is hard, I can sell even this perfume at the purchase price, or even I sell to lose when I really need money, sometimes on Sunday like that for the meeting, but I know that I can sell even a jewelry like that I have 200 or 300% profit another day, it completes what I lost, but it depends on the customer you have in front of you"⁴(trader owning a perfume/jewelry/beauty accessories and bag store, 36 years old, West, PLEG teacher, Mvan bus station, 2020). This trader demonstrates a strategy where he adapts his prices according to demand and immediate economic conditions. This reflects an economic resilience where priority is given to survival rather than to optimizing profits. It is also not uncommon to see some traders divert customers by using flattery or promises.

All this affects the relationships between entrepreneurs, but, in a spirit of solidarity, it is common for an entrepreneur to temporarily sell another's products in his absence or to exchange goods or services based on mutual trust. However, unfair competition creates tensions that deteriorate this relationship. For example, when an entrepreneur sells a colleague's product and does not return the full amount, or a customer has been embezzled, this can lead to open conflicts. A trader confirms this by saying: "Because of things like that there are often problems, for example a neighbor had sold her neighbor's merchandise when she was not

⁴This story highlights several characteristics of the informal sector: Remarkable economic flexibility and adaptability to market constraints. Intuitive but effective management of profit margins to ensure the sustainability of activities. Constant interaction between social and economic dynamics, where human relations play a central role. These elements reflect the resilience of informal entrepreneurs, but also the challenges they face in an environment where formal structures are difficult to access.

there as soon as she arrives she gives her the money but it was not all the other neighbor who was there when the lady there was selling betrayed mama, it was hot here the problems but afterwards they resolved "⁵(bag seller, 28 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station, 2020). The betrayal perceived in this story could weaken the trust between the parties concerned and, by extension, the balance of the group.

These tensions often result in mutual accusations, verbal and sometimes physical violence, partnership breakdowns or mistrust between the actors. More generally, unfair competition contributes to a climate of instability in these areas, where solidarity between entrepreneurs tends to weaken. In this context, the concepts of solidarity or competition take shape through constant negotiations and relational adjustments (.

This unfair competition, although it may seem advantageous to some in the short term, has negative effects on others. It affects the viability of certain activities in the long term. In addition, it can lead to the exclusion of the least competitive entrepreneurs, reinforcing inequalities within these bus stations. This rivalry goes beyond competition; it is sometimes linked to the occupation of economic space.

3.1.1.2. Tensions related to the occupation of space

In areas with strong socio-economic dynamics such as travel agencies, the occupation of space is a major issue, often the source of tensions between the different economic players. These spaces, although strategically located to attract a varied clientele, are generally limited in terms of reception capacity. This restriction, combined with a lack of structuring, fuels conflicts over access to and control of these places, which are essential to the survival of economic activities.

Tensions related to the occupation of space manifest themselves in various forms. On the one hand, disputes break out between entrepreneurs over the allocation or maintenance of points of sale or services deemed strategic, such as the immediate surroundings of travel agencies or busy passages, or the taking over of a space to the detriment of another actor. They also manifest themselves among entrepreneurs who use their notoriety to dislodge their colleagues. To illustrate this point, a trader says "I looked everywhere for space, I didn't see [...], I had difficulties, I was up there, a man chased me away, I was selling the same thing as him" (woman selling various products, 28 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station). On the other hand, these tensions sometimes pit traders against local authorities or landowners, when the latter try to limit or reorganize the occupation of the premises.

In some cases, these tensions turn into open conflicts, marked by verbal or physical altercations, mutual denunciations, or even forced evictions like that of the young woman mentioned

above. "Small" traders, especially those who sell on stalls, are often the most vulnerable, because they rarely have the financial means or the connections needed to secure their space. In this regard, a fresh food seller says this: "I am outside [...] So it is really difficult to find a place, often you come in the morning that your place has been taken so the problems start, we argue like when someone takes the other's customer or when jealousies arise, it is very difficult to have a place here"⁶, (fresh food vendor, 35, Dschang bus station). This vendor highlights the scarcity of available spaces, a common phenomenon in busy travel agencies, where demand for spaces often exceeds supply. The fact that "you often come in the morning that we have taken your place" highlights a lack of mechanisms for regulating or clearly allocating spaces, which creates an environment conducive to conflict. The expression "we argue" illustrates how competition for spaces can lead to interpersonal tensions.

Several factors contribute to the emergence of these tensions:

- **Lack of organization:** The absence of clear rules governing the occupation of public spaces encourages anarchic appropriations and conflicts over the legitimacy of this occupation.
- **Demographic pressure:** The constant influx of new economic players, attracted by the commercial potential of bus stations, increases competition for already saturated spaces.
- **Economic and social power differences:** Economically more powerful actors, with financial means or connections with the authorities, often manage to monopolize the most advantageous locations, marginalizing small traders.⁷.

Tensions related to the occupation of space have a significant impact on relations between actors. In a context where solidarity could be a lever to overcome common challenges, these conflicts fragment economic communities and fuel mistrust. In addition, these tensions contribute to reinforcing inequalities between informal actors.

They directly impact local economic dynamics. They can slow down productivity and business expansion, especially when stakeholders spend more time managing conflicts than developing their businesses. In addition, an unstable or poorly organized commercial space reduces the attractiveness of the areas concerned for customers, thus affecting all economic stakeholders.

The occupation of space around travel agencies remains a crucial issue in the balance between the different actors. However, the solutions remain fragile, because they depend largely on the goodwill of the parties involved and the stability of social relations. In a context of strong competition, agreements can quickly be called into question.

⁵This incident highlights the central role of social relations in these environments. Sustainable understanding requires mutual cooperation, but also clear boundaries to avoid misunderstandings. When these implicit rules are broken, conflict can become a threat to social cohesion.

The fact that "the problems were hot here" shows how these tensions can be acute and affect the whole group. However, the ability of the actresses to "resolve" the conflict testifies to an informal mechanism for managing disputes, based on discussions or community interventions. This reflects a form of social governance specific to the informal sector, where the actors themselves play the role of mediators.

⁶This testimony illustrates the major challenges faced by actors in the informal economy, particularly in terms of regulation, competition and stress related to their environment. It also highlights the need for strategic interventions to promote a more harmonious and productive climate.

⁷In the Mvan bus station, for example, particularly at the Satellite and Galaxie travel agencies, the coexistence of several landowners helps to maintain the presence of small traders. If the space belonged to a single owner or a single entity, these traders would risk being relocated in favor of the agencies, which would seek to expand their infrastructure.

3.1.1.3. Underlying competition

Even in a collaborative context, competition remains omnipresent, which can hinder the emergence of sustainable partnerships. This competition can arise from feelings of jealousy, as some actors point out: "Here we get along very well, the only problem we have here is jealousy, like he does in the juice and I'm already starting to sell juices too, he's jealous because of the sales, the little jealousies but we don't tell you, you just notice, the gestures, the way you talk to him, he responds strangely" (Male, seller of various products, 27 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station); "The jealousies of other sellers, otherwise there's no problem" (woman seller of fresh food, 28 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station); "We understand that there are little jealousies like I sold more than you, I haven't sold anything since morning unlike you, there are little conflicts depending on the moods of each person." (Phone accessories seller, 25 years old, Bamiléké, Mvan bus station).

The jealousy referred to arises directly from competition between actors sharing similar activities. The expression "as he does in the juice and I too am already starting to sell juices" illustrates how the entry of a new competitor can be perceived as a threat to the market share or profit opportunities of an already established actor. These tensions are frequent in economic environments where resources and customers are sometimes limited.⁸ Although sellers coexist and share a common space, "petty jealousies" harm collective harmony. These resentments can affect daily interactions and create an environment less conducive to solidarity and mutual assistance.

Expressions such as "we don't tell you, you just notice" and "he responds strangely" reflect conflicts that are often not verbalized. These implicit tensions can harm cooperation and conviviality, but they often remain underlying, preventing direct and clear management of disputes.

In other cases, some entrepreneurs see the bus station as a battlefield, as several of them confirm: "[...] here it's a beating, the strongest in spirit win, I'm not easy myself, because if you stay there they come and beat you up. see you act like a moumou⁹, we will pick you up, so you must also be a delinquent." (Seller of small food products in a kiosk in one of the Bucca travel agencies in Mvan, 47 years old); "this is a shooting range, when things are not going well..." (Seller of fresh food, 32 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station). Or again "The bus station is the gang of disorders, so I cannot advise anyone to come and sell here" (seller of fresh food, 35 years old, Bamiléké, Dschang bus station).

These stories reveal a conflictual and competitive atmosphere in the bus station, marked by a strong rivalry between the actors. Expressions such as "la bastonnade" and "le gang des désordres" describe an environment where verbal and sometimes physical confrontation seems to be a means of economic survival and affirmation.

⁸As is sometimes the case at the Dschang bus station, where Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are often characterized by low traffic.

⁹This term is generally used to refer to a mute person, but in this context it would refer to a person who, far from being mute, is very calm and does not use verbal or physical violence to defend themselves in certain uncomfortable situations.

This dynamic also highlights the psychological pressure on the actors; to succeed, one must adopt a posture of "strength of mind" and sometimes an aggressive attitude, under penalty of being marginalized or exploited. Furthermore, the term "firing range" reflects the instability and unpredictability of this economic space, where tensions can arise at any time.

Finally, the refusal to recommend this space to others reflects a disillusionment with the structural difficulties of the bus station, while highlighting a lack of formal regulation to prevent disorders. This situation fuels a vicious circle where extreme competition harms social cohesion and the development of actors, thus impacting on local economic dynamics. These relationships are not limited only between entrepreneurs, but also between them and the authorities of the local community.

3.1.2. Relations between entrepreneurs and local community authorities

The bus stations of Mvan and Dschang, strategic spaces in the dynamics of informal economic activities, constitute places of complex interactions between informal entrepreneurs and local authorities. These spaces, historically belonging to the indigenous people and the urban community respectively, are subject to rental relationships that involve both travel agencies and certain informal entrepreneurs operating on the periphery of these. These rental arrangements, often marked by informal regulation, shape the nature of the relationships between these actors and the local authorities, who position themselves as guarantors of the overall management of the space.

Local authorities play a central role in organizing and regulating these spaces through mechanisms such as controlling economic activities and maintaining order. However, the informal nature of many economic activities generates tensions but also occasional collaborations between entrepreneurs and these local governance bodies. These relationships oscillate between interactions marked by administrative constraints, pragmatic negotiations, and conflicts related to the collection of certain taxes or the sharing of spatial resources.

3.1.2.1. Tax reports

Tax relations between informal entrepreneurs and local authorities in the Mvan and Dschang bus stations are based on the collection of taxes and fees related to the operation of economic spaces and activities. These interactions are part of a logic of financial regulation, aimed at integrating informal activities into the financing mechanisms of local authorities. However, they reveal often ambiguous dynamics, where the formality of tax requirements comes into tension with the informality of activities. Taxation is therefore not exempt from tensions between actors fueled by:

- **Irregularity of payments:** Some entrepreneurs, due to unstable income, struggle to pay taxes on time, which can lead to sanctions such as the temporary closure of their spaces or the seizure of goods.
- **The perception of injustice:** Some entrepreneurs consider the taxes to be disproportionate to the services provided by the authorities (maintenance of premises, security, etc.). These frustrations can lead to conflicts. Indeed, each entrepreneur must pay hygiene and sanitation taxes, but their environment does not always justify these payments. The following photos show the environment of the Mvan bus station.

Photos 1: presentation of the unsanitary state of the Mvan bus station**Source: field data**

These photos show the environment of the Mvan bus station, which despite the collection of the hygiene and sanitation tax, remains unsanitary. This situation is one of the justifications for the tensions between informal entrepreneurs and local authorities. Because these entrepreneurs sometimes consider that the infrastructure does not meet their needs, particularly in terms of cleanliness or safety, which reduces their willingness to pay taxes. The problem of unsanitary conditions is one of the problems affecting the environment of travel agencies. Indeed, the economic activities around travel agencies drag with them a considerable amount of garbage that is not always managed by traders and maintenance workers, which is also due to the incivility of users of the bus station.

3.1.2.2. Conflicts over space management

Disagreements over the occupation of space are also a central element of conflictual relationships. Municipal authorities often try to reorganize or delimit commercial spaces, sometimes unilaterally, without consulting entrepreneurs. This redistribution of spaces or the removal of locations deemed strategic by entrepreneurs creates tensions, because the latter see their operating conditions called into question, which can have a direct impact on their income. These conflicts related to the occupation of space are exacerbated when municipal authorities use coercive methods to impose new rules without taking into account the reality on the ground. This trader denounces it in these terms: "they ask us to leave but do not say where we will go so we are forced to leave and come back, so the conflict with the town hall agents arises because they chase us away without showing us where we are going to go." (Male, 25 years old, seller of various products, Bamiléké, Mvan bus station).

This statement highlights a recurring conflict between informal traders and local authorities, particularly town hall officials. Vendors complain about pressure to leave certain spaces, without being offered alternatives or replacement areas. This situation creates frustration and dismay, as traders find themselves in uncertainty, forced to leave and return without knowing where to settle. The lack of concrete solutions and the way local authorities operate fuel tensions and conflicts, exacerbated by a feeling of injustice and marginalization of vendors. But in all this atmosphere, the actors are still trying to better organize and maintain stability in these spaces.

3.2 Regulatory mechanisms

Faced with these challenges, economic actors often resort to informal regulatory mechanisms to manage these tensions. Informal governance plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts related to unfair competition. Business associations or simple groups intervene to manage disputes, establish implicit limits and encourage fairer business practices. Let us take for example the group of fresh food sellers and that of illegal drivers at the Dschang bus station who establish strict rules for conflict management. The following photo shows the regulations of the group of drivers at the Dschang bus station.

**Source: field data**

This photo, although not very legible, shows the table summarizing the offenses and the sanctions relating to them, of the members of the association of the group of drivers of the Dschang bus station. Thus, looking more closely, we see that the registration numbers of the vehicles are mentioned, some already crossed out to indicate that the fine has already been paid. As we can see, it is always paid with drink. The first column shows the members of the internal association of the group, the second shows the people sanctioned with a drink fine, and the last shows the drivers who committed the offense of soliciting with the precise dates and times.

As for the grouping of fresh food sellers, there are also rules to follow under penalty of being sanctioned. These informal regulation mechanisms are put in place to limit tensions. In addition, in the Mvan bus station, there is a police station responsible for maintaining order within the station. But all this is often ineffective, leaving room for tacit arrangements, based on mutual respect which contribute to social cohesion.

The collaboration between entrepreneurs around travel agencies therefore illustrates the importance of solidarity networks in informal economic environments. These interactions, although ephemeral or contextual, play a determining role in the survival of the actors and the stability of the activities in these strategic spaces.

4. Discussion

These results present four elements around which the conflicting relationships between the actors in travel agencies are structured. These include, among others, commercial competition which is linked to the quest for customers, jealousy (which goes hand in hand with gossip), finances (loans, product prices, retention of earnings of a colleague, etc.), and healthiness (with regard to the entrepreneurs established in the agencies and their managers).

The notion of competition, says political economy, is "the soul of commerce. It confronts, in fact, supply and demand and therefore seems the surest way to bring about a healthy balance of prices; but this is, of course, on the condition that it is exercised freely between competitors whose strengths are not too unequal."¹⁰

In this work, it is a source of conflicts between stakeholders. Conflicts are part of all life in society: labor conflicts, family conflicts, political conflicts, social conflicts. The latter are tensions between members of a society, between social actors. The French sociologist A. Touraine defines them as an "antagonistic relationship between two or more units of action, at least one of which tends to dominate the social field of their relationships." Conflicts result from differences in social positions, interests, values, and points of view between social actors. For the sociologist, they are a revealer of social organization. Sociology is interested in the causes of conflicts, their internal dynamics or their effects. Some conflicts lead to ruptures in the social bond, but they can also play the role of regulator.

In the case of entrepreneurs around travel agencies, it is about labor conflicts. They discuss customers among themselves and only one person retains the customer. It is perhaps through the same situation observed in Ivory Coast that A. Toure, qualifies the relations between the actors of the informal sector as all conflictual. The actors of the economic activities around travel agencies are in a field where each one puts his interests before those of the group. Regardless of the multiplicity of associative bases, when it comes to having more customers in order to sell more goods, each one manages in his own way to achieve it and this is not always done fairly. This competition most often leads to feelings of jealousy.

According to F. Minner, "Jealousy is often perceived as an emotion having as its object the relationships of proximity (love, friendship, siblings etc.)". However, it can in certain cases and circumstances relate to the different goods (wealth, prestige,

reputation, privilege, material goods). In the case of informal activities around travel agencies, jealousy can have as its object the privilege linked to the location, to the interpersonal relations of certain entrepreneurs. And above all, it is the result of the success of certain traders. The competitor who is successful is very often a huge factor of frustration for others who work in the same field of activity. It depends either on the ability of certain traders to have the clientele, or on the speed at which the activities of some develop. It manifests itself through slander and deviations in behavior towards the target person. But it does not prevent financial transactions between the different actors.

The meaning that we give to the term financial transactions in this work is summarized in loans, marketing of its products and sometimes those of its colleagues at an inappropriate price in order to sell the goods on time with regard to fresh food and tubers that have a relatively short expiration date. This results in a loss of earnings and sometimes for the "small" entrepreneurs a decrease in economic capital. Which justifies certain conflict situations between the protagonists.

Being in a social space made up of individuals shaped in different socialization structures (families, schools, peer groups, etc.), opinions, ways of thinking and acting can diverge, which most often creates conflicts between individuals who do not necessarily understand each other.

In fine, Unsanitary conditions are one of the elements around which conflicting relationships are built between the actors. Given the precariousness of economic activities around travel agencies, the risks to safety, health, and the environment are obvious at this level. The observation is that the waste resulting from these activities pollutes the environment, making traders, passengers, and local populations uncomfortable. This is why the lack of cleanliness is one of the causes of conflicts between entrepreneurs and local authorities.

The determinants of the construction of relationships between actors depend on the categories of actors and the situations that arise for them on a daily basis. They can be peaceful, but also conflicting depending on the circumstances. But it should be noted that measures are taken between entrepreneurs within their associative groups to resolve conflicts or even to amend the initiators of trouble.¹¹ But there are situations that cannot be resolved during the groupings of entrepreneurs, as proof, there are traders who were once friends, but have not spoken to each other for a long time. This is the case of the owner of a shop selling various products (telephones and accessories, men's and women's jewelry, etc.), who no longer communicates with his closest neighbor who turns out to be his older brother who shaped him in the trade at the Mvan bus station.

Bus stations, with all their dynamics, are spaces that predispose individuals to violence, whether verbal or physical.

¹¹This is mainly the grouping of clandestine transport drivers, and that of fresh food sellers, where any person responsible for a malfunction of the activities receives a mandatory sanction of up to a case of beer or more depending on the seriousness of the fault committed. It should be noted, however, that not everyone is integrated precisely because of the conflicts.

¹⁰Richard Bloch, *Contemporary Problems and Conflicts. Competition and Producer Groups*, 1929, Persée, PP 203-224

Conclusion

Economic activities have an influence on the dynamics of social relations. In the context of our work, all interactions are structured around these activities. They therefore have direct consequences in relationships with others. And these relationships are of several types depending on the circumstances. We have noted that there are conflicting relationships between competitors, as well as between entrepreneurs and agents of the urban community, but all these actors develop conflict management strategies for better functioning of activities. These activities therefore have consequences on the dynamics of social relations. They have "unexpected effects" to quote R. Bourdon, insofar as they often incite conflicts, but all this contributes at one level to the consolidation of social ties. In short, conflicts in bus stations, although they may seem destabilizing, fulfill essential functions in the structuring and regulation of social interactions. They are not only a reflection of economic tensions, but also of the processes of negotiation, domination, and collaboration that shape the informal organization of these spaces.

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