

Commercial Motorbikes and Intra-Urban Transport in Mbouda Town - West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract: - In Cameroon, before the civil unrest of the early 1990s that retarded economic activities and development in the whole country, urban transport was an absolute monopoly of township taxis. During the unrest, circulation of vehicles was prohibited by protesters and only bikes were permitted to circulate in towns. That was probably the unnoticed spark that developed into a new urban transport system. In Mbouda town, after the unrest, taxis resurfaced and functioned together with the motorbikes. As time went on, the competition became stiff and by the year 2000, taxis were very scarce in Mbouda. In 2010, the taxis had completely disappeared from the urban transport sector in Mbouda and gave way to commercial motorbikes. This study, therefore calls for the need to understand the stages of the evolution of the transport system in Mbouda. Equally, there is the need to understand the socio-economic impacts of the activity in the area. Primary and secondary data were used in the study and it was found out that the intra-urban transport sector in Mbouda slumbers in informality. The commercial motorbike riders function like outlaw citizens. The town thus needs a complete re-organisation of the sector, as well as the proper implementation of the laws and texts governing the activity.

Keywords: Commercial – Motorbikes- Urban – Transport- Mbouda -Cameroon

I. INTRODUCTION

In Cameroon, urban transport was formerly a monopoly of township taxis painted in yellow. A decline in organized public transport systems has led to rapid growth in non-conventional means of public transport, initially provided by minibuses and shared taxi/vans, and more recently by commercial motorbikes. With the absence of communal transport facilities and the poor urban transport systems, more adaptive modes of urban transport like the use of motorcycles became common in Buea town (Fombe and Balgah, 2012).

Commercial motorbikes came up as a transport system in Mbouda in the early 1990s when there was civil unrest in most towns of the country. The use of motorbikes for commercial transport ignited and later gained grounds just like in other parts of Cameroon. There is the need to attempt an understanding of the evolutionary stages of the activity in Mbouda urban area, the efforts carried out by the central and local governments in an attempt to regularize the sector, the challenges as well as the impact of the activity in the municipality. Therefore, the research questions of this study are: What are the trends of commercial motorbikes in Mbouda town? What efforts were carried out by the central and local governments in an attempt to regularize the sector? What are the problems faced by the sector and what impact does the transportation activity have on the local population?

1.1. General presentation of Mbouda

Geographically, Mbouda is located between latitude 5°31 and 5°82 degrees north of the equator and longitude 10° 11 and 10°20 degrees east of Greenwich meridian (figure 1). Mbouda, which is some 1410 m above sea level, is one of the main towns of the West Region of Cameroon. It is the headquarters of the Bamboutos Division. It was declared a town on the 30th December 1950 by Colonial Decree N° 634 (Council Development Plan (CDP) for Mbouda, 2011). The town is about 10 km² in size. It is located along the National Road N° 6 that links Bamenda and Bafoussam. It is some 28km from Bafoussam and 58km from Bamenda. Mbouda urban area is surrounded by the villages of Bamessingue (northward and northwestward), Babete (southward), Balatchi and Batcham (westward) and Bamendjinda (eastward). It had a population of about 50.000 inhabitants (BUCREP, 2005).

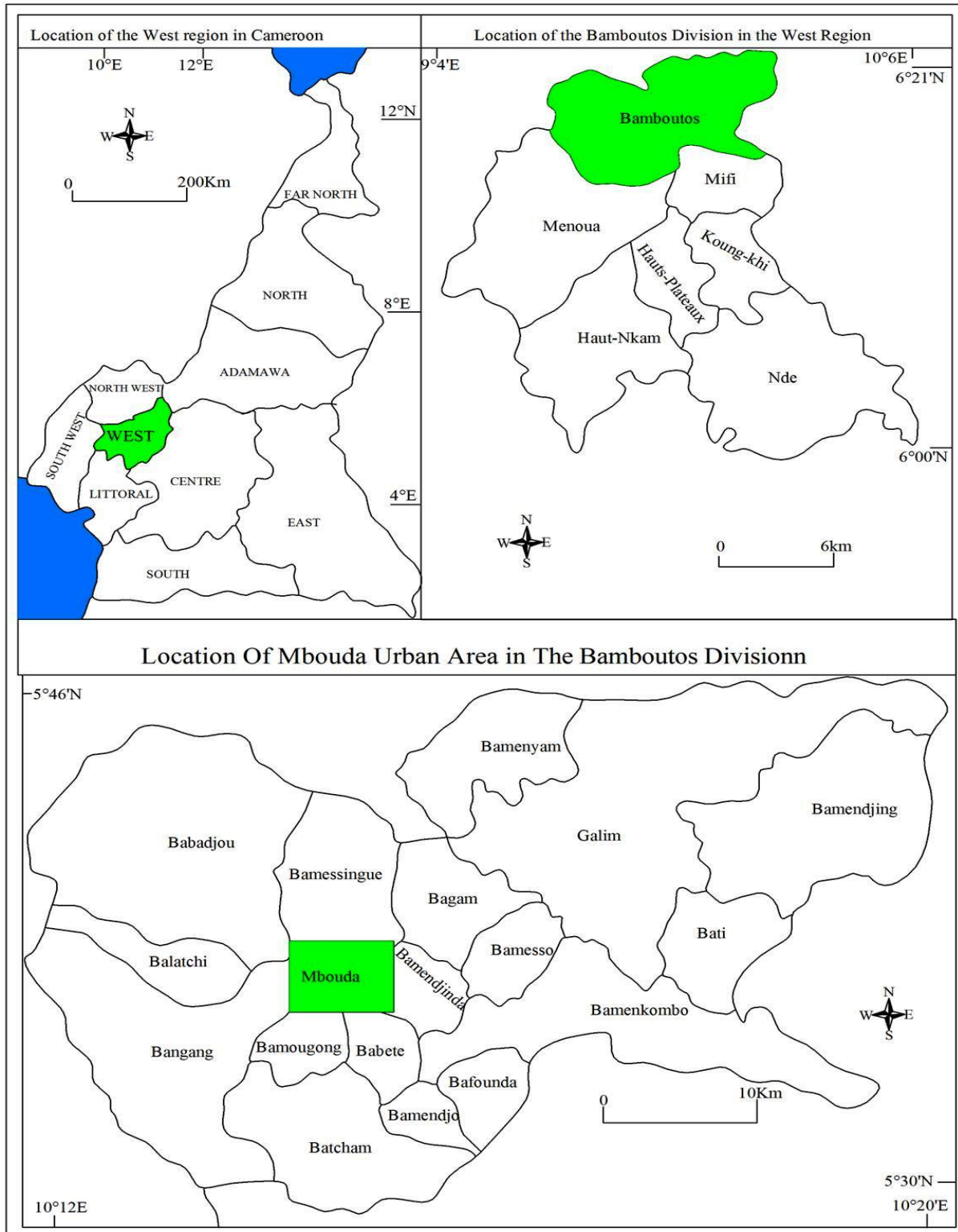


Figure 1: The relative location of Mbouda

Source: Mbouda Rural Council and field work, 2014

1.1.1. *The relief and watershed*

The topography of the town is undulating. Some areas are highlands meanwhile others are lowlands. Gentle and steep slopes are very common in the town. The regions of the town with uneven topography are not suitable for road construction, since it may entail extra cost. This therefore hinders transport development in the town. Runoffs after heavy downpours easily degrade the roads in sloppy areas especially the untarred ones.

Four main streams drain the town. They are: *Taametap*, *Lefok* (which has a fall), *Tsoumontchio* and *Fouolap*. They all flow in a west to east direction, into Rivers Noun and Mifi. They take their rise from Mt. Bamboutos (2740m). Given that the town has two seasons (rainy and dry), the discharge of these rivers vary in response to seasonal change. During heavy downpours, these streams, prominently the *Lefok* overflow their banks and cause damage to local facilities.

1.1.2. *Climate*

The climate of the area is the Sudano-Guinean type with two distinct characteristics: the long rainy season has a cold and refreshing weather while the short dry season of five months has a hot and aggressive weather. The annual average temperature of the town is about 20° centigrade with an annual rainfall amount of about 1800mm (CDP for Mbouda, 2011). The rainfall type here is mostly convectional. The climate of the town is influenced by the Mt. Bamboutos, the Bamendjin dam and the confluence of Rivers Noun and Mifi in Bamenkombo, a small village in Mbouda Sub Division (CDP for Mbouda, 2011).

1.1.3. *Soil types and Vegetation*

The soil types include brown clay soils and alluvial soils in some parts, feralitic and basaltic in other places as well as lateritic. They produce dust during the dry season and mud during the rainy season.

The area is found in the tropical rainforest zone, though there is a predominance of the savanna due mainly to deforestation and urbanization. The vegetation in the urban milieu is mostly artificial with raffia palm plants and food crops like maize and plantains. The trees include cypresses, eucalyptus and fruit trees like pear, mango, plum and guava.

1.1.4. *Population and Economic activities*

Mbouda is one of the most historic towns in the West region of Cameroon. Prominent economic activities in the town include agriculture, trade and transportation. The local people belong mostly to the Bamileke ethnic group, the Hausa, Mbororo and other tribes. The local people are very hardworking, enterprising and equally have a high fertility rate. Mobility in the town is done with vehicles, motorbikes and most importantly by foot (CDP for Mbouda, 2011).

Mbouda is a commercial town with a good number of economic activities. The economy of the town is powered by its strategic location, the entrepreneurial nature of the people, their solidarity and their dynamism. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of the town. The people commute on daily basis to neighbouring villages like *Ngouaya*, *Bati* and *Galim* for the cultivation of food crops like maize, beans, yams and plantains. Arabica coffee, tobacco, tubers, market gardening products and fruits are also cultivated. Trade here involves retail and wholesale and is highly in the domain of foodstuffs, textile, cosmetics, farm tools, automobile spare parts and repair as well as medicinal products. Tons of foodstuffs purchased from the markets in the neighbouring villages are transported from Mbouda to other major towns of Cameroon like Douala, Yaoundé, Limbe, Garoua, Maroua and Kumba on daily basis. Every evening, fresh spices and vegetables are transported to Kye-ossi for transfer to Equatorial Guinea.

Transportation is an important economic activity in the town. Intra-urban, inter-urban and urban to rural transport is highly practiced by motorbikes, buses and other vehicles. Urban and urban-rural transport is done by private individuals in an informal set up while special transport companies like *General Express*, *Amour Mezam Express* and *Polyglotte Express*, together with many other individuals engaged in the sector relay the major towns especially Bamenda, Bafoussam, Dschang, Yaoundé, Douala, and Buea. Transportation within the town is facilitated by the numerous roads that are found in the town. Apart from the National Road N° 6 and a few secondary roads that are tarred, the rest of the roads in the town are still to be tarred. Figure 1.4 below illustrates the road network of the town.

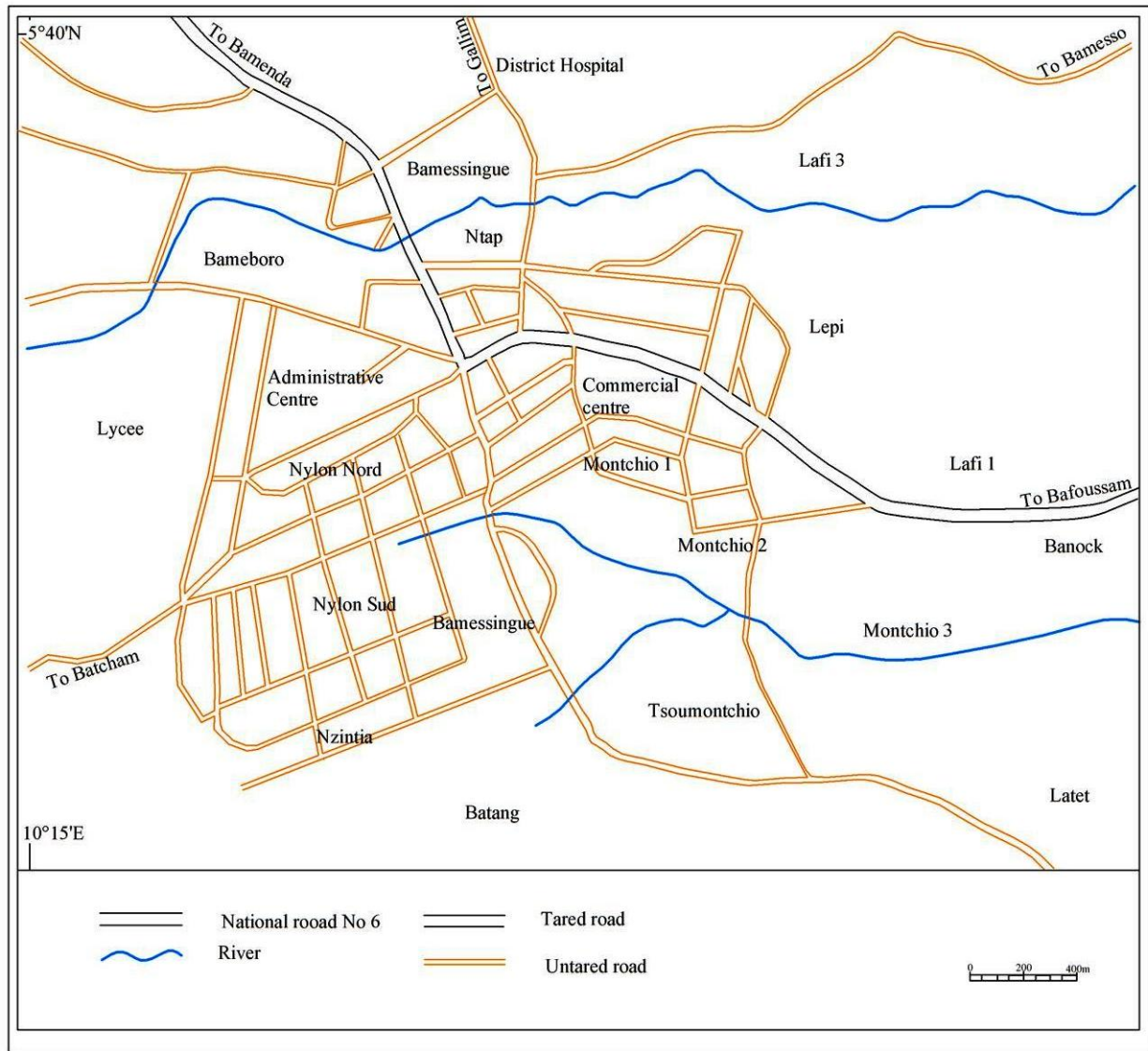


Figure 2: The road network map of Mbouda

Source: Mbouda Rural Council (2014)

II. METHODOLOGY

Primary as well as the secondary data information were used for the preparation of this paper. Published and unpublished documents containing information on commercial motorbikes were consulted. This provided information on the evolution, management, challenges and socio-economic impact of intra-urban transport in Mbouda town. Reports on commercial motorbikes were also obtained from the council archives, the following Divisional Delegations of Transport of Bamboutos: Trade, Urban Planning, Public Works and the local council. Reports from special commissions and trade unions were equally exploited. They provided information on the state and management of commercial motorbikes. Field visits to the bikes riders and to the population at the various parks in Mbouda town permitted

investigation through interviews, the administration of questionnaires and direct observation of commercial motorbikes activities. Questionnaires administration and interviews were carried out with the transporters and the population during their off peak periods (between 10am and 1pm). This was geared towards gaining their maximum attention. An analysis of all the information collected permitted understanding of the activities in Mbouda town.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cities' primary modes of public transport are changing (Lombard, J., & Ninot, O.,2010).While developed countries are shifting towards collective modes of public transport, developing countries show the reverse trend, with a shift towards individual modes (Kumar, A. , 2011). The result has

been the privatization of public transport services, notably by individual operators who take advantage of institutional and regulatory gaps (Kisaalita & Sentongo-Kibalama, 2007). Rodrigue (2009), stated that urbanization is a major factor that contributed immensely to urban transport problems, particularly in developing countries. He leaned his assertion on the fact that urbanization usually brings about high demands and evolution in the urban transport system. As he put it, some 90 % of urban population growth occurs in developing countries, thereby exerting intense pressure on urban infrastructure particularly transport facilities. Waugh (2009) stated that many developing cities cannot afford an elaborate public transport system. He identified the road network as being unable to deal with the large volume of traffic. The traffic, he said, mainly consisted of old cars, vans, trucks and overcrowded minibuses. He further explained that some cities even complicated the scenario by using rickshaws, bullock carts, donkeys, and bikes for urban transport, but however acknowledged that as development occurred in such cities, sophisticated transport modes like the sub way system and the metro got into the scene to relieve pressure on the roads. Balgah (1987), in his study of transportation in Bamenda, noted that transportation modes, particularly road transport promoted economic growth in the town in terms of trade and industrialization. In his analysis of the town's growth with regards to pre-colonial and post-colonial transportation systems in Bamenda, he attributed the growth to accessibility factor that resulted from an evolution in the transport systems. Fombe and Balgah (2012) pointed out that the growth of Cameroon towns has brought about drastic evolution in the transport system as the population rely on various modes of transport that develop in response to the needs of the people. They equally held that the need for transport services coupled with the absence of communal transport facilities, poor and limited urban transport systems have encouraged more adaptive modes like the use of motorcycles. Although their emergence may be linked to the demand foreseen in a given area their location is essentially arbitrary. This results in an unbalanced spatial distribution of stands whose action ranges overlap or merge (Guézéré, 2013). The proliferation of motorcycle taxis has favored a certain reshaping of the urban space, as parking areas have multiplied all over the place to the point of causing congestion in markets and streets. These logics correspond to the strategic choice of the heads of lines of taxi-bikes to locate near markets and public institutions, in lively squares, close to business areas and busy intersections. Reading the locations of driver stops in the urban space responds to a spatio-temporal logic that rhymes well with the centers of economic interest of the city (Guezere, 2012). Drivers are confronted with an arbitration between three spatiotemporal logics which are as many alternative strategies for controlling and appropriating the urban territory "*in the dynamics of exchanges between individuals, in the movement of people and goods, and in ways that more general in the movement of human and social activities, as well as in the repetition of interactions and connections*" (Torres, 2009). Authorities in developing

countries must manage the growing mobility needs of an increasingly scattered peri-urban population with limited financial and technical capacities (Khisty, 1993). Agossou (2004), established the link between the motorcycle taxi and the creation of the places of transport, which is perfectly identical to the situation of Lomé. Users and operators of zemijan (moto-taxi) are creators of places of transport, understood as places of the territory where is ensured the mobility of people and goods. These are the parking places that we have already presented in the logic of location of the heads of lines, to which we can add the illegal fuel outlets, restaurants, newsstands. (Claval, 1981). Like other markets in African cities, a multitude of informal and artisanal activities are organized around the markets of Lomé, which are meeting places for almost all layers of urban society and real places structuring of urbanity. The markets of Adawlato, Hédzranawoé, Bè, Akodéssewa, Agoè-Assiyéyé, Adidogomé etc. are real convergence economic centers draining every day a large number of people, which requires a large number of trips provided by taxis-motorcycles. Nagle (2000) pointed out that governments play an increasingly significant role in transport because it is a vital tool in a country's economic infrastructure. He also saw transport as a means of regional economic development. He noted that, for internal economic development to be achieved, the mobility of workforce as well as the increase in food distribution and regional specialization could easily be achieved through improvement in transport. The coming into place of commercial motorcycles have made mobility easier and rendered many places especially rural areas where the roads are in most cases inaccessible (Connerly and Larry, 1996). Usuwah (2012), in his work also confirms that this activity have made certain localities very accessible as many people now are being transported at ease to their destinations.

The emergence of this commercial activity has led to the creation of employment opportunities to thousands of people that are directly and indirectly involve in the activity (Mbalisi and Nzokuru, 2014). Ghotcho (2001), in the same opinion presents the expansion and socio-economic impact of the motorcycle business in Douala insisting on its role in the fight against unemployment in Douala, its contribution to urban transportation and financial gains. Aderamo (2012), in his study of urban transport in Nigeria identified noise and environmental pollution as a major impact of the activity. He noted that the pollutants resulted from the discharge of effluents and the emission of toxic fumes like carbon monoxide, lead and nitrogen from automobiles. To him, this endangered the quality of life as well as the health of urban dwellers. The urban transport activity is a natural noise producer. According to Ndiribe (2009), the rapid emergence of commercial motorcycles has led to increased road accidents and the number of deaths due to the low level of education amongst riders. Mbalisi and Nzokoru (2014) on the other hand say this new mode of transportation has increased road accidents because most of the riders are very impatient and at times are as results of the recklessness of the riders. Neba

(1999) argued that human communities that are not served by transportation means and modes are a form of closed economy where trade and exchange of goods and services is absent and production is greatly limited. He identified the major problems of road transport to include accidented relief, presence of rivers necessitating bridges, thick vegetation, swamps and inadequate government activity. Fellman, *et al.* (1990) pointed out that transportation in a given area fosters its political integration as it promotes interaction between areas and links them socio-economically. The role of transport here is thus a uniting factor. To them, the level of economic advancement of a place is a direct reflection of its level of transport development. Thus, without transportation, an area has no possibility to take off. Mbouda is highlighted in this perspective as transportation is known to be a major stimulus to the growth and development of the town.

The Evolution of Commercial Motorbikes Transport in Mbouda

Intra-urban transport in Mbouda before the 1990s was an exclusive affair of the township taxis. The commercial motorbikes in Mbouda town began in the 1990 as the consequence of the civil unrest which was characterized by a total paralysis of economic activities in the country. Movement was prohibited and circulation of vehicles stopped amidst rising insecurity. This situation therefore led to the disappearance of township taxis in the town as the taxi drivers dropped their keys, waiting for the situation get under control for them to resume their activities. The population nevertheless needed a mode of displacement in the town. The local inhabitants who had motorcycles started using them to transport people from one part of the town to the other. That was the spark that ignited the use of motorbikes as a transport system in Mbouda. By 1994, the activity had become very popular and its local name, “*Benskin*” became a household name. “*benskin*” the word originates from a traditional dance from the western region of the country. This period was characterized by a complete colonisation of the intra-urban transport sector by the motorbikes as the sole system of transport in Mbouda town (table 1). During this period, there was a drastic increase in the number of motorbikes in the town. According to the Divisional Delegate of Transport for the Bamoutos (2014), the bike sector gradually moved from an organized and well regulated activity (since transporters fully complied with the laws in force) to one of chaos within that period.

Table 1 Registration of transport licenses for taxis and bikes in Mbouda.

YEAR	N° OF TAXIS	N° OF BIKES
1992	27	0
1993	1	-
1994	2	-
1995	-	-
1996	1	5
1997	5	61

1998	4	29
1999	-	-
2000	2	37
2001	0	45
2002	1	69
2003	3	51
2004	0	62
2005	1	73
2006	0	80
2007	0	90
2008	0	98
2009	0	103
2010	0	161
2011	0	175
2012	0	190
2013	0	300
2014	0	320

Source: Divisional Delegation of Transport, Bamoutos, 2014

The moto bikes are today the only intra-urban transport system in Mbouda partly as a result of the poor road network. They have successfully flushed out the township taxis through their advantages of accessibility, flexibility and rapidity that have made them to win the competition against township taxi drivers. Motorbike taxi riders circulated in the peripheries of the city at the start of this activity. This is accounted for by two reasons. The first being that the centre of the town was covered by the regular yellow coloured taxi cabs and secondly, the activity was of a clandestine character which limited the expansion margins of its practitioners. Its clandestine nature was due to the lack of official recognition by the state and the absence of laws regulating this activity; the only available texts concerned taxi cars. A good example is the Ministerial order N° 291 of 30th June 1975 regulating the activity of taxis in towns. (Ngabmen, 1997). The motorbike riders were thus falling under article 226 of the Road Code which among others punishes this illegal activity with the seizure of their vehicle.

The Prime Minister’s decree N° 94/033/PM of 2nd of February 1994 came to recognise the activity of motorbike taxis laying down the modalities of its exploitation. The text which excluded the two most important cities of Cameroon (Yaounde and Douala) imposed the procurement of the following documents; a special licence, Global tax, public transport card (Carte bleue), Insurance, vehicle stamp rights, a registration at the transport register for motorbike taxis. The early 2000s saw the signing of commercial partnerships between Cameroon and China. This led to the importation of Chinese goods into the country at very cheap and affordable prices. One of such goods constituted the motorcycles. More flexible and comfortable brands of motorcycles like *Kymco*,

Nangfang, Chanlin and Sanili were imported and sold at less than 500,000 FCFA. This was: cheaper as compared to the previous Japanese brands like *Honda, Yamaha* and *Suzuki* that cost more than 1,000,000 FCFA at that time. The influx of these motorbikes into the country made many people to purchase them and use them for intra-urban transport. This recognition and affordable prices contributed to the increase of commercial motorbike in Mbouda. The following table 1 present the evolution of commercial motorbike in Mbouda town.

The Management of Commercial Motorbikes in Mbouda

The management of the commercial motorbike sector in Mbouda provides great avenues for concern. Given that it deals with life, it is thus highly regulated by the texts governing this sector of activity to ensure that it is safely carried out. It is notably the decree N° 95/650/PM of 16th November 1995 fixing conditions and modes of exploitation of motorbikes on profit bases. The decree N° 2004/0607/PM of March 17, 2004 and the latest being the Prime Minister Decree N° 2008/3447/PM of 31st December 2008 completing the texts and modalities of exploiting motorbikes on a profit base by fulfilling the following conditions:

- They must possess all required official documents (insurance policy, windscreen license, the road worthiness test, council taxes, the business license and the road transport’s license).
- Their tanks must be painted in yellow to differentiate them from motorbikes used for private mobility.
- They must have just two seats. One for the rider and the other one for the passenger.
- The motorbikes must have registration plates both in front and behind and must also have a registration number from the local council.
- It should be in possession of two helmets; one for the rider and the other one for the passenger. This helps protect the head of the bike users in case of an accident.
- It should have a good head lamp, a reliable sound system for alert and two side mirrors to ensure road safety.
- The bikes should be used for transportation only in rural and semi-urban areas.
- The bike must be in possession of necessary tools to repair the motorbike when it breaks down (maintenance tool kit).
- The motorbike rider should be at least 18 years of age and be in possession of a driving license of category ‘A’.
- The rider must be mentally and morally upright and must use gloves when riding. He must also wear a jersey carrying an identification number obtained from the local council.

Contrarily to the laws governing the activity, field studies revealed that the motorbike riders in Mbouda exercise their

activities in total contradiction of the law (table3). They do not purchase their official documents, do not paint their motorcycles in yellow and do not ensure the proper technical and mechanical state of the motorbikes. The riders do not purchase the helmets and often overload their bikes with more than one passenger (plate 1). The absence of the maintenance tool kit is often noticed. Generally, the required regulations are not fulfilled by the commercial motorbike riders in Mbouda. They park or station on the pedestrian paths, at the road sides and on recreational grounds. This is a violation of article 113 of the above text.

Table 2: The situation of the motorbike riders in Mbouda in December 2014 as per the conditions of intra-urban transport

Document or condition	Those in possession(out of 60 bike riders)	Percent age (%)	Those not in possession(out of 60 bike riders)	Percent age (%)
Driving license	23	38.3	37	61.7
Insurance	10	16.7	50	83.3
Transport license	12	20	48	80
Windscreen license	32	53.3	28	46.7
Road worthiness test	17	28.3	43	71.7
Business license	19	31.7	41	68.3
Motorbike painted in yellow	07	11.7	53	88.3
Motorbikes registered at the transport office	00	0	60	100

Source: Field work, 2014

The non possession of the documents is partially due to the non enforcement of the laws by the competent authorities. This therefore makes the transporters to violate article 98 as they ride recklessly and carry out risky over takings all over the town and has been one of the major causes of road accidents in the town. This shows that the riders carry out the activity in total disrespect of the regulation and without the mastery of the road safety rules.



Figure 3: Overloaded bikes without helmets in Mbouda.

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Fombe and Balgah (2012), pointed out that about 90% of Cameroon towns lacked terminals which are centralized meeting points where service providers can manage the flow of transportation vehicles, serve customers and efficiently load and unload freight and passengers. Such facilities help to dislodge traffic and congestion during rush hours. The absence of such terminals causes the loading and unloading of goods, as well as alighting and dropping of passengers to take place everywhere in the town (figure3).



Figure 3: Poor parking in Mbouda town

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The various administrative stakeholders of the sector such as the divisional delegations for transport, trade and public works, the Mbouda Council, the forces of law and order and the trade unions are not very present in the activity. The commercial motorbike riders are known to be very uncompromising as far as respecting the law is concerned. They are always ready to organise a strike and jeopardize the serenity of the town. For this reason therefore, they succeed in operating in total contradiction to the law because the administrative authorities on their part appease them by letting them do what they wish, all this for the sake of peace. This thus explains why overloaded motorbikes not painted in yellow and without any official required documents are often seen being ridden by young boys of less than 18 years who do not possess the experience and the license to carry out the activity. The sector in Mbouda is thus highly chaotic as concerns management. The sector is a 'laissez-faire' arena as, in an attempt to appease the motorbike riders and let peace reign, the riders have used the opportunity to totally disrespect the rules and thus, function like outlaw citizens.

Socio-economic implications of commercial motorbike riding in Mbouda town

Commercial motorbike in Mbouda town provides solutions in terms of mobility and employment. The emergence of this commercial activity has led to the improvement of living standard of many stakeholders involved in this activity and also created employment opportunities to many youths in this town. It provides direct employment to bikes riders, revenue to bikes owners, and indirect employment to those involved in motorcycle

maintenance and repairs, and also to those involve in the business of motorbikes and their spare parts. Even though commercial motorbikes has today become part of the mode of life of many city dwellers of Mbouda town, the activity has created certain setbacks that affects this town.

Impacts of commercial motorbikes on the creation of employments for youths in Mbouda town

The activity of commercial motorcycle riders has provided many employment opportunities and has equally improved the living standards of a majority of people in Mbouda town. This is in form of bike riding, the sale of spare parts, those working in garage for bikes and other related minor informal jobs related to the commercial motorbike.

Records gotten from the Divisional Delegation of transport in Mbouda town, revealed that 320 commercial motorbikes riders were registered in 2014. This implies that the sector created 320 jobs and if we rely on the Union of commercial motorbikes today Mbouda town scored more than 500 commercial bikes within many of them are not registered at the Divisional Delegation of transport of Bamboutos. Added to this during fieldwork we recorded 20 stores selling spare parts, 25 garage operators, 15 washing points and 10 stores selling bikes which go a long way to solve the problem of unemployment in this town.

The social benefits of intra-urban transport in Mbouda include increase in mobility. This is only achieved through spatial interaction. Spatial interaction goes with increase in mobility. People live in residential areas like 'Nzintia', 'Lafi' and 'Rapide' that are very far from their places of work, from the commercial centre as well as from the administrative centre. The schools are equally far from where students leave. The hospitals are situated at different locations in the town. Students leave the 'Lafi' neighbourhood and attend school in 'Lycee de Mbouda Rurale' which is more than 3 km away. The services provided by intra-urban transport helps the inhabitants to relay where ever they wish to go and in a relatively short time. This has helped to promote social development in the town especially in the domains of health and education. Patients are easily evacuated or transported to the health units. Students easily relay their schools, no matter the distance. Some inhabitants have gone into contract with trustworthy and popular riders who transport their children to and from school on daily basis for a monthly payment that ranges between 3,000 FCFA-10,000 FCFA depending on the distance from the school and the number of children. Subscribers say it is a safer mode of transport for their children and that it ensures the security of their off springs. The riders too on their part enjoy the service because it permits them to save money since they are paid monthly and they usually prefer to use the money as savings or for a project. Workers also use the bikes to go to their places of work or back to their houses. The bikes also promote the socio-economic development of the town in that they are available at all time. Their services are nevertheless more

expensive at night. Equally, for security purposes, the bikes do not go to places like 'Lafi 1' and the Bus Stop "C", at very late hours. This is because such places are noted for frequent assaults.

Commercial motorbikes as source of income

Income generated from the motorbike riding is used in so many ways which contributes to social development. This is used in the education of children, reinvestment in businesses, payment of house rents, and home management amongst others (table 3). Commercial motorbike riders in Mbouda town used part of their income for education of their children at all levels (nursery, primary, secondary and university). The commercial motorbike sector in Mbouda town also acts as a source of direct revenue to those involve in this venture. Nevertheless, housing infrastructure make for one of the achievements made by commercial motorbike riders.

Table 3: Other social achievement by motorbikes riders

Designation	Number of respondents	%
Education of children	12	20
Reinvestment in business	07	11,66
Rents	11	14,33
House construction	10	16,66
House management	20	33,33
Total	60	100

Source: Field work 2014

Table 3 shows the various social achievement by motorbikes riders in Mbouda town. These range from children education to house management. However, there is a variation in the proportion of respondent as to what activity their income is spent. Education of their children cover 20%, 11,66% is spent as plough back profits in the business, 14,33% of the revenue is spent on rents, 16,66% on house construction and 33,33% in home management. Dealers in this sector have taken education as a pride of place in their programs and part of their money gotten from commercial motorbike riding is used for the education of their children.

The coming to place of commercial motorbikes activities in Mbouda town made some youths who were previously involved in craft activities to abandon the activities in favor of commercial motorbikes which was seen by most of them as a faster mode of making money (table 4).

Table 4: Drop in some craft activities as a result of commercial motorbikes

Previous activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Carpentry	10	16,66
Shoe mending	05	8,33
Barbing	11	18,33
Others	34	56,66
Total	60	100

Source: fieldwork, 2014

Table 4 shows the number of bike riders who abandoned some craft activities to embrace the commercial motorbikes sector. From our findings 16,66% of our respondents were carpenters, 8,33% shoe menders, 18,33% were barbers and 56,66% of those doing other craft activities. According to them they abandoned these craft activities in favour of the commercial motorbikes sector is principally the lucrative nature of the business where they cab earned up to 100 000 frs per month. Such amounts have helped to change the status of previously unemployed and idle persons in the town. There has thus been an improvement in the standards of living of the inhabitants of the town. It has provided personal incomes to the inhabitants. It has also supplemented the incomes of some workers of other sectors who either do not yet have salaries or whose salaries are small. During field work in December 2014, 25 of the 60 riders interviewed were not full time riders. They belonged to sectors like trade, agriculture and teaching. Those of the teaching field were mostly private school teachers who complained of meager salaries and those of the public service who were still awaiting salaries. Such people thus relied on commercial bike riding for income. The intra-urban transport sector in general and the bike riding activity in particular has been a blessing in Mbouda in the domain of employment. It has also provided jobs both directly and indirectly, provided incomes and has diverted the youths from bad activities like theft.

Another important economic benefit of intra-urban transport in Mbouda is the fact that it is a source of revenue to the government. Transporters pay taxes either directly or indirectly. Direct payments come in the form of the payment of windscreen license, park fee, insurance, business licenses, road transporters license, registrations and the road worthiness test. Commercial motorbikes is a source of revenue for the riders, the state and the council in Mbouda town. The motor bike sector act as a source of direct revenue to those involve in this venture. The commercial motorbikes activity also increases government revenue through taxes (table 5).

Table 5: cost of running a commercial bike for intra-urban transport in Mbouda

DOCUMENT or ITEM	COST
Insurance(annual)	16,000 FCFA.
Category 'A' driving license	30,000 FCFA (obtained just once)
Windscreen license	2,500 FCFA yearly
Road worthiness test	1,000 FCFA every three months
Park fee	4,000 FCFA. yearly
Business license	8,000 FCFA yearly
Road transport license	7,500FCFA

Source: Field work, 2014

Generally riders complained of high taxes paid to the local council and central government and the cost of insurance as presented in table 5. These taxes goes a long way to swell

the government's coffers and provide income for other projects towards the economic development of the country.

IV. PROBLEMS OF THE COMMERCIAL MOTORBIKE SECTOR IN MBOUDA

The intra-urban transport sector in Mbouda is plagued with a myriad of problems that range from physical to human. The poor state of the roads limits the riders only to the few kilometers of tarred surfaces in the town. Such roads also cause accidents and spoil the mechanical state of the motorbikes. From the physical perspective, the tropical climate which is characterised by a long wet season and a short dry season is a problem to the activity. During the wet season, the roads are slippery, muddy and thus impassable (figure 4), on raining days activities are halted or perturbed because many potential passengers remain indoors given that motorbikes do not provide them a shade from the rain. During the dry season, the high sunshine increases the rate of evaporation and this desiccates the soil, thereby rendering it loose and dusty. The topography of Mbouda is very uneven. The average altitude of Mbouda town is 1410m above sea level (Council Development Plan, 2011). It is made up of areas of highlands and lowlands. These slopes are not too suitable for transportation because of the fact that the roads are usually slippery and this renders them impassable. Human challenges of the motorbike sector in Mbouda include road accidents, insecurity, the non-implementation of the rules and regulations of the sector as well as police harassments.



Figure 4: Degraded roads in Mbouda town.

Source: Field work, September 2014

The sector of commercial motorbikes in Mbouda is thus highly chaotic as concerns management. The sector is a 'laissez-faire' arena as, in an attempt to appease the motorbike riders and let peace reign, the riders have used the opportunity to totally disrespect the rules and thus, function like outlaw

citizens. The absence of the maintenance tool kit is often noticed. Generally, the required regulations are not fulfilled by the commercial motorbike riders in Mbouda (figure 5).

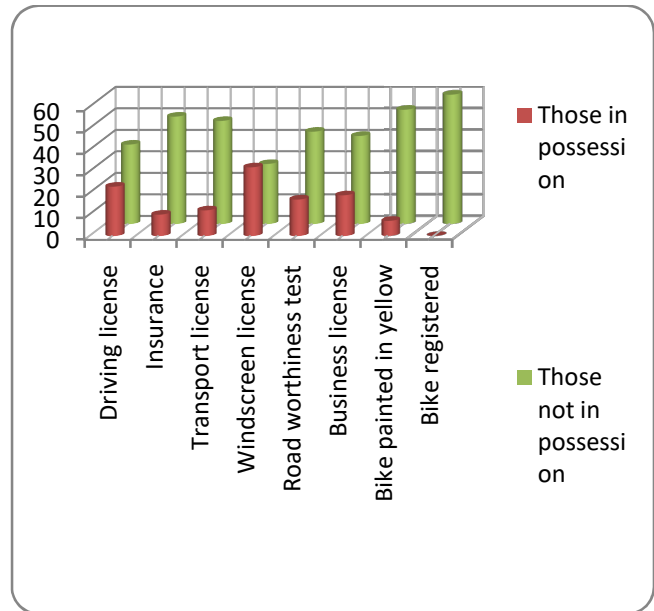


Figure 5: The possession and non possession of required documents

Source: Field work, December 2014

The various administrative stakeholders of the sector such as the divisional delegations for transport, trade and public works, the Mbouda Council, the forces of law and order and the trade unions are not very present in the activity. The commercial motorbike riders always organize strikes and jeopardize the serenity of the town. For this reason therefore, they succeed in operating in total contradiction to the law because the administrative authorities on their part appease them by letting them do what they wish, all this for the sake of peace. This thus explains why overloaded motorbikes not painted in yellow and without any official required documents are often seen being used by young boys of less than 18 years who do not possess the experience and the license to carry out the activity.

V. MEASURES TO AMELIORATE THE SECTOR

In an attempt to ameliorate the intra-urban transport sector in Mbouda and give it the taste it deserves, the following recommendations were arrived at:

- There should be a regular and proper maintenance of the roads in the urban area. This should include the filling of potholes, the enlargement of the roads, the emptying of drainage channels or the creation of new drainage channels, the tarring of the earth roads and the constant maintenance of seasonal roads by the local council and the Public Works Divisional Delegation for the Bamboutos.
- There should also be the provision of street lights in the town to reduce insecurity.

- Traffic signs should be made available in the town to regulate traffic and reduce the rate and frequency of accidents.
- Corruption that characterizes the activities of the forces of law and order and the road safety agents should be checked. The National Anti- Corruption Committee (CONAC) should investigate the intra-urban transport sector and ensure that it is corruption-free. This will greatly help in regularizing the sector since the commercial motorbike riders will be forced to either conform to the laws or face the consequences. The administrative authorities should strictly implement the various texts, laws and decrees governing the activity. They should ensure the application of the rules and regulations and punish defaulters as prescribed by such policies. Parking spaces should be created in the town by the Council. This should be in the Central Business District so as to reduce traffic congestion and poor parking that is often common especially on market days.
- Spontaneous patrol missions of the forces of law and order and the road safety agents should be organized in the town to tract down unscrupulous riders that do not function as the law stipulates. In line with this, modern equipments like the Red Line Alcohol Tester should be used to tract down transporters who consume alcoholic substances while still on duty. The central government should provide the Divisional Delegations of Transports and that of Public Works with skilled personnel. This will improve upon the quality of the services provided.
- The local government should also provide capacity building seminars and refresher courses to the commercial motorbike riders to improve upon their level of mastery of the transport activity. The riders should also be given some notions of civic education and sensitized on the need to conform to the laws.

VI. DISCUSSION

Nagle (2000) noted that urban centers of the developing countries are characterized by a limited number of quality transport as well as insufficient reliable transport modes to link the core and the periphery. He equally said that the peripheries of most urban areas are underserved as a result of the poor road network system. He however failed to understand that innovations and evolution in the transport system could overcome such difficulties of accessing the peripheries. This is clear with motorbikes that serve the most remote and enclave parts of Mbouda town which were not earlier served by taxis. The scenario of the commercial motorbike sector in Mbouda is peculiar. Riders prefer to function in informality and to resist from abiding by the laws. They see the purchase of documents as wastage of financial resources that are rather scarce because passengers hardly pay more than 100FCFA per drop. They hold that regulating to the rules is too costly and thus not favorable for them. The

temporal riders see the sector as a jungle that they can access at any moment and equally exit at all time without any control. The sector thus helps them to supplement their incomes. Passengers on their part have no choice than to board the bikes in their chaotic mechanical and physical condition. Most passengers are aware that the riders are not in line with the laws but still use their services because they have no other option. The commercial motorbike system is the only intra-urban transport mode of displacement in Mbouda. This situation is similar with the mode of transportation in Ngoyla. According to Sop Sop (2016), motorbikes are the only mean of transportation in that subdivision. The passengers therefore do not have an option apart from accepting the services of such a sector. They also hold that the motorbikes are good for transport because they are flexible, fast and accessible.

VII. CONCLUSION

Transportation is an indispensable activity in every inhabited part of the world. It is the pivot of all economic and socio-cultural activities in every society. It brings about development and opens a given society or region to the rest of the world. It favours mobility and promotes spatial interaction. The changing socio-economic and political aspects of Cameroon in the 1980s caused great evolution in the transport systems in Mbouda. The township taxis that monopolized the transport arena in the 1980s have given way to commercial motorbikes that now own and control the activity. Equally, there exist very interesting rules and regulations governing the intra-urban transport activity in Cameroon. These rules are however not respected by the stakeholders in Mbouda. The motorbike riders do not conform to the outlined rules governing the activity. The administrative authorities do not implement or enforce the laws. More than 80% of the intra-urban transporters in Mbouda function in contradiction to the laws and regulations governing the activity. The stakeholders in charge of ensuring order in the sector are indifferent to the situation and claim to be powerless. This results in a situation of chaos. The transport activity is affected by a number of problems such as accidents, high cost of fuel, insecurity, poor road network and pulmonary infections that affect the motorbike riders. On the other hand, the activity has provided jobs, diversified the economy of Mbouda and has also increased personal incomes. It has reduced the rate of crime wave in the town. The various stakeholders involved in the sector like the Divisional Delegation of Transports for the Bamboutos, the forces of law and order, the Mbouda Rural Council, the trade unions as well as the Public Works Department for the Bamboutos have not been efficient in exercising their duties. They have been very dormant and silent amidst mounting or rising disorder in the sector. This has given the commercial motorbike riders the right and audacity to act as they wish. Given that transportation is an activity that affects all other activities, the stakeholders are thus called upon to work hard in an attempt to achieve sustainable urban transport in Mbouda urban area. Sustainable intra-urban transport can be achieved in Mbouda

by developing and implementing proper policies geared towards the tackling of transport problems and the provision of services that reflect the expectations of the inhabitants of Mbouda urban area.

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