

## REEMDOOGO MUSIC GARDEN, OUAGADOUGOU



**TRAINING LOCAL CULTURE** CROSS-SECTORIAL  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT **EMPLOYMENT** PUBLIC SPACE  
**KNOWLEDGE** INSTITUTIONAL MONITORING EDUCATION

### 1. Context

The capital city of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, has a population of 1,500,000 inhabitants, of which 60% are less than 25 years old. It is a gateway city made up of several ethnic groups whose mix forms a very cosmopolitan city. Creation and dissemination activities in the areas of visual arts (in general and particularly in bronze), music, theatre and cinema are developing at the same rate as popular entertainment and rituals. Ouagadougou is renowned for its festivals: FESPACO (Pan-african Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou) cinema, music with Jazz in Ouaga, contemporary dance with *Dialogue de corps*, theatre with FITMO (International Puppet Festival in Ouagadougou), *Les Récréâtrales* and the International Art and Craft Fair in Ouagadougou (SIAO). These activities are supported by the fabric of the cultural community, the State and the Commune. Ouagadougou's cultural energy earned it the title of African Capital of Culture in 2009, awarded by the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa.

The city hall of Ouagadougou initiated Reemdoogo after meetings with groups of musicians and show organisers. As a result of the Ouaga jazz festival and the hip hop craze, Ouagadougou has

seen its musical hype somewhat hindered by a general lack of reliable producers, modern instruments and places for musicians to create and broadcast their music. On top of these shortcomings, there is a lack of training centres and accessible recording studios, as well as the high cost of accessing these services.

Following the 'cultural and developmental issues' symposium organised by the Culture and Development NGO, and the creation of a network of 'West African cities for culture and urban development', which were established in order to set up resource sites for artists, the Ouagadougou city hall participated in a discussion on municipal cultural action in partnership with Abidjan, Bamako and Dakar. It involved researching solutions for both issues regarding the cultural development of the territory and improving work conditions for artists. Ouagadougou is the first to take action.

Consequently, the Municipal Council decided to set up cultural infrastructures within the built-up areas in order to promote the development of musical practice and to facilitate the professionalization of musicians and actors in the musical industry by providing them with a support structure. In order to meet the cultural needs of young people, the City hall wanted to provide a solution for cultural development, to contribute towards structuring the music industry and to strengthen its economical potential in order to diversify job opportunities and income-generating businesses, particularly for the population. It involved exploring the role that music had to play in terms of creating these gardens that combine urbanism and the environment as part of the city's development.

In this regard, the city hall has collaborated with the Culture and Development NGO and has engaged in a partnership with the city of Grenoble. Thus, as the first infrastructure of a planned series, Reemdoogo was built within the framework of a North-South partnership combining artists, elected representatives and cultural technicians from Ouagadougou, Abidjan and Grenoble. UNESCO, the city of Grenoble, the European Union Cultural Initiatives Support Program and French Cooperation have supplemented the construction of this facility, which has been primarily financed by Ouagadougou.

THE REEMDOOGO MUSIC GARDEN ENDEAVOURS TO STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE AREA, IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL INCLUSION BY PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEARBY INCOME-GENERATING BUSINESSES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS IN THE AREA.

## 2. Ouagadougou and Culture

In the interest of encouraging the city's cultural development, the Ouagadougou city hall has made culture an important part of its development plan, as shown in the plan for the 2013-2017 parliamentary term. This parliamentary term plan consolidates the advice taken through the adoption of the first cultural policy document in 2009, which will be reformulated as of 2014. The city hall's involvement mainly concerns access to knowledge, reducing the digital divide with a network structured around a media library, houses of knowledge and rooms for artistic broadcasting and creativity, supporting cultural practices especially among young people, promoting arts and crafts and cultural tourism. In order to promote these areas of activity, municipal policy is strengthening the city's facilities with cultural infrastructures and showcasing and promoting cultural heritage, which traditional craftsmen claim to be very much alive (dyeing, basketwork, textiles, jewellery, fashion). The implementation of this policy relies on a strong commitment from the local authorities, who clearly assume the cultural responsibilities attributed to them by the State, with an aim to use Ouagadougou as a pilot area for cultural decentralization and local development by showcasing its cultural resources.

Its cultural community infrastructure is one of the most dynamic in Africa and is therefore a major asset. The vitality of traditional cultures is the 3rd mainstay of cultural life in Ouagadougou. In order for this vitality to develop, it must overcome hurdles such as lack of infrastructures, a lack of financial means, a lack of long-lasting tools for funding culture and a weakly structured network for marketing cultural products. In the future, Ouagadougou hopes to solve the weak structure in the community,

which is actually very active, by creating meeting spaces and implementing cultural projects, especially in areas such as visual arts, bronze work, music and popular cultural traditions.

The 'Reemdoogo' music garden, which is a facility open to the public, is an integrated part of local cultural development strategy in Ouagadougou. From the design phase of the project to the monitoring of infrastructure operation using a participatory framework known as a 'management committee', its inclusive and consultative approach in civil society has placed it at the heart of Agenda 21 for Culture. The development approach of the artistic practice, as well as its connection with the urban and land development strategies give it another point of agreement with Agenda 21 for Culture.



Ouagadougou's approach to the Agenda 21 principles is to facilitate access to culture through the construction of rehearsal areas and spaces for creation and broadcasting, as well as promoting expressiveness among the population, mainly through holiday music workshops. By promoting the development of nearby income-generating businesses for the disadvantaged populations in the area, the Reemdoogo music garden endeavours to strengthen connections within the area to encourage social inclusion

The promotion of cultural diversity is one of Ouagadougou's main focuses as it tries to promote modern, traditional, national and international cultural practices as well as promoting knowledge of the national cultural forms of expression. Although most professional music is still made by men, the holiday music workshops (mainly aimed at children and teenagers) enable large numbers of young girls to learn about and practice making music.

Ultimately, the South/South or North/South culture dialogues are one of the strong focal points of the Reemdoogo music garden project. Thanks to the provision of rehearsal spaces and residency exchanges in Ouagadougou or abroad, exchanges have been developing between musicians from Africa, Europe, Asia and eventually South America (Brazil), exhibiting music from Burkina Faso. This falls within the framework of the biennial Divercities musical get-together that brings together musicians from Bethlehem, Innsbruck, Kaunas, Oujda, Oxford, Rehovot, Sevan and Sfax. The Divercities get-together was very much enjoyed in Ouagadougou as it emphasized the use of music as a vector for dialogue between cultures and promoted values of solidarity, exchange and tolerance.

SOUTH/SOUTH OR NORTH/SOUTH CULTURE DIALOGUES ARE ONE OF THE STRONG FOCAL POINTS OF THE REEMDOOGO MUSIC GARDEN PROJECT.

### 3. Objectives and implementation of the project

#### 3.1. Overall and specific objectives

The Reemdoogo project includes the construction of two cultural facilities both in the east and west of the city and is part of a platform for developing Ouagadougou's music industry. The music garden is the first infrastructure, followed by the Palace of Culture and a second Reemdoogo, which is in its

planning stages. The aim of the project is to support the professionalization of careers in music in order to help improve the practice and structure within this industry.

The Reemdoogo project aims to:

- Help develop musical practices and provide musicians with a diverse infrastructure, which is a necessary tool for creating quality;
- Support the professionalization of musicians and actors in the industry through training and providing a supportive structure for young people;
- Contribute towards helping young people access culture by providing musical education;
- Create a link between artists, managers and entrepreneurs from Ouagadougou's cultural sector and those of other international partner cities, such as Grenoble.

### 3.2. The cultural complex

Reemdoogo is a cultural complex comprised of 3 kitted out and air-conditioned rehearsal studios, 1 broadcasting suite, 3 booths for instrument practise, 1 open-air stage, 1 resource and training centre, 1 shop and 1 restaurant. It is structured around 4 focuses:

- a focus on rehearsal and support for groups by creating and developing repertoires, stage performances and demo recordings;
- a focus on broadcasting (performance room with a capacity of 700 people);
- a focus on information (a centre with professional documentation specialised in the musical sector);
- a focus on professional training (workshops, professionalization seminars, instrument and vocal practise, musical and stage careers).

The construction of this first facility had a real impact within the Ouagadougou territory, it has greatly:

- encouraged the use of rehearsals;
- led to a renewed interest in playing instruments and 'live' music;
- promoted a new, local music-oriented life with festivals, TV shows and a greater number of concerts,
- improved the quality of musical productions, concerts and projects in general;
- raised the level of professionalization of careers, as shown by the way musicians such as Alif Naba, Bil Aka Kora and Smartey have been able to enter the international francophone music market as a result of organised training sessions;
- developed music-related economic activities.

REEMDOOGO'S SUCCESS AND ITS RECOGNITION WITHIN WEST AFRICA HAS LED THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL TO BUILD A CULTURAL PALACE, TO DEVELOP A MUNICIPAL CULTURAL POLICY AND TO DECIDE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SECOND REEMDOOGO.

With the exception of traditional music and dance groups who do not use it much, different musical groups practising all kinds of music have benefited from this centre: foreign musicians on tour in Ouagadougou use the studios and sometimes the stage, as well producers and musician managers (meetings, organising shows, organised training). Television stations often film live shows there, musical school groups and school associations host their annual parties there, families sign up their children for lessons and holiday music workshops, cultural associations use the stage for their artistic activities and foreign ambassadors present the music of their countries there. Young people from the local area and amateur musicians from Ouagadougou regularly attend concerts at this facility. Students at the University of Ouagadougou who carry out research on cultural subjects and shows and use the resource centre are indirectly benefiting from this facility, as well as shop owners who have opened up catering businesses and small shops near Reemdoogo.



### 3.3. Obstacles encountered

The project's success is partly due to its connection with municipal policies for young people, the environment, tourism, leisure/social life and urban development. Another factor of Reemdoogo's success is the complementarity of its artistic, cultural, technical and commercial activities. This combination has had a positive effect nearby, by ensuring that cultural music-related products and products for creation and dissemination contribute to the local economy. Nevertheless, obstacles and limitations have been encountered during the implementation of the project:

- The reluctance of non-cultural services to work with cultural services;
- The lack of frameworks for integrating sectoral policies;
- The priority given to the extension of the current infrastructure in Ouagadougou, which has slightly detracted from the objective of creating a link between artists, managers and entrepreneurs from the two partner cities;
- The lack of financial resources has led to a thorough discussion, which shows the Municipal Council's willingness to give a true place to culture and music;
- The economic crisis and its impact on municipal income is slowing down the completion of Reemdoogo II.

### 3.4. Project progress

The completion of Reemdoogo I is part of a long term process that has enabled the creation of the Reemdoogo music garden, which was launched in the Gounghin area in November 2004, followed by the Palace of Culture. A third infrastructure, Reemdoogo II, is planned. The implementation of the project has occurred in a series of phases:

- **1998:** survey and consultation with musicians and show organisers;
- **1999 and 2000:** development of the Reemdoogo I technical and architectural project as a music garden;
- **2000 - 2004:** search for funding alongside the foreshadowing residences;
- **1999 - 2001:** international residences for creating music with musicians from Ouagadougou, Abidjan and Grenoble (in Ouagadougou and Abidjan in 1999 and Grenoble in 2000 and 2001) and a tour of the 'Sono de villes' group (France, Italy, Germany).
- **2001 - 2003:** the setting up and formation of a professional team in charge of the operation and implementation of a town council management committee - civil society.
- **2003 - 2004:** construction works and launch in November 2004 with an international residence for young musicians from Ouagadougou and Grenoble.
- **2008:** 2nd assessment phase of the artistic impact in Reemdoogo, monitoring the operation, the missions, the new requirements of the artists and the facility's ability to meet those requirements.
- **2009:** Reflection on an overall program in order to ensure Reemdoogo II's complementarity with other infrastructures. Reemdoogo II will favour traditional and urban music and dance and will have the following missions:
  - To support artists through the use of an information, training and support device at the project definition stage;

- To support the development of economic and cultural activities involving music and dance, as well as lutherie;
- To teach young people about the arts.

The facility will therefore have a performance venue, soundproofed and fitted out rehearsal spaces for traditional music and dance, lutherie and instrument repair workshops and an open esplanade within the urban environment.

THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS IS PARTLY DUE TO ITS CONNECTION WITH MUNICIPAL POLICIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, THE ENVIRONMENT, TOURISM, LEISURE/SOCIAL LIFE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT. ANOTHER FACTOR OF REEMDOOGO'S SUCCESS IS THE COMPLEMENTARITY OF ITS ARTISTIC, CULTURAL, TECHNICAL AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES.

## 4. Impacts

### 4.1. Impact on the local government

Reemdoogo's success and its recognition within west Africa has led the municipal council to build a cultural palace, to develop a municipal cultural policy and to decide on the construction of a second Reemdoogo. The municipal council has also just decided to create a series of municipal performance venues and music festivals in the years to come. The musical community has been transformed with the development of private places for listening to music, which brings a very lively atmosphere to the local night life.

### 4.2. Impact on the culture and the local cultural officers

The project has paved the way for creation and has strengthened dissemination and training capabilities. By providing training for instrument practise and composition and the availability of instruments and rehearsal studios, it has improved the quality of musical compositions and has inspired a generation of young musicians. The training has given rise to the emergence of a dozen businesses that organise shows and has inspired collaborations with contemporary dance groups who need a place to work, or visual artists who wish to combine their work with music.

### 4.3. Impact on the land and the population

Reemdoogo, which is located in a popular area, has enhanced the local living environment thanks to the music and garden. Asphaltting of roads and street lighting has improved urban development and safety for the residents and their belongings. The distribution of these areas of focus has encouraged visits from various people, including professional musicians, local amateur musicians or those who are looking for a nice place to live. This mix of people has inspired the strengthening of links between inhabitants.

### 4.4. Cross-cutting Impacts

**Social and educational scope:** Reemdoogo is a very popular place of exchange for the young people in the area and is also used as a meeting place for young school associations. The garden's serenity and prosperity promote development. Frequent visits from artistic and official personalities make local residents feel proud to be part of such a notable area. By providing training for young beginners or those in the process of professionalization, Reemdoogo also allows the people of Ouagadougou to express their creativity or to start a career. **Economic scope:** Reemdoogo is a tool that has been structured for the music sector and combines tools for creation and dissemination with tools dedicated to training and marketing records.

Thanks to the development of rehearsals, concerts and stage production times, instrumental musicians have seen an increase in their revenue. The sector works better now, thanks to the representative groups that have formed following training in the fields of producing and organising shows. A portion of the activities have been funded by the low-cost rent of the studios. The

functioning of this facility has created six permanent jobs and five casual positions: production team technicians (sound and lighting), those in charge of training and maintenance technicians.

## **5. Relative Information**

The city of Ouagadougou was a nominated candidate for the first 'UCLG International Award - Mexico City - Culture 21' (January-May 2014). The awards jury produced a final report in June 2014 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to promote this project as a practical example for the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture.

Text approved in November 2014.

Good practice published in November 2014.

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