

Urban growth and liberal fixation on the land in a sustainable city context in greater Lomé (Togo)

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Abstract: Over the last two decades, greater Lomé has experienced a spatial evolution marked by a disproportionate fixation of Lomé residents on the ground. This liberal occupation of urban land undermines the development of the capital and delays the vision of a sustainable city initiated by the public authorities following the Habitat III conference of the United Nations in Quito in 2017. The objective of this article is to show how largely uncontrolled spatial dynamics delay the sustainable development of greater Lomé. To achieve this, this research used quantitative and qualitative approaches based respectively on questionnaire administration and individual interview techniques. In total, 232 landowners and resource persons were interviewed. Field investigations have shown that liberal fixation on land has led to the occupation of unapproved areas and the privatization of administrative reserves. This creates urban instability marked by conflicts between public authorities and populations. This situation, very detrimental to the sustainable city, demonstrates weakened urban governance.

Keywords: Greater Lomé, Liberal occupation, Public authorities, Sustainable city, Urban growth, Urban instability.

1. Introduction

African cities, in their growth, are experiencing a demographic density which is attracting the attention of researchers, governments and international institutions. According to the World Bank, 4.5 million new inhabitants move into urban areas each year [1]. Indeed, “during the 2010/2020 decade, the cities of the West African sub-region welcomed 58 million inhabitants. During the 2020/2030 decade, the addition will be heavier because these cities will accommodate 69 million additional inhabitants” [1].

The process of urbanization occurs through spatial expansion and population densification [2]. Indeed, the rampant urbanization of cities in the South is causing major concerns about land management. This shared observation leads [3] to affirm that urbanization constitutes a threat to land use. Changes in land use and urbanization caused by human factors are apparent everywhere [3]. For [4] cities struggle with structural and morphological problems associated with high rates of urbanization.

Land fixation or land appropriation in the city has introduced urban insecurities [5]. Under demographic pressure, space in the city center is saturated and the little that exists is only open to the highest bidders. In this very monetary context, land, which is the fundamental element in the making of

a city, has become an object of desire, of power struggles and is only open to certain city dwellers. The land market decreases according to a centrifugal gradient and has a selective effect on households. They are forced to move away until the price of land is compatible with their real estate project. However, we must not be mistaken, the city is a place of habitat for everyone, rich and poor.

This situation, which exposes the problems of social injustice, forces the majority of city dwellers to appropriate the peripheral spaces of the city. Already burdened by a demographic explosion, the peripheries are also experiencing accelerated consumption of space. The conversion of undeveloped land into built-up urban areas is an underestimated but growing problem in African cities [6].

In greater Lomé, the growing evolution of populations leads to a densification of urban tasks. “The capital Lomé spreads out over its distant outskirts and its growth has been accompanied by the development of vast areas of diffuse housing” [7]. Thus, in the city center, we see “a finite space” while in the outskirts, we see a “contested space”. For Bloom, et al. [8] the rapid growth of urban population exceeds the capacity of most cities and increases the demand for urban land. This situation of rapid growth causes, according to Decoville and Schneider [9] a dizzying occupation of urban land.

After approximately three decades, the area of the agglomeration has almost quadrupled, from 7,185 hectares in 1986 to 29,301 hectares in 2014 [10]. The sprawl of Togolese cities has swallowed up and consumed ancient villages once located on the outskirts. Indeed, the spatial extension of greater Lomé confirms what can be called “space bulimia” For [11]:

“The appropriation of land, its uses and the developments that accompany them are evolving more and more quickly. This leads to ruptures which have the following names: intensification of non-agricultural uses of land, modification of ecosystems, peri-urbanization, rurbanization, eviction, expropriation, etc. »

These facts raised by the author show the delicacy of urban land management. With highly uncontrolled or even unstoppable urbanization [12] spatial consumption is increasing and has land implications that are detrimental to the creation of a sustainable city. Land, and particularly soil, is a limited and essentially non-renewable resource [13]. This is why, for Gardi, et al. [13] urban development and the land grab that accompanies it constitute a major threat to soil.

In the communes of Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4 for example, the fact is clearly perceptible. The dynamic occupation of space leads to a widening of the urban fabric and a blurring of the demarcation of what is a city or not. For Kennedy, et al. [14] land conversion induced by the spatial expansion of urban areas is a major development challenge. Undeniably, due to this unsavory urban configuration, today, “the city of Lomé appears as a compact mass of rural and urban spaces, pieces of towns and villages, a mix of urban and rural” [15]. This overlapping of rural and urban areas blurs urban boundaries and modifies the boundaries set by master plans [16]. These facts, mostly shared, are observed in the two study municipalities (Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4) where residential spaces continue to expand.

In the principles of urban law, the consumption of space is a social need because it allows urban populations to satisfy their most legitimate aspirations [17]. However, what is more noticeable and attracts attention is the informality in which the occupation or consumption of these spaces develops.

Obviously, the Togolese capital is experiencing irrational demographic and spatial growth and a high occupation of unstable areas. Taking the example of the research localities, we note a spatial occupation contrary to town planning standards. Which reflects the recurrence of notifications such as: “to break, see justice”, “Stop all work, see bailiff X or Y”.

The vision of the Togolese authorities is to make Togolese cities sustainable urban spaces in all dimensions of the approach. However, according to Zhang, et al. [18] sustainable development is affected by problems related to land use. Indeed, to build a sustainable city, land is the fundamental element to control [18]. For, the goal of sustainability is to seek a balance between the demands of stewardship on the one hand and the desire for a better life on the other hand [19].

As it stands, the liberal fixation on land does not ensure the short-, medium- and long-term development of the capital. Faced with this context, we are led to ask ourselves the following question: how do the largely uncontrolled spatial dynamics constitute an obstacle to the sustainable development

of greater Lomé? To answer this question, the following heuristic proposition is put forward: mainly uncontrolled spatial dynamics lead to urban instability through the occupation of unapproved and contentious areas.

The objective of this article is to show how largely uncontrolled spatial dynamics influence the sustainability of the capital.

2. Physical Setting of the Study

Located in the southwest of Togo, in the Maritime Region, Greater Lomé is located between $1^{\circ}4'50'$ and $1^{\circ}20'40'$ East longitude and between $6^{\circ}12'20''$ and $6^{\circ}9'40''$ of northern latitude. It is limited to the northeast by the lower Zio valley, to the west by the Togo-Ghana border and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. As a beach town and border town, it runs along the coastline of the Gulf of Guinea and borders Ghana at Aflao. With spatial dynamics, the city of Lomé has opened up to other areas to become “greater Lomé”. With the 2015 Urban Development Master Plan, greater Lomé is made up of the prefectures of Agoè-Nyivé and Gulf. The first is made up of 06 cantons while the second has 7. For this research, only the communes of Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4 were favored due to the recurring land problems that these areas experience (see Figure 1).

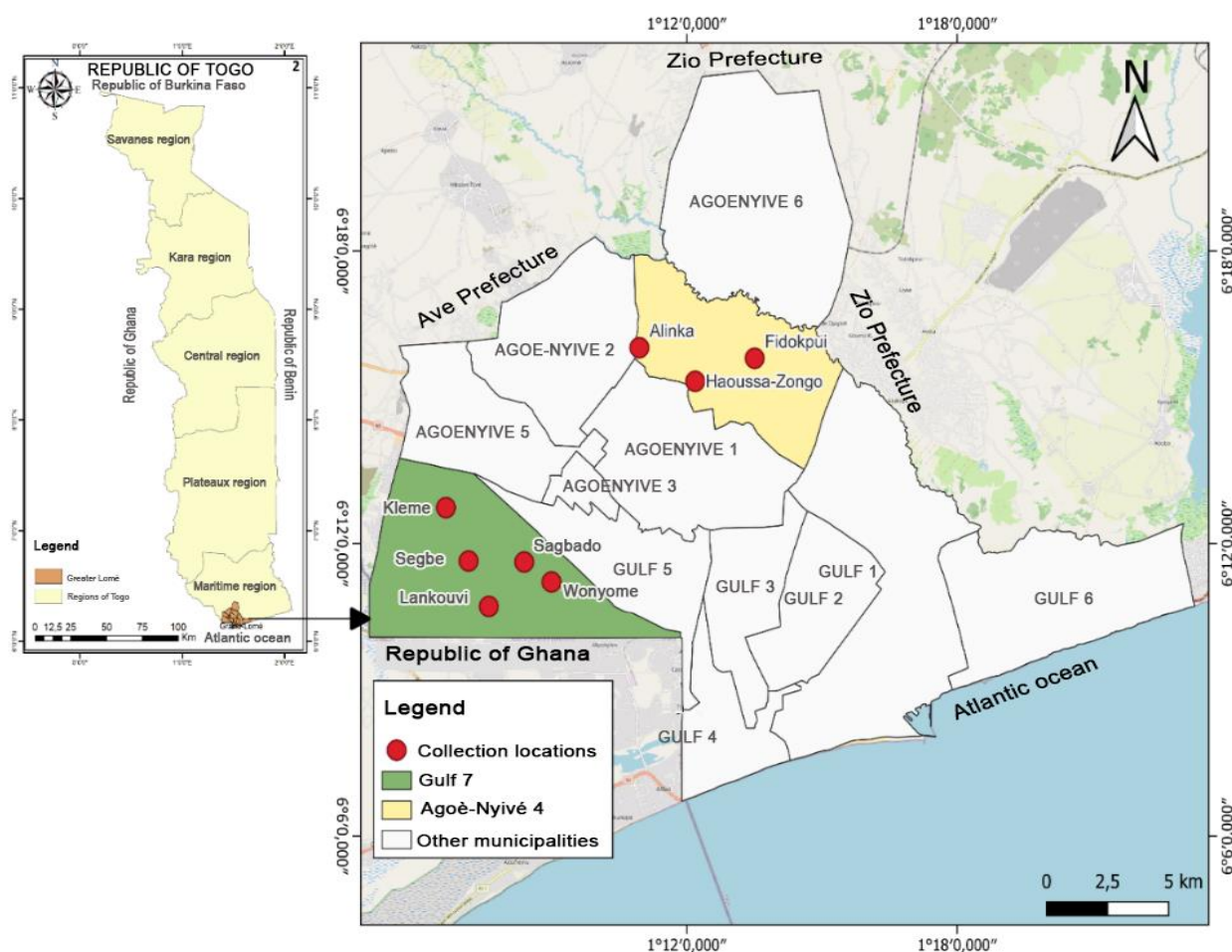


Figure 1.
Geographical location of greater Lomé and the study communes.
Source: Our field work, 2023.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Materials

3.1.1. Study Population

This research, which deals with urban growth and liberal fixation on land, involves, in the broad sense, several actors. However, for this work, the populations targeted or concerned by the quantitative survey are the landowners of the communes of Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4 in Greater Lomé. For the qualitative survey, the following resource persons were targeted: the head of the land security department of the Directorate of Cadastre, Land Conservation and Registration; town planners, judges, the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Town Planning; the heads of planning and development departments of the town halls of Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4.

Table 1.
Summary of the sample size according to the types of survey.

| Type of survey | Actors interviewed | Workforce |
|----------------|--|-----------|
| Quantitative | Landowners | 208 |
| Qualitative | Cadastre land security agents | 15 |
| | Heads of planning services for the communes of Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4 | 2 |
| | Urban planners and judges | 6 |
| | Deputy secretary of the ministry of urban planning | 1 |
| Total | - | 232 |

Source: Field survey, July 2023.

Table 1 presents the qualitative and quantitative sampling seize. In detail, 208 landowners were quantitatively interviewed. On the other hand, for the qualitative approach, a total of 24 resource people were interviewed.

3.1.2. Collection Techniques and Tools

In accordance with the methodological approaches chosen, the information collection techniques and associated tools are presented in the following table:

Table 2.
Summary table of data collection methods, techniques and tools.

| Methods | Collection techniques | Data collection tools |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Qualitative | Literature search | Content analysis grid documentary |
| | Individual interview | Interview guide |
| Quantitative | Questionnaire administration | Quiz |

Table 2 outlines the data collection methods, techniques and tools. Regarding the qualitative method, documentary research and individual interviews were the preferred collection technique. For the quantitative method, questionnaire administration was the technique adopted to collect the data.

Speaking of tools, reading Table 2 shows that the documentary content analysis grid and the interview guide are the tools chosen to collect qualitative information. On the other hand, to obtain quantitative data, the quiz was used as a collection tool.

In detail, the documentary research consisted of collecting written data related to the study problem. These include: scientific articles, books, doctoral theses, master's theses, etc. For this work, the journals of MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute) and Elsevier indexed in the Scopus database were consulted. Specifically, the documentary research focused on the following themes:

- Space consumption;
- Spatial disparity;
- Urban planning;

- Sustainable urban development;
- Land fragility;
- Land insecurity;
- Urban management.

This inventory made it possible to build a solid documentary base on the different dimensions of research. The exploration of these writings informed the development of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks of the research.

Regarding the questionnaire, it is made up of closed questions whose answers are pre-coded in order to facilitate the processing of information. The questionnaire was administered indirectly to the respondents in order to avoid possible errors. It is subdivided into four sections namely:

- Profiles of respondents;
- Land consumption and spatial disparities;
- Difficulties of sustainable land regulation in Greater Lomé;
- Perspectives for sustainable management of urban land.

The administration of the questionnaire made it possible to have numerical trends. This facilitated statistical analyzes of the results obtained in the field.

Finally, the individual interviews helped to collect the opinions of certain resource people (previously mentioned) on land occupation strategies and spatial disparities in Greater Lomé.

3.2. Methodological Approaches

For the methodological approach, the collection of information was based on quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Whatever the methodological approach considered (quantitative and qualitative), this research favored the non-probabilistic sampling technique, that is to say a technique based on the reasoned choice of the actors to be interviewed. It's about a non-probability sampling method which is determined by the respondents.

In the absence of a database providing information on landowners in the two cities, this technique consisted of gradually building a sample using references obtained from first respondents. On each field, the number zero (0) designates the resource person and n represents the saturation of the sample. This probing technique determined by respondents or *respondent-driven sampling* (RDS) was used by Wilhelm [20] for studies concerning so-called hard-to-reach populations .

3.2.1. Data Processing

3.2.1.1. Quantitative Data Processing

The quantitative data, which are collected using the KoboCollect software, were transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 22) software on Windows for statistical analyses.

Concerning the statistical analysis, the variables were summarized by the proportions followed by the calculation of their prevalence and their confidence interval at the 95% level (95% CI) according to the following formula:

$$\left[f - 1,96 \frac{\sqrt{f(1-f)}}{\sqrt{n}}, f + 1,96 \frac{\sqrt{f(1-f)}}{\sqrt{n}} \right]$$

Furthermore, the calculation of the confidence interval was done according to the lower limit and the upper limit. Formatting of tables and graphs is done with Excel software.

3.2.1.2. Qualitative Data Processing

As for the qualitative data, content analysis based on *logico- semantic and structural* methods was applied to identify the manifest and latent meaning of the information.

Emphasis was placed on the order of appearance and frequency/repetition of symbolic representations in speeches. Then, attitudes and reactions of the interviewees were interpreted. In doing so, we were able to understand what we could fundamentally miss through the collection of data on the basis of a questionnaire.

Furthermore, the principles of analysis are based on the argumentative logics that develop interviewed. So, we proceeded to study and compare the meanings of the speeches actors interviewed to highlight the systems of representation they convey. Personal experiences were then translated into collective issues in order to understand the experience of the interviewees.

4. Results

4.1. Consumption of Space in Greater Lomé: Contexts and Logic of Actors

The vision of a sustainable city, included in the government program, faces enormous challenges, including the dynamic occupation of urban land. By addressing the subject of accelerated occupation of space, we sought to understand why urban populations consume urban space? This question was the subject of field investigations and the different answers collected are presented in the table:

Table 3.
Reasons for space consumption in greater Lomé.

| City | Greater Lomé | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Effective | % | 95% CI lower terminal | 95% CI upper terminal |
| Installation (Company, shop, stores) | 45 | 21.63 | 11.232 | 19.487 |
| Family setup | 208 | 100 | 65.794 | 76.186 |
| Housing/Lease | 26 | 12.5 | 5.618 | 12.130 |
| Resale | 14 | 6.73 | 2.336 | 7.221 |
| Total | 293 | 140.86 | - | - |

Analysis of the data in [Table 3](#) shows that the reasons for spatial occupation are diverse. In greater Lomé, the family installation or home (100%) and the installation of a shop, a business or a commercial store (21.63%) mainly motivate the dynamic occupation of urban space.

Beyond satisfying the needs of one's home, space is particularly consumed in the capital as a support for Income-Generating Activities.

Long sought after for "home" needs, field data shows that land is becoming an important support for the creation of one's own business. Without doubt, we can say that old urban practices are changing into another ideology which is more commercial.

In urban literature, it is widely demonstrated that the city is in motion. These dynamic forces city dwellers to innovate, to invent themselves and to go beyond old logics. Certainly, spatial occupation for the purposes of building shops, businesses, stores and accommodation existed. But here, it is the ascendancy that these aspirations have taken in recent decades which calls for a rethinking of the priorities of Lomé residents when it comes to talking about access to land.

Moreover, this research reveals that the frantic race of Lomé residents for land no longer necessarily justifies their needs at home. On the contrary, we notice a Lomé strategist who uses space to carry out his subsistence activities. This is why it is not uncommon to find some Lomé residents living in family homes but having personal accommodation for rent or lease.

Regardless, the information received in the field shows that space consumption per inhabitant is a complex issue because the space consumed is not necessarily dedicated to personal housing, but also to economic activities and private facilities.

With a view to wanting to occupy space at all costs for the reasons discussed above, some Lomé residents have chosen and maintained the logic of informality and irregularity. Obviously, the spatial dynamics mentioned above are not without impact on the sustainable management of greater Lomé. On

the contrary, these rapid spatial extensions have led to a disorganization of land use plans. The investigations carried out in Gulf 7 and Agoè-Nyivé 4 have made it possible to present below, certain implications detrimental to the creation of a sustainable city.

4.2. Occupation of Unapproved Areas: Between Land Liberalism and State Laxity

Spatial consumption, variously motivated, takes place within a pronounced liberalism. The forms of fixing to the ground, observed in Togolese towns in general and those concerned by the research in particular, are poorly aligned with the rigor of standards. From this perspective, the visions of a sustainable city, so much advocated by the authorities, seem to be moving away from reality.

The figure provides a synoptic view of the urban fabric in greater Lomé.

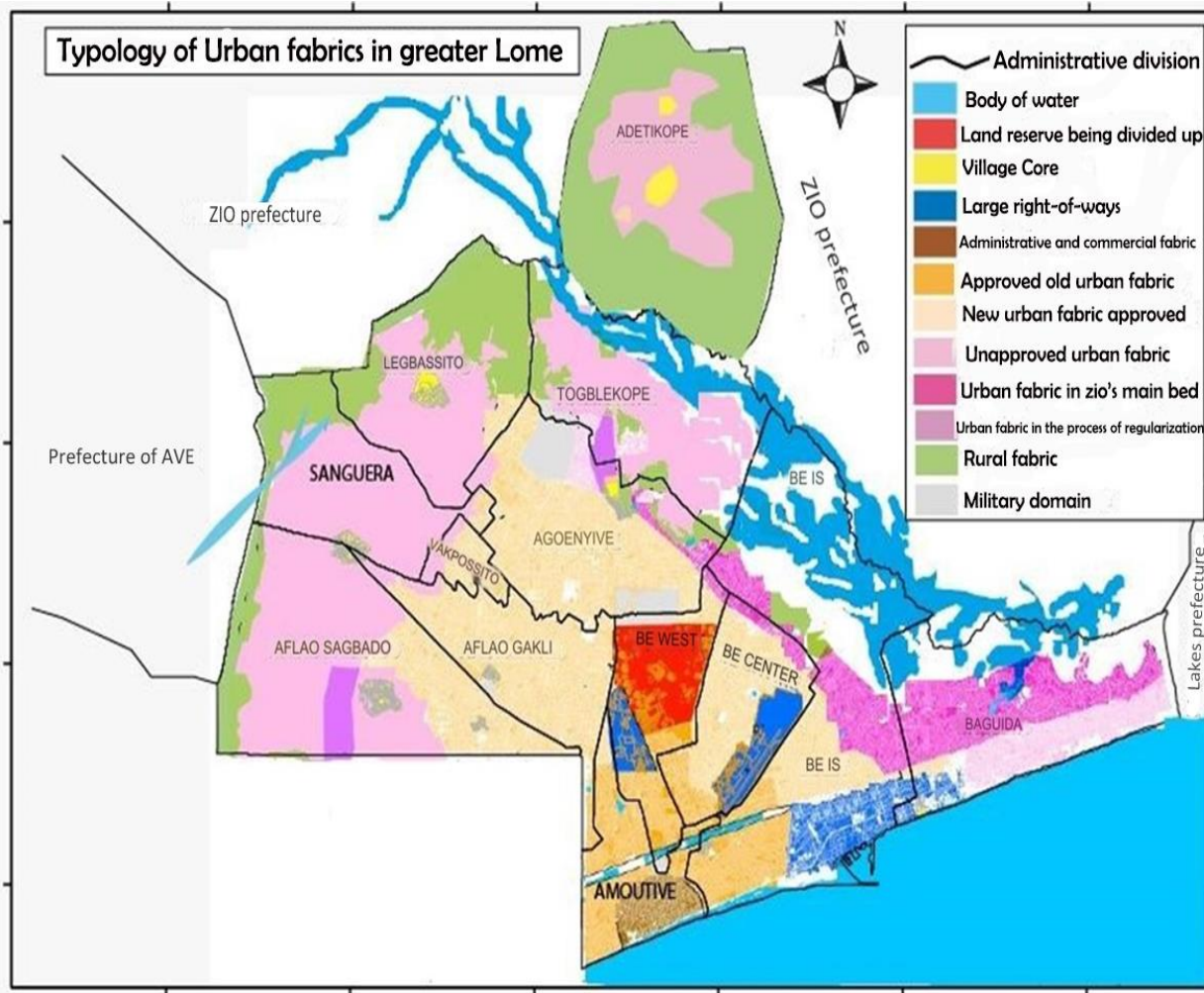


Figure 2.
Typologies of urban fabrics in greater Lomé.
Source: Authors

Figure 2 confirms an uncontrolled occupation of the urban space of greater Lomé. Looking closely, we see that the outskirts recently overtaken by urban expansion are developing informally. Particularly, we note that research localities such as belong to the unapproved urban fabric. In other words, these areas which are densely populated are not yet approved by the State. But how can populations occupy a

space not yet approved by the State? Who authorizes them? And how do they do it? For an official from the Ministry of Urban Planning, the popular city has taken precedence over the planned, organized city.

The social and land practices resulting from the sprawl of greater Lomé show a discontinuous and uncontrolled production of urban space. By observing the urban structure of the capital, we see a spatial disorganization marked by the spontaneity of habitats. The forms of spatial occupation in the research communes are part of total liberalism. The extension of urban fabrics in greater Lomé is taking place outside of all town planning standards. This carelessness or laissez-faire, in which the capital is vegetating, reflects administrative weakness and compromises the vision of sustainability that the State itself initiated.

Indeed, if urban spaces continue to be left to popular fate, that is to say a construction of the city from below, there would be almost no more space to inhabit within 15 years. And for good reason, the Lomé demographic doubles with each census and this raises alarms about land reform in greater Lomé.

Furthermore, the occupation of unapproved areas can also be explained by the lack of information on the space to be acquired. Questioning the respondents about the state of the occupied zone, the following answers were obtained and illustrated through the figures:

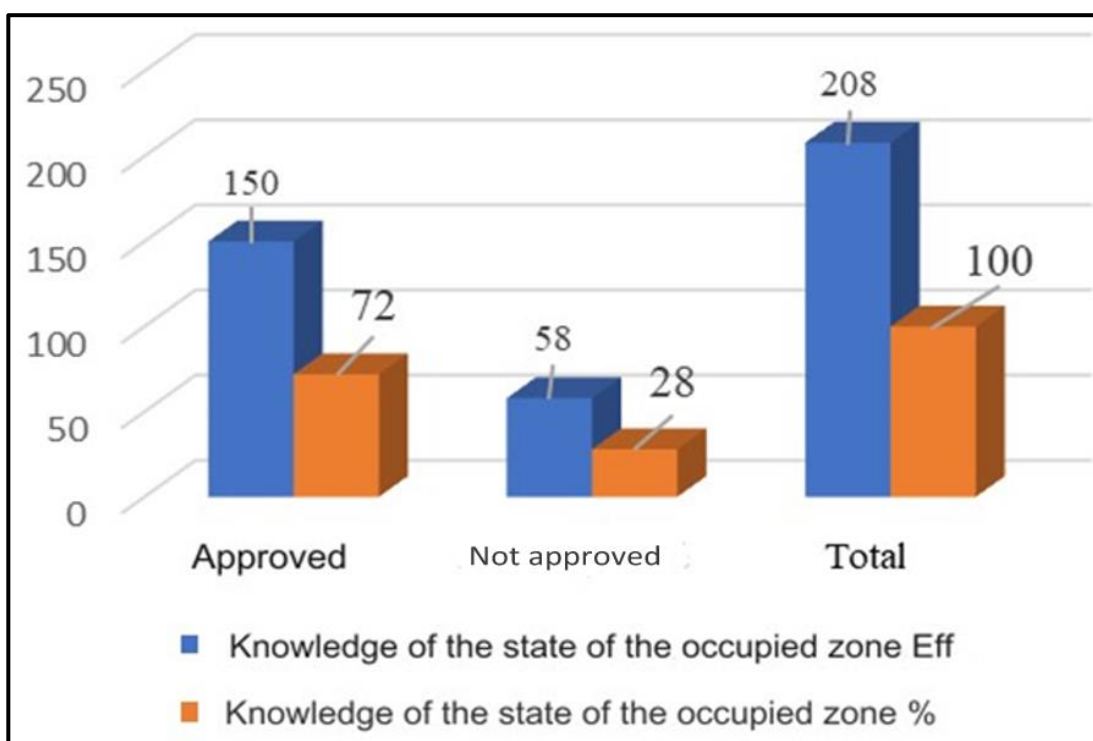


Figure 3.
Opinions of respondents on the state of their residential areas.
Source: Field survey, July 2023.

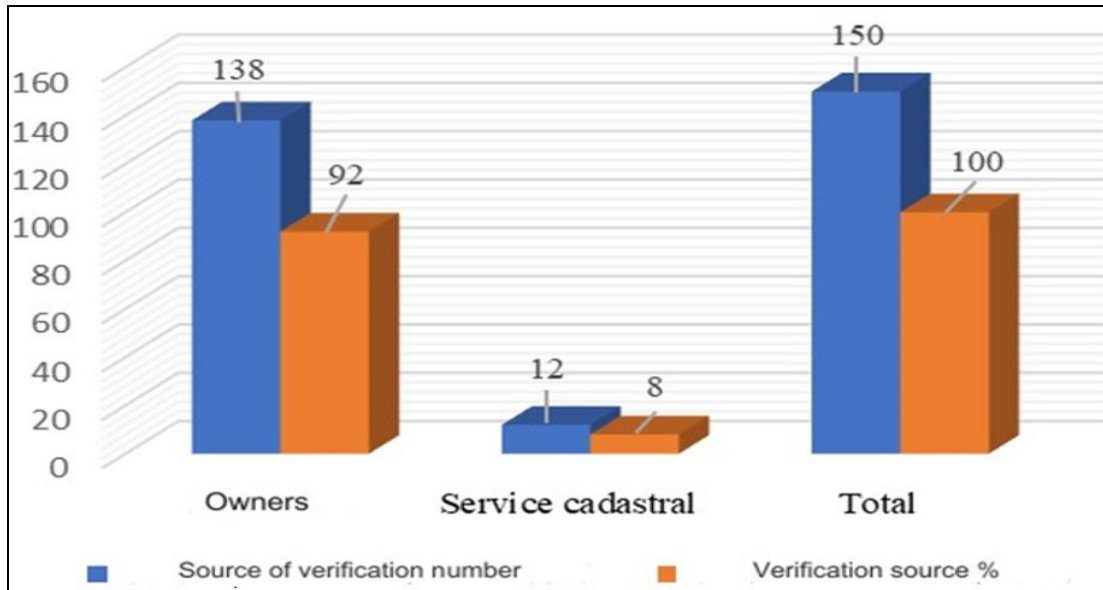


Figure 4.

Source of verification of respondents.

Source: Field survey, July 2023.

The data in [Figure 3](#) show that the majority of buyers surveyed know the state of their occupancy zone (72% for approved and 58% for not approved) before acquiring the plots. By adopting a comprehensive approach, [Figure 4](#) tells us that the majority of buyers (92%) seek information from their landowners. In other words, it is the landowners who confirm and reassure their buyers about the approval or not of the areas where their homes are located.

The data recorded in [Figure 3](#) and [4](#) show the quintessence of the problem addressed by this research. In reality, the approval of a zone comes from a ministerial decree and assumes that the essential town planning work has been carried out (subdivisions, street layouts, detection of administrative reserves, etc.). Based on this context, any individual occupying approved areas would find themselves in a position of recognition and legality. Recognition to the extent that its residential area is recognized as usable, habitable and occupiable by the competent institutions. Legality because his house or accommodation is located in an area which respects town planning standards.

Indeed, the analysis prompted by the data in [Figure 3](#) and [4](#) remains worrying when we approach the question of urban planning. According to the owners' words, buyers pride themselves on knowing the state of their living area and their land. Taken as such, it is not surprising to note that the people surveyed reassure themselves completely illegally. Which creates abundant land disputes.

In the standards, the Ministry of Urban Planning, Housing and Land Reform is the institution authorized to provide information on the state of occupation of an area. If necessary, the cadastral service can also, in view of the provisions and prerogatives, provide the same information. Indeed, the mission of the land registry is to ensure planning and land management.

The attention paid to the field data leads to the conclusion that the majority of applicants do not rely on any of these above-mentioned institutions before any land acquisition. Naturally, we can only note the illegal occupation of unapproved areas (see [Figure 2](#)) and the recurrence of land conflicts. Curiously, these actors are not at all worried. This fact seems surprising, especially since here, we are not facing a zone of tolerance. On the contrary, we are faced with environments which, for the sake of urban organization and sustainable land management, should be placed in the form of a pending zone.

The absence of these measures demonstrates the weakening and laxity of institutional power. Popular logic dominates institutional logic and the demarcation between public and private domains persists in a continual blur. In this condition, liberal fixation leads to what can be called "land waste".

If the creation of a sustainable city remains the ideal, then spatial regulation should be a non-negotiable principle. This confirms our hypothesis according to which the liberal fixation on the land in greater Lomé leads to urban instability. Instability to the extent that this deliberate occupation leads to conflicts between the occupants and the public authorities.

4.3. Fixing Yourself to the Ground at All Costs: When the Lomean Surfs on the Uninhabitable

The diffuse distribution of populations in urban space thwarts any sustainability plan. The liberal consumption of urban land leads, to a certain extent, to the occupation of administrative reserves or areas of public utility. Documentary investigations made it possible to illustrate the occupation of administrative reserves.

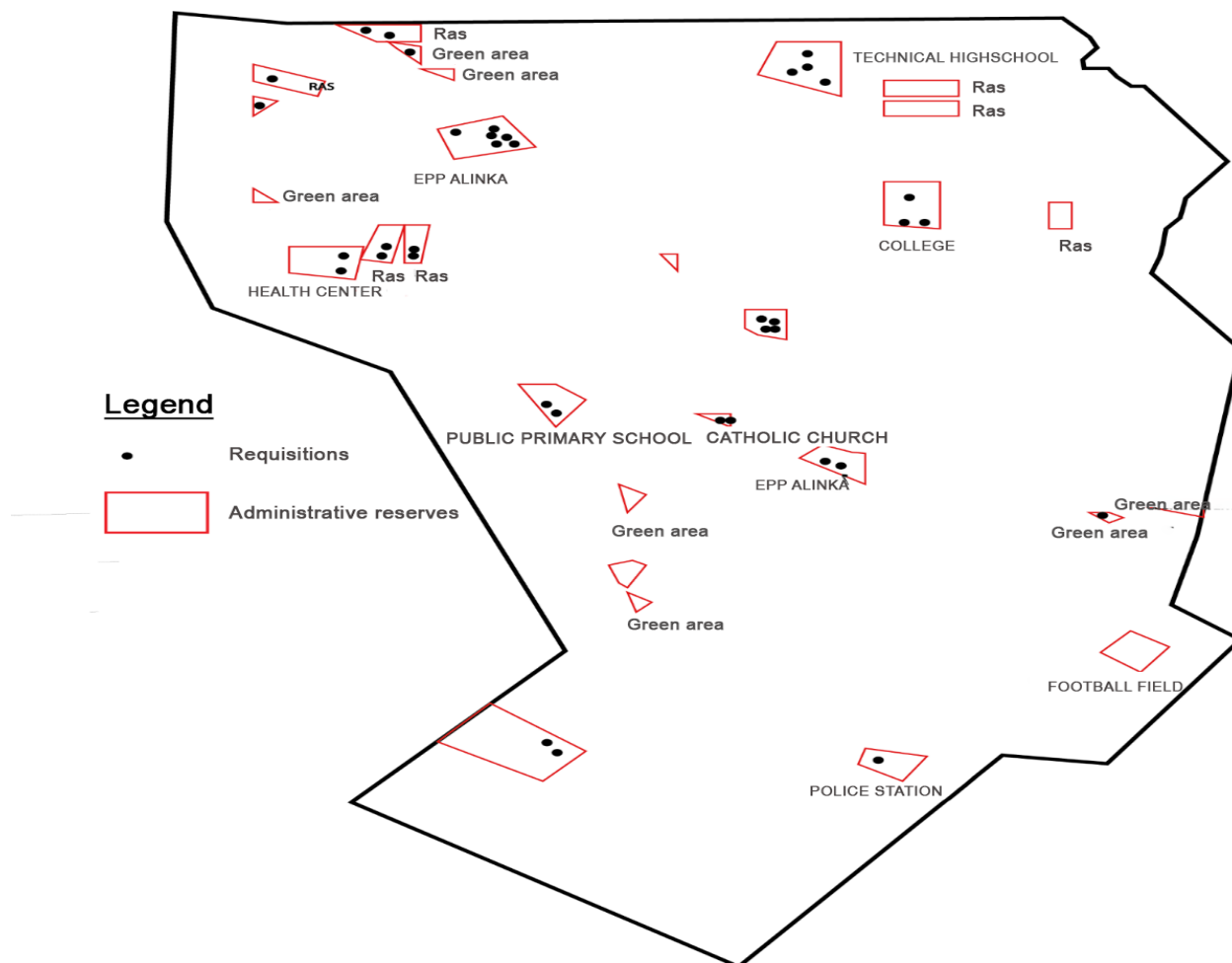


Figure 5.
Occupation of administrative reserves in Alinka (Togblé Kopé).
Source: Town Planning Department, Extracts Division 5050 of 10/16/2016.

Figure 5 presented above shows a high occupation of ARs in the Alinka area (one of the research sites). It is clear that as much as buyers rely on their landowners to know the identity of the occupied space, state domains will be compromised. As said above, the landowner can never be a reliable source when it comes to knowing the identity of the land acquired.

In urban planning standards, RAs are uninhabitable spaces. This assumes that, whatever the evolution of the land system, these areas cannot be sold. In fact, they are environments declared *non-*

aedificandi. However, for some informants, if the privatization of RAs is a persistent problem, it is the State that should be blamed.

During some field visits carried out on the ARs, it was difficult to find a marker indicating that this land is an AR or not. However, if buyers think they will enjoy their property rights over the long term, they must, as a matter of necessity, obtain information from competent institutions such as the land registry or the ministry of town planning.

The sustainable city, as theorized, does not fit well with liberalism and laxity. As the forms of spatial occupation present themselves in the capital in general and in the research localities in particular, there is no other solution for public authorities than to initiate “catch-up policies”. The urban disorder we witness today contrasts with the sustainable city. As much as the State is active in creating a sustainable city, it is dominated and overtaken by a complex, dynamic land market largely anchored in the informal sector. If it is true that the State, through history, is not the guarantor or owner of land, it does, on the other hand, have the power and the duty to plan occupations and to force city dwellers to comply with it. The occupation of the RAs is a clear desire of the populations to live in the city whatever the means. Popular logics have eroded habitability standards. The overlap between popular interests and those of the State has led to land insecurities marked in the background by evictions and expropriations. These bleak phenomena create urban instability that is detrimental to sustainable urban development policy.



Figure 6.

A house built on an administrative reserve in Sagbado (Gulf 7).

Source: Authors, June 2023.

Figure 6 shows a house built on an administrative reserve. Which causes evictions and social conflicts.

The consumption of AR strips public power of spaces that can be used to implement their actions. Indeed, in the absence of administrative areas, the State experiences difficulty in building basic services such as: schools, dispensaries, water reservoirs, etc. If we think about it, the lack of basic service in certain urban localities is justified by the informal appropriation of equipment reserves (ER).

Unable to expropriate a large number of the population, the State, in a significant *omerta*, remains distant from all recourses linked to the construction of basic services. In other words, the State lets

popular logics organize themselves to satisfy their legitimate needs. This is how we find, in greater Lomé, spider-web electrical connections, the all-out clogging of peripheral roads by city dwellers, etc. Also, it should be remembered that the Electric Energy Company of Togo only provides electricity in approved areas.

The figures illustrate spider web electrical hookups and track conditions in the search area.



Figure 7.
Spider web electrical connection at Akato (Gulf 7).

Figure 7 shows spider web electrical connections. This situation shows the complexity of access to basic social services in urbanized peripheries.



Figure 8.
Degraded service road in Alinka (Agoè-Nyivé 4).

Figure 8 illustrates the degraded state of roads in urbanized outskirts. Which creates difficulty in accessing these areas.

To another extent, failing to find an available RA, the State buys land from certain communities to satisfy an urgent urban need. This is the example of the construction of certain water reservoirs in greater Lomé.

All these situations, both abnormal and informal, complicate visions of sustainability. If the State wants to achieve the objectives of a spatially harmonious city open to the present and future generation, it must, in an appropriate proportion, readjust and execute with great monitoring, the Spatial Occupation Plans, Local Urban Planning Plans and land maps. These tools can, each in their own right, restore urban order in terms of land occupation.

5. Discussion

Land management is an important scale in the question of urban planning [4]. The rhythmic growth of greater Lomé raises a question of urban planning. The pressing desire to find shelter in the city creates land and social insecurities. For Dicker [21] the appropriation of urban spaces is subject to various conflicts and dynamic changes which weaken the sustainability of cities. At the current stage, the author believes that the policy of “laissez-faire” has had very unfortunate consequences, including urban development that is neither planned nor controlled and therefore anarchic and detrimental in its socio-economic and spatial effects. Realities which constitute major challenges in which this research is interested. For several analysts like [22] land use planning strategies have not been able to effectively resolve the problems of land sustainability in the countries of the South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. For Ronchi, et al. [23] these failures can be explained by the fact that land use planning instruments were developed in a context of land profusion.

The city is a space manipulated by individuals or groups of individuals. On this consideration, Clavel [24] writes that it is a production of men in society, a collective work. For Liu [25] land is one of the natural resources exposed to the transformative dynamics of the Anthropocene. Which allows humans to modify land through direct interventions (e.g. agriculture, soil sealing infrastructure, housing, etc.).

The freedom of actors to produce space without constraint leads to spatial consumption which undermines the sustainability of cities. Considered as such, Takili [26] emphasizes that irrational spatial and demographic growth and the occupation of unstable areas do not favor sustained and sustainable planning. Spatial inconsistencies between urban plans and regional plans, as well as actual urban developments, hinder the achievement of objectives linked to land use planning strategies [27].

In this context of spatial anarchism, Nguimalet, et al. [28] note that working-class neighborhoods are subject to forms of vulnerability physical and socio-economic (flooding, absence of sanitation services, presence of peri-urban crops).

This poorly controlled spatial organization leads [29] to see in the African city a threat to urban development inspired by Western canons. To this end, he specifies:

“City planning and urban governance in sub-Saharan Africa are described as all the evils (problematic and faulty planning, wild and spontaneous urbanization, etc.). In an in-depth analysis, we see a failure in the planning of the African city which is carried out day by day, without a plan, without a program and without apparent or institutional public control” [29].

The increase in population size and the disproportionate occupation of space that it implies leads to the need to improve urban services [30]. For this reason, Downes, et al. [31] believe that planners and policy makers increasingly need to understand the spatio-temporal evolution of cities in order to design, within the framework of sustainable development, appropriate planning tools.

The extension of urban fabrics is a crisis factor which involves city dwellers and States [22]. In this co-responsibility, the author believes that the State, as an institution of power and decision, holds the majority of responsibilities. This position finds support from Crousse [32] for whom: “the absence of state control is in all sectors of urban life and at all levels. Which makes us observe cities that are diffuse and without landmarks. According to Biernacka and Kronenberg [33] government failures constitute the first obstacles to sustainable land management. By carrying out its analyses, Neglia [34] argues that the occupation of state reserves and developed spaces observed persistently confirms a weak presence of sovereign power. The spatial evolution of cities is hampered by a lack of urban planning in general and land planning in particular [35]. According to Colsaet, et al. [36] urban sprawl is not simply the result of “market forces”, but it is also shaped by public policies. For these authors, weak or inadequate planning, subsidies for land consumption and automobile transport would increase urban sprawl. According to Arduini, et al. [30] the African state suffers from a triple deficit, notably legitimacy, institutionalization and territorial regulation. As long as institutional social control remains fragile, the result of laissez-faire, complicit in the probable, appears like destiny.

This involvement of public authorities in the planning and management of urban land is, for other analysts, a non-problem.

With great hindsight, Kpotchou [37] find an exaggeration in the qualification of the spatial organization of African cities. These authors believe that often, discourses on the dysfunction, chaos or even informality characterizing African cities are in fact based on their underlying comparison with urban planning standards and models that have accompanied the growth of Western cities.

By supporting this position, Blakime, et al. [38] invites all stakeholders to understand African cities in the broad sense, taking into account the different sectors (infrastructure, land, housing, waste management, environment), the materials of their built expressions (streets, buildings, walls, etc.) or even the forms and tools of their organization (neighborhoods, development, plans and maps, subdivisions, etc.).

This last position is understandable but must be widely revisited. Indeed, the results of this research lead us to reaffirm a certain state laxity. Crowned with regulatory and decision-making powers, it seems to us that public authorities should be more predictable, planning and regulating. However, what is happening?

Faced with the overflow of the city, a city that is moving faster than its planning and the illegal occupation of public spaces, enormous difficulties arise in terms of local governance [39]. The boundaries between private and state property are themselves transgressed episodically (private buildings spilling over into the RA). In Lomé, Blakime, et al. [38] recall that the development of peripheral districts is the work of customary land owners who escape any control of the State and local authorities. These attitudes adopted by the actors in their constant desire to live in the city have caused a violation of the rules of spatial occupation and a renewed problem of land insecurity. In this context, Steffen, et al. [39] find that changes in land use and land cover must be widely studied as an indicator of controlled urban management.

The undeveloped city has overwhelmed the developed city in recent decades. Today, the State only exercises a monopoly in the designation of land tax collectors. For Chen, et al. [40] the planning and management of urban spaces has become a difficult task in the field of urban planning. According to Goerg [41] the double face presented by cities reflects a strong growth in licit and illicit transactions. Jaglin [42] for his part, finds that the practice of informality which is widely distributed in African cities reflects a new urban reality, testimony to an informal geographical space and a confusion between private and public space. For Simmoneau [43] “the informal works; it provides land and housing for the majority of city dwellers.”

Faced with this situation, it is imperative to plan spatial occupation and ensure sustainable land control. This can be done through the participatory development of Local Urban Planning Plans, Land Use Plans and land maps. At the city scale, a land use plan identifies existing public and private spaces and also provides for the development of new urban and peri-urban green spaces [44]. Furthermore, land use planning can help identify the best options for allocating land resources based on environmental, economic and social factors [45]. This is why, for Kontokosta and Hong [46] it is not enough simply to draw up development plans. According to these authors, social equity should be taken into account in the development and use of these planning tools. Also, sustainable land use planning can be useful in preventing and mitigating the effects of other natural disasters, whether climate-related or not [47].

Land use planning initiatives are means of resolving land use disputes and achieving sustainable land use [48]. This is why Remøy and Street [49] believe that land use planning will help improve the quality and efficiency of land use.

In this condition, greater Lomé will truly be part of the sustainability process. Because the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG-11), which calls for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, covers the spatial aspect of urbanization through its land consumption indicator (indicator 11.3 .1 of the SDGs: “Ratio between the rate of land consumption and the rate of population growth” [50]. Thus, for this indicator, Schiavina, et al. [51] recall that where land conversion rates due to urban development are disproportionately high relative to population dynamics, such “growth proves to violate every premise of sustainability by which an urban area could be judged.”

This is why, Hénaff [52] through his work “The Coming City”, announces that the urban policies and projects that will be developed will now be subject to the imperatives of the sustainable city. Because, for the author, the sustainability approach is a means of building a new city whose management will ensure resilience to urban disturbances.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Cities are the dominant form of human settlement. As centers of economic and population growth, they are at the heart of several disruptions [53]. The question of land control is emerging today as one

of the essential means to contain and regulate urban growth. Spatial occupation in the cities of the South leads to a rethinking of urban planning tools.

The case of greater Lomé addressed in this research presents multiple interests, especially since the public authorities are committed to creating a sustainable city. Unconditional attachment to the ground poses a planning and urban governance problem. In this condition, this work has shown how the predominantly uncontrolled spatial dynamics constitute an obstacle to the sustainable development of greater Lomé. The different interactions between the market, the relationship between supply and demand for land and the laxity of the institutional system for regulating land use have led to a situation of great fragility [54].

Through the various results presented, it is demonstrated that liberal fixation on land leads to the occupation of unapproved areas and the privatization of administrative reserves. This situation creates urban instability marked by conflicts between public power and the population. According to Solly, et al. [54] poor management of these situations of informality generally leads to evictions and expropriations. However, Marquard, et al. [55] believe that the execution of these evictions and expropriations allows the State to have space for its public actions.

The occupation of administrative reserves strips the State of any space that could allow it to implement basic social services that are very essential to city dwellers. This leads to social disparities that are detrimental to a city that wants to be sustainable and open to present and future generations. This research in its execution had certain limitations.

Regarding the difficulties and limitations of this research, the absence of a formal database of landowners did not make it possible to reach all buyers as desired. Also, not all land maps were consulted due to certain administrative restrictions. Furthermore, several respondents, having the status of landowner, fear giving information that could harm their land holdings. Despite our confidence, the reluctance of certain informants made individual interviews complex. However, all these difficulties did not prevent the collection of necessary and relevant information. Some respondents, overwhelmed by land problems, preferred to share all their frustrations with us with the sole aim of freeing their hearts.

All in all, the field results previously presented reflect a crisis in urban governance. It is noted that the capital is produced by popular logics which go beyond the State and thwart urban planning plans. In this context, what should the State do?

This research, as part of an action-research approach, suggests that public authorities initiate catch-up urban policies. In fact, it is:

- *Redesign Land Use Plans to adapt them to the current context;*
- *Develop and execute in a participatory approach with the populations, Local Urban Plans and land maps.*

These tools can, each in their own right, contribute to planning spatial occupation and restoring urban order. For Delphin, et al. [56] the organization of the land information area through these tools must integrate the built or artificial environment by mainly combining cadastral and topographical data which can also include topographical, environmental and natural resource issues. From this moment, it would be possible to implement in a practical way the much-desired sustainable urban development policies.

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Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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