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7 Spatio-physical Power and Social Control Strategies of the Colonial State in Africa: The Case of CDC Workers' Camps in Cameroon

Introduction

Among the many indelible imprints of European colonialism on the landscape of African countries are company towns. Defined as settlements built, owned and operated by corporations or individual investors, company towns have been influential in countries undergoing rapid economic development.¹ As an instrument of “economic pioneering”, these towns played a major role in opening up previously unexploited regions in Europe and North America from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.² In Africa, these towns were built and used by colonial authorities not only to open up previously unexploited areas but also as instruments of power and social engineering. In the first instance, company towns, and especially workers' camps, were employed to articulate the power of colonial authorities in built space.³ In the second instance, company towns and the concomitant lifestyle-change they engendered were used as a conduit for transmitting Eurocentric ideals of work and general conduct to the worker. Despite their presence as a conspicuous feature of the landscape, company towns remain a largely ignored topic in academic discourse in Cameroon and other erstwhile colonial states. Consequently, many questions about company towns are yet to be answered. What is their form and function in developing countries? In what ways did/do they contribute to the realization of colonial/postcolonial development goals? This chapter seeks to address these questions. In particular, it employs workers' camps and company towns of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) to show how such facilities were, and continue to serve as, tools of power and social control in a developing country.

1 John D. Porteous, “The Nature of the Company Town,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 51 (1970).

2 Porteous, “The Nature of the Company Town.” James B. Allen, *The Company Town in the American West* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma University Press, 1966).

3 Ambe J. Njoh, *Planning Power: Town Planning and Social Control in Colonial Africa* (London/New York: University College London Press, 2007).

This contribution takes off in the next section with an overview of the power theoretical framework. This is followed with a brief history and description of CDC employee housing as an important feature of built space in Cameroon. A subsequent section analyzes company towns as an instrument for the articulation of power and maintenance of social order in the built environment of colonial and postcolonial Cameroon. The chapter ends with a discussion of the future of company towns as well as some suggestions for further research on the subject.

Power in Urban Planning Discourse

One factor that appears to have eluded the attention of analysts for a long time is the importance of physical space in the articulation of power in social intercourse. This situation significantly changed once urban planning critics began challenging the view of planning as a neutral tool designed to promote spatial order and conceived of planning as a tool of power and social control.⁴ A foremost social critic, Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, characterized planning as a tool for expressing negative institutional oppression.⁵ On this score, he referred to Jeremy Bentham's 1791 plan for the *Panopticon*. The *Panopticon* was an elaborate plan for an incarceration facility.⁶ Its most conspicuous features included a semi-circular structure, a centrally-located inspection ledge which was circumscribed by cells, a shrewdly designed lighting system, and a set of wooden blinds. This latter feature would ensure that the prison guards could see, but could not be seen by, the inmates. This design would be effective in impressing upon the inmates that they are under the constant watch of the

4 Ambe J. Njoh and Liora Bigon, "The Toponymic Inscription Problematic in Urban Sub-Saharan Africa: From Colonial to Postcolonial Times," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 50 (2013). Ambe J. Njoh, "Urban Planning as a Tool of Power in Africa," *Planning Perspectives* 24 (2009). Nicola Cooper, "Urban Planning and Architecture in Colonial Indochina," *French Cultural Studies* 11 (2000). Kim Dovey, *Framing Places Mediating Power in Built Form* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999). Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1997). Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonialism Urbanism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Anthony D. King, "Exporting Planning: The Colonial and Neo-colonial Experience," in *Shaping an Urban World*, ed. Gordon E. Cherry (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980). Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

5 Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," in *Michel Foucault, Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 166–182.

6 Foucault, "The Politics of Health."

prison guards. This would ensure that inmates behave according to the dictates of the powers. In this case, physical objects – including the set of wooden blinds, the centrally-located inspection ledge and semi-circular structure – would contribute to making the inmates behave in ways they would ordinarily not, or perform tasks in a manner they would not otherwise.

The articulation of power in urban space can be seen as an extension of the use of physical objects to discipline as in the case of inmates in facilities such as the *Panopticon*. It is in this light that strategies to manipulate space can be characterized as tools of power.⁷ Dovey has identified five different ways, including force, coercion, seduction, manipulation, and segregation, in which urban planning has been employed to articulate such power.⁸ Force in built space entails the use of physical structures designed to confine individuals within a certain locale. Coercion alludes to the latent use of force wherein there is a threat but not the actual use of force. This type of force finds expression in built space through the use of buildings of grandiose scale and/or embellished with superfluous décor. Such buildings are often designed to advertise the resourcefulness of their owners. Seduction refers to tactics and strategies promoting an idea, artefact or way of life. Efforts on the part of colonizers to acculturate and assimilate the colonized typically involved seduction. Segregation entails the construction of boundaries or pathways for the purpose of separating or compartmentalizing built space along racial, socio-economic, or other lines. Efforts to segregate human settlements along racial lines by authorities in colonial Africa are illustrative.⁹ Concomitant with this is often an effort to impose a socially constructed hierarchical structure on the affected groups. In colonial East and Southern Africa, human settlements were divided into three hierarchically arranged zones to accommodate Europeans, colored people comprising mainly people of Indian descent, and members of the native population.¹⁰

Colonialism and Plantation Agriculture in Cameroon

Cameroon was initially colonized by the Germans (1884–1916). However, Bismarck, the German Chancellor, had extended imperial protection to the

7 Njoh, “Urban Planning.” Cooper, “Urban Planning.” Çelik, *Urban Forms*.

8 Dovey, *Framing Places*.

9 Njoh, “Urban Planning.” Liora Bigon, “Bubonic Plague, Colonial Ideologies, and Urban Planning Policies: Dakar, Lagos, and Kumasi,” *Planning Perspectives* 31 (2016).

10 Njoh, “Urban Planning.”

territory in 1882, two years before the formal onset of the colonial era. The Germans were attracted to Cameroon mainly by the country's agricultural potential.¹¹ Consequently, soon after the formal annexation of the territory on 12 July 1884, German colonial authorities proceeded speedily to convert the land around Mount Cameroon into German Crown land. By 1885, according to some accounts, the German colonial government under Von Puttkamer had confiscated approximately 400 square miles of land in said area.¹² This resulted in the displacement of thousands of Bakweri people – that is, natives of the Mount Cameroon region. In fact, the German colonial land confiscation plan included a provision that encamped most of the displaced persons in reservations (*Reservate*).

The encampment of members of the indigenous population, whom colonial authorities pejoratively called “natives”, in reserves was not the only scheme concocted by German colonial authorities to free land for plantation agriculture. Another scheme designed to accomplish this objective entailed drastically reducing the quantity of land available to members of the indigenous population. This scheme was effectively implemented in Tiko.¹³ During the German colonial era, Tiko, then known as Keka, was a small fishing village on the Atlantic Coast at the foot of Mount Cameroon. A number of soil tests conducted by the German colonial government in 1892 attested to Tiko's suitability for plantation agriculture.¹⁴ The revelation heightened the German colonial government's desire to procure the land for agro-plantation development purposes. The government's strategy to realize this desire entailed conducting a census. The census, which was completed in 1908, revealed that Tiko contained 50 adult males.¹⁵ In 1911, the colonial government crafted a plan that dedicated 300 hectares to Tiko's population on the basis of six hectares per adult male or family. Within the broader scope of this scheme, the German colonial government declared all of the land outside of the aforementioned 300 hectares in the region as “vacant/unoccupied”. Also designated as property of the German Crown, the “vacant/unoccupied” land was placed at the disposal of private agro-plantation companies in 1912. Two private German companies – the African Fruit Company and Holforth Company – were among the first to establish farms in the Tiko area. These two firms joined others, such as Woerman

¹¹ Njoh, *Planning Power*.

¹² Charley K. Meek, *Land Tenure and Land Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons* (London: H.M.S.O. Colonial Office, 1957).

¹³ Njoh, “Urban Planning.” Ambe J. Njoh, “Development Implications of Colonial Land and Human Settlement Schemes in Cameroon,” *Habitat International* 26 (2002).

¹⁴ Njoh, “Development Implications.”

¹⁵ Njoh, “Urban Planning,” 196.

and Jantzen und Thormalen, that were already operating agro-plantations in the Mount Cameroon region.¹⁶

One of the nagging problems encountered by agricultural firms related to the scarcity of workers. This problem was compounded by the unwillingness of members of the indigenous population to work for the Germans whose land grabbing and other proclivities they vehemently detested.¹⁷ As a result, the firms resorted to recruiting workers from the hinterland. This triggered yet another problem – that of retaining workers in places geographically far-removed from their places of birth. As part of efforts to address this problem, plantation operators decided to develop living facilities for their workers. This marked the beginning of employment-tied housing schemes in the territory.

German colonial rule in Cameroon came to an abrupt end in 1918 as an outcome of World War I. With the departure of the Germans, Cameroon became a Mandate Territory of the League of Nations, forerunner to the United Nations. The League moved to divide the territory into two unequal parts of four-fifths and one-fifth. The larger portion was placed under the colonial control of France while the smaller part – Northern and Southern Cameroons – was placed under the British. The German plantations were located in Southern Cameroons and remained under the management of German entrepreneurs as Custodian of Enemy Property subsequent to the end of World War I.¹⁸ This arrangement continued until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. At this point, the Nigerian Government, through which the British colonial authorities administered the Cameroons, bought the plantations.

In 1946, the British colonial government in Nigeria enacted two important measures that significantly changed the status of the plantations. These measures comprised mainly two ordinances, Ordinance No. 38 and Ordinance No. 39.¹⁹ Ordinance No. 38 of 1946 empowered the colonial Governor to acquire and use the land for the common good of the indigenous population of Southern Cameroons. Ordinance No. 39 of 1946 created the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) as a statutory body to assume control of the erstwhile German agro-plantations. The CDC assumed formal control of these plantations, which were mainly located on the southern and southwestern slopes of Mount Cameroon, on 1 January 1947.

¹⁶ Njoh, "Urban Planning." Meek, *Land Tenure*.

¹⁷ Meek, *Land Tenure*.

¹⁸ Meek, *Land Tenure*.

¹⁹ Meek, *Land Tenure*.

CDC Workers' Camps

The birth of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) coincided with a time when colonial powers in Africa were under pressure to afford the colonial project a humane face. Consequently, colonial powers embarked on programs and projects to improve social conditions in the colony. In Cameroon, colonial authorities implemented these programs as part of the British Colonial Development and Welfare Act of the 1940s. In this regard, and as Meek noted, the CDC adopted an ambitious program designed to provide “up-to-date accommodation for its resident labour force of some 20,000 men.”²⁰ Thus, the corporation's initial welfare-related initiative included the provisioning of the following:

- Workers' housing, a project that required a capital outlay of £2,250,000;
- Facilities for universal primary education for children of its employees;
- Medical facilities, including health posts, dispensaries, and well-equipped hospitals.

The CDC operated four categories of worker housing, corresponding with the following classifications of workers:²¹

- Laborer housing, comprising multi-units of one room (2.70 m × 2.70 m), a kitchen (1.50 m × 2.00 m), and communal toilet facilities (latrines);
- Junior clerical staff housing, comprising single, duplex, triplex, and sometimes multi-units of one bedroom, one living room, a kitchen, and communal latrines;
- Intermediate staff housing, comprising one-bedroom self-contained duplex units;
- Senior staff quarters, comprising well-furnished three- and sometimes four-bedroom bungalows, each of which was equipped with a bar, a large kitchen, a two-car garage, servants' quarters, a large garden, and an orchard as well as lawns that were catered for by company laborers. In a few cases, senior staff housing units were enclosed within a fence and a gate manned by armed guards.

The term *company town* as used here is intended to capture the entire assemblage of housing units of all the categories described above, including the concomitant facilities such as company stores, club houses, health, recreation, and education facilities. The narrower term *camp* is used to refer to a locale containing mainly

²⁰ Meek, *Land Tenure*, 368.

²¹ Njoh, “Urban Planning.”

(low-income) workers' housing units without the concomitant facilities. However, it is worth noting that facilities such as the club houses and certain recreational facilities such as golf courses and tennis courts have usually been reserved for the senior cadre. Housing units for members of this group of workers have typically been far-removed from areas housing other classes of employees. During the hey-days of the colonial era, these units were reserved for European employees of the corporation. The units have typically been set on spacious parcels of land complete with lawns and gardens that until today are cared for by CDC laborers. Borrowing from Porteous, we identify the following as constituting five of the main features of CDC company towns: spatial segregation, gridiron physical layout, uniformity of style, spatial isolation, and physical expression of economic enterprise.²²

Spatial segregation. This entails the distribution of housing units either by the socioeconomic class or race of their occupants. Racial segregation in these towns was the norm during the colonial era. At the time, the managers and other senior staff of the CDC were exclusively of European extraction, and their residential facilities were physically far-removed from those of the African employees. In addition, they were typically perched atop higher elevations overlooking these quarters.

The company towns of CDC have, in effect, been comprised of three distinct living quarters that can be respectively designated as laborers' quarters (Fig. 7.1 and 7.2), junior clerical staff quarters, intermediate staff quarters (Fig. 7.3) and senior staff quarters (Fig. 7.4).

Basic amenities such as electricity constituted standard equipment in housing units throughout the towns. The towns have also been typically equipped with potable water. However, while public standpipes provided water for low-income quarters, housing units in the intermediate and senior staff quarters have been equipped with indoor plumbing facilities. Other fringe benefits for residents of CDC company towns – especially at the twilight, and immediately subsequent to the demise, of the colonial era – included “free” healthcare at CDC dispensaries, clinics and hospitals, low-cost supplies at CDC company stores, and subsidized funerals/burials upon the death of an employee.

Gridiron physical layout. One peculiarity of CDC company towns or workers' camps remains their physical layout, which is in conformity with the gridiron pattern. The streets orderly intersect at right angles and are flanked by housing units. However, except in the junior clerical staff quarters, there is a noticeable absence of physical planning and woefully inadequate sanitation facilities. In this latter regard, CDC camps are notorious for having only a few toilets to be shared by several families.

²² Porteous, “The Nature of the Company Town.”

Figure 7.1: A new CDC camp under construction: laborer camps. Notice the well-aligned buildings.

Source: Ambe Njoh.

Figure 7.2: Typical housing unit for a ranking low-income employee, Moliwe.

Source: Tabrey Construction, Buea, Cameroon and Ambe Njoh.

Figure 7.3: Intermediate Staff Quarters, Moliwe.
Source: Tabrey Construction, Buea, Cameroon and Ambe Njoh.

Figure 7.4: Typical house for a senior level employee at CDC.
Source: Tabrey Construction, Buea, Cameroon and Ambe Njoh.

An example of these toilets, which are typically of the bucket variety, is shown in Fig. 7.5. In contrast, housing units in the intermediate staff quarters, and especially those in the senior staff quarters, are served by well-aligned streets and furnished with enough space for gardening. However, it is worth noting that the streets and buildings in these once exquisite quarters are currently suffering from severe physical and functional obsolescence. The manager's building in Fig. 7.6.

Figure 7.5: Communal bucket toilet, CDC Camp, Moliwe (notice the bucket-holding compartments at the base of the building).

Source: Tabrey Construction, Buea, Cameroon and Ambe Njoh.

exemplifies this phenomenon. As a feature, the gridiron layout is a shared feature of all the living quarters.

The feature is rendered more conspicuous in the low-income districts by their congested spatial pattern. It is, however, less noticeable in the senior staff quarters where the housing units are sparsely distributed. Thus, when Njoh likens the structure of CDC camps to that of military barracks, he is talking of the low-income districts.²³ As shown on Fig. 7.1, the barrack-like structure of such districts in CDC company towns is obvious.

Uniformity of Style. This feature, as Porteous observed,²⁴ is characteristic of English company towns built before World War II. It is therefore no wonder that when the CDC, which emerged under the auspices of British colonial authorities in Southern Cameroons, embarked on a course to develop housing for their workers, they incorporated this feature. However, the reasons for this uniformity in Cameroon and in England differ. For the latter, one reason for the uniformity is that the building materials were “invariably those available locally.”²⁵ Paradoxically, imported materials from Europe are among the features that

²³ Njoh, “Urban Planning.”

²⁴ Porteous, “The Nature of the Company Town.”

²⁵ Porteous, “The Nature of the Company Town,” 135.

Figure 7.6: CDC Manager's House atop a hill, Moliwe.

Source: Tabrey Construction, Buea, Cameroon and Ambe Njoh.

embellished the uniformity of buildings in CDC camps. Njoh draws attention to this point:

In contrast to the assorted housing units in the surrounding environment, housing units in plantation camps were not only of identical design, but were also constructed of modern materials such as cement blocks (for the walls), steel (for the door and window shutters and frames) and aluminum sheets (for the roofs).²⁶

Arguably the most important aspect of uniformity in the camps is the architectural style. As Fig. 7.1 shows, all the buildings are constructed based on a common blueprint. The last aspect of the uniformity worth noting is the finishing, particularly the painting, as the buildings in any given living quarter are usually painted the same color.

Spatial isolation. The CDC camps, like all company towns in general, are single-purpose entities designed to provide housing for workers. Thus, by design, company towns are usually located in places where the companies do business. In the case of CDC camps, they have historically been located in agro-plantation milieus such as large -scale farms for banana (e.g. Ekona Yard at its inception), rubber (e.g. Upper and Middle Costains, Tiko), oil palm (e.g. Bota and Middle Farms, Limbe), and tea (e.g. Tole, Buea) (Fig. 7.7).

²⁶ Njoh, "Urban Planning," 199.

Figure 7.7: Moliwe Camp exemplifies spatial isolation.

Source: Ambe Njoh.

These camps, and especially those of a smaller variety such as Saxon Horf (near Sasse, Buea), Mondoni (near Muyuka), and Idenau (near Limbe), have always been in remote locales. It is only in recent times, and thanks to urbanization, that socio-economically heterogeneous populations have been encroaching upon them.

Physical expression of economic enterprise. No account of CDC company towns or camps can be deemed complete without a word about the omnipresence of some agro-plantation-related activity. During the colonial and immediate postcolonial era, residents of these towns were acquainted with the bustling sounds and noxious odors of factories (e.g. the rubber factories of Middle Costains, Tiko), or palm oil mills (e.g. Bota and Mondoni). These residents were also familiar with noises from busy docks, wharves, and railway termini (e.g. Likomba, Tiko and Bota, Limbe).

CDC Company Towns as a Tool of Power and Social Control

To understand CDC company towns as a tool of power and social control, one needs to recall their origins. All corporations that operated in Africa during the colonial era were expected to contribute to the attainment of colonial development

goals.²⁷ One of these goals, although hardly ever avowed, was the reinforcement of colonial power in colonized territories. The development of company towns constitutes one way in which the CDC has bolstered the colonial and postcolonial governments' power in built space in Cameroon. A more immediate goal of the company towns has been to instill in the workers the Western work ethic, minimize absenteeism, and, above all, facilitate employee retention. Applying Dovey's instruments to articulate power in built space,²⁸ the remainder of this paper is pre-occupied with elaborating these points.

Force as an instrument of power. Physical features such as concrete walls, barbed-wire fences, and armed guards constitute visible and generously applied elements of force in built space. Recently, 20 CDC guards completed military training at Cameroon's Military Training Center in Koutaba. The corporation, however, did more than fence or install armed guards.

In many cases, these facilities are situated in isolated and secluded locales. Thus, elements of active force, in the form of armed guards, or elements of passive force, in the form of physical barriers or geographic distance, serve to guarantee the security of the camps or company towns. As in the case of Foucault's "Great Confinement", the strategic use of space and physical barriers nullifies the need for brute or military force as a means of assuaging real or potential threats to the camps and/or company towns. To be sure, the use of barriers and guards is intended to accomplish other objectives such as discouraging loitering and absenteeism by workers.

Coercion as an instrument of power. The expression of coercion in built space is similar to the use of force. However, coercion typically involves the use of artefacts or symbols that threaten, but do not actually use, force. As Marcuse stated, "coercion has physical force only implicitly behind it."²⁹ As an instrument of power, coercion finds expression in CDC camps/company towns through restrictions on the use of space. For instance, residents of low-income quarters have been forbidden from using recreational and other facilities in the senior staff quarters. This was especially true during the colonial era when residents of the senior staff quarters were exclusively of European extraction. At the time, racial residential segregation was also employed as an instrument of coercion. With the demise of colonialism and the concomitant departure of European residents, segregation as an instrument of coercion has been institutionalized along socio-economic lines. Physical barriers separating the low- from the high-income quarters

²⁷ Njoh, "Urban Planning."

²⁸ Dovey, *Framing Places*.

²⁹ Peter Marcuse, *The Forms of Power and the Forms of Cities: Building on Charles Tilly* (Springer Science: Building Media, 2010), 342.

are not the only social markers of exclusion in CDC company towns. Rather, the paved streets, manicured lawns, spacious yards and gigantic buildings that are unique to the senior staff quarters also serve as symbols of domination. The sheer size of these buildings is meant to advertise the resourcefulness of their owners;³⁰ it is also intended to subdue those over whom their occupants have supervisory authority without the need to resort to force.

Another variant of coercion that has been given physical expression in CDC company towns is internal surveillance. Here, the choice of elevated sites for the managers' residential facilities has two power-related objectives. The first is to symbolize and dignify the dominance of managerial power. The other is to facilitate internal surveillance and security. In this regard, and especially during the colonial era, the sites of these facilities were carefully selected to overlook the low-lying quarters of the low-income workers. Here, coercion is invariably manifested to the extent that those in the low-lying districts, the managed, are under the constant gaze of those at the elevated sites, the managers.³¹

Seduction as an instrument of power. Seduction entails the use of tactics designed to coax people into adopting a certain way of life and its attendant artefacts. This form of power is typically articulated in built space through the use of imported building materials, not because of their scientifically-proven superior quality but as a means of promoting a preferred culture. In the case of CDC company towns, it is no accident that building materials imported from Europe have been used in the construction process since the colonial era. Another Eurocentric feature of CDC company towns with far-reaching implications for acculturation is building design. For instance, the housing units for intermediate and senior level staff are of the self-contained variety, complete with kitchens. This effectively renders impossible the use of firewood, a well-known traditional African cooking fuel. Instead, occupants of the units are compelled to use natural gas, an imported cooking fuel. In addition, the CDC has effectively employed complex propaganda campaigns to promote Eurocentric culture in Cameroon. A common strategy in this regard is through screening of movie shows. Such shows constituted a staple of the entertainment diet that the CDC fed its employees in the colonial and immediate postcolonial period. Thus, as Njoh argued, "seduction is a potent and complex form of 'power over'."³² In addition, during the mentioned period, the corporation operated its own primary schools whose curricula were replicas of

³⁰ Cooper, "Urban Planning." Çelik, *Urban Forms*.

³¹ c.f. Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (Milton Park, Abington, UK: Routledge, 1976).

³² Njoh, "Urban Planning," 303.

British elementary schools. Furthermore, they instituted home economics classes designed to train workers' daughters and wives with European housekeeping skills.

Another element of Eurocentric culture in the spatial structure of CDC camps is the gridiron pattern. This was designed to promote a Eurocentric sense of order and economic efficiency. The small rooms that are standard for laborer or low-income housing, the dominant unit in CDC camps, are meant to encourage nuclear family sizes, a conspicuous aspect of Western families. It is clear that the one-room tiny housing units in the low-income quarters cannot conveniently accommodate a typical African family. This was especially true during the colonial era when African families were mostly polygamous. The history of colonialism in Africa is replete with accounts of Europeans working indefatigably to discourage polygamy and large families. In this regard, Bigon and Njoh noted that the Germans, Cameroon's first colonial masters, levied an extra head tax on men for each additional wife beyond the first.³³ Another feature of the camps suggesting that their founders were bent on promoting Eurocentric culture relates to toponymic inscription.³⁴ Here, there was a conscious effort to christen camps after European places or persons. Camp names such as Upper Costains and Middle Costains (in Tiko) and Saxon Hoff (near Sasse, Buea) illustrate this tendency. The Costains were named after the British construction company that built them.

Manipulation as an instrument of power. Manipulation includes efforts on the part of the state or agents acting on its behalf to bamboozle, and deceive, the citizenry. Most cases of manipulation involve the state or its agents distorting scientific knowledge to facilitate attainment of some desired cultural, social, political or economic objective. Instances of such manipulation with implications for spatial planning include the use of race or culture as a basis for access to socioeconomic goods and services. As already noted, CDC company towns were segregated by race during the colonial era. Manipulation in CDC company towns typically involves the supplanting of indigenous practices with Western equivalents. It also includes the use or misuse of (pseudo-)scientific knowledge to mislead the citizenry into using built space in a manner designed to achieve some goals of the governing authorities. Therefore, manipulation as a form of power thrives on the ignorance of the target population. The implied relationship between knowledge and power here validates Francis Bacon's familiar maxim that "knowledge is power." It is worth noting that CDC spatial planners dating back to the colonial era have always been uniquely knowledgeable in the version of planning – modernist

³³ Bigon and Njoh, "The Toponymic Inscription Problematic."

³⁴ Ambe J. Njoh, "Toponymic Inscription as an Instrument of Power in Africa: The Case of Colonial and Post-colonial Dakar and Nairobi," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52 (2016). Njoh and Bigon, "The Toponymic Inscription Problematic."

planning – that was one of the leading European export commodities of the mid-eighteenth to nineteenth century. Accordingly, knowledge of modernist urban planning rose to become an important source of power. Foucault sheds light on this phenomenon in one of his oft-cited works, *Power/Knowledge*.³⁵ For Foucault, there can be no power relationship without the correlative establishment of a field of knowledge. Similarly, there is never a body of knowledge without some form of power relation.

Segregation and power. The segregation question attained its zenith and assumed its most consequential form in Cameroon during the colonial era. In the context of CDC camps of the colonial era, the power of the colonial state was employed to bolster and legitimize the perceived superiority of Europeans over “racial others”. By racially segregating CDC company towns, authorities were able to effectively control the movement of workers, especially the laborers. Racial segregation also enhanced the power of the European managers over their African employees by facilitating the former’s surveillance of the latter. In contemporary terms, confining workers within a geographically or physically delineated space, and focalizing surveillance equipment on this space, has often been enough as a control measure. But the potency of spatial segregation in bolstering the power of “managers” can be appreciated at yet another level: low-income-only districts occasioned by segregation facilitate efforts to quell workers’ riots, and the use of basic service provisioning to low-income districts for social control purposes – thus, supplying basic services as a reward for compliance and withholding them as punishment for recalcitrance or non-compliance.

Summary and Conclusion

The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) was created by the British colonial government in 1946. Rather early in its evolution, the corporation was preoccupied with the development of company towns, and especially workers’ camps. This paper contends that these towns and camps did more than serve to accommodate CDC workers. They were designed, constructed, maintained, and managed as part of the broader colonial project. In this regard, the physical and spatial planners’ expertise was summoned by the colonial state to maintain social order and articulate power in built space. The demise of colonialism did not witness a waning of the role of CDC company towns and camps in the geopolitical context of Cameroon. Rather, these facilities continue to serve as tools to enhance attainment

35 Foucault, “The Politics of Health.”

of laudable goals such as accommodating workers. During the colonial era, the paper contends, the facilities were especially considered viable tools for attaining rather covert goals of the colonial project, such as maintaining racial residential segregation, controlling workers' movement, disciplining workers, and facilitating exploitation of the labor power of workers. With the demise of colonialism, the indigenous leadership of the corporation has continued to incorporate company towns in their efforts to articulate power and maintain social order in built space. The specific instruments of power and social control often summoned for this purpose include force, coercion, seduction, manipulation, and segregation. This use of the opportunity to alter spatial structures to accomplish covert goals of the state is not unique to the CDC. Rather, it has always been part of modernist planning since its emergence in Europe in the 1800s. This suggests that in order to understand the purpose of planning projects it requires looking beyond official pronouncements avowing their *raison d'être*.

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