

## Research Article

# Sub-Saharan Colonial Town Stagnating Development Indicators in Edea, Cameroon

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**Abstract:** It has been over a hundred years urbanisation history seems to be a time-development mismatch lethargy with almost nothing added to justify the merited colonial town status of the German rule. This article probes into the genesis of this dawdling Edea development hypothesising a paradigm shift in developmental instruments to be more of externalities than internalities. Accusations take on energy production plants, the creation of the Kribi deep sea port as well as the swallowing incidence Douala over Edea. A methodology involving multi-temporal Landsat satellite images 1990, 2007 and 2017 were used to monitor the spatial growth of Edea. These were complemented with field survey through interviews and observations to denote the spatio-temporal dynamics. Some 108 questionnaire were administered to appreciate stakeholder perception and knowledge of urban development. Findings portray that Edea witnessed a crawling expansion of built-up space from 0.56% in 1990 to 3.01% in 2019 with a timid population increase from 25,398 inhabitants in 1987 to 66,581 in 2005 and 78,601 inhabitants 2019. This paper suggests that the creation of spill over companies in Edea from overwhelming Douala and Kribi could well give the development Edea its historical stand.

**Keywords:** development, energy production plants, infrastructure, urban attractiveness, Edea

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## INTRODUCTION

The predominantly coastal exposure of Sub-Saharan African colonial towns to teaming hubs exchange of goods and services quickly reverted into contemporary dynamic cities. Archetypical of such cities is their ability to often sprawl into gigantic population and service concentrations spiralling in resources from heartlands. This has produced a cluster matrix of metropolitan areas aligning the West African continuum. Landwards from the Gulf of Guinea is colonial town Edea that emerged well before the First World War with abundant German colonial infrastructural facility to its potential growth. Port characteristics and technological innovations industrialisation continued to brighten the urban lights and psychological pull factors (Fombe and Balgah, 2012).

Unfortunately Edea is one of such colonial towns with the highest industrial advantage which over the year has been witnessing a lagging urban development. The expansion of the built-up area and the population growth of Edea appear so timid which is barely arithmetic unlike other towns with geometrically growth. Such dwindling growth is depriving Edea of its historical mitigating factors and advantages (URBANPLAN, 2009). This article investigates into the

bewilderment of this urban development whose vindication is multi-factorial ranging between the impact factor of proximity to the economic capital Douala or the decentralisation of the energy supply industry from the hitherto Edea Hydro-Electric Plant to the now Lom Panga, Memve'ele, Mbam Memkim. Could it have perhaps been the issue of type of industry where it is more of high-tech rather than labour intensive that have been reducing the labour force concentration in Edea. Otherwise, the creation of the Kribi deep sea port could have diverted the quest for settlement in Edea away to the legendry touristic heaven of Kribi thereby giving an unconscious blow to the Edea development.

## THE CONCEPT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This article draws inspiration from the slow-city concept or slow growth and urban development and the concept of urban attractiveness to explain the inactive growth of Edea. The slow-city concept or citta-slow (Leo Christopher, 2000), is the regression in the growth of a city instigated by economic crisis, drop in the level of industrialisation and depreciation of the originally built environment. Edea is regressing instead of progressing in urban growth and development both from the shift in industrial monopoly and the economic

crisis of Cameroon in 1987. The concept of slow growth and urban development (Adorjan, 2016), advances that the gradual increase in the population of an area and lack of opportunities reduces the chances of urban development of the city. The population of Edea for the past four decades has increased but at a slow rate as compared to that of its neighbouring cities such as Douala and Kribi. This gradual increase has thus affected its development. Furthermore, Edea was known for its monopolistic strength of having the lone Hydro Electricity Plant. The shift of this monopoly to other plants in the country has reduced the opportunities of an eventual employment in the area, hence, slowed-down the development.

The concept of urban attractiveness deals with the ability of an area to draw and hold people. It is related to the movement of people to and from places (Reuel, *et al.* 2013). An areas' attractiveness is closely related to its population growth and decline. When an area is perceived to be attractive than its surrounding environment, its population will increase as many people settle there in preference to other areas (Imrie and Raco, 2003). Urban attractiveness of Edea deals with the pull factors that have brought people into the town and the push ones which have sent them away. Edea unfortunately exhibits a negative urban attractiveness as push factors out way pull ones. Decrease in the built-up areas and neighbourhoods, inadequate industries and commercial opportunities as well as low standards of living are observed in the town. Housing depreciation, economic stagnation and decline from no job opportunities have triggered out-migration of the population. Indicators such as abandoned houses, the shot-down of industries as well as poverty and misery can confirm the slow urban development of Edea.

Further literature on Edea has mostly focused on the influence of the Hydro Electric Plant to the town and the environment. Many write-ups have dwelled on the vegetation of the town (Angoni *et al.* 2015) identifying the presence of a dense vegetation type in the area confirming the slow nature of its development. This is explained by the fact that the built-up area has not increased to colonize the vegetation as observed in other towns. Edea is endowed with much forest and vegetation (Ajonina and Usongo, 2001), favouring wood extraction with less built-up to consume the urban space since the presence of the population is tantamount to space consumption. The vegetation exploitation is associated to forest conservation and fauna preservation (Tchindjang, *et al.* 2010), as much literature on Edea focuses less of the urban spatial setting. Researchers and authors have therefore focused more on the

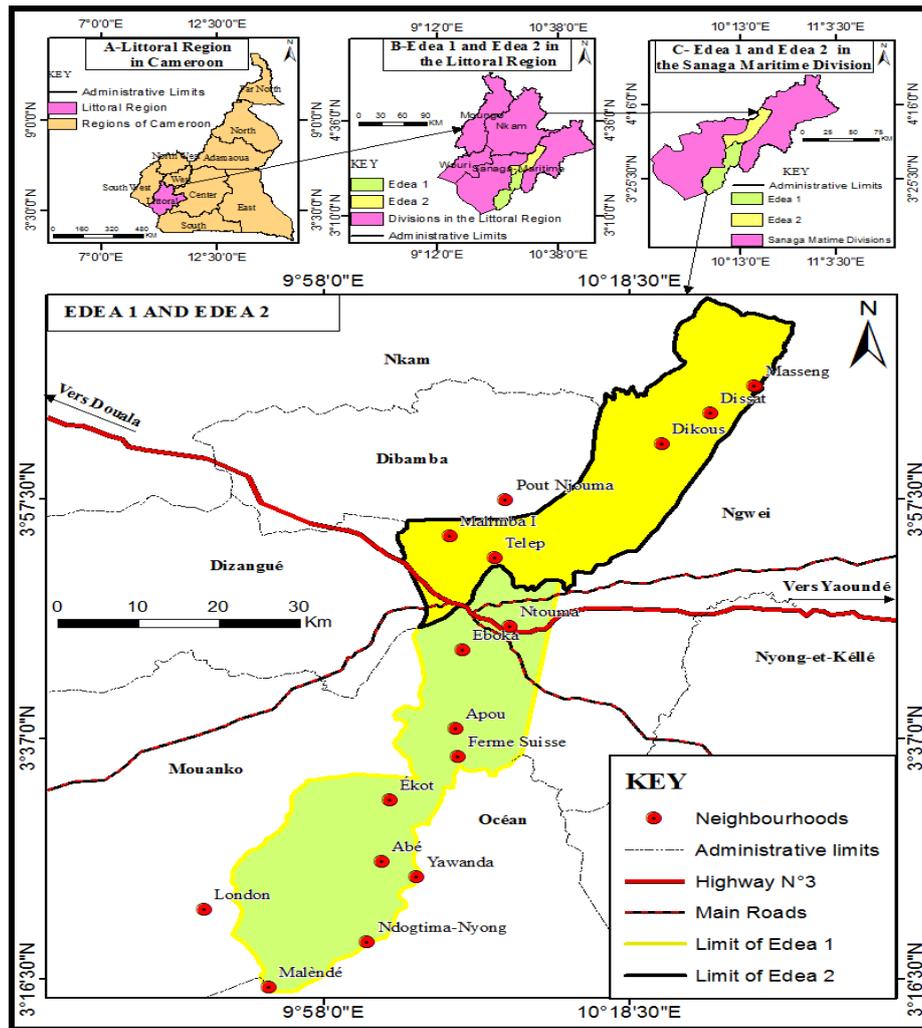
vegetation and fauna with influence to the environment of Edea. This is indicative of how much more is left to be done on the spatial growth of the town to which this paper has its *raison être*.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

Edea is located between longitude 9°58'00"E and 10°18'30"E and latitude 3°16'30"N and 3°57'30"N. The town is bounded to the north by Dibamba and Nkam, south by Mouanko and Atlantic Ocean, west by Dizangue and east by Ngwei and Nyong and Kelle Division (Figure, 1).

Data collection was done through primary and secondary sources for a qualitative and quantitative research. In order to determine the spatial expansion of the city, satellite images for three different periods were used. The Landsat MSS for 1990, Landsat ETM for 2007, and Landsat OLI for 2017 satellite images were used. These images were chosen because of availability and possibility to have better results. Primary data was obtained through field observation, interviews and questionnaire administration. Field observation was done in order to identify the depreciation of infrastructure and abandoned enterprises as proof of retarded urban development in Edea as well as capture photographs for results. Interviews with the first deputy government delegate of the Edea urban council, the mayors of the Edea I and II local councils, the delegate of urban development and housing in Edea, five local chiefs and ten quarter heads making a total of (19 authorities) were done. The purpose was to have first-hand opinion on the root causes of slow urban development in Edea. Some 108 questionnaires were administered to households of the Edea town to collect information on the causes and consequences of slow urban development of the area. A 0.5% sample (Oloyo, 2001) of the total of 21,628 household (BUCREP, 2005 and 2010 projections) was used to arrive at this result.

An in-depth secondary data collection was done to have information on the total population (BUCREP, 2005 and 2010 projections). Statistical information on the economic activities and maps of Edea were gotten from the National Institute of Cartography, Yaounde, Cameroon. Consultations at the level of the Edea local councils and the urban council were done to have information on the growth of the city over the years. All these data from primary and secondary sources were as well treated through the ArcGIS 10.4 and MapInfo software to generate maps for analyses. Furthermore, the SPSS 17 and Excel 2010 were used to treat statistical data used to generate tables and diagrams for analyses.



Source: Modified from NIC, by Tende 2020  
**Figure 1: Location of Edea in Cameroon**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from findings adhere to the fact that the slow rate of expansion of the built-up area and the gradual population evolution has influenced slow development in Edea. Furthermore, the proximity of Edea to Douala, creation of the Kribi Deep Sea Port, political influence and the introduction of other Electricity Energy plants are the major factors of citta-slow in Edea.

### Spatial expansion trend of Edea from 1990 to 2019

**Table 1: Spatial expansion percentages of Edea from 1990 to 2019**

Period	1990	2007	2017
Built-up area	0.56	1.25	3.01
Vegetation	97.22	96.62	94.95
Hydrographic network	2.22	2.13	2.04
Total	100	100	100

Source: Satellite images of 1990, 2007, 2017

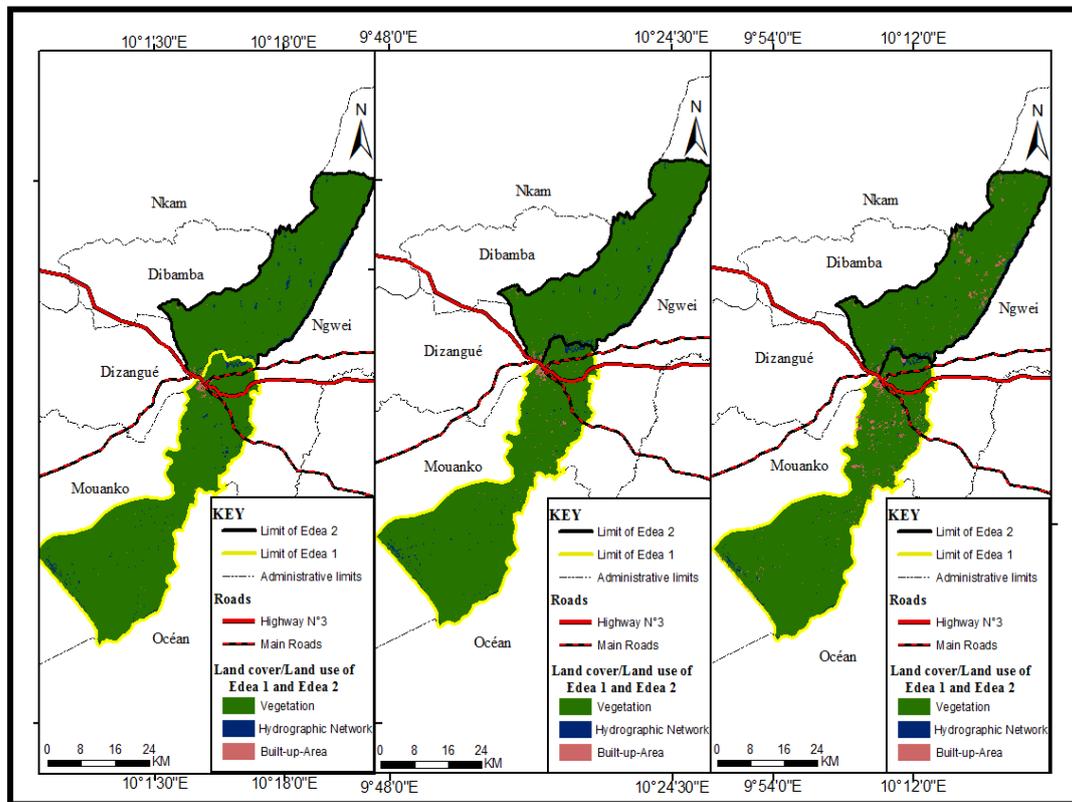
Table 1 reveals that in 1990, the vegetation cover and hydrographic network were far above the

Spatial expansion refers to the increase in the built-up space of an area as the vegetation is being colonised (Gordon, and David, 2014). The spatial expansion trend of Edea revealed a slow rate of increase in the built-up area over a period of 30 years. Even though there has been a slight reduction in the vegetation over the years, the rate of decrease as compared to the change in the built-up area is practically insignificant. Over a period of 30 years, the built-up area has increased from 0.56 to 3.01% indicating a slow rate of expansion (Table 1).

built-up area. With a vegetation cover of 97.22%, the built-up was 0.56% indicating a predominantly virgin

land with much available space for settlement. Some seventeen years later, the built-up had just increased to 1.25% while the vegetation dropped minimally to 96.62%. By 2017, no major increase in the built-up was recorded as it rose to 3.01% with vegetation dominating with 94.95%. With a total surface area of 204, 838.17

hectares, the vegetation cover represents 194, 521.75ha while the built-up constitutes 6,145.68ha, indicating that much bare and unoccupied space is found in Edea. The built-up area of Edea has gradually increased overtime indicating a slow development of the area (Figure, 2).



Source: Satellite Images of 1990, 2007 and 2017

Figure 2: Land Cover / Land Use of Edea

Figure 2 exhibits the land cover / land use of Edea from 1990 to 2017. The built-up area of Edea has not only increased gradually, but has as well concentrated along the Douala-Yaounde via Edea Highway N° 3 road infrastructure. This road network which was constructed to link the Centre and the Littoral regions of Cameroon attracted the settlement of the population of Edea. A linear settlement is observed in the town with much concentration around the centre. A linear settlement is that which is done in the form of a straight line along the stretch of an area usually provoked by some economic activity (Richard and Nigel, 2013). The Highway No 3 road has obviously

triggered the settlement of the population of Edea along the road stretch as much trading activities are observed. Unfortunately, much concentration has been along the highway and little settlement at the peripheries with much bare and available space occupied by vegetation.

Associated to the slow increase in the built-up area is the population increase over the years. The population evolution of Edea for the past three decades has influenced the slow development of the town. The increase in the population is slow as compared to other colonial towns (Table 2).

Table 2: Population evolution of Edea from 1976 to 2019

Year	1976	1987	2005	2019
Population	25,398	50,609	66,581	78,601

Source: BUCREP, 1976, 1987, 2005 and 2010 projections

The population of Edea for the past 33 years has not registered a significant rise. From 1976 to 1987, the population increased from 25, 398 inhabitants to 50,

609. This eleven year period witnessed a close to double the number (25, 211) in the population of the town. However, from 1987 to 2005, the population

increased from 50, 609 to 66, 581 inhabitants. This increase for a period of eighteen years (1987 to 2005) witnessed a rise in just 15, 972 inhabitants as compared to the 25,211 inhabitants in eleven years indicating a drop in the population of the town. Furthermore, from 2005 to 2019, the population increased from 66, 581 to 78, 601 inhabitants. This increase nevertheless for the past fourteen years is insignificant as compared to the other previous periods.

The population increased by 12, 020 inhabitants but revealed a drop in the rate of increase comparatively, connoting a slow population evolution of the town. The slow population evolution of Edea especially from 1987 to 2005 was due to the economic crises that hid Cameroon in 1987 (Dikoume, 2014). During this period, many inhabitants with the inability to survive in foreign towns relocated to their towns of origin as several companies had closed their doors. However, by 2008 with the economic recession of

Cameroon (Mbeng Dang, 2017), not much industrial influence was re-introduced in the town thereby reducing the chances of attracting migrants to settle in Edea. Besides, several other factors aside the land cover / land use and the population evolution have as well influenced the slow development of the Edea colonial town in Cameroon.

**Factor analysis of Edea development trend and consequence**

Results from findings reveal that the slow development of Edea has been influenced by several factors. It has either been from the proximity of Edea to the Douala metropolis, or the introduction of other electricity industries to maximize the supply in the country or resistance to foreign settlement. Further factors include the creation of the Deep Sea Port in Kribi which is next to Edea, political influence as well as limited employment opportunities in the Town (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Factor perception of slow development in Edea

Reasons	Respondent	Percentage
Proximity of Edea to Douala	17	15.75
Creation of other electricity industries	30	27.77
The neighbouring Kribi deep sea port creation	16	14.82
Political decisions	12	11.11
Resistance to foreign (non-indigenous) settlement	15	13.88
Limited employment opportunities in Edea	18	16.67
Total	108	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 3 divulges that the creation of other electricity energy generation industries in Cameroon is the major cause of slow development in Edea. Field revelations showed that 27.77% of the population attests to the fact that the shift of energy supply from Edea to several other areas in Cameroon has greatly reduced growth of the area. From 1970 up to 2005, the Edea Hydro Electricity Plant was the only electricity energy supplier in Cameroon (EUEI-PDF and ARSEL, 2013). This monopolistic tendency did not only help to retain people in the town, but it as well attracted other industries such as ALLUCAM with employment opportunities. This explains why the population of Edea from 1976 to 1987 doubled and further increased up to 2005. Edea was the attractive pole at the time with many unemployed moving in for opportunities. With the introduction of other electricity industries in Lom Panga, Memve’ele, Mbam Memkim in 2008 to address the energy situation of Cameroon, Edea loosed her monopoly over energy supply and thus the chances of withholding employment opportunities in the energy sector. Several other industries which depended on electricity energy for their functioning such as SOCATRAL relocated to the other areas and pulled the already settled and prospective job seekers. Edea therefore loosed the grip of urban attractiveness to the advantage of slow development.

Associated to the creation of other electricity energy industries that reduced Edea’s monopoly of supply are limited employment opportunities. Results from findings revealed that 16.67% of slow development in Edea stems from inadequate employment opportunities. The Hydro Electricity Industry, ALUCAM and SOCAPALM were the major employers in Edea for the past 40 decades (Asa and Saah, 2015). The greater part of in-migrants into Edea came to work in these industries. These secondary sector activities which could attract people were so limited in the town. Aside these industries, others such as ENEO for electricity energy production and distribution and CDE/CAMWATER employed a hand full of inhabitants of the town. Tertiary activities in the town were as well scarce. One can notice mostly administrative opportunities from civil service with little services from banks, insurance companies as well as hospitals and markets. The town therefore lacks sufficient employment opportunities to attract the active population serving as a major weakness to the development of Edea.

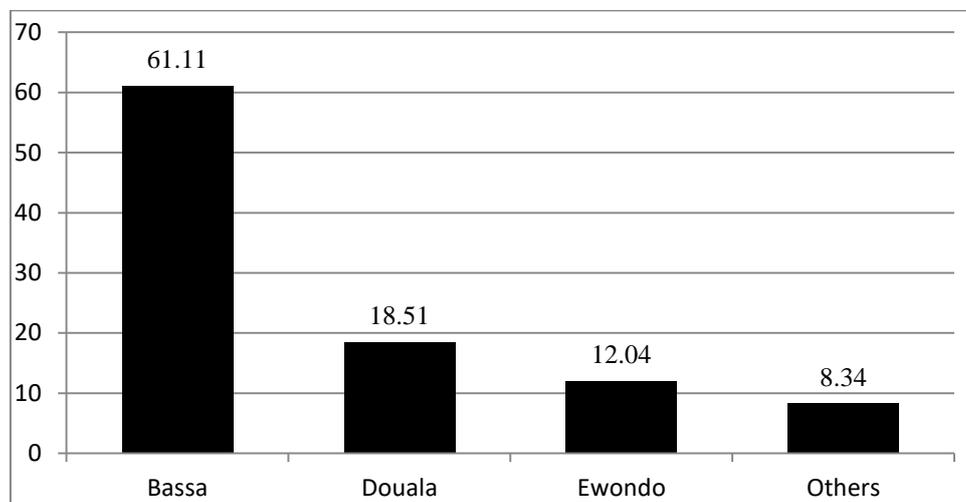
The proximity of Edea to Douala has a major influence on the development of the town (Mougoue, 2016). Field results revealed that 15.75% of Edea’s

inhabitants point a finger to the nearness of the town to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon. The fact that Edea is so close to Douala has reduced her chances of developing so fast. Most industries have located in Douala and many other economic activities have sprawled serving as a pull factor to the population. Field work revealed that some workers of ALUCAM and ENEO live in Douala and work in Edea. Douala with its monopoly of industries has therefore pulled even the active population of Edea and has thus created a slow development of the town.

The Kribi Deep Sea Port creation in 1999, its reception in 2008 and effective functioning in 2010 (Charlotte Fiskén, 2013) is as well one of the factors that has hindered Edea’s smooth development. Some 14.82% of the population in Edea declared that the deep sea port creation has slowed-down the development of the town. Kribi, a satellite town to Edea was originally known for her touristic function influenced by the sea and beaches. Ever since the announcement of a deep sea port creation, migration to the town has increased. This population influx has been accompanied by industrial expansion and creation of transit and transport firms which have attracted the people. A majority of job seekers in Edea have moved to Kribi and have caused the depreciation of the Edea town. Most commercial activities for daily subsistence have been diverted to

Kribi and Edea has been left at the mercy of old indigenous trading with little improvement.

Furthermore, the resistance to foreign (non-indigenous) settlement is also a factor of slow development in Edea. The resistance to foreign settlement or non-indigenous settlement is the refusal or rejection of other settlers aside those of an areas origin or who speak the same language to live in that area (Mbeng Dang, 2017). Some 13.88% of inhabitants in Edea revealed that close to 61% of the population of the town are indigenes (Figure 3). In the course of field work and interview sessions, what was discovered in Edea was that a majority of the people speak mostly their local Bassa language in their day to day activities. The situation is universal from the offices to the markets making it difficult to survive in the area without a mastery of the language. The Edea town is noted for having the least number of non-indigenes in Cameroon (Dikoume, 2014). Results from findings revealed that the town is predominantly composed of the Bassa, Douala, Ewondo and other tribes. The Bassa of course dominate the area while the Douala constitutes 19% of the total sampled population. This can be explained by the fact that Douala is close to Edea and most often the languages spoken are familiar to people of these areas. The Ewondo are also part of the Edea ethnic composition with a 12% representative sample from field work (Figure 3).



Source: PDU Edea, 2013 and Field work, 2019

**Figure 3:** Ethnic composition percentage of the Edea population

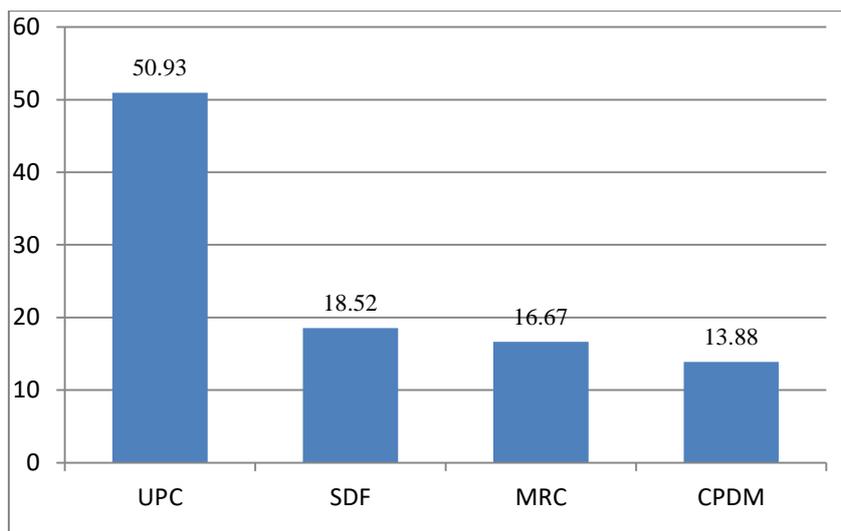
A manifestation of resistance to foreigners or non-indigenes in Edea is seen from the 8% field sample in this work. The other tribes in Edea include the Bororo, Banson, Bamileke and Banneg. These non-indigenes are mostly those working in the Hydro Electricity plant and the ALUCAM industry as well as civil servants. Little or no traders from other regions were noticed in Edea indicating that the town rejects non-indigenes. Some revelations even attribute the town to the practice of witch craft which served as a push

factor to both the foreign and local population (Gashiére, 2000). The repulsive nature of the town hindered the smooth development of the area.

Slow development in Edea can be likewise attributed to political reasons. Edea is known for her resistance to the ruling party of Cameroon and as well known for being a town of opposition dominated by the UPC party (Dwouta, 2000). Some 11.11% of the sampled population revealed that political struggles

have greatly hindered a fast development of the Edea town. Historical facts and findings revealed the resistant nature of the people of Edea ever since the colonial and even at this post-colonial period (Fanso, 2001). This resistance has not only scared many people from settling in the town for fear of being stigmatised, but has as well reduced governments intensions of expanding the area for fear of more supporters and power. Field results showed that the town of Edea is dominated by parties of the opposition in Cameroon (Figure 4). Out of the 108 households sampled in the

town and coupled with statistics from documents, 51% of the people belong to the UPC political party. This wide opposition dominance is as a result of the dominance of the indigenous population over foreigners and also the resistance to non-indigenous settlement in the town. Further results revealed how the SDF is the second most populated party in Edea with close to 18% representation. Associating the UPC and SDF dominance in this area explains why the town exhibits a slow development since such issues have been made to be more politically inclined.



Source: Fanso, 2001 and Fieldwork, 2019

**Figure 4:** Percentage of political party representation in Edea

The field results show that the ruling CPDM party is not amongst the first three political parties in Edea. However, this paper is focused on the fact that with the new political dispensation of the country, much has not been done in the Edea town due to their resistance to the ruling party. This unfortunately has affected the growth of the town and consequently slowed the development of the area.

In addition to the results gotten from field observation and respondents, interviews were conducted with some 19 authorities of the Edea town. Results from the interview sessions with the authorities in Edea revealed that three additional factors to those of table 3 have as well influenced slow development of the town. The authorities revealed that the mentality problem, inadequate higher education opportunities and little industrial expansion are reasons for slow development in Edea. The mentality problem is mostly focused on the inability of the people of Edea to accept change especially when it comes from foreigners. New habits and way of life introduced in the town meets stiff resistance and thus hinders progress. Furthermore, Edea has no major higher institution of learning which could help retain the student population after the high school certificate. As such they are forced to move out of the town for further studies, thus reducing the population

and the chances of the construction of new buildings to harbour in-migrants. Further still, inadequate industrial expansion in Edea has reduced the rate of development of the town. The economic strength of an area is measured by the number of industries found and employment offered (Kengne, 2012). Edea unfortunately has little industrial expansion as most of the industries have concentrated in Douala and recently in Kribi. Even those which used to operate in the town are faced with depreciation and competition which has caused many workers to migrate for better opportunities elsewhere. The result is greatly felt in Edea as its level of development leaves much to be desired. Emergent towns such as Kribi are fast changing and the fear is that they might further reduce the chances of Edea from emerging as well. Further findings revealed that the infrastructure of Edea has as well contributed to slow development of the town.

**Infrastructural Depreciation and incidence on slow development in Edea**

The road, housing and commercial infrastructure of Edea has as well revealed a slow development of the town. Much of the infrastructure of the town have not been changed or renovated and are in a constant dilapidating state. The road infrastructure leaves much to be desired as movement within the Edea

town is far from being easy. The only tarred road at a good state is the highway No 3 linking Douala to Yaounde through Edea. The other intermediary roads linking internal movements within the town are either degraded or untared. The physiognomy of the town x-

rays abandonment and depreciation of infrastructure. Field observation of the area reveal that much infrastructure constructed during the colonial period is still being used with little renovation (Plate 1).

**Plate 1: Depreciating Infrastructure in Edea**



Photo by Tende, 2019

Plate 1 shows the Edea bridge in A and the old Senior Divisional Office in B of the Edea town. Some colonial artefacts in depreciation as the Edea town experience a slow development. The infrastructure in Edea is faced with massive anthropogenic activities which have obstructed traffic flow. Associated to the road infrastructure is housing in Edea which breeds anarchy. The town is more unplanned than planned with drainage and accessibility difficulties. Residential areas are mostly privately owned with the absence of low income housing to accommodate the population. This insufficient qualitative and quantitative infrastructure has triggered slow development of the town. Recreational facilities of Edea are few as the town has only one football stadium, just one main market with little space and no water supply and inaccessible touristic sites to draw people into the area. The natural vegetation which could serve as a reserve for touristic purposes as well has been neglected and is being exploited indiscriminately to the detriment of the area. These difficulties expose Edea to stagnant growth and if not checked may lead to other urban problem. It is therefore the hope of this paper that fast and prompt action be taken to salvage the situation of Edea.

## CONCLUSION

Cities constitute the most important force of national and regional socio-economic development. Therefore, new urban policy measures must be introduced to improve upon the attractiveness of the areas (Jolita and Saulius, 2010). The Edea town in Cameroon despite her past colonial glory and natural portal characteristics is faced with a slow urban development (citta-slow). This unfortunate situation has affected the spatial expansion of the town as the built-up area progresses in a very slow manner (Table 1). The population has relatively decreased as compared to the

neighbouring towns to Edea as she has loosed her urban attractiveness. This paper which sought to understand the reason for slow development in Edea found out that several factors have contributed to the downward trend of the town (Table 3). The Edea snail-pace development hallmark has been triggered most especially by the reduction of her monopolistic might over Hydro Electric Energy generation and supply to the country. Since one of the major tools of the town's attractiveness was the presence of employment opportunities from industrial availability, dwindling expansion of these industries has pushed-out the population. Consequently, Edea exhibits a decaying city characteristic with the shot-down of some industries, depreciation of others with dilapidated infrastructure from abandoned houses and much bare land and vegetation cover which is typical of a rural setting. The fear is that with the rise of the neighbouring Kribi town and the proximity of Edea to Douala, a shift in developmental imprints may continue which will further drown the town. Prompt action from the local population and decision makers is needed to save Edea from the shackles of developmental humiliation.

Improvement in industrialisation, availability of employment and social amenities as well as economic advancement will increase the attractiveness of a city (May et al, 2016). Restoring the past glory of Edea and maintaining present and future stability in the area of urban development is the responsibility of the local population and the State. This paper advances that improvement in industrialisation in Edea will re-instate the attractiveness and increase the development of the town. The creation of industries in the town will not only solve the problem of proximity to Douala, but will as well help to decongest the Douala metropolis which through industrial concentration is fast becoming overpopulated. Furthermore, the industries no doubt

will create employment opportunities which will pull people into the town. The decentralisation of Electrical Energy Plants should be accompanied by supply zones so as to maintain some level of monopoly with respect to the areas and give the host cities an advantage of development. Social amenities such as Higher Institutions of learning and University should be created in the town. This will solve the problem of out-migration of the youths especially and pull others as well into the town that will have an opportunity to work after studies. The presence of people will therefore encourage the improvement of economic activities. Several commercial activities such as markets, shopping moors, restaurants and bars will be created to improve on the livelihood of the people and the development of the town. Education and awareness is recommended to improve upon the mentality of the inhabitants of Edea so as to enable them be more flexible and hospitable. In this way, the town will be open to foreigners or non-indigenes as well and new ways of life and going about activities will be introduced to develop the area. The problem of resistance will be reduced at best and more people will be attracted to the town and serve as agents of development.

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