American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)

e-ISSN: 2378-703X

Volume-4, Issue-1, pp-122-128

www.ajhssr.com

Research Paper

Open Access

IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION IN RESIDENTIAL URBAN CITIES: A Tool for Preserving Professional Status and Aboriginality

BAH Mahier jules Michel

Master Assistant, Institute of Ethnosociology (IES)-UFR/SHS, Félix Houphouët Boigny University

ABSTRACT: Based on a survey conducted at the Sodeci Source City, the study is a contribution to reflections on political management in urban residential cities through residential condominiums. The scope of our article is to show how the use of residential co-ownership within a local association modifies relations between inhabitants so as to categorize them to bring out autochthony and professional status as a channel through which the inhabitants access to the resources of the political power.

KEYWORDS: Identity Reconstruction, Residential Urban Cities, Preservation, Professional Status, Aboriginal.

I. INTRODUCTION

As soon as Abidjan became the national capital, colonial administrators established land management and control practices to protect colonial settlement and organize the settlement of indigenous peoples. Under the cover of hygiene and sanitation objectives, they defined the first directions of Abidjan's urban plan: residential districts reserved for the colonial population, districts planned to accommodate populations in the service of the colonial establishment, and working-class districts to house or rehouse the indigenous populations and to accommodate the new modern, administrative and port immigration to the industrial activity (René. P and François, 1992). The social stratification of the city was set up under the control of the public authorities, which in addition to the usual means (planning, legislation) have the possibility of intervening directly through state real estate development. In Côte d'Ivoire, public action to play a major role in the urbanization of the city of Abidjan in this sense where great resources have been released for decades to develop the capital. And this action will take place in two phases: The first is where the State has played an executive, planning, regulatory and entrepreneurial role by creating in 1966 the National Bureau of Studies and Development (BNETD). The State will also set up real estate companies in charge of constructing economic housing, the linchpin of the housing policy, including SUCCI (Société d'Urbanisation et de Construction) created in 1959, SICOGI (Société Ivoirienne de Construction et de Gestion Immobilière) and SOGEFIA (Société de Gestion Financière de l'Habitat), and the second is where the State will adopt new orientations by slowing down its production and transforming its simple rental and lease-purchase programmes. Thus, the fall of the public sector will subsequently be made up for by the emergence of a dynamic private sector in the field of housing. These companies built essentially three types of housing, according to general quality criteria:

- so-called "very economical" housing, which are mainly studios and bachelor apartments;
- so-called "economical" housing, with minimum equipment and reduced size;
- medium and good standard" housing, which are either individual villas or apartments in towers and bars.

Real estate companies have succeeded in setting the level and quality of residential development in two typical neighbourhoods: the well-to-do Cocody neighbourhood, the construction and development of which had already begun during the colonial period; and the new Yopougon neighbourhood, mainly for State employees and the lower middle classes.

The acquisition of housing was mainly by hire-purchase and direct access to ownership was reserved for households with good incomes. Potential or immediate first-time home buyers will therefore be concentrated mainly in Cocody (including Riviera and Deux-Plateaux). Operating leases concern the majority of the stock and are aimed at middle- and lower-middle-income households. It will be the almost exclusive status of the inhabitants of economic housing in Yopougon and Port-Bouet. The lease-purchase system and the direct access to ownership granted to good-income households would appear to be a real opportunity for middle- and lower-middle-income households employed in enterprises to benefit from this type of housing. Thus, with a policy put in place between the state-owned companies and certain enterprises, this allowed the latter to offer houses to

their employees under the label of "social action" and housing estates were granted to professional categories. The specificity of these housing estates favoured the lease-purchase as a process which in the long run carried an ideology of residential homogeneity, i.e. all residents should be of a single socio-professional category. Moreover, through the appropriation of the space the subscribers to the real estate project would obtain the status of legal owner.

Once the status of legal owner was granted, this ideology described above is borrowed from many redefinitions due to the spatial integration of other categories of actors. On the one hand, the first assignees leave these dwellings while still retaining the title of owner and giving access to other categories of actors through rental. It turned out that the latter move to the more qualified neighbourhoods or other cities because of allocation or resell their houses and thus lose the status of owner while delegating it to a beneficiary who is in opposition with the social category of the said city. On the other hand, there are the owners who remain on the spot, preferring subletting and also giving access to the city to another category of actors. Those who gain access through these different processes either consider this movement as a stage in their residential history and soon wish to move to other places or simply appropriate the space so that they assimilate or are assimilated like the natives.

The first beneficiaries of these dwellings, faced with the different redefinitions of their space and the integration of other statuses, represent themselves as "indigenous" and through strategies manage to maintain themselves as such.

Consequently, in these cities, the inhabitants form associations in different forms (co-owners' association, neighbourhood committee, residents' association, etc.) to manage and maintain their neighbourhood.

These forms of association lead these actors to agree on the practical modalities of cohabitation, on how to live together within the space they share in order to avoid its degradation, and also organize themselves to govern and improve their entire living environment.

In this context, the Source Sodeci city, which is precisely the field of this study, has set up community-type residential management structures that are elected on the basis of an action programme. Initially limited to the management of the maintenance of community spaces, they have become more accentuated and have become essential in the political management of the city. The management bodies have become organized and over the years informal changes have appeared in its functioning and have gradually become part of the experience of the inhabitants. On this basis, the study focused on the specific construction of the identity of the resident "house owner, former agent of Sodeci" through the management bodies of the city.

II. METHODOLOGY

Based on a qualitative approach, the data for this study comes from our Master 1 and Master 2 scientific courses, which took place from March 2015 to April 2017. These data were collected from documentary research, observation and semi-directive interviews. These interviews were conducted with (50) people, including members of the syndic (05) who are representatives of the co-ownership, tenants (30), owners who are former agents of the Sodeci (10), and owners who are not agents of the Sodeci (05). In addition to maintenance, direct observation allowed us to perceive the SourceSodeci city as a space both physical and social.

All the data collected and transcribed were intelligible on the basis of thematic content (Bardin, 2005). The themes addressed during our interviews revolved around, i) Identity reconstruction in the residential housing estates perceived as a tool for preserving a professional status, ii) Preservation of autochthony based on identity reconstruction in the residential housing estates, iii) Preservation of a residential identity through political power. However, the social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986) allowed us to analyze our empirical data. This theory postulates that the mere categorization into two distinct groups leads to discrimination against the exogroup in order to differentiate its group. The issue at stake in differentiation is a positive collective identity. This results from an intergroup comparison that is favourable to the andogroup to which they belong or are assigned. Social identity is based on the knowledge that individuals have about categories.

Thus, it is social categorization that becomes the intermediate process and gives meaning to different aspects of the social world.

III. RESULTS

3-1. IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING ESTATES PERCEIVED AS A TOOL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF A PROFESSIONAL STATUS.

3-1-. Appropriation of space, a residential ideological referent.

Living in the Source Sodeci city mobilizes an ideology of belonging. Indeed, it is through the professional status of SODECI agent that one could acquire a house within the city. Moreover, as its name "SOURCE" indicates, it is the first of a long list of other cities. The city is perceived as "the mother city". This is explained through this note-taking:

My daughter, don't forget each time you write or mention the name of the city, don't forget to always write SOURCE before SODECI because this city that you see is the first of all the cities that you can meet in Côte d'Ivoire (...). We are the first SODECI agents to have a house in a city, in the SOURCE SODECI city.

The acquisition of houses is therefore seen as an advantage, a feeling of pride towards the other agents. They thus present themselves as the "pioneers" to benefit first of all from a typical experience in a city located in an urban setting.

One does not live in the SOURCE SODECI city, but one belongs to the SOURCE SODECI city, as this verbatim testifies: "It is a spirit that we want to cultivate."

The SOURCE SODECI city becomes a referent for these inhabitants, it's a privilege for the members of the andogroup. Moreover, the city is perceived as a memory of a work, the SOURCE SODECI city is the result of a long selection process. The agents who are members of the andogroup perceive these houses as a professional souvenir of having once worked at SODECI. The house within the city is represented as a souvenir, a reward. This very true memory that they were the instigators see in SODECI a benefactor. The project initiated by their former employer now allows them to have a roof over their heads, not to rent a house during their retirement, to give roofs to their outbuilding but above all a house in an urban context.

3--2. Safeguarding a real estate heritage.

The ideology of the city as a heritage to be safeguarded in fact covers the idea of the house as a property to be preserved for the descendants. As these words illustrate:

We have houses that can never be moved no matter where we go. We can work elsewhere but we will always come. Even if we are dead, the children will inherit these houses and so on. We have bought a house and this house is considered a lifetime property ... it is a lifetime property and as long as we live we will be in our houses ... it is our property forever, a reward for our retirement" or I want to provide my children and their children with a reference point. The conditions in which I worked, I didn't have great means to have an estate and there I was lucky to have this perimeter. It allowed me to federate this place. It is to have a base in Abidjan.

We are then faced with the fact of the centrality of the professional activity in the actions of the actors.

3- 2. PRESERVATION OF AUTOCHTHONY THROUGH IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

3-2-1-Autochtony, driving force of the new identity.

Since the creation of the SOURCE SODECI city, associations have been created in favour of three (03) categories of actors: house owners (the co-owners' union), women and young people. Thus, in order to have access to positions of responsibility, certain criteria have been elaborated as can be seen in this verbatim:

The city belongs to SODECI, so it is only a SODECI agent who can be president, that's clear. This is also the case for young people; you must be the legitimate daughter or son of an agent who has worked at SODECI and a house owner, and for women, either you are the wife of a house owner who has worked at SODECI or you yourself are a house owner who has worked at SODECI.

Aboriginal people are a referent for access to positions of responsibility. The fabrication of this indigenousness is perceived by the monopolization of the political field and therefore the management of the governing bodies. The members of the andogroup define themselves as indigenous and make the social space work in their favour: They can't be president because when they want to fight the campaign, the people I know them, they won't want to. There's something we want to keep. We prefer the one who works at SODECI to the one who is not one of us. The other doesn't understand the spirit.

Joining the work of Juteau (1996), we identify belief in the consciousness of ethnic groups. Here, it is the belief in a social identity of value that becomes the foundation of intergroup relations within the city. It is a chance through work to have a home within the city. In this way, the integration of other categories biases the ideology of remaining together. Gnabeli (2008) also informs us about the ideology of indigenousness, he states that it is mobilized by the actors to legitimize claims. In the present study, this refers to the situation within the Source Sodeci city and by relying on the authors mentioned, it must be understood that the ideology of autochthony, mobilized by the members of the andogroup to question the acquisition and spatial integration of the members of the exogroup appears as a recourse. It is used here to claim control of the social space that is the Source Sodeci city.

3-2-2- The representation of the exogroup as "invaders" and "foreigners".

From the restructuring or sale of houses by resident owners and ex-agents to favour the introduction of another category of actor within the city. The members of the exogroup are perceived as foreigners, people who might leave from time to time. Let's see this in these verbatim statements, one with the president of AFCS (association of women of the Source SODECI city):

Of course they are always on the spot, it's their houses or the tenants, they can move from one moment to another. If you are a tenant and you have to leave the city for one reason or another, you see that breaks the group a little.

The exogroup is also perceived as a group with a negative social identity, although its members own houses within the city and belong to the condominium owners' union: "The others who call themselves owners are like strangers sooner or later, they will leave (...) in a word, they can't come and interfere in anything.

The departure of its two categories of actors is seen as plausible.

3-2-3-The ideological transfiguration of the urban framework into village space

The concept of "village" used by the andogroup is a source of legitimization of a positive social identity. On the one hand, the precariousness of retirement leads these actors to see this city as a privileged domain where all have the same origin. In the conception of the members of the andogroup, a village is the place where an individual during his time of activity arranges to live during his retirement. It is in this sense that the construction of a property legitimizes this space as a village. Because of their status as zone agents representing the workforce within the SODECI structure, the salaries could not allow them to have several constructions at the same time in an urban and rural setting. Therefore, choosing the urban setting, they build as villagers because it is within the city that they spend their whole day and rarely find themselves in "their real village". We illustrate this with the following words: Our children grew up here, and we - even we are not used to village life, so we are still here. In any case, this is our village.

On the other hand, the social control of space involves redefining the city as a village. The norms that regulate social life in a rural space are less complex than in an urban space. Thus, rebuilding the city as a village becomes an operative strategy that favours the manipulation of the regulatory norm within this space in favour of the indigenous people:

It is simply to get along better. You know when you are in a city there are so many rules and favours that it is better to live as in a village so that the rules that are established since the Elders take root and never change.

In this logic, Antil (2009) considers the representations of the actors in the present results. With him, the actors' representations are turned towards other actors. These are the representations that participate in the exclusion or inclusion of the represented actor, while in this work, the representations refer to those of the actors vis-à-vis the social space where they reside. They represent the city as a village and extract it from its urban framework in order to reconstruct it ideologically as a village on the pretext that social regulation within a village facilitates the maintenance of autochthony as in the city. These representations construct the actors' relationships to space.2 Referring to Loucou's (2002) analysis, narratives are recounted on the construction of a residential identity of the andogroup. Historical facts are mobilized to reproduce the social functions of this city in the sense that the social frameworks are reinvented here in the current context and the administrative authorities' failure to agree on the spatial integration of other categories of actors becomes a myth. They thus participate in legitimizing the positions that the groups that make up the Sodeci source city are constructing.

3-3- PRESERVATION OF A RESIDENTIAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE MONOPOLIZATION OF POLITICAL POWER

3-3-1- Informal practices as standards

Here, it is important to highlight the 03 categories of actors involved in the SOURCE SODECI city experience:

- residents who own houses, former SODECI agents;
- residents who own houses and are not SODECI agents;
- Residents who are tenants.

The reconfiguration of the residents' association of the Source Sodeci city into a condominium owners' association is part of a reappropriation of space through the title deed. From an associative or union point of view, each entity has well-defined internal rules and statutes for the operation of these institutions. Although there are readjustments according to the social experience of the actors for the most part, any social norm is formalised and made public for the smooth running of life in society. It has been noted that the practice of reactivation remains at an informal stage insofar as none of the members of the andogroup or the exogroup is in possession of or knows the content of a status of co-owners' union of which they proudly speak.

The only statute and regulation that could present us and which is recognized is that of the association which dates back to 1994 as this verbatim from the president of the syndicate of co-owners testifies:

The only status we can give you is that of our former association. We are currently in the process of drafting for the syndicate of co-owners. Otherwise it must be said that since 2010 we are in the process of obtaining our land title and it is this agreement that will make us a real syndicate of co-owners. So we use the ones of the association in the meantime ... this is Africa, so it's like that here.

From what follows let us say that the functioning of this syndicate of co-owners is only in the imagination of the actors because the fact of putting oneself in syndicate within the source city Sodeci had only one goal to obtain the land title. The objectives of a syndicate of co-owners on a national scale is to establish the rights and obligations of each of the co-owners of the same building and to share the common costs between them. This in order to make the social space pleasant to live in. To quote this verbatim:

My daughter all these things, we've suffered too much to have our houses. We just want the land title, that's all... seriously, what I pay here are the contributions for death, marriage... not to fix someone's house.

We can then conclude that the union as they call themselves does not function as the one established by institutional standards. There is no syndic, no union council, the co-ownership contributions are not known and therefore not paid and the collective maintenance is not taken into account. The whole functioning of the co-ownership is not effective within the city on the contrary it is the association that is still functioning. So the reactivation of the normative framework of the ARCSS in the functioning of the syndicate of co-owners thus becomes an informal practice which benefits the andogroup and which is simply formulated by them with the aim of expressing a setting aside, a differentiation.

3-3-2- Expressed exclusion.

The practice of reactivating the normative framework of the ARCSS within the syndicate of co-owners is perceived by the exogroup as being a sidelining. In fact, it can be seen that this category does not participate in the decision making of the office of the syndicate of co-owners nor in the meetings although they do make them part of it, as this verbatim report shows:

Concerning their meeting, it's only the syndicate of co-owners, they don't inform us of anything, but according to them, they're also in that syndicate, right? Often I see them gathered in a corner down there like a sorcerer's brotherhood. When you ask, they throw in your face: "Meeting of the syndicate, aren't you informed?" as if they called you or they have my contacts... my daughter. It's all good, so it's office business, it's good. As long as I have my house, the rest I put behind...". According to another: "As we don't make them leave the office if you have to be ex-agent owners of the famous SODECI to be president of the city, they will always be president because even if we do a hundred years we will never become president and that is very clear.

On the other hand it is observed that the exogroup seems to take too much to heart the affairs that directly concern the andogroup. Thus they formulate unfounded proposals: We have the impression that they want to take our city... they cannot understand and moreover they never understand anything, so as they are not interested in anything we are also not told anything.

This finding is reported on our study site. Previously, there were only SODECI officers. It was therefore the professional activity that brought them together in the same social space, but today various categories of actors live there. With Michael Y and Peter. W quoted by Colin. G (2010) we see how residents of a neighborhood activate networks, in this case kinship, to maintain social relations. In this logic, family ties appear as a foundation of local social structures. Within the SODECI city, professional activity is the positive social identity and becomes the basis for maintaining social relations. This shows an affirmation of residential indigenousness. Evoking Fromentin's (2012) analysis, therefore, postulates that neighbourhood councils are not free of relationships of domination and, on the contrary, the existence of a hidden sense of participation limits access to these structures from these inhabitants. It emanates from social processes of exclusion that have their origin in the construction of the political order by those who profit. There is a domination at the level of the political field and this is reflected in the non-participation of those who are not represented in the neighbourhood committees. Returning to our framework of study, relations of domination exist insofar as the andogroup leading the decision-making positions discriminates against others and legitimizes this through their autochthony. Thus, the exogroup does not participate in the control of the management committees because it is not represented. Also, it should be remembered that to understand the management of neighbourhoods, we proceeded by structural analogies to intercommunity relations. It is based on a relationship of dependency and extends to a domination that arises from the obligation of recognition. The principle of dependence applies to both categories but the members of the exogroup remain under the domination of the natives (ex-agents). However, Juteau (1996) sees a construction of minority groups based on the domination of the majority group.

3-3-3-Total occupation of decision-making positions by the andogroup.

Restructuring of the houses which led on the one hand to the spatial integration of the tenants and on the other hand to the sale of the houses which allowed the acquisition of the houses by the exogroup. In fact, it emerges that the members of the andogroup exercise a kind of monopolization at the level of the management of the associations. The youth management committee in the former office out of 05 posts, only one post, secretary in charge of the environment and security was held by a tenant.

Secondly, the women's association, also out of 05 posts, one secretary post is held by a female tenant.

Finally, the co-owners' union out of the 05 positions, there is no position held by a member of the exogroup. The structure of the management of the different associations masks a division of labour based on professional status, as this verbatim suggests:

The structure of the management of the different associations masks a division of tasks based on professional status, as this verbatim lets us understand: "The proof is that they don't inform us of anything simply because they don't make you leave the Sodeci as they want you to believe, my daughter" or "It is us, that is to say the union that integrates them into our associations, now we show how we work and he too can come to us for more

information. This way of doing things is there to keep an eye on things and we have to follow him so that he doesn't have any excesses. They can't come and interfere in something (...) even if the workers are no longer their children will direct.

According to the actors' discourse, monopolizing the political field is a way for them to reappropriate the space.

3-4. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POSITIVE IDENTITY AS A CHALLENGE TO REACTIVATE THE ARCSS NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK.

3-4-1- Preservation of a residential identity through the structuring of relationships within the city.

The creation of the SOURCE SODECI city had one objective: to make the former SODECI agent a homeowner. Thus, the category of agents who wanted to own a house agreed to have a certain amount of money taken from their salary for a period of 10 years, and once this period had expired, the agent became the owner of his house. With the status of owner, these agents proceeded to restructure their homes or sell them in order to accommodate another category of actor, either tenants or owners who were not SODECI agents.

The approach made on individuals and groups that they are looking for a positive self-esteem and that their belonging to social groups depends on it. Also, referring to Ascher-F (1998), who mentions the fact that traditional social relations within neighbourhoods tend to be altered, the development of associative life, although precarious, tends to cushion the disappearance of social relations of proximity. According to him, the neighbourhood-village phenomenon is tending to come to an end.

This co-presence of two main categories of actors in a city only for former SODECI agents recomposes the statutes and redefines social conditions. Professional status becomes an element in the creation of autochthony within the city. An identifier demonstrating that the acquisition of houses is the result of a long selection process and therefore a souvenir given by the said society, the city becomes a good to be preserved by the former SODECI agents.

3-4-2- Power: stake of a monopolization of the political field.

The preservation of the city is revealed through the monopolization of the political field by the andogroup. Thus, access to the functions of president becomes an access exclusively reserved for members of the andogroup or their descendants. This monopolisation of strategic management positions testifies to the return to living in a city where access was recognised by professional status. It shows the return of a community spirit as at the beginning. If the town is considered as a village first of all because of its size and number of inhabitants, the relationships that are established there favour the return to the village town with the sole intention of preserving a property. The search for autochthony is the foundation of this practice: the residents use the professional status to maintain social relations, it structures the social relations and the life of the city, it therefore has a hold and a social control. We can see that professional ties thus appear as the foundation of the local social structures.

Thus, these strategies for conserving political power give the andogroup a prestigious position because the fact of having the same status as the exogroup, i.e. "owners", does not give them a favourable self-esteem. Their position in the social stratification within the city was unsatisfactory. Political conservation then became the process that now gives them a positive social identity.

IV. CONCLUSION

The cross-cutting form that this part of our study revealed showed that ex-agents of SODECI, owners of houses defined as the andogroup, monopolize the political field in order to build a positive social identity within the city. At the ideological level, their representation of the city, even though it is in an urban context, shows that they legitimise and want to establish a positive social identity in order to preserve a heritage or even a memory. Tenants and owners who are not defined as the exogroup, although spatially integrated, are considered as foreigners, which gives them a negative social identity vis-à-vis the andogroup. The aim here is to preserve a legitimate objective, a local identity within the city. Spatial integration at the symbolic level results in the exclusion of the members of the exogroup. By retaining the function of responsibility for the management of the city, this category is excluded. The consequence of spatial integration at the structural level starts from the emergence of solidarity relations between the inhabitants of the city and the differentiation between the members of the andogroup and the exogroup, but above all domination in the political field.

The results presented here lead us to understand that, although it is true that we are witnessing a local associative dynamic, particularly for the organisation of leisure activities and the defence of local interests, the political field is used to monopolise power, thus returning to the construction of a positive social identity which is nothing other than that of an "agent of the Sodeci". Thus the professional status becomes the foundation of the construction of this residential identity. Thanks to spatial anchors, thanks to the links that they weave with the space, the ex-agents of the Sodeci, owners of houses find providential resources to maintain their own identity cohesiveness and to manufacture continuity. The construction of identity, especially of a political nature, invests the geographical space with a very powerful collective sense that gives it great social intensity. Such a construction often concretizes power relations. It enters into processes of domination and hegemony.

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