# SUMMARY

The analysis of urban power and authorities, their legitimacy and their impact upon urban planning, may be situated in the « longue durée », in a comparative context, comprising French colonial cities (Cotonou, Conakry, Kaolack), as well as British cities (Lagos) and Mandate cities (Lomé). Numerous variables distinguish the various quarters of the cities studied here: historical age, geographical location with regard to the urban centre (centre or periphery), urban politics, geographical extent and population, and the diversity of the local power or authorities. On a local level, numerous actors have been identified: administrative and technical representatives of the central power, elected representatives or those nominated by municipal structures, associations as well as representatives chosen from long-established local communities.

The attempt to modernize urban structures did not, in fact, sweep away older organizations, though the latter were sometimes temporarily occluded by restrictive regulations. These structures evolve to accord with the political climate but demographic growth and rural to urban migration call into question this evolution; the structures are often marginalized even if they are called upon in time of conflict to mediate. Urban planning now brings into play intra-community relationships (between leading families, between former leaders and present incumbents, between former settlers and new arrivals) as well as relationships between the various representatives of the quarter (customary officials, members of associations) and representatives of the government itself

The present thus seems indeed to be a transitional period in which diverse forms of power rub shoulders, each based on fundamentally different forms of legitimacy (the importance of the ancestors, the sense of the community, election, nomination by higher officials but also the weight of international organizations. These forms of power collaborate, oppose one another, or form alliances according to constantly changing strategies, most frequently determined not by the general perception of urban governance or planning, but rather by immediate issues or local issues, around which they mobilize those people from whom they derive their legitimacy.