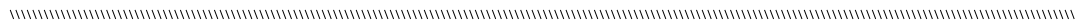


Chapter 8



## Spatial representations and cross-border co-operation in West Africa

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Chapter 8 analyses the spatial representations of the actors involved in cross-border co-operation in West Africa. The first part of the chapter uses mental maps to identify areas recognised as priority regions for cross-border co-operation, the extent to which they vary in size depending on the country in which the actors are located and the locus of the cross-border co-operation's centre of gravity. The second maps the places that are considered as particularly strategic for co-operation between actors within the region itself, while the third section identifies actors which have the potential to be more actively engaged in co-operation activities and discusses the emergence of multi-layered governance in the region. The fourth and concluding section proposes an overview of the co-operation dynamics in place in cross-border areas.

### Key messages

- In all regions, the priority area for cross-border co-operation is far more limited than that over which cross-border co-operation bodies exercise their authority.
- To be fully integrated, cross-border co-operation policies should combine the potential of regions, the structure of the networks linking actors and the political vision underpinning institutional initiatives.
- Place-based policies should leverage untapped co-operation potential in areas which have potentially favourable conditions for co-operation but where local actors are not particularly well connected to governance networks.
- Tighter co-ordination within local and regional governance networks is required to remove institutional blockages in areas where cross-border co-operation is a priority but decentralised networks are currently underdeveloped; this will require greater resources.
- Where political trade-offs have led to the neglect of regions that have potentially favourable conditions for cross-border co-operation, decentralisation and regional investments should be prioritised.

## A PRIORITY AREA FOR CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

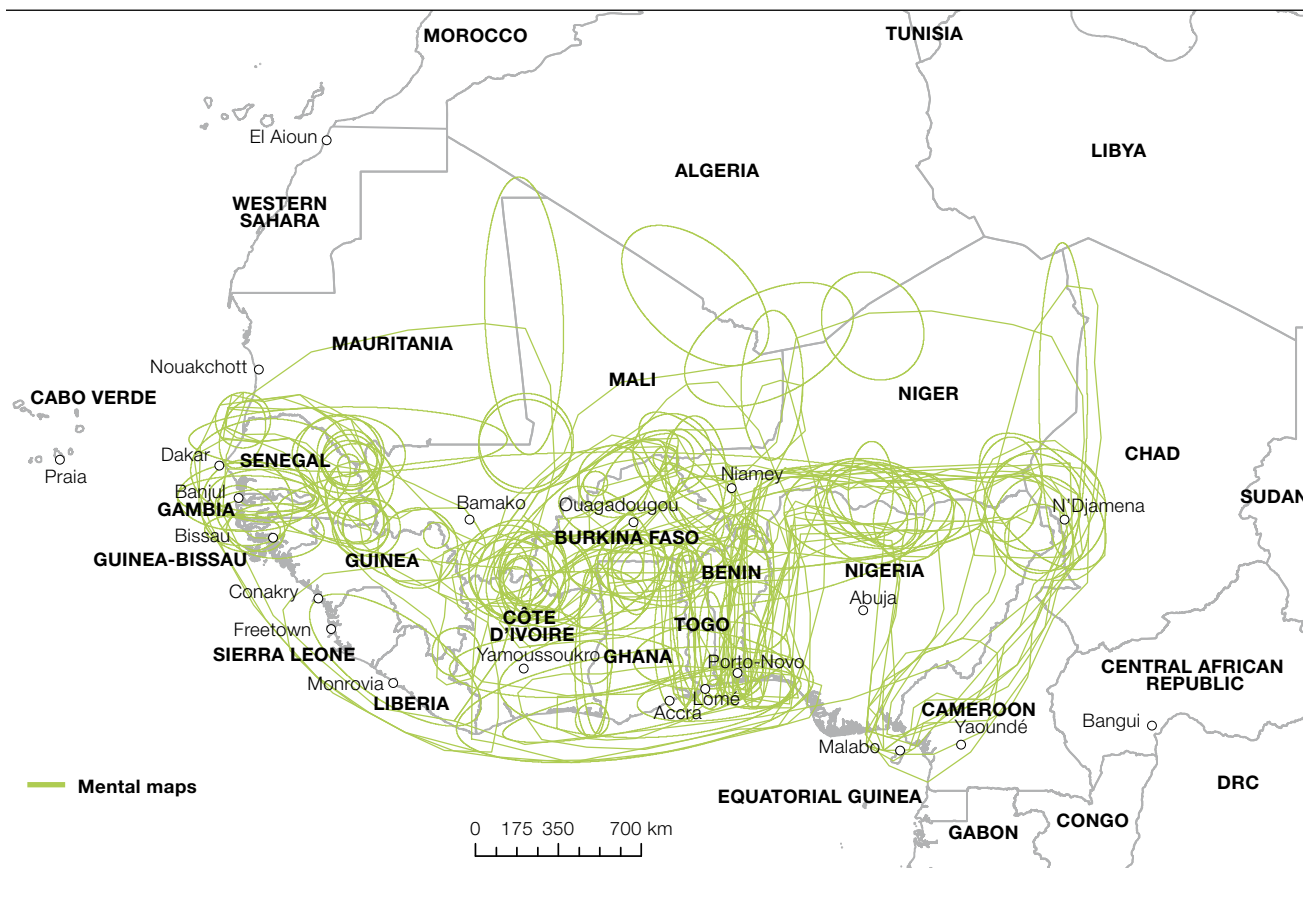
One of the thorniest questions facing the institutional actors, private sector representatives, civil society and financial partners involved in cross-border public policies is knowing exactly *where* to develop co-operation. Is it preferable to set up border regions that are delineated by the administrative maps of the countries concerned? Would it be better to use physical markers that are harder to contest, such as catchment basins? Or is it better to constitute border regions based upon the shifting contours of the populations that interact and

cross borders on a daily basis? Far from being anecdotal, the delimitation of the space selected for targeted cross-border co-operation will often determine the actors represented within governance structures, whether investment is distributed across a wide area or concentrated on a small number of particularly dynamic areas and the relationships between a border region and other levels of authority.

Border regions are socially constructed realities and their geographical extension cannot be based solely on the analysis of socio-economic

Map 8.1

Mental maps of the region



interaction, integration potential or institutional structures. Regional construction is based on spatial representation and on the emergence of a common vision of the cross-border spaces among co-operation partners. The goal is to chart these spatial representations by identifying priority regions for cross-border co-operation in West Africa, in the region around the Senegal River, in Liptako-Gourma and in the Lake Chad basin. This work complements the analyses made in previous chapters that were designed to establish the potential of these regions and the current structure of cross-border governance networks. It draws on a unique analysis of diagrammatic maps known as “mental maps”. Introduced in the 1960s to examine the differences in spatial perception between social groups in US cities (Lynch, 1960), mental maps make it possible to depict the way in which social groups view their own spaces (Heft, 2013; Boschmann and Cubbon, 2014; Dörry and Walther, 2015).

The survey is based on a sample of 137 actors involved in cross-border co-operation, identical to that used in the previous analysis. These actors were given a simplified topographical map of their region on which they were asked to draw the boundaries of what they perceived as the space for targeted cross-border co-operation. The assumption is that the size and shape of the mental map is deformed by the perception of each respondent. The presence of a national border is particularly likely to cause major distortions in the maps as respondents will tend, for example, to overestimate the border zones belonging to their country of origin in comparison with those of neighbouring countries. The resulting maps are then superimposed using a geographic information system (GIS). Actors were allowed to draw several mental maps, and a total of 160 maps were analysed at the regional level (Map 8.1). At the local level, the analysis was based on a sample of 43 maps in the Senegal valley, 29 in

Liptako-Gourma and 23 in the region around Lake Chad (Map 8.2).

This method highlights two essential features of border regions (Figure 8.1):

1. Mental maps establish whether a consensus exists on the geographical extent of cross-border co-operation. They show the regions considered as priorities for cross-border co-operation by a majority of respondents and those that are considered to be of lesser significance. The average area of the mental maps drawn by the actors and their density by region are used to evaluate the geographical extent.
2. Mental maps allow for the cross-border co-operation mean centre to be calculated: i.e. the locus with the mean co-ordinates of all of a region's mental maps. From this central point, two metrics are used to assess how far the

mental maps are spread across the area: the standard distance, which measures the degree to which features are concentrated or dispersed around the mean centre; and the standard deviational ellipse, which shows whether the maps' distribution follows a particular direction. Similar to the standard deviation used in statistics, the standard distance quantifies the amplitude of the dispersal of a set of spatialised values. The smaller the figure, the more concentrated the distribution of the mental maps, indicating agreement among the respondents as to the centre of gravity of cross-border co-operation. In Figure 8.1 a, the majority (77%) of mental maps, represented by black points, are located within one standard distance of the centre of gravity in what constitutes the area of greatest concentration. Similarly, the smaller the standard

Map 8.2

Mental maps by locality

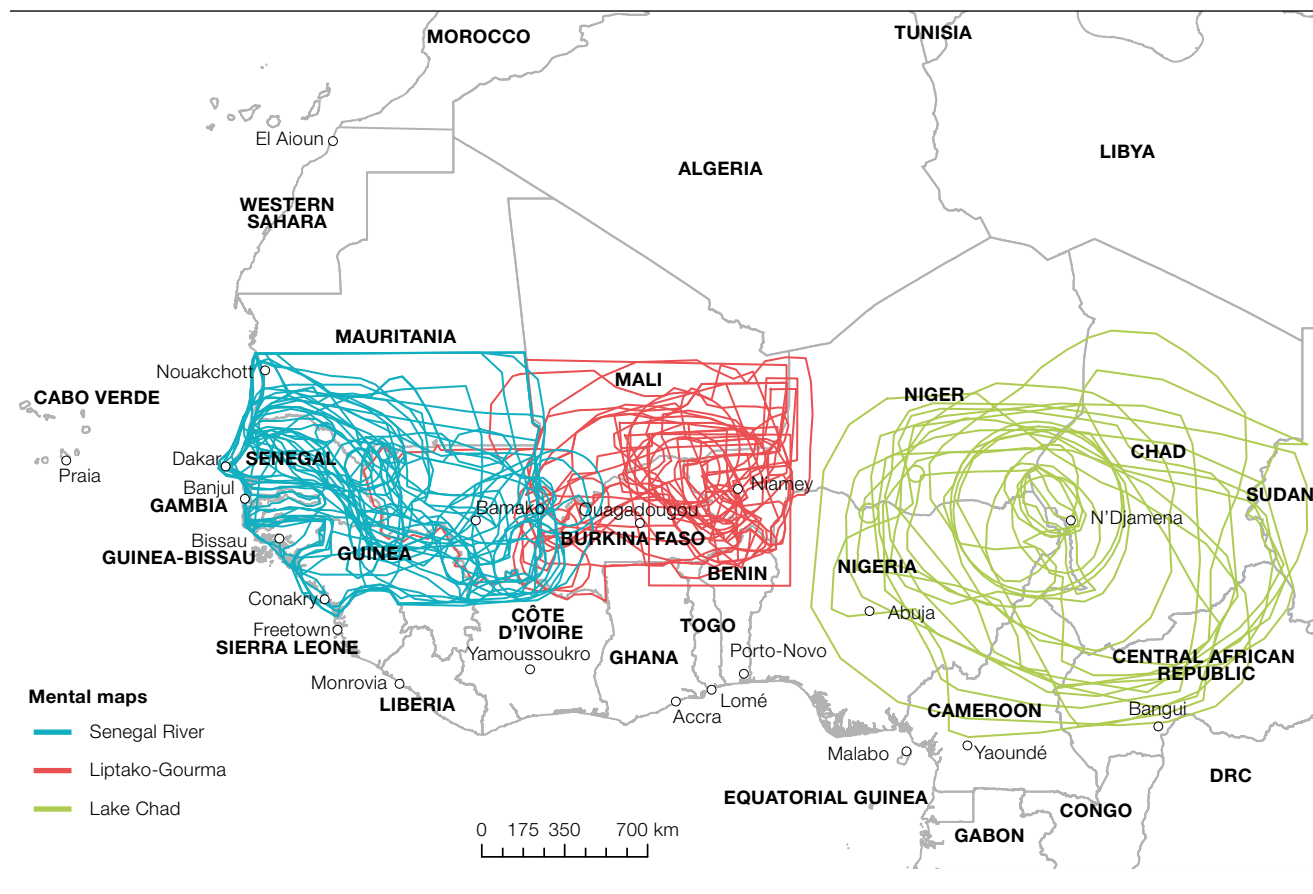
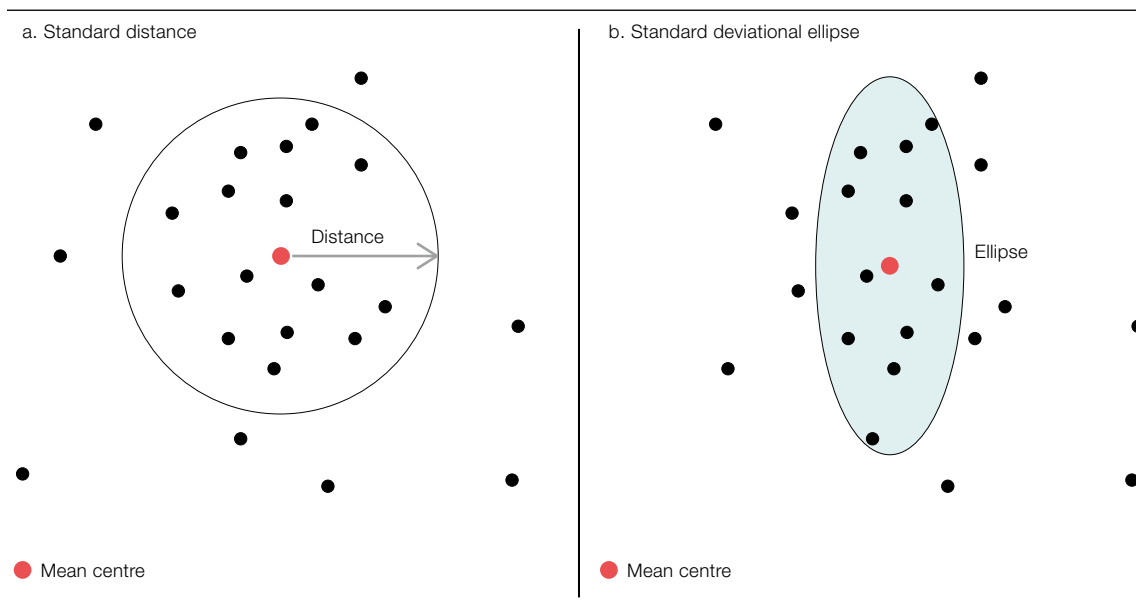


Figure 8.1  
Standard distance and standard deviational ellipse



ellipse, the more the respondents agree as to the dispersal and orientation of cross-border co-operation. In [Figure 8.1b](#), the points representing the mental maps delineate a north-south ellipse, in which the concentration of points is particularly high.

The space considered relevant in terms of cross-border co-operation is 728300 km<sup>2</sup> on average according to the mental maps of the region, which corresponds approximately to the surface area of Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Benin combined. By locality, this surface area is 375000 km<sup>2</sup> in the Senegal River valley, 246000 km<sup>2</sup> in Liptako-Gourma and 699000 km<sup>2</sup> in the Lake Chad region, according to the mental maps drawn by the actors interviewed. These regional variations reflect major divergences between different respondents’ representations of cross-border co-operation.

There are also wide internal variations in the different geographic areas or countries in which the respondents are based ([Figure 8.2](#)). At a regional level, actors based in eastern, central and southern Africa are those with the broadest perception of the area of West African co-operation, reaching 1.4 million km<sup>2</sup>, an area greater than the country of Niger. This figure contrasts sharply with the space identified by respondents based in Europe,

which is less than one-third this size (385 000 km<sup>2</sup>), while West Africans’ spatial representation was close to the average, at 617 000 km<sup>2</sup>. The reason for these results is that respondents in the rest of Africa are mainly political decision makers active in the region’s major organisations, for which the relevant scope of cross-border co-operation is often likened to that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), while those based in Europe tend to work at a more local level.

In the Senegal River region, the area of the mental maps drawn by the respondents, with an average of 375000 km<sup>2</sup>, showed little variation across the sample. It was 401000 km<sup>2</sup> for those working in Mauritania, 399000 km<sup>2</sup> for those in Senegal and 354000 km<sup>2</sup> in Mali. In Liptako-Gourma, a certain consensus between respondents in Niger and those in Burkina Faso can be seen over the average area of the border zone (around 250000 km<sup>2</sup>). The few respondents from Mali tended to draw mental maps that were smaller than the average (182000 km<sup>2</sup>). In the Lake Chad region, the number of mental maps collected in Nigeria and Cameroon was insufficient to expose national trends.

The calculation of dispersal metrics reveals that the Senegal River valley has the weakest consensus over the location of the centre of

gravity of cross-border co-operation, while Liptako-Gourma has the strongest consensus. The average variation between the mental maps and the centre of gravity is just 222 km in the latter case, suggesting that the scatter of the maps is more concentrated than in the other regions (Table 8.1). Similarly, the area of the standard ellipse is smallest in Liptako-Gourma, which indicates greater geographic concentration. Map 8.3 shows more precisely where the centres of gravity are located and the reach of the standard distances and the standard deviational ellipses in each case.

These regional differences are more visible when mapping the density of mental maps at the level of West Africa and the three micro-regions examined. The darker the colour, the greater the consensus over the zone's

Table 8.1

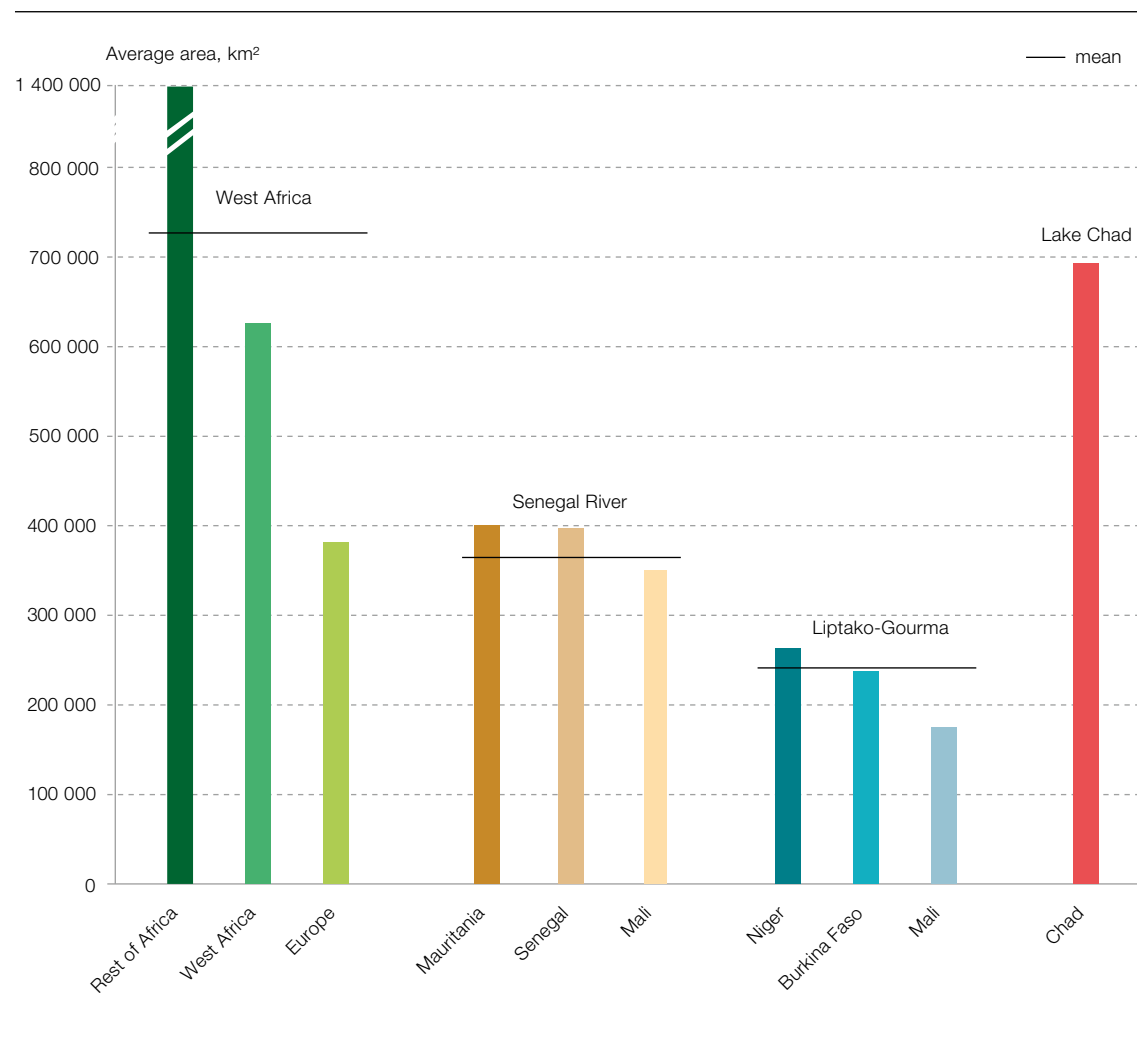
Standard distance and standard deviational ellipse by micro-region

Region	Standard distance (km)	Standard deviational ellipse (km <sup>2</sup> )
Senegal River valley	286	177 000
Liptako-Gourma	222	125 000
Lake Chad	237	128 000

importance. In West Africa, the priority zones recognised by a high proportion of respondents are the Lagos-Cotonou conurbation, the Hausaland, Dendi (Gaya-Malanville-Kamba),

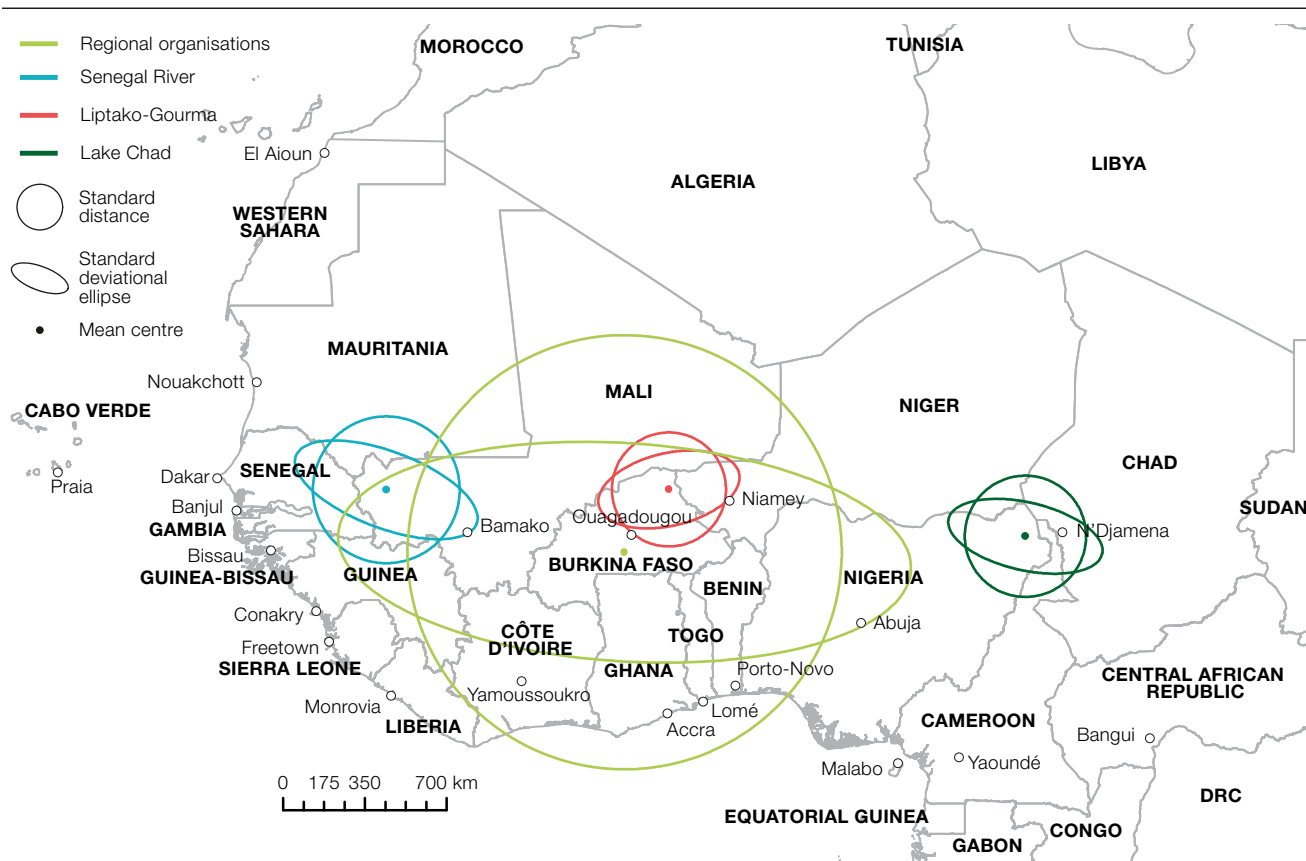
Figure 8.2

Average area of border zones to be targeted, by respondents' country of origin



Map 8.3

Centre of gravity, standard distance and standard deviational ellipses



northern Togo (Sinkansé, Burkina Faso) and the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso (SKBo) triangle (Map 8.4). Three of these five regions are located around the perimeter of Nigeria. The priority regions do not fall within the zones covered by the Senegal River Basin Development Organisation (OMVS), the Integrated Development Authority of the Liptako-Gourma Region (ALG) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). The second tier of priority regions identified concerns the western and northern sections of Nigeria’s borders; Lomé; Lake Chad; the tripoint between Senegal, Mali and Mauritania; and the Burkina Faso-Ghana border, north of which is the centre of gravity of all the mental maps drawn at the regional level. The intermediary strip between the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel is considered to be of low priority for cross-border co-operation, especially in the west (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire), as is the Sahara.

At the local level, priority zones in the region around the Senegal River are distributed along

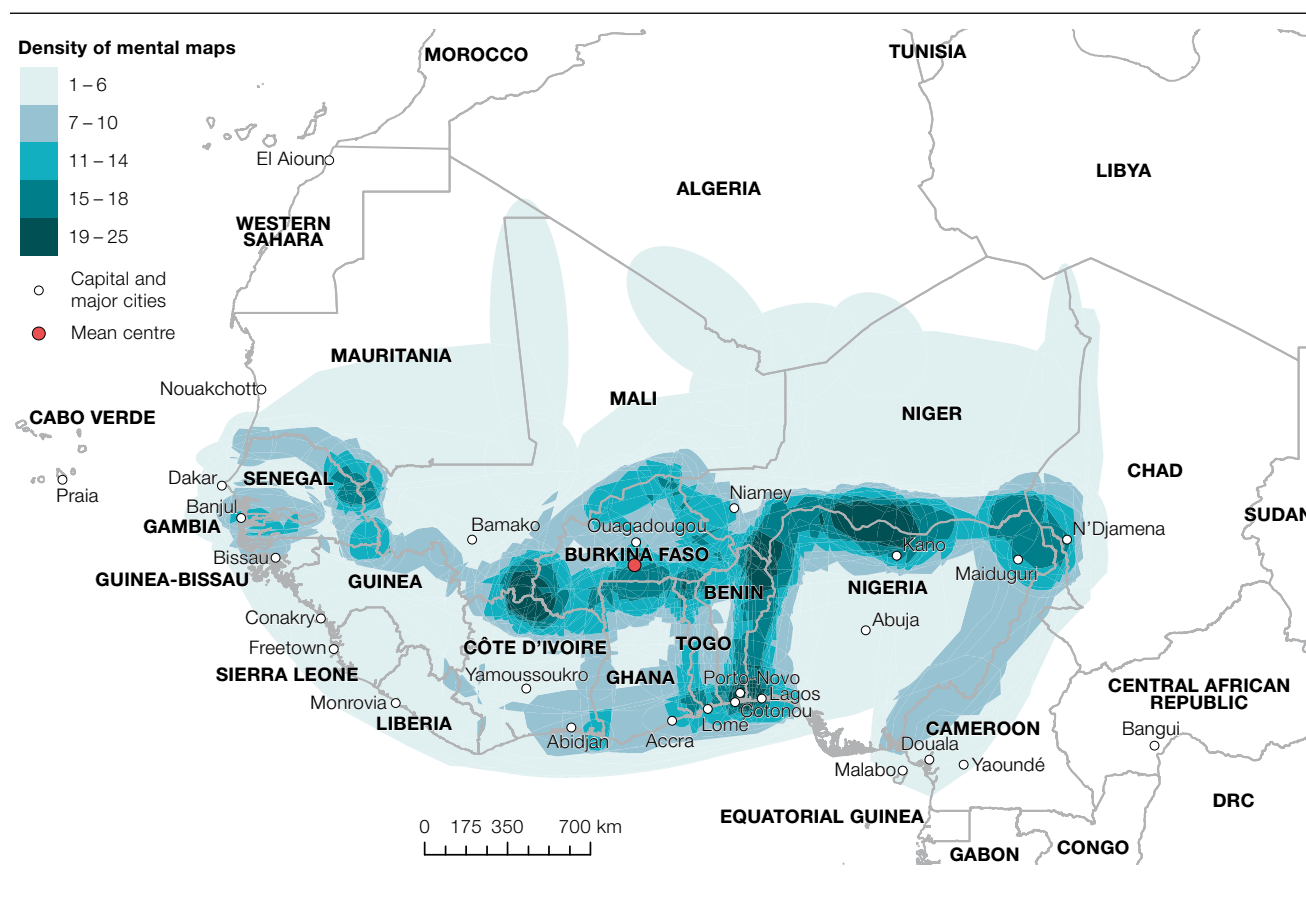
the valley and follow its tributary, the Falémé, along the border with Mali (Map 8.5). From this central axis, the density of the maps diminishes, indicating lessening consensus. The area recognised as a priority stretches along for approximately 100 000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is scarcely more than a third of the size of the Senegal River basin (289 000 km<sup>2</sup>) and corresponds to the southern section of the area under the authority of the OMVS, and to a lesser degree the north of Mauritania and the east of Mali. The centre of gravity is located in Mali, to the east of the Bakel-Sélibaby-Kayes triangle. The mental maps steer clear of non-French-speaking countries in the region (Gambia and Guinea-Bissau), suggesting that the perceptions of regional actors are influenced by the different colonial languages.

In Liptako-Gourma, the priority area for cross-border co-operation traces a crescent through the tripoint between Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali and the Niger River valley to Niamey (Map 8.6). Niamey and Lomé are the only capitals in the region to fall within a



Map 8.4

Priority areas for cross-border co-operation in West Africa



priority area for co-operation. This zone of about 50 000 km<sup>2</sup> roughly corresponds to the heart of the restricted area of the ALG, which itself is almost seven and a half times the size (370 000 km<sup>2</sup>). The towns of Gao, Dori and Tillabéri are its major regional centres, and the centre of gravity is located halfway between Dori and Tillabéri, in Burkina Faso.

In the Lake Chad region, the priority area for co-operation is confined to the area delimited by N'Djamena, Maiduguri and Diffa. Beyond this, the density of the maps decreases rapidly in concentric circles (Map 8.7). This central zone of 176 000 km<sup>2</sup> represents only one-sixth of the area known as the Lake Chad basin (967 000 km<sup>2</sup>, excluding Libya), over which the LCBC exercises its authority. The centre of gravity lies between Maiduguri and N'Djamena in Nigeria.

Mental map analysis reveals an emerging vision shared by the actors involved in co-operation (Table 8.2). At the regional level, it

is difficult to assume that consensus exists over the territorial extent of co-operation, given the wide variance in size between the respondents' mental maps. At most, the respondents located in West Africa have a more tempered vision of their region than outsiders. Several regions, however, are recognised as centres of gravity for cross-border co-operation, particularly the Lagos-Cotonou conurbation, Dendi, the Hausaland and the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso triangle.

In the Senegal valley, consensus exists over the area of cross-border co-operation, which follows the river valley and the border between Senegal and Mali. The centre of gravity of this co-operation is, on the other hand, more variable than in other micro-regions. In Liptako-Gourma, there is consensus over both the extent and the centre of gravity of cross-border co-operation. Mental maps are particularly dense in the crescent that passes through the tripoint between Niger, Burkina



Map 8.5

Priority area for cross-border co-operation in the Senegal River region

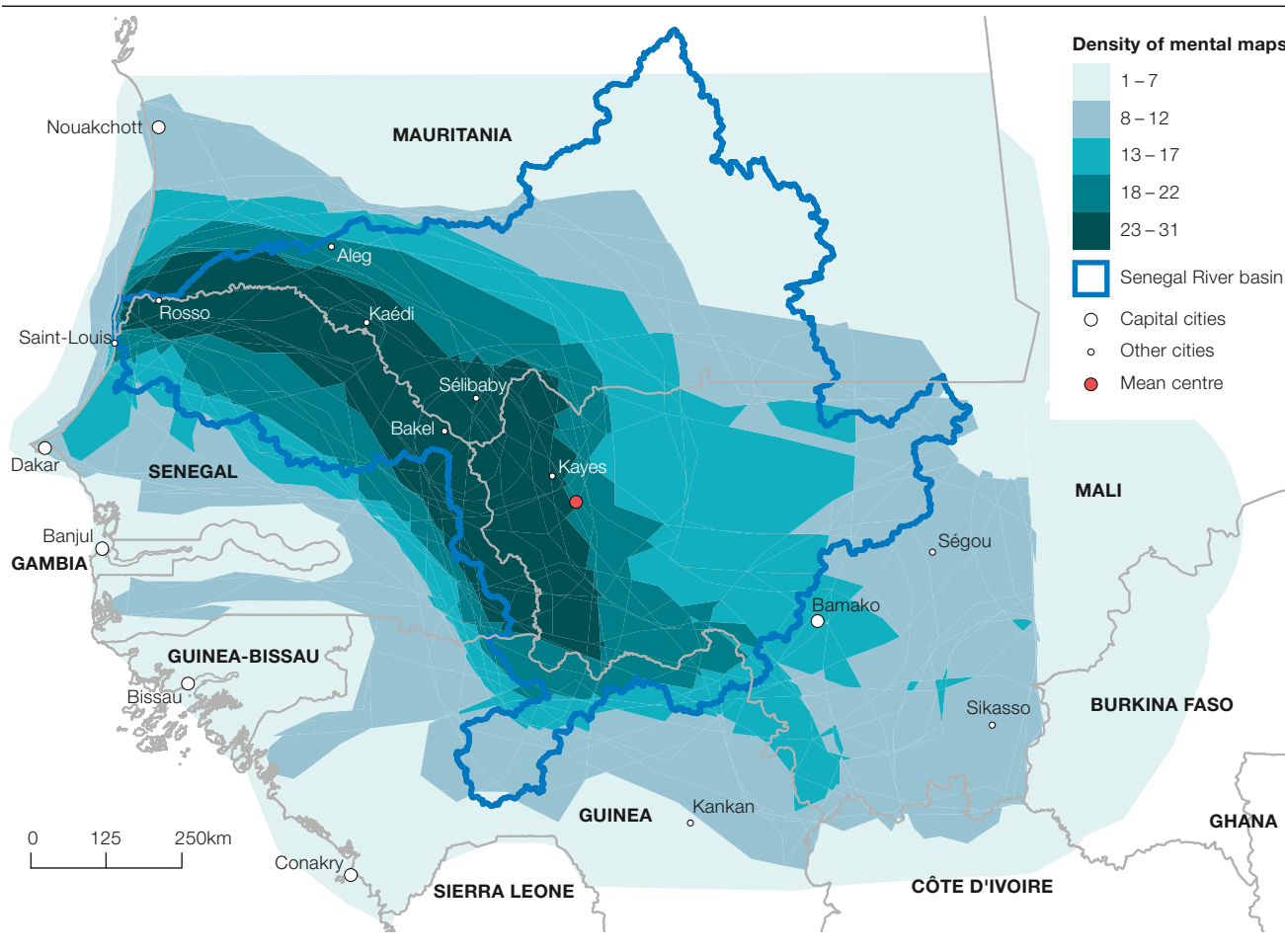


Table 8.2  
Consensus over the extent and centre of gravity of cross-border co-operation

Region	Territorial extent	Centre(s) of gravity
West Africa	No	Yes
Senegal River valley	Yes	No
Liptako-Gourma	Yes	Yes
Lake Chad region	No	Yes

Faso and Mali and the Niger valley down to Niamey. In the Lake Chad basin, respondents agree on the N’Djamena-Maiduguri-Diffa area as the hub for cross-border co-operation, but vary widely over its extent, which reaches as

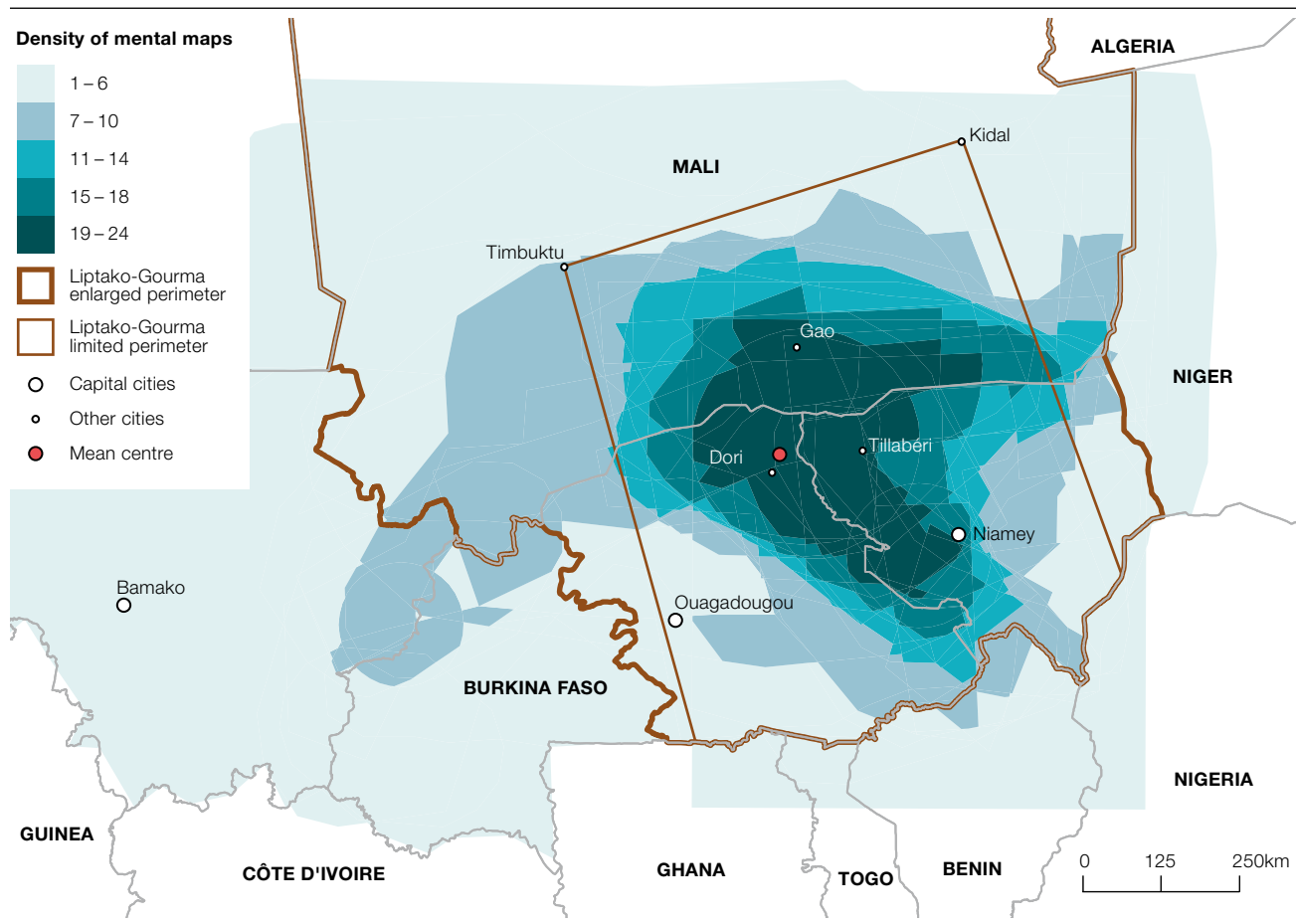
far as the Central African Republic, the south of Chad and the centre of Niger.

In all regions, the priority area for cross-border co-operation is far more limited than that over which organisations such as the OMVS, ALG and LCBC exercise their authority (Table 8.3). The gap is most pronounced in Liptako-Gourma, where the ALG’s limited intervention zone is over seven times larger. In the Lake Chad basin it is five times larger, and in the Senegal valley it is three times larger.

The mismatch between the institutions’ jurisdictions and the priority areas for co-operation is not specific to West Africa. Comparable situations can be seen in Europe, especially in the area that encompasses Luxembourg and its German, French and Belgian neighbours, where the cross-border metropolitan area of Luxembourg City represents a particularly dense area of socio-economic interaction

Map 8.6

Priority area for cross-border co-operation in Liptako-Gourma

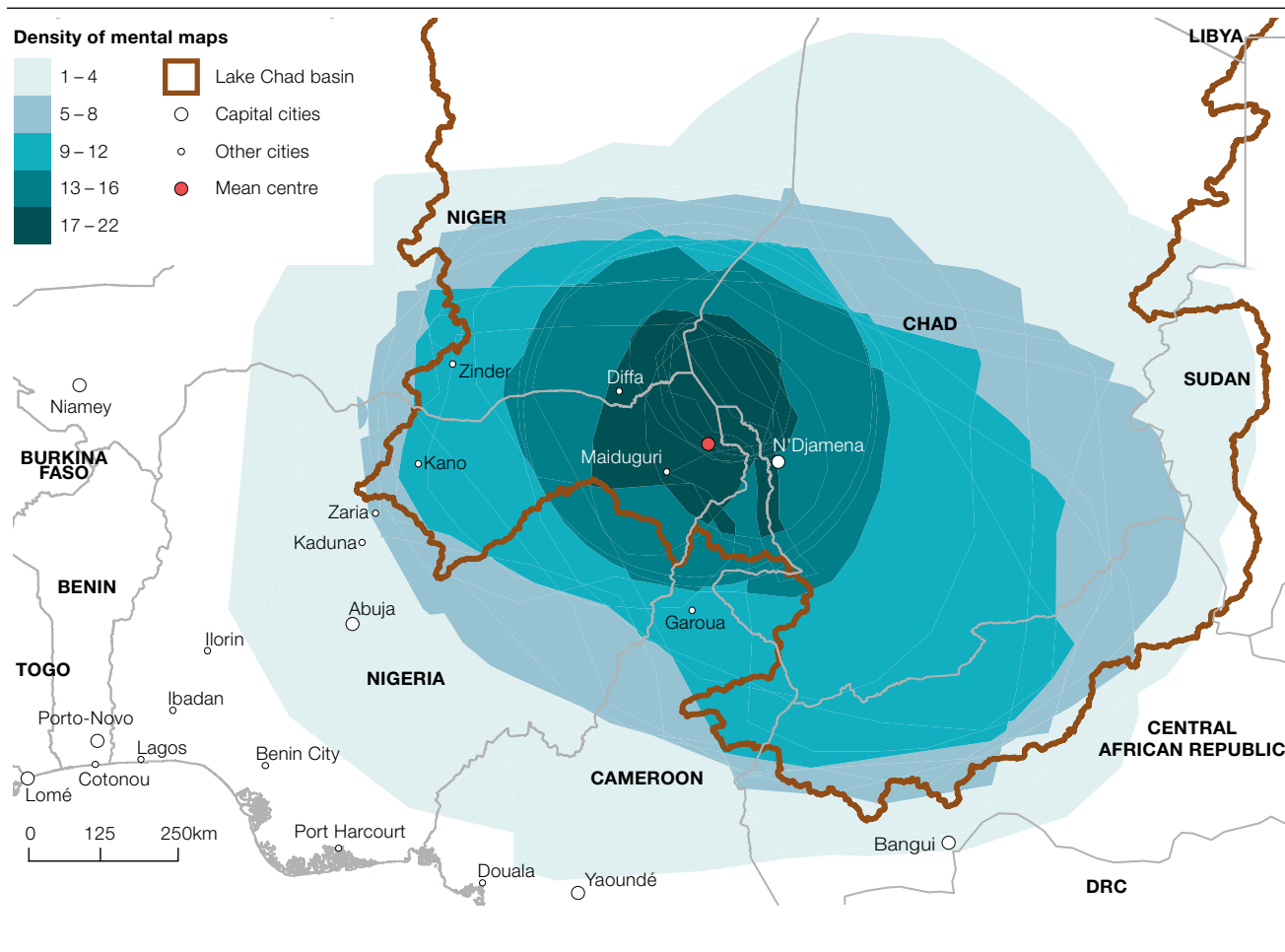


(ESPON, 2010). Far from being a fundamental barrier to the implementation of cross-border initiatives, the large size of West African institutions is the legacy of a time when there was a drive to build regions based on existing administrative bodies. This raises the possibility of smaller-scale cross-border investments in urban centres which are considered to be the most central, such as Kaédi, Sélibaby and Kayes; Dori, Gao and Tillabéri; or N'Djamena, Maiduguri and Diffa.

Table 8.3 Institutional areas and priority areas for cross-border co-operation

Organisation	Area covered by institutions (km <sup>2</sup> )	Size of priority areas (km <sup>2</sup> )
OMVS (Senegal River basin)	289 000	100 000
ALG (limited intervention zone)	370 000	50 000
LCBC (Lake Chad basin excluding Libya)	967 000	176 000

Map 8.7  
Priority area for cross-border co-operation in the Lake Chad region



### STRATEGIC SITES FOR CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

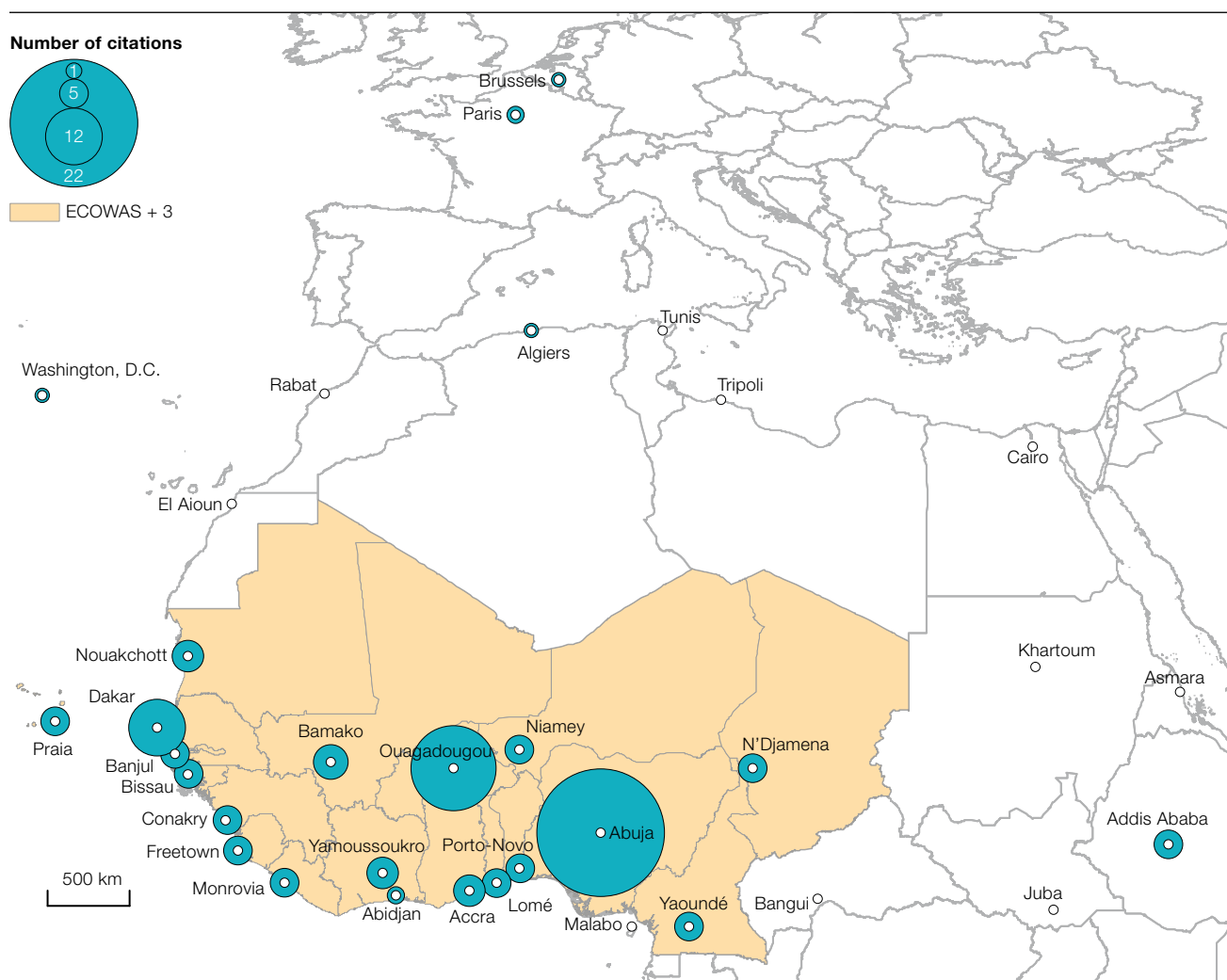
The negotiation and decision making processes concerning cross-border co-operation take place in a limited number of locations considered to be particularly central by decision makers and their partners. At the regional level, the surveys carried out among those involved in co-operation show that these strategic locations are primarily Abuja in Nigeria, where ECOWAS is headquartered, Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, home to UEMOA and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and to a lesser extent Dakar in Senegal (Map 8.8). Abuja, Ouagadougou and Dakar represent nearly 40% of the places mentioned at least once as strategic. With the exception of Abidjan, the other places mentioned are all national capitals. Cities outside West Africa are seen as less strategic

for cross-border co-operation, including the capitals of some European and North American countries, as well as Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, even though it is the headquarters of the African Union (AU). These spatial representations contrast sharply with the reconstitution of the co-operation networks on a regional level (Map 7.1), which show West Africa as closely connected to Europe and the rest of Africa, both in terms of information exchange and power relationships.

At the local level, the areas considered strategic correspond generally to the capitals, which are home to the sectoral cross-border co-operation organisations (Map 8.9). This is the case for the Senegal River valley, where Dakar, Bamako, Nouakchott and Conakry emerge strongly as the major centres of strategic

Map 8.8

Strategic areas for cross-border co-operation at the regional level



decision making due to the rotating presidency of the OMVS. These key locations decisively outrank the more distant capitals of Niger and Burkina Faso, as well as regional centres such as Kayes, Sikasso and Ségou in Mali (Table 8.4).

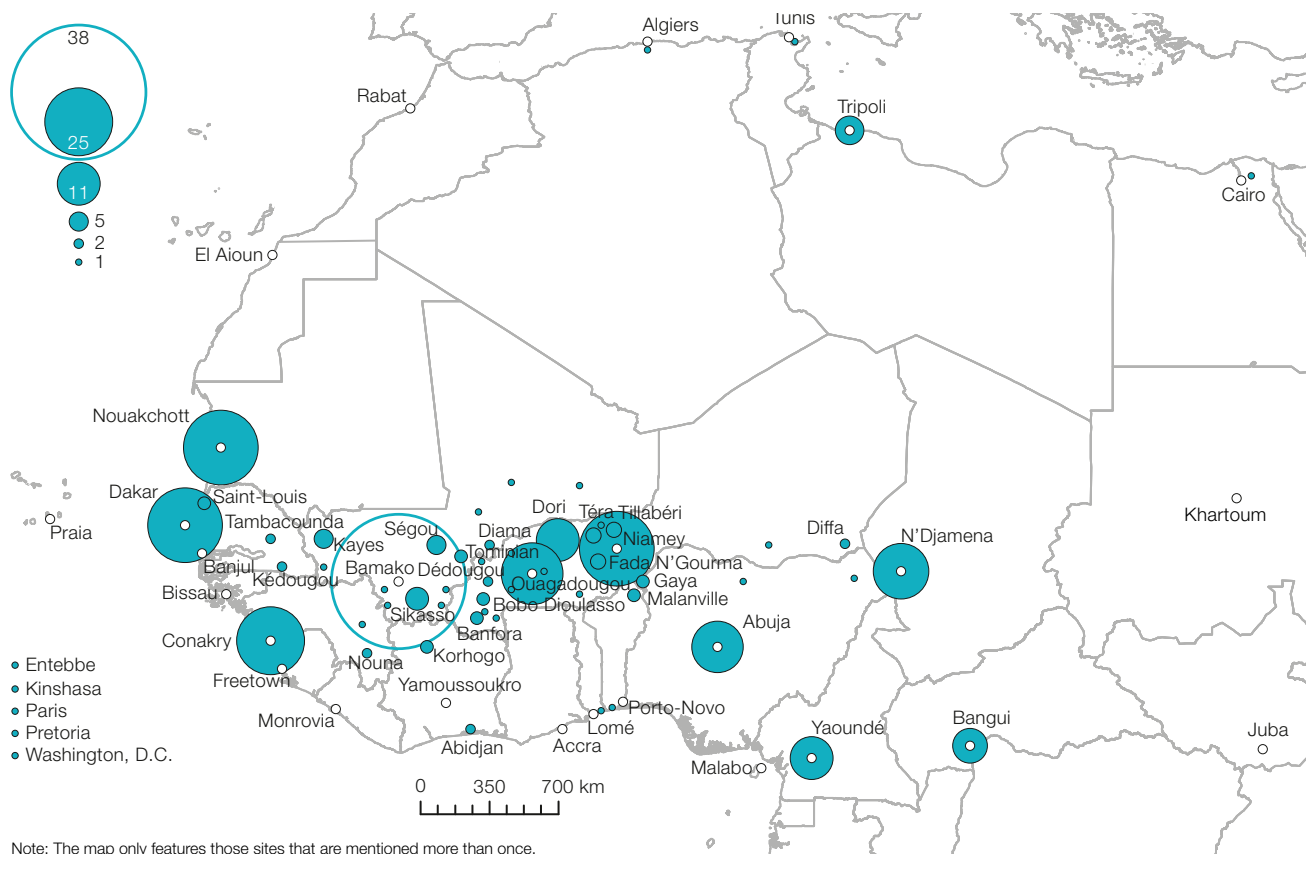
In Liptako-Gourma, Ouagadougou is widely considered to be the most strategic location for co-operation because in addition to being a member of the ALG, it is also the headquarters of both the ALG and UEMOA. The other capitals of ALG member countries – Niamey and Bamako – are also viewed as particularly central. One of the names most frequently mentioned is Dori, a small town in Burkina Faso, whose strategic importance far outweighs its small size (23 050 inhabitants in 2010 according to *Africapolis* [Moriconi-Ebrard, Harre and Heinrigs, 2016]). Dori essentially owes its

significance to the fact that its former mayor, Hama Arba Diallo, played a leading role in the consolidation of nine territorial authorities in the Decentralised Cross-Border Co-operation Unit of Sahel Local Authorities, known as C3SAHEL. Before moving to Niamey, the Billital Maroobe Network (RBM) was headquartered in Dori, as was the Association for the Promotion of Livestock in the Sahel and the Savannah (APESS). In addition, Dori regularly hosts meetings of the region's pastoral organisations. Many other locations of lesser importance in terms of population are mentioned in the region, suggesting that cross-border co-operation in Liptako-Gourma is based on a dense group of cities of various sizes.

No such polycentrism exists in the Lake Chad region, where strategic decisions are

Map 8.9

Strategic areas for cross-border co-operation at the local level



chiefly taken in the capital of Chad, followed by the capitals of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. The role of Tripoli and Bangui, two capital cities of countries that are official members of the LCBC, is of less importance because of the current conflicts in Libya and the Central African Republic. No other city plays a strategic role in the region.

An analysis of strategic locations for cross-border co-operation suggests that most

decisions are taken in West African capitals, whether they concern policies with regional impact or local initiatives. It is largely in these capitals that the public policies affecting cross-border regions are drawn up between very different partners, not all of whom are governmental. Only the Liptako-Gourma region has a group of smaller centres that can potentially play a role in local governance.

### TOWARDS MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE?

Relations between subnational and central government may take the form of multi-level governance, in which state power is supplemented from the top by supranational organisations, from the bottom by local and regional entities, and laterally by actors in the private sector and civil society. This reorganisation of the role of the state is

necessitated by the dispersal of resources between public and private organisations, the need for collective decision making between hierarchical levels and the obligation to include private actors in public policy making. It complicates the process of governance, as the exchange of information and the decision making processes which take

place between these actors not only follow hierarchical structures but can also take the more difficult-to-discern form of a network. The governance structures implemented by the interplay of different actors with multiple affiliations are akin to a series of arrangements and coalitions that vary in time and space. Whereas the governance of public affairs tends to be vertical, institutionalised and co-ordinated at the national level, governance relationships are more horizontal, informal and devolved at the local level.

The examination of cross-border public policy networks presented in [Chapter 7](#) suggests that this form of multi-level governance is emerging in West Africa, where information and power networks involve actors with very different skills, although each region will have one dominant form of relationships. At the regional level around Lake Chad, for example, the policy network is mainly based on internal interactions within intergovernmental organisations, while internal relations between government officials are the preferred mode

**Table 8.4**  
Number of mentions of the most strategic locations at the local level

Senegal River	Mentions	Liptako-Gourma	Mentions	Lake Chad	Mentions
Bamako	28	Ouagadougou	18	N'Djamena	16
Dakar	28	Niamey	13	Abuja	11
Nouakchott	27	Dori	11	Niamey	11
Conakry	25	Bamako	10	Yaoundé	11
Kayes	5	Fada N'Gourma	4	Bangui	9
Ouagadougou	5	Téra	4	Tripoli	7
Ségou	5	Tillabéri	4	Diffa	2
Niamey	4	Gaya	3	Others	3
Sikasso	4	Malanville	3	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>
Saint-Louis	3	Abidjan	2		
Tominian	3	Abuja	2		
Abuja	2	Bobo Dioulasso	2		
Banfora	2	Korhogo	2		
Diamana	2	N'Djamena	2		
Kédougou	2	Séba	2		
Nouna	2	Sikasso	2		
Rosso	2	Others	23		
Tambacounda	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>		
Others	16				
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>				

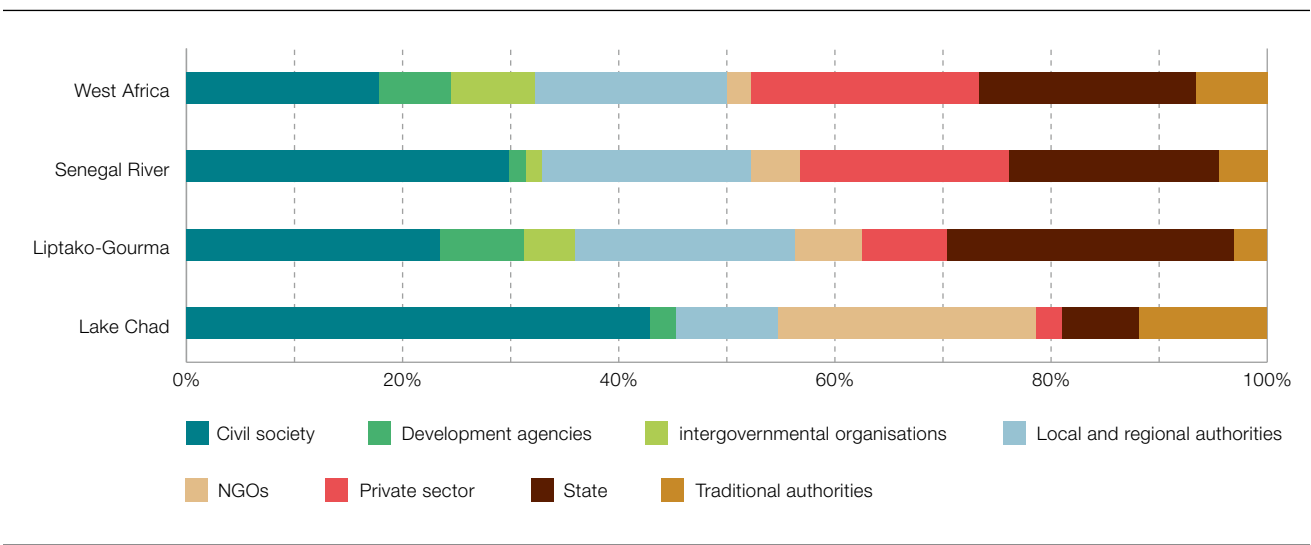
along the Senegal River and in Liptako-Gourma. The fact that representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector are relatively disconnected from these networks implies that certain actors could become more involved in cross-border co-operation. This is indeed what emerges from surveys of regional players, which show that the state, the private sector, local and regional authorities and civil society should all, to an almost equal degree, play a greater role in cross-border co-operation (Figure 8.3). At the local level, the most frequently mentioned actors are subnational authorities and the state in the Senegal River valley, and NGOs in the Lake Chad region. The private sector is only frequently mentioned in the Senegal River valley. Traditional authorities, which include chiefs and religious leaders, as well as development agencies, were not identified by the respondents as actors which ought to be more closely involved in cross-border co-operation.

Among the state bodies which are cited are line ministries, technical departments, security forces (e.g. customs, police, gendarmerie, military and intelligence), chambers of commerce, industry, handicrafts, agriculture and universities. These bodies have the regulatory, legal and financial authority that gives states such a vital role in cross-border co-operation. To quote one representative of a Western development agency based in Addis

Ababa: “Strategic decisions are taken at the national level because those are the people who enter into agreements and decide that police officers at the border need training or children in border regions can gain access to schools. So as sovereign bodies they need to take action and decide what they want.” State-level financial investment in cross-border initiatives remains insufficient, however, according to many respondents who point out that many regional organisations depend heavily on these resources. The executive secretary of one of the region’s co-operation structures reports: “The major challenge is funding. In the last couple of years, it has not been very easy to get the contribution of member states that will allow us to fully execute our planned programmes.” This issue is particularly crucial in the Lake Chad region because of the political instability that has been troubling Libya and the Central African Republic for several years, since both countries contribute to the LCBC.

These concerns raise the more general question of cross-border funding and whether it should be the business of states, regional organisations or international fundraisers. An AU representative puts it as follows: “At the state, regional and international levels, the mechanism of funding cross-border activities doesn’t exist. States are reluctant to fund activities that benefit several states, and ECOWAS has no mechanism for distribution

Figure 8.3  
Actors needing to play a greater role in cross-border co-operation by region





to the member states jointly ... ECOWAS integration funds are more or less about intra-state activities.”

Following the launch of the ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) (now known as the Cross-Border Co-operation Programme [CBCP]), a number of cross-border initiatives have received greater funding, notably from the Peace Fund. UEMOA's Council of Local Governments (CCT) has brought fresh support to strengthen subregional decentralisation. As an example, its investment programme located in the IIR Sahel area (the border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) supports local border authorities. Funded by the Government of Luxembourg, the Local Cross-Border Initiative (LOBI) project covers eight UEMOA member states, providing for the establishment of institutional and financial tools to ensure that investments are equitable and respond to the needs of border communities such as the SKBo and IIR Sahel areas. Cross-border co-operation was taken up for the first time in the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) under the tenth European Development Fund (EDF), making it possible for two neighbouring states to align their cross-border priorities as expressed through the National Indicative Programme (NIP). Whilst this list of initiatives is not exhaustive, there is a real lack of financial support for cross-border projects at the regional and subregional levels, and many obstacles remain to ensuring the sustainability of existing mechanisms at the legislative, technical, financial and political levels. Furthermore, the creation of regional funds to finance cross-border co-operation is complicated by the fact that the funds set up for regional co-operation are not designed to finance local activities and the funds administered by national authorities for the purpose of financing local activities are limited to the national territory (AU, 2007). This also requires the implementation of regulatory requirements that can accurately assess the financial feasibility and logistical viability of cross-border projects within national and regional legislation contexts.

In addition, technical and financial partners still face real difficulties when working on cross-border projects. Certain attempts to launch twin programmes on both sides of a border have been hampered by a lack

of coherence between national funds and programmes or between funds operated by the same co-operation agency based in two neighbouring countries. These constraints can be attributed as much to the different policies and priorities of each country as well as to the relatively underdeveloped dialogue and planning processes that exist between stakeholders. The limited financial instruments available from both states and technical and financial partners (TFP) often go hand-in-hand with a lack of support in the pre-funding of these activities.

The need for greater direct private sector involvement in the construction of border regions is also a leitmotif for the representatives of regional organisations. One ECOWAS civil servant based in Abuja says: “We need to involve the professional organisations. Nobody more than them can bring practical rules and instruments to facilitate cross-border mechanisms... I am talking about the producers and traders along the value chains... If they are not part of our policies, we will never make any impact.” It is frequently observed that traders, farmers, fishermen, and their respective associations harbour knowledge of cross-border dynamics that remains underutilised in regional policies. Because of strong demographic growth, these actors are increasingly involved in supplying the region's towns and cities with agricultural and manufactured products. One representative of a governmental structure working in food safety in Benin has the following to say: “We should better involve these big business people who are now developing cross-border trade. Yoruba and Ibo traders go through their networks, they are settled everywhere and should be involved in strategic decisions.” This statement echoes the call of earlier studies, which reported the low investment of private actors in the formal process of regional integration (Terpend, 2006).

The way in which the private sector could be consulted and involved in cross-border development policies is a delicate question, insofar as certain production and commercialisation activities also thrive on the failings of regional integration (Chapter 3). The solution most often put forward by representatives of government and intergovernmental structures is the formalisation of the informal, whereby private actors adopt transparent accounting

methods, declare their income, pay taxes and conduct their business in accordance with the rules of international trade. An ECOWAS civil servant specialised in customs comments: “We need to see how to incorporate informal traders and make them use the right way. If they are involved, they can help co-operation by fighting against smuggling”. The major programmes currently aiming to develop regional transport corridors, build adjacent border posts and report acts of corruption are aiming to do just this: persuade those involved in smuggling and/or the black market to adopt the practices of the formal economy.

A number of actors point out that the current challenges in cross-border co-operation are caused not so much by the absence of certain kinds of organisations but by their lack of co-ordination. The most frequent comment concerning intergovernmental organisations is related to the obstacles in exchanging information with national governments. One expert in agricultural policy working for a Western co-operation agency reports that government representatives responsible for overseeing the application of regional regulations are sometimes the last to be informed of decisions made concerning regional policies: “ECOWAS has a lot of policies and laws, but there is a lack of implementation. Sometimes decisions taken by state representatives are not communicated properly to police and customs officers, and they block border posts for 2 or 3 days.” These challenges are a major concern for the representatives of regional organisations, which strive to “domesticate” regional policies by ensuring that they are properly applied at the local level. A senior cross-border co-operation official based in Abuja says: “ECOWAS is putting together a common policy of facilitating action across various sectors where policies have already been adopted. This is to ensure that these policies are domesticated in the region and that member states stick to the decisions adopted at the regional level.”

Communication between regional organisations and the principal beneficiaries of free-movement policies on the ground poses another problem. According to the secretary general of an NGO working in local development, appropriating regional policies at the

local level requires the crafting of a more targeted message: “If we should address the issue of cross-border co-operation, we should have a narrative of the advantage for people of cross-border co-operation. Most of the time this narrative is not there and people even doubt the advantage of free movement.” The “cross-border area” concept introduced by Malian president Alpha Oumar Konaré in 2002 to promote the existence of border regions that share common physical and human characteristics (Diarrah, 2002) is in many respects the cornerstone on which this regional message has been built. This concept is used today by ECOWAS (2005) to promote local integration, and the AU (2007: 6) explicitly mentions the “geographical areas straddling the border lines of two or more neighbouring states and inhabited by people linked by socio-economic and cultural relations” in its programme dedicated to cross-border co-operation.

More generally, the focus which the cross-border area concept puts on local actors recalls the *borderlands* concept that has been integrated into the border studies discipline since Martinez’s (1994) work on communities living in the border areas between the United States and Mexico (Box 5.1). The head of an African NGO states: “[Alpha Oumar] Konaré said once that borders should be transformed from barriers to bridges, and he defined such cross-border areas as regions where we can have different equipment in different territories across borders, so that we eliminate in the spirit of people the presence of this colonising legacy.” Given this remark, it is hardly surprising that the inhabitants and civil society of border regions should be more closely integrated in cross-border co-operation, especially local associations, women and young people. A senior civil servant in the AU, based in Addis Ababa, for example, asserts: “For cross-border to succeed you must rely on the communities at the grassroots... They are immediately impacted by policies... The communities organise themselves, they have local agreements, they promote peace and co-habitation, they are doing everything together.” The solidarity networks that unite the populations separated by borders bolster the role of civil society at both the regional and local levels.

**Box 8.1****Securing transborder mobility: The BRACED project**

In the Sahel where recurring droughts are the norm and localised droughts are an annual phenomenon, mobility forms a vital strategy to utilise and optimise scattered and unpredictable resources. Post-drought studies have unequivocally shown that transborder mobility of livestock is crucial to the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities to climate variability and extremes. Well-equipped and secure livestock corridors, which facilitate these mobile strategies and transborder flows, are therefore vital to the ability of communities to cope with climate extremes, enabling animals to reach vital rural and urban livestock markets.

Against this background, the Acting for Life (AFL) project Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) has been working since 2015 to strengthen the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in West Africa. The project, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and co-financed by the EU and AFL for a total of EUR 9.6 million until December 2017, promotes transborder livestock mobility across the Sahel by securing strategic transborder corridors. It provides key services and enables communities and stakeholders to lobby for livestock mobility and for appropriate policy making at local, national and regional (ECOWAS) levels.

During the first 15 months of implementation the project secured more than 1 640 km of strategic

transborder corridors and provided more than 3 400 tonnes of livestock fodder across two transnational territories interconnecting Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, and Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. These zones capture major seasonal movements of transhumant pastoralists and agro-pastoralists accessing grazing resources and markets, and refuge areas during droughts. The secured livestock corridors act as both a circulatory system conveying flows of transhumant herders and also trade routes for trekking with livestock.

Fundamental challenges to cross-border mobility have been transborder dialogue between local governments and the inter-co-operation between municipalities for securing livestock corridors which is often limited and fragmented. To address these issues, the AFL BRACED project works with local authorities in decentralised and devolved government mechanisms to ensure actions are made within existing legislative contexts. AFL BRACED has developed an approach in which regional councils are teamed up with local project partners to provide key social and technical engineering expertise to local governments, based on formal contractual agreements. To complement this approach a new training module on livestock mobility in West Africa is in development, which will highlight the issues faced by cross-border mobility, particularly in regards to movement between the Sahel and coastal countries.

Local and regional authorities represent another kind of actor that could, according to the opinions expressed by the actors in cross-border co-operation, engage more closely with cross-border issues, given that most West African states have implemented administrative and political decentralisation policies since the 1990s. A Nigerien civil servant from the Ministry of Hydraulics and Sanitation, for example, says: “With the decentralisation process underway in various countries, neighbouring

territorial authorities should be more involved in cross-border co-operation. They are the best placed to understand the concerns of the people on either side of the borders.” In West Africa, decentralisation aims to support local governance so as to channel civil engagement into national unification, increase democratisation and achieve a better use of resources and public services. The creation of new levels of administration varies substantially between countries, and does not always lead to a real transfer of

resources and authority to local and regional bodies. In Niger, for example, decentralisation led to the creation of urban communities from larger agglomerations, urban districts from cities, and rural districts from *cantons*.

The involvement of local and regional authorities is perceived as a way to legitimise regional integration policies designed by civil servants in intergovernmental organisations. Seen from Abuja or Addis Ababa, greater involvement of subnational authorities helps to implement the subsidiarity principle, inspired by Europe, which recommends that decisions be taken at the most efficient level of the administration

and as close as possible to the people. Until now, however, local and regional authorities have been largely sidelined from policies designed to promote cross-border co-operation, whereas in other parts of the world genuine local and/or metropolitan governance has been built up on the basis of original legal instruments, such as the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC). The existence of small and medium-sized cities that are particularly affected by cross-border dynamics should inspire a re-evaluation of the potential of local and regional authorities and encourage the emergence of greater inclusive governance.

## CONFLATING THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Cross-border co-operation is a complex integration process which this study has broken down into three dimensions, with analysis focusing on the potential of the regions, the structure of the networks linking actors and the political vision underpinning institutional initiatives. This section sets out to combine these three fundamental dimensions – which until now have been examined separately – in order to deliver an overview of co-operation dynamics in place in cross-border areas. This task of linking highly disparate indicators has been made necessary by the fact that policies reflecting the vision of cross-border co-operation should be based on both an appraisal of the regions’ characteristics and precise knowledge of the existing network of social actors.

The mapping carried out thus far provides a means of comparing the three dimensions of cross-border co-operation, as the maps can be used to assess the regional variations that can inform cross-border policies. The purpose of this process is to spatialise development at the most appropriate scale according to the phenomena observed. A certain number of dynamics such as long-distance trade and the governance networks of intergovernmental bodies do have a genuinely regional dimension, in that they cover the whole of West Africa. Other phenomena specific to cross-border co-operation, such as accessibility to border markets and local governance, are better observed at the scale of micro-regions. Indeed, there are highly

visible internal differences within West Africa which, it should not be forgotten, has a surface area of 7.85 million square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>). This makes it as large as the contiguous United States albeit with 18 constituent countries.

Cross-border co-operation policies are considered fully integrated when they combine the three dimensions of cross-border co-operation. By leveraging the potential of each region, they help foster policy networks based on a common vision which transcends the national framework. This situation, which characterises western Mali, the SKBo triangle, Liptako-Gourma, Dendi, the Lagos-Accra conurbation and northern Ghana, is nevertheless relatively uncommon in West Africa, where considerable differences can sometimes be seen between the potential, the current state and the future vision of cross-border co-operation. Of the nine theoretical possibilities generated by cross-referencing the three dimensions of cross-border co-operation, three present differences capable of informing the place-based policies implemented in the region.

### Leveraging untapped co-operation potential

The first situation concerns regions which have potentially favourable conditions for co-operation but where local actors are not particularly well connected to governance networks. This situation, which reflects

untapped potential, is relatively rare in West Africa. More than 50 years after the first sectoral regional organisations were established, most of the high-potential regions have attracted institutional initiatives designed to encourage cross-border co-operation. This is notably the case in the Senegal River valley, where the actors occupy a relatively central position in regional governance networks through dense ties linking them to partners in regional centres in Dakar, Nouakchott and Bamako and, more broadly, to other West African decision making centres (Map 7.2).

Liptako-Gourma also appears to be an area with potential that is being realised by cross-border governance networks, in particular along the border between Niger and Burkina Faso (Map 7.3), with Ouagadougou and Niamey acting as relays to regional organisations. This region is also characterised by a large number of local initiatives and a dense network of actors working for numerous small and medium-sized decision-making centres. This polycentrism, harnessed to the very real dynamism of the municipalities, can be considered as beneficial for the implementation of bottom-up integration programmes, especially in livestock rearing, which is one of the region's main resources. (Box 8.1)

Around Lake Chad, the correlation of integration potential with co-operation networks is less obvious than elsewhere. The region may be home to the oldest river basin organisation in Africa, but it does not have many connections to regional governance networks (Map 7.1). At the local level, the focus of the governance network on LCBC actors, many of whom are based in N'Djamena (Map 7.4), does little to promote the border areas, especially between Chad and Cameroon. There is an even greater disparity between co-operation potential and regional governance networks in Gambia and across the whole of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and southern Guinea. Despite the fact that each one of these regions has an intergovernmental body potentially capable of managing cross-border co-operation at the local level – the Gambia River Basin Organisation (OMVG) and the Mano River Union (MRU) – their involvement in West African networks remains marginal. The capital cities and major towns in these four countries do not

host any actors with a particularly central role in co-operation or any regional institutions to rival the ones in Ouagadougou and Abuja.

### Improving co-ordination within networks

The second situation concerns regions which are recognised as being priorities for cross-border co-operation, but which have poorly developed local and regional governance networks. This situation requires tighter co-ordination within the local and regional governance networks in order to remove any institutional blockages. As the study revealed, the existence of institutional structures did not necessarily guarantee the proper functioning of cross-border co-operation. These structures must also be capable of encouraging the exchange of information and good practices across national borders and between partners of different natures.

In this respect, the network analysis carried out in West Africa suggests first and foremost that the general structure of networks heavily influences the exchange of information and power between actors. In this respect, decentralised networks are particularly suited to the constraints of cross-border co-operation, which requires constant co-ordination between actors with highly diverse skills. At the individual level, network analysis also shows that regional integration is facilitated by both the involvement of co-operation actors in dense groups of partners (embeddedness) and the construction of ties which extend beyond the local level (brokerage). Embeddedness strengthens trust between like-minded actors, reduces risks related to project implementation and helps border regions to develop a common vision, while brokerage gives them access to new resources in other border regions or at the level of regional organisations. The most central actors are therefore those who combine embeddedness and brokerage, which is also the conclusion reached by more qualitative studies on the links between social capital, poverty and development (Narayan, 1999; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

The case of northern Nigeria is particularly interesting in that the Hausaland has not become a highly institutionalised cross-border area, despite being recognised as one of the

top priorities in the region. This region, often called K<sup>2</sup>M in reference to the three main cities of Kano, Katsina and Maradi, was one of the pilot sites for the West African Borders and Integration Initiative (WABI) to document the cross-border integration process and promote co-operation in the mid-2000s (SWAC/OECD, 2006; Abdoul and Trémolières, 2007; Abdoul, Dahou and Trémolières, 2007). Hausaland, an area which straddles Nigeria and Niger and covers a land area of 83 000 km<sup>2</sup> with over 50 million inhabitants, is one of the oldest trade corridors. It has connected the Gulf of Guinea to North Africa and the Middle East for centuries. With a dense urban network organised around the city of Kano, it illustrates a polarisation of Niger's economy by Nigeria along the length of the 1 500 km border. The intensive trade that thrives here is in livestock from Niger, cereals and manufactured products from Nigeria, and products re-exported to Nigeria.

K<sup>2</sup>M was on the original ECOWAS agenda for the implementation of the Cross-Border Co-operation Programme (CBCP). Initial work carried out by WABI focused on the relationships between improving border crossings for cereal and livestock markets and food security following the serious food crisis in 2005. Several institutions are involved in this process: CILSS, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Human Affairs (OCHA), the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Network Information Systems Markets of West Africa (WAMIS-NET), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Co-operation (NNJC). The K<sup>2</sup>M initiative was launched under the authority of this commission. The bi-national legal and governance framework of the NNJC gives it the perfect status for heading a policy committee containing representatives of the national boundary commissions of both Niger and Nigeria. The NNJC therefore has a key policy role to play in moderating platforms which are intended to be the privileged forum for the expression of local initiatives (both public and private).

More recently, support from the World Bank led to the implementation of the Competitiveness

and Growth Support Project, designed to create a master plan for developing and adapting the Kano-Katsina-Maradi corridor. The focus of lenders on transport infrastructures, trade circuits and markets suggests that cross-border co-operation in this region is based on an integration model which gives priority to socio-economic interactions. This is in sharp contrast therefore with the heavily institutionalised model in place in Liptako-Gourma and the Lake Chad basin. This juxtaposition of very different integration models is characteristic of many West African countries. Sectoral regional organisations created in these countries in the 1960s now work alongside more recent and less institutionalised initiatives. These were designed primarily to reduce the frictions that hinder regional trade through the creation of adjacent border posts, the reinstatement of transport corridors, and the removal of the informal controls and practices that had led to a fragmentation of the regional area, proving particularly costly for cross-border economic operators in West Africa ([Chapter 2](#)).

### **Reconciling political priorities**

Political trade-offs are the most likely explanation for a failure to prioritise regions exhibiting potentially favourable conditions for cross-border co-operation. This situation is the most restrictive in terms of cross-border development, as the construction of micro-regions presupposes that local and regional authorities are sufficiently autonomous in terms of resources and power to make their interests heard by central government. Without strong regions, it is difficult to talk of regional construction.

Situations in which the development of certain border regions is perceived as being of secondary importance reflect balances in the political relationships between national elites and local and regional authorities, which differ according to the extent to which states are decentralised. Heavily centralised states tend to focus their investments on a small number of urban regions, in particular around capital cities, without necessarily implementing regional policies likely to encourage cross-border co-operation. This situation can persist until decentralisation results in an actual

transfer of resources and power to local and regional authorities. This is notably the case in the region covering southern Guinea, the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone, and western Côte d'Ivoire, where the resources and performances of the local authorities are below the regional average (UCLG [United Cities and Local Governments], The Cities Alliance, 2015). In this region, co-operation potential is largely overlooked by most of the actors involved in co-operation (Map 7.1), despite the fact that it was the epicentre of the Ebola virus disease epidemic declared between December 2013 and November 2015. The areas worst affected by this outbreak were in the border regions of southern Guinea (Gueckedou, Kissidougou, Macenta, Nzerekore), eastern Sierra Leone (Kailahun) and northern Liberia (Lofa, Gbarpolu). This provides a clear illustration of both the vibrancy of the social and economic interactions that characterise the region and the need to develop a common vision. As a senior ECOWAS official commented, the region deserves better treatment: "The region has also been through civil unrest and war and is countering a major health concern, the health epidemic of Ebola. We had thought that this is a zone that should be given priority attention".

For federal states or states which have pursued decentralisation in order to strengthen local and regional authorities, the issue is not so much about determining whether investments should be distributed on a fairer geographic basis but rather about prioritising those which can actually be funded out of the public financing available. This is the case in eastern Nigeria, where its high co-operation potential has not resulted in political priority status due to the fact that most of the co-operation resources allocated by the federal state and its regions are focused around Lake Chad. This is also the case along the northern border between Togo and Benin (high co-operation potential), where the Lomé-Cotonou conurbation attracts the bulk of national and international investments.

The pursuit of integration in Africa and West Africa needs to be reinforced through greater co-operation, particularly between border areas. Each border segment and micro-region possesses its own unique dynamic whereby cross-border co-operation occurs on different temporal and spatial levels, with varying

degrees of formality. However, the decentralisation process, as well as improvements in frameworks for border demarcation and the existence of a convention on cross-border co-operation present favourable conditions for the effective management of greater regional integration.

From an administrative perspective, several types of co-operation mechanisms exist, the most prominent being administrative border co-operation and decentralised co-operation. Administrative co-operation is practiced by border authorities at different levels of the administration, taking place through regular meetings between the administrative authorities of two countries, for example, or through joint structures in charge of border and cross-border co-operation issues or twinning arrangements between cities. Decentralised co-operation is based upon the participation of diverse players such as local authorities, economic operators and civil society associations and organisations. It requires strong political will, given the institutional differences that may exist between states and the potential of border areas. By transferring resources and responsibilities to local and regional levels, decentralised co-operation would allow border communities to experiment with new approaches to local development initiatives and would facilitate improvements in the effectiveness of intercommunal cross-border co-operation policy.

From a legal perspective, greater cross-border co-operation in West Africa also requires that certain prerequisite steps are taken. The AU Convention defines cross-border co-operation as "any act or policy aimed at promoting and strengthening good-neighbourly relations between border populations, territorial communities and administrations or other stakeholders within the jurisdiction, including the conclusion of agreements and arrangements useful for this purpose." The term "territorial communities and authorities" refers to the domestic laws of African states, as well as to the areas and procedures of co-operation (ex. applicable law, the legal form of co-operation, etc.). International texts serve to define the basic principles of cross-border co-operation, and it is then up to domestic law to put these principles into practice. In order to become operational in the field, these texts must be



signed and ratified by member states and then transposed into domestic law in a consistent manner. In this respect, bilateral agreements should be signed on a border-to-border basis in order to outline the practical procedures and applicable framework for cross-border co-operation. Where such conventions exist, it will be necessary to ensure that regional and national texts are consistent with one other. Such bilateral agreements could serve to define the legal framework for cross-border co-operation between local authorities, provide legal certainty and greater transparency, and ensure that laws on both sides of a border are consistent (SWAC/OECD, 2007).

Furthermore, the momentum for regional integration can be accelerated according to the motivation and interests of the communities

that co-operate across borders. Given that integration still faces many challenges, public policy should aim to push forward legislation, end corrupt practices that hinder cross-border flows of goods and people, and develop joint projects of interest to border populations. Irrespective of the legislative mechanisms that are developed, cross-border policies are faced with the challenge of providing a sufficiently flexible framework that draws upon the border potential and informal component of each region. As this report demonstrates, such place-based policies are enabled by a better understanding of the governance networks in place which shape cross-border co-operation in West Africa and which help connect it to the rest of the globalised world.

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