

Olivier Walther, Thierry Renaud et Jonathan Kissling

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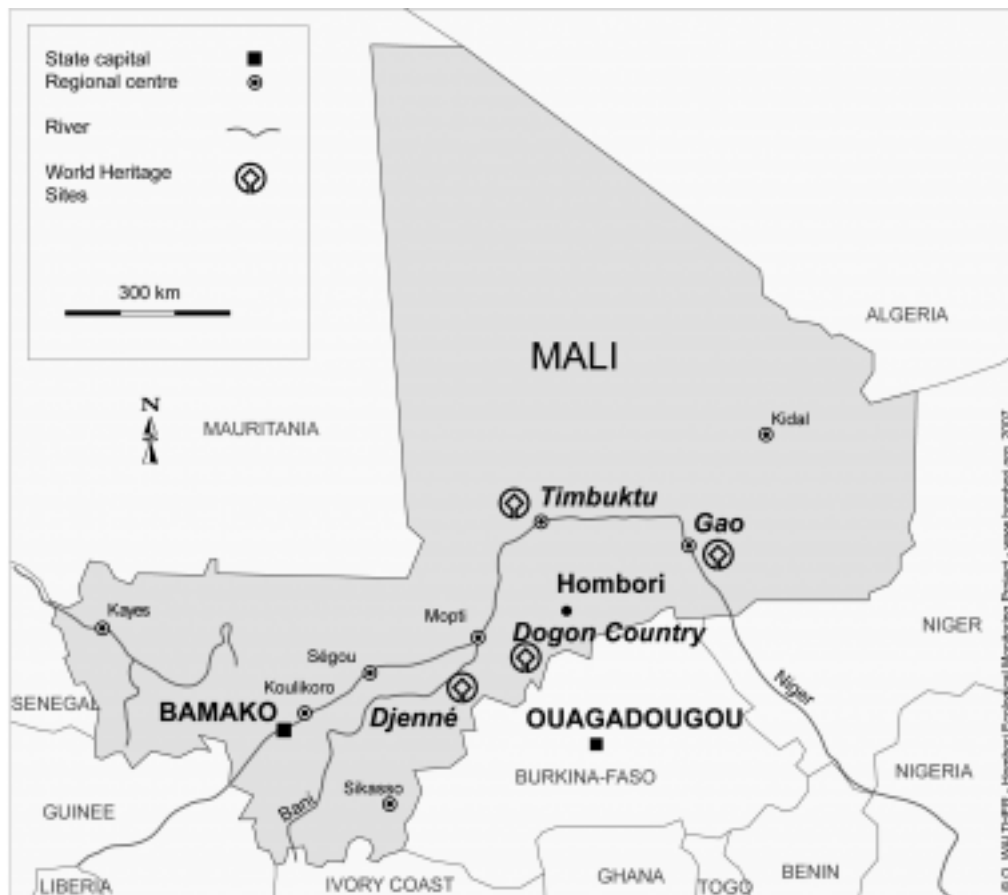
Introduction¹

- 1 For the last 15 years, Mali has developed into a spectacular successful tourist destination. According to the World Tourism Organization (2006), the number of international arrivals has increased from 40.000 to 200.000 between 1990 and 2005. Most of the tourists visit the “Golden Triangle” of Timbuktu–Djenné–Dogon Country (also known as “Cliff of Bandiagara–Land of the Dogon”), three World Heritage Sites classified by UNESCO between 1988 and 1989, and seem to ignore other secondary destinations, such as the Hombori Mountains (Figure 1). Located at 750 km in the northeast of Bamako, this large mountainous massif reaches 1155 m at its peak, called Mount Hombori.
- 2 Due to the high cliffs surrounding its summit plateau, Mount Hombori houses a unique unspoiled vegetation and fauna, which have been preserved from pasture and agriculture. With more than 150 species on only c. 1.5 km², Mount Hombori is a refuge for different plants requiring higher rainfall such as the rare *Gloriosa superba*, *Amorphophallus aphyllus* or *Bombax costatum*, or occurring only on rocky areas such as *Enteropogon rupestris*, *Kalanchoe lanceolata* or *Lannea humilis* (Kissling and Renaud, 2008). More specifically Mount Hombori houses several “useful/medicinal” plants that are presently rare or have completely disappeared from the Hombori region (Kissling *et al.*, 2005), representing so a unique opportunity to conserve *in vivo* both those species and their associated knowledge. Furthermore, preliminary studies on the fauna of the Hombori area by Nusslé *et al.* (personal communication) shows that several species of rare birds and bats are to be found in the cliff of the mountain, while the plateau is inhabited by a rich wildlife with possibly a few endemic amphibians and reptiles.
- 3 The reasons why tourism has not developed in Hombori, as it did in the Dogon Country 250 km away, are unclear since the two destinations share a large number of physical and cultural similarities, particularly high cliffs and a defensive human settlement built to survive the nomad slavery raids before the 20th century. Both sites are likely to attract customers interested in mountain-based adventure tourism, an emerging but growing activity (Beedie and Hudson, 2003). Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to empirically investigate the unequal development of these two tourism destinations in Mali and suggest development perspectives that take both the potentiality and the limitations of Hombori into account.
- 4 Based on existing knowledge related to tourism in the Dogon Country (van Beek, 2003, 2005; Walther, 2003), field observations from a sample of eight villages located in the Mountains have been conducted as well as semi-directive surveys and a literary review (Walther, 2006). This study is part of the *Hombori Project*, a scientific collaboration between the Swiss Universities of Neuchâtel and Lausanne, Switzerland, the Centre for Population, Poverty and Public Policy Studies in Luxembourg, and the Traditional Medicine Department of Bamako, Mali (see www.hombori.org for more details). The aim of this project is to undertake the long-term ecological monitoring of the Hombori Mountains, in order to better understand climatic changes in Sahel as well as locally support the protection of its biodiversity through tourism development (Ioset *et al.*, 2004). With only c. 1200 species for c. 2.8 million km² (White, 1986), the Sahel is one of the poorest eco-regions of the world, but its biological diversity is

threatened by desertification (Nicholson *et al.*, 1998). Due to current species extinction risk, there is an urgent need to identify the most threatened areas of high biodiversity in this area. Moreover, people living in this eco-region rely directly on their environment for subsistence, and particularly health care (Fortin *et al.*, 2000; Diallo *et al.*, 1999; Kandji *et al.*, 2006).

- 5 In the next few years, protection measures should be applied with the cooperation of scientists, tour-operators, regional/local authorities and communities. Lastly, following Jha (2005), a concerted management between the *Hombori Project* and the local communities should make it possible to guarantee the sustainability of the ecological richness, the infrastructure and the benefits derived from the site.

Figure 1 - World Heritage Sites and the Hombori Mountains in Mali



Source : Walther, 2007

The context

A fast growing tourism industry

- 6 Tourists visiting Sahelian countries, Mali included, are mainly interested in cultural expeditions. The available trips, advertised by European and American tour operators, are expensive compared to the other exotic destinations, because of high plane ticket prices and long distances on bumpy roads that require the use of all-terrain vehicles (Mustal, 1997).
- 7 Tourism in Mali largely depends on the political situation and has been severely affected by the Tuareg rebellion (1990-1991, 1994-1995), the civil war in Algeria and the recent “terrorist threat” in the Sahara. After a decline in the 1990’s, tourism became more active again from the year 2000: the income made from this activity is rapidly increasing again, going from € 19 to 110 millions between 1995 and 2002 (WTO, 2005). This happened despite some petty crime in several areas, which brought short-term losses. Because of the difficult climatic conditions,

tourism takes place during a very short period of time: from the beginning of November to the early days of March, and again from July to August.

- 8 In total, about one thousand people a year stay overnight in the Hombori Mountains, mainly during the months of November to February (Walther, 2006). These figures take into account the three official camps located in the town of Hombori, but not the two places built at Fatma's Hand, a climbing spot in the east. The new charter air links opened between Europe and Mali by Point Afrique, a French company, added to the proximity of Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina-Faso, has slightly increased the popularity of Hombori. Compared to the Dogon Country, which used to welcome roughly 30.000 visitor nights in 2005 according to the latest surveys (van Beek, 2003), the Hombori Mountains have room for expansion in the number of people going there every year.

A niche market in West Africa

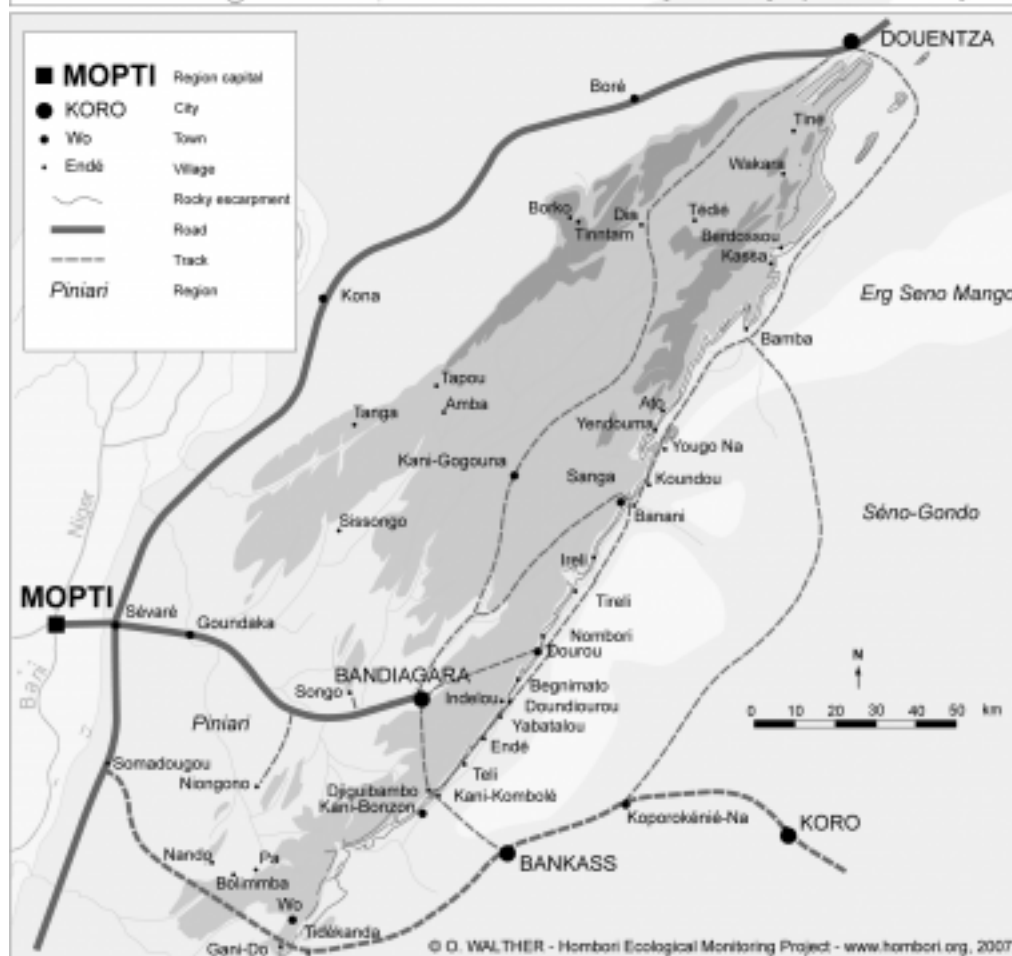
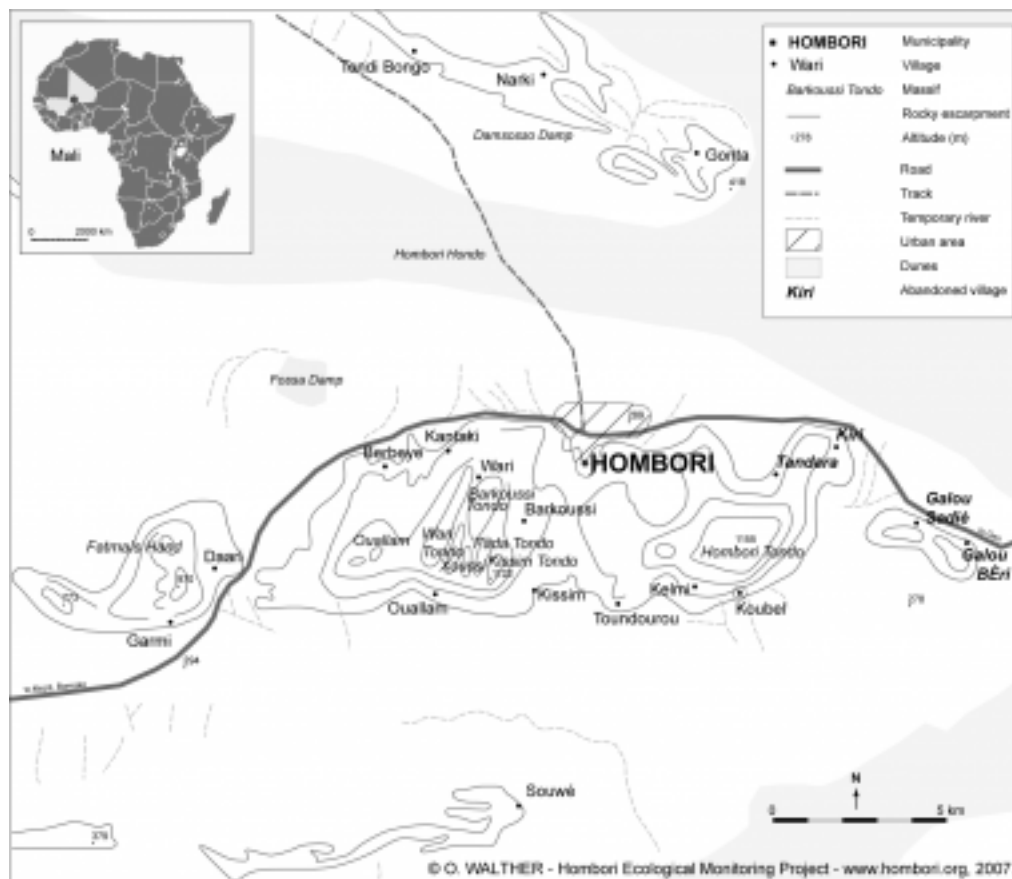
- 9 Most of the tourists come to the Hombori Mountains and the Dogon Country from France, Italy and Spain and travel with different agencies such as Nouvelles Frontières, Point Afrique, Club Aventure, Explorator, Terres d'Aventure, Allibert and Azimut. Interviews carried out among a sample of travellers who stayed in the 47 tourist accommodations of the Dogon Country and the two hotels in Hombori show that they belong to two main categories, according to their different expectations (Walther, 2003 and 2006). The first group is made of young people who are attracted by the low cost of living and the possibility to lead an "African" way of life. The second category is made of wealthier and older tourists who are used to travel to countries that are far from their home. Attracted by the historical and cultural heritage of Mali, they visit the Hombori Mountains or the Dogon Country as part of a tourist circuit that starts in Bamako, Sévaré-Mopti, Ouagadougou or Gao, most often through a travel agency. Obviously, it is that kind of visitors who is most interesting for the local guides because they guarantee important benefits for the people who hire jeeps, the restaurants, the antique dealers and other merchants. The expatriate also fits this category.
- 10 In addition to these two categories, Hombori also attracts tourists that specialise in climbing sports or hiking tours advertised by the travel agencies. These visitors take the routes that are described in the specialised magazines and visit sites that can be reached during five to six hours of daily walking. The rock-climbers and hikers have financial means that are between the previous two categories. However, without any local equipment to hire except in the town of Hombori, they do not bring much income to the people of the district. Unlike in the Dogon Country, trekking has not yet contributed to the quantitative development of the tourist camps in the villages, or the growth of a handcraft industry designed for tourism.
- 11 Tourists still expect less from the destination of the Hombori Mountains than from the Dogon Country, one of the most famous and exotic tourist destinations in West Africa. The ones who gathered information on the region before getting there wish to see with their own eyes the key elements which caught their interest or from the more specialized books on climbing. They are especially interested in admiring the scenic aspects of the sites located high up in the mountains. From this point of view, the collective imagination of tourists is dominated by the natural characteristics of the Mountains, for example their massive appearance which is often compared to Monument Valley in the United States. Through limited contacts with the local people, tourists enjoy the hospitality and the quality of the human interactions, for which Mali is globally known.
- 12 However, in both sites, tourists sometimes have a few disappointing experiences. The reproach that is most often heard is about children begging continually. This phenomenon is seen as a sign that tourism perverts the culture of the region. Since their early days, children endlessly address the tourists with the same insistent requests: "*Are you all right candies? Give me your bottle*" ("*Ça va bonbons? Donne-moi bidon*"). Thus, tourists go away with the feeling that they have constantly been approached during their visit. Begging is therefore seen as a constraint,

which is a source of tensions in the groups of visitors. The tourist guides are aware of this responsibility and recommend not to give anything at random and to choose carefully the people who could possibly receive a gift. They acknowledge that the current situation largely depends on the low percentage of children in full-time primary education. At a national level, it was estimated at 45 % in 2002–2003 (UNDP, 2005), which means that children tend to follow tourists instead of going to school.

Villages built to survive slavery raids

- 13 Hombori and the Dogon Country are characterized by high cliffs and defensive settlements located on the sides of the mountains (Figure 2). Dogon inhabits both sites, even if in the Hombori Mountains those cohabit with other populations like Songhay, Fulbe and Tuareg. Perched houses were necessary to survive the nomad raids before the colonial times. The houses are generally compact and characterized by granaries inserted in the body of the dwelling and little rooms that can include up to three floors. The general plan is conceived as a defensive maze in order to fight inside the houses in the Songhay's case or to flee in case of repelling slavery raids in the Dogon villages (Huet, 1994).
- 14 Today, however, it is no longer an essential strategy, which explains why some villagers have decided to move to the plain more or less temporarily (Petit, 1998; Thibaud, 2005). Studies from the 1970's had already showed a direct relationship between the age of the villages and their inhabitants' willingness to live high up on the sides of the mountains (Gallais, 1975). Migration to the plain is definitely linked to the stability brought by the colonial period (1899-1960) and also had important economic consequences as the productive systems were modified. The cultivated plots located in very steep places were gradually abandoned and people favoured cereal cultivation and some extensive livestock farming in the sandy plains. Between 1968 and 2005, four sites located on masses of fallen rocks from the piedmont plains (Galou Sadié, Galou Béri, Kiri and Tandara) were deserted in the east end of the Hombori Mountains. On the contrary, all the perched villages experience a clear and positive demographical growth, especially in Garmi, Kantaki and Ouallam (Walther, 2006).

Figure 2 - The Hombori Mountains and the Dogon Country in Mali



Source : Walther, 2007

- 15 Migration toward the plain doesn't seem irreversible despite the water supply difficulties and the general climatic conditions. People living in the perched villages have been exceptionally tenacious, displaying a very intense historical and cultural attachment to their initial sites. A similar evolution can be observed in the Dogon Country (Beek, Lemineur and Walther, 2007). From a tourist perspective, the perched sites are meaningful as they combine elements of culture, discovery and trekking that attract visitors.

Building a tourist destination

- 16 Unlike the Hombori Mountains, the Dogon Country very early acquired an international reputation, thanks in particular to the French anthropological literature, which created a myth based on the uniqueness of the Dogon culture. Furthermore, the Dogon Country benefited from its classification to the World Heritage List by UNESCO on the basis of cultural and natural criteria.

The Dogon Country, a well-established tourist market area

- 17 The work of anthropologists has had important repercussions on tourism in Dogon Country and on the life cycle of this tourist destination. According to Butler's cycle of area evolution (1980) based upon the product cycle concept, tourist areas go through somewhat identical stages. Following the initial *exploration* period, during which a "discoverer" invests in an area that is as yet unknown in the geographical area from which he comes, there comes the *involvement* stage, during which a tourism system is progressively set up. The number of tourists increases during the *development* and *consolidation* stages, but gradually growth begins to slow down during the *stagnation* stage. The destination may decline or being rejuvenated with the help of man-made attractions or natural resources.
- 18 Obviously, the Dogon Country is well established in the development stage, characterized by a well-defined tourist market area, large facilities provided by external organizations and a deep-rooted image (Figure 3), whereas the Hombori Mountains enters the involvement stage in which some facilities are provided by local residents on a more regularly base during the tourist season. Referring to Butler's general pattern, it is possible to consider the anthropologists of the 1930s as the actual discoverers of present-day tourist destination. The extraordinary diversity of scientific references documenting Dogon Country has therefore indisputably played a role in supporting its subsequent development stages.
- 19 The work of French anthropologists, such as Marcel Griaule or Germaine Dieterlen is a key factor to understand the unequal development of tourism between the Hombori Mountains and the Dogon Country (Ciarcia, 2003; Doquet, 1999). Building on books such as *Dieu d'Eau* (Griaule, 1948) and *Le Renard Pâle* (Griaule and Dieterlen, 1965), the most "traditional" references related to the perched settlements still prevail in the way of perceiving the Dogon civilisation. Griaule was not the first European to discover the Dogon in the 1930's but his work conducted in *Dieu d'Eau* has contributed to create a picture "in which the whole culture should be understood through a deep and hidden Creation myth. As Griaule's publications have found a wide audience, argues van Beek (2003: 267), tourists –at least through the tourist guidebooks– come prepared with an image of a remote, mysterious and exotic society". Even though critics have been formulated against Griaule's mytho-poetic work in *Dieu d'Eau* – particularly by van Beek (1991: 157), who argues that this literature was the result of "a complex interaction between a strong-willed researcher, a colonial situation, an intelligent and creative body of informants, and a culture with a courtesy bias and a strong tendency to incorporate foreign elements" – it is still considered as a guarantee of credibility by travel agencies and local tourist guides.

Figure 3 - A Dogon point of view on tourism

Source : Original drawing from Amaga Saye, Tireli, 2001

20 Anthropological research did not abate as the number of tourists increased. To the contrary, renewed research for over 70 years has allowed the destination to maintain international status and attractiveness, which recently resulted into the inscription of the Bandiagara Escarpment as a Natural/Cultural World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Several different programmes have been implemented in order to rehabilitate both natural and cultural heritages.

Hombori, a tourist destination in its early stage

21 To date, tourism in the Hombori Mountains is characterized by external investment. It means that the most active local players are using their professional experiences to their advantage, as well as their acquired financial resources from outside the region. Still, they are very few in number. Indeed, less than thirty people in Hombori earn their living from tourism, partially or totally. There are four official guides and four occasional ones, seventeen hotelkeepers and employees and a handful of craftspeople.

22 The local guides organise circuits that go all over the Hombori Mountains. Moreover, according to their experience, they run tours over the whole territory. In the old city of Hombori, the guides offer trips that include a visit to the Fondikali pond, which played an important role in the foundation of the city. Another possible destination is Bonseigney, a site where sacrifices took place and where tourists can wander around craft shops and significant village places with interesting buildings such as the house of amulets (*gris-gris*) and the youth club. The visit generally lasts thirty to forty minutes. In the lower part of the city, the food and livestock markets that take place on Tuesdays remain the main places of interest. Nevertheless, some agencies prefer taking tourists to look at the sunset over the dunes some kilometres away in the northeast of the city.

23 The three hotelkeepers have been competitive for the last few years in Hombori. Even though tourists are offered more variety than the surrounding area, the number of nights has not significantly increased (see Walther, 2006 for more details). This stagnation can partly be explained by the lack of specific advertising about the Hombori Mountains, compared to the Dogon Country, which has been well know outside Mali for decades. Despite its architectural

qualities, old Hombori has neither tourist accommodation nor services. Instead these are all located in the lower part of the city and can welcome twenty-five people. The sale of handcraft objects, hotel services and guiding activities obviously bring some seasonal gains to the city of Hombori. However, on a general scale, none of the other villages in the Mountains has managed to develop an offer as attractive as the one that made the Dogon Country famous.

24 It is true that the question of profits made by tourism is not always a priority for the people living high up in the Hombori Mountains. Indeed, they have other urgent preoccupations such as the access to water and to a working place. Homborian living in the least privileged areas of Wari or Barkoussi worry about access to more abundant and regular water. Today, the villages in the Mountains get their water from drilling in the plain and, depending on the season, from springs located in the masses of fallen rocks or in the cliffs. There is no micro dam that could guarantee a part of the water supply for the people or make it possible to grow irrigated crops, as in the Dogon Country. Therefore, the water problem has to be a central issue in every project in the region. Indeed, it is by keeping people living in the perched sites that tourism can develop.

25 Keeping in mind the regional dimension of tourism in Hombori, the current organisation could be improved with the creation of small and basic hotels in some of the villages (Kelmi, Toundourou, Kissim and Ouallam) which could provide three types of simple goods: a refreshing drink, a hut or a terrace to sleep and some handcraft. Evidence from the Dogon Country shows that some individuals could play the role of pioneers, such as Christians, youngest sons of chiefs of villages and young or ambitious people coming back from emigration. In the Cliff of Bandiagara, these categories of people progressively introduced specific services, made the effort to bring drinks to the villages, organised small camps around their house as well as handcraft shops. A question remains whether the local financial capacity is big enough to support the investment linked to the diversification required by accommodation services in Hombori. It seems that this investment is possible because the costs of basic accommodation for tourists are low in the rural Sahel region. In the Dogon Country, which shows similarities in investment, most of the camps in the villages opened with an extremely small amount of money. In this particular case, the hotels developed from the family home, to which were added other buildings that became more specialized to welcome tourists.

26 In addition to these private activities, the development of tourism could benefit from the institutional decentralization currently at work in Mali. A strengthening of local capabilities would doubtlessly help Hombori balance conservation and development.

The decentralisation process

27 The beginning of the decentralisation process in Mali brings new perspectives to the tourism field. Indeed the municipalities represent a new space to think, discuss and act on local tourism in a legitimate consultation framework. Because of their small size, the municipalities are theoretically able to communicate information among the village leaders and individuals who are interested in tourist investment. Moreover these local authorities can develop infrastructure that are adapted to the visitors' needs and likely to generate benefits for the local populations.

28 However, as in other West African places, municipalities face serious cash flow problems. In the Hombori Mountains, the collection rate of tax is extremely low because people have become accustomed not to pay their legal contributions, especially after some bad years during which they had been exempted from tax. In the present situation, the municipality is unable to conceive or support actions that are specifically linked to tourism. Being aware of this weakness, the people in charge of the community thought of instituting a tax on visitors who travel through the district in order to benefit from the tourist activity. They finally decided against the idea because the current cultural offer doesn't justify deducting taxes without a satisfactory compensation.

- 29 Even though the number of tourists increases, if structures are organized in the city and new jobs created, the financial effects on the municipality will almost equal zero because of the absence of income tax, civic responsibilities and tax-free jobs. Therefore the only way to make Hombori benefit from the financial resources tourism brings is to link the charges to the number of visits or to the number of bed nights. A possible solution to guarantee stable income to the municipality would be to decide on a tax for each night. At the present time, the tax on tourism, which is theoretically taken on each night by the State, isn't profitable for the district and isn't allocated in a transparent way. However, this tax could represent the main resource for the district in terms of tourism if the State agreed to decentralize the allocation of these taxes to the people in the local communities.
- 30 This long-term project could only be undertaken through a close collaboration with the relevant institutional and informal Malian institutions, as well as with the international ones. It could also draw inspiration from achievements in Mali in the same field such as the Rehabilitation and Conservation of Djenné's Architecture Project (1996 – 2003), the Maintenance of the Cultural Heritage in Mali Project (2004 – 2007) and the Mission for the Documentation of the Architectural Typologies in the Dogon Country (2001) which were implemented by the Netherlands and the Ministry of Culture in Mali (Bedaux, Diaby and Maas, 2003; Bedaux and Van der Waals, 2004). All these projects show that tourism in the sites is a potential factor of development and, at the same time, they also offer very practical solutions to rehabilitate the built heritage. In Hombori, this restoration would require taking into account both the natural and the cultural dimensions. As far as biodiversity is concerned, an international scientific acknowledgement of the importance of the Mountains is necessary before developing the site. This first step should be followed by focused acts of protection. In the case of the architectural heritage, it is the uniqueness of the sites located high in the mountains that should be emphasized, especially for their inherited defensive character.

Religious, political and ecological constraints

- 31 The development of tourism in Hombori comes up against religious proscriptions, which apply to sacred places in the mountains, conflicting dynamics in the local authorities, and ecological constraints.

Sacred places and the development of tourism

- 32 Research has recently shown that religious heritage carries an educational dimension likely to enrich tourist visits and to preserve the vitality of cultural events (IUCN, 2008, Mallarach et Papayannis, 2007). Indeed, the example of Dogon Country shows that religious ceremonies (mask dances), have been a major tourist attraction that has been transformed to adapt to tourists' expectations (van Beek, 2001).
- 33 But tourism also faces the disapproval of some people who fear that this activity will damage the numerous sacred places located in the area. There is no doubt that specific religious practises took place in the mountains. Thus, climbing the mountains has always been socially very important. It has been confirmed that people used to climb the mountains partially or totally before the colonial time. This custom also took place in the Fatma Hand's Mountains where some peaks draw the attention to an old climbing route similar to the one of the Dogon in the Cliff of Bandiagara. The oral tradition recalls hunters trying to reach the top of the mountains to collect vultures' eggs, later used as decorations, as well as climbing attempts resulting from gambling. However, it seems that climbing has been scrupulously controlled for a long time because of many religious proscriptions that applied to these mountains. The members of the traditional religion were the most likely to be allowed to access the highest parts. That is how Mount Hombori providing shelter for the spirits protecting the surrounding villages, has a central religious role even if, since Islam became socially dominant in the

Hombori Mountains (in about 1950), the frequency and intensity of animist celebrations that were directly linked to the massif have radically dropped.

34 It is true that most of the sacred places are not spectacular and tourists often do not notice them because they are made of apparently ordinary stones. In Hombori as in the Dogon Country, the proscriptions do not apply to the colour but more often to the gender and condition of the people. For example, in some cases, chiefs of villages and blacksmiths are not allowed to go to some places because of specific restrictions. In other cases, the proscription is linked to the colour of the clothes a person is wearing. Every time that a forbidden place is defiled, most often not on purpose, the villagers have to decide how the fault can be repaired by the person who did it or by the guide who let a tourist wander too far. This always requires a sacrifice. From this point of view, the water points are particularly full of taboos because they represent a rare resource likely to be soiled by material or symbolic actions. In order to avoid the situations where some non-informed visitors walk in places that they should not, a supervision of tourists by guides who are specifically trained and are aware of the symbolic wealth of these places should be implemented.

Local political conflicts

35 Even though a detailed analysis of the entire network of stakeholders is beyond the scope of this study, it is useful to remind that political tensions are relatively strong in the local communities in Hombori. Admittedly, the dynamics of conflict are not specifically characteristic of the Songhay people but develop quiet easily because of the insular nature of Hombori and their ancient tradition of resistance to many different types of adversaries. The issue of the chief group or the political power of the community remains central to the Songhay people. In the local context, the rivalries are usually among members of the families in the chief group itself, as well as from these members to other people who would like to belong to the chief group.

36 In Hombori, conflicts between the actual mayor, from the merchant class, and his predecessor, an aristocrat, are well known. Through his actions, the current leader wants to fight against the myth built by the previous mayor which says that only the son of a chief can rule. He also tries to change the tradition which implies that only an “intellectual” person can be the leader of the community. The mayor relies on the results of his recent election and his ability to persuade the voters. Because of this strategy, he gained the support of the ADEMA (Alliance Démocratique du Mali) advisers who were in favour of the previous leader.

37 These rivalries have consequences on the dynamics of tourism development because they focus the attention and the resources on political and genealogical conflicts instead of concentrating on socio-economic problems. Therefore many infrastructure projects have been abandoned or stopped.

Potential risk for the environment in Hombori

38 Negative impacts of human use on the environment have been widely studied (Cole *et al.*, 1987; Buckley and Pannell, 1990; Sun and Walsh, 1998, Duim van der and Caalders, 2002). These impacts on biodiversity can and do results from tourist visitation but many of them can be competently managed. Tourism, like many other forms of development, will always produce environmental impacts, even at low level of intensity, and despite efforts of protection (Eagle *et al.*, 2002). Because Mount Hombori is a biological sensitive area, it is vital that the impacts of tourism be assessed as accurately as possible beforehand to being established or reinforced. Moreover, it is important to be aware that no environmental impacts would have occurred on the mountain summit if the tourism industry were not present (it is irrelevant to consider the impact of other land use, such as agriculture, forestry or mining on the plateau, as this one is too difficult in access).

- 39 In order to assess the environmental impact of tourism, a convenient way to proceed is to categorize the environment in function of current land use and then compare it with the negative impact and the environmental risk from tourism. Therefore, for the Hombori region, three distinct categories can be easily recognized: the plains, the piedmont and the summit. A). Because cattle are bred and crops are grown here, the plains are submitted to a severe human impact. In term of biological diversity this category. B). The piedmont is much richer in terms of biological diversity because of its steep gradient. It is under temporary human impacts because of water abundance, but cattle are not bred there due to the difficult access. C). The summit is under no (or very few) human pressure.
- 40 The following impacts of tourism development in the Hombori region are the most relevant: trail creation; camp-sites; litter; human waste problems; wildlife disturbance, habituation, or impact; impacts on vegetation; damage to sand dunes; soil compaction or erosion; habitat loss; weeds, fungi and exotic species; firewood collection; increase fire risk; taking souvenir (flora, fauna, etc.); visual and noise impacts. Thus, considering the current land use, tourism impact on the biodiversity in the plains is negligible compare to traditional human activities, while it is potentially high on the summit.
- 41 Nowadays, tourism is mainly developing in the plains having so very few impacts on the environment. However development of tourism is still in its early stage, it becomes more and more easily to reach the summit and the impact on the plateau is increasing from years to years, especially considering the firewood collection, the increases of fire risk, human waste problem, trail creation and deterioration, and its impact on the vegetation. Moreover, weeds from the plains such as *Cenchrus biflorus* or *Aristida spp* are likely to be carried on by tourists, and might affect the vegetation of Mount Hombori. Considering Hombori's uniqueness for the Sahel in term of biological diversity, it seems appropriate to rapidly establish a framework for its conservation and a sustainable tourism management.

Conclusion

- 42 Building on Butler's Destination Life Cycle Model (1980), we suggest Dogon Country benefits from a considerable, long-term lead in terms of image as compared with the Hombori Mountains. This privileged position has led to its inscription on the prestigious UNESCO's World Heritage List. In Hombori, present-day mountain tourists as well as the few local tourism entrepreneurs can thus be considered as the trailblazers of this particular destination, whereas the pioneers of the Bandiagara Escarpment were the anthropologists who studied Dogon Country as of the 1930s.
- 43 Because of a very specific and little numerous clientele, tourism could be a great help if perched sites with simple housing infrastructure were built and could provide visitors with specific tourism services such as handcraft or guided tours in the Hombori Mountains. This strategy is conceivable if access to water for the perched sites is improved with the help of a new hydraulic infrastructure. Even if the actual resources of tourism are still limited by the number of visitors and a relatively modest reputation for Hombori compared to other attractive places in Mali, there is a large potential in this field, especially in accommodation and peripheral services.
- 44 In order to build a tourism infrastructure, large financial resources are necessary, but neither the Hombori municipality nor the Malian State can afford them. That is why this study suggests decentralizing the tourism tax revenue to the local authorities. In a very short-term view, the income derived from tourism activities would strengthen the position of the Hombori municipality and reinforce the tourism potentiality of the villages in the Mountains. It emerges from this study that local support is necessary to strengthen capabilities. Managing tourist operations requires skills both in terms of services provided by private firms such as catering and hotel business and of collective management and redistribution of benefits resulting from tourist activities involving the community as a whole.

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Notes

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Résumé / Abstract

Le Paradis sur Terre ? Le développement du tourisme au Pays Dogon et dans les Monts Hombori (Mali)

Cet article étudie le développement touristique inégal de deux destinations touristiques du Mali: le Pays Dogon, un must du marché touristique ouest-africain, et les Monts Hombori, considérés comme un « paradis sur Terre » en raison de leur exceptionnelle biodiversité. En s'appuyant sur les travaux de Butler (1980), nos travaux suggèrent que ces lieux touristiques se situent à des stades très différents de leur cycle de vie touristique. Au Pays Dogon, l'intérêt constant manifesté par les anthropologues depuis les années 1930 a conduit au classement

du site au Patrimoine de l'Humanité. Rien de tel à Hombori, où les amateurs de tourisme de montagne contemporains peuvent être considérés comme les pionniers de cette destination.

Mots clés : tourisme, biodiversité, Monts Hombori, Pays Dogon, Mali

This paper studies the unequal development of two tourist destinations in Mali: Dogon Country, a well-established market area, and the Hombori Mountains, considered as a kind of "Heaven on Earth" due to their preserved biological biodiversity. Building on Butler's Destination Life Cycle Model (1980), our research suggests Dogon Country benefits from a considerable, long-term lead in terms of image, which has led to its inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The situation is totally different in the Hombori Mountains where present-day mountain tourists can be considered as the trailblazers of this particular destination.

Keywords : tourism, biodiversity, Hombori, Dogon Country, Mali