

WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF DOLISIE IN CONGO

Commoning for a municipal service?



THE CARNETS FAIRE COMMUN were produced by the Commons and shared governance action-research programme, which was initiated by GRET in 2019. The programme is opening up a learning space, where commons-based approaches capable of generating and facilitating shared governance dynamics for fair, sustainable management of resources, services and territories can be tested and documented as part of development projects. How to create the conditions necessary for collective action and collective learning? How to promote systems of shared governance within which citizens-users have real power to control and decide on issues affecting them, alongside public authorities and the private sector? How to reflect on the position of development operator, how to design intervention strategies, which facilitation methods to choose? How to use projects as official development assistance tools to support these social transformation processes over the long term?

In line with the Cahier projet collection, the Carnet Faire commun series, with its short, easy-to access format, shares operational findings drawn from concrete experiences in various geographies. The objective of these handbooks is to enrich the reflections and references of practitioners and political deciders wishing to promote forms of commons-based social organisation and shared governance.

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WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF DOLISIE IN CONGO

Commoning for a municipal service?

Written by: Marion Osmont

Coordinator: Marilou Gilbert

Authors: Frédéric Makita Bati, Noémie Régeard

Contributors: Florian Marchadour, Giglah Bikouya, Adeline Pierrat,
Jean-François Kibler

Editors: Marie Camus, Véronique Beldame

Editorial managers: François Enten, Marie Camus

Interior composition: Nancy Cossin

Photographs: © GRET, unless stated otherwise

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AADJFM	Association pour l'assistance et le développement des jeunes filles mères (Association for the assistance and development of young mothers)
ATOM	Aire de transit des ordures ménagères (Household waste transit area)
AVESAP	Association des volontaires pour l'éducation de la santé publique (Association of volunteers for public health education)
CCR	Cadre de concertation et de réflexion (Framework for consultation and reflection)
CCT	Comité de coordination technique (Technical coordination committee)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GICOD	Gestion inclusive et concertée des déchets à Dolisie (Inclusive and concerted waste management in Dolisie)
OPC	Opérateur de pré-collecte (Pre-collection operator)
PROMAISS	Projet de partenariat mairie et société civile sur la gestion des déchets solides (City and civil society solid waste management partnership project)

THE COMMONS-BASED APPROACH

Our choices for society are mainly operated by **public authorities** (national and decentralised), which we expect to defend the general interest, and by the **private sector** (companies and foundations), which is considered more efficient from a managerial point of view. Directly or indirectly, both of the latter monopolise arenas of governance, i.e. spaces in which decisions are made. They mobilise a model of society based on competition and survival of the fittest, exclusive private or public property, regulation by the market and by the state, and various forms of control over populations' behaviour.

These models of State-private governance **often struggle to ensure social and environmental justice**. Ecosystems are being degraded, biodiversity is being eroded and the climate is changing, accentuating social inequalities. In the Northern and Southern hemispheres, essential services such as access to drinking water or energy, under public control that in some cases delegates these public services to private operators, remain inaccessible to a large number of poor people who cannot afford them. Similarly, urbanisation and governance patterns in protected areas, which are decided by public or private authorities, are not reconciling conservation of the environment with inclusion of precarious populations who depend on it. The inability of current systems of governance to meet growing social and environmental challenges is generating defiance among citizens vis-à-vis institutions, with which they no longer identify. This situation is leading to socio-political insecurity, which is a threat to peace.

This overview is deliberately exaggerated to underscore **the urgency of exploring ways to move beyond the State-private governance paradigm**. This realisation is expressed in particular in Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG), which targets the implementation of exemplary institutions and systems of inclusive decision-making¹. This is a considerable challenge for official development assistance.

The **commons** movement, which is multidimensional and has been growing since its renaissance in the 1980s with the work of political scientist Elinor Ostrom², is opening up new possibilities. The concept of the commons provides a powerful benchmark for social organisation, which can be described as a set of interdependent stakeholders directly affected by a common challenge, who decide to undertake collective action to co-construct shared governance.

1. "Target 16.6 – Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels" and "Target 16.7 – Ensure responsive, inclusive and representative decision-making at all levels", UN, "16 Peace, justice and strong institutions", *Sustainable Development Goals* [accessed 3 May 2022], <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/peace-justice/>

2. Her best-known publication is *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Within a continuous collective learning process, it defines and implements rules for access and use that are deemed fair, and ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability of the object of the common (see Figure 1 below).

GRET is convinced that forms of shared governance “in commons” are more likely to ensure social and ecological justice for several reasons. For example, they enable citizens to take (back) ownership of the powers to decide and control alongside public authorities and the private sector. They also maintain dynamics of collective action and learning on ways to define and develop the rules to be respected, which is a source of adaptation and resilience. Lastly, they recognise bundles of differentiated, inclusive rights (access, harvesting of resources, management, etc.) and mobilise levers for cooperation and “commoning” to build the society of the future.

Such forms of social organisation, to be invented and built, are likely to provide better responses to the SDGs and to the issues and challenges targeted by official development aid.

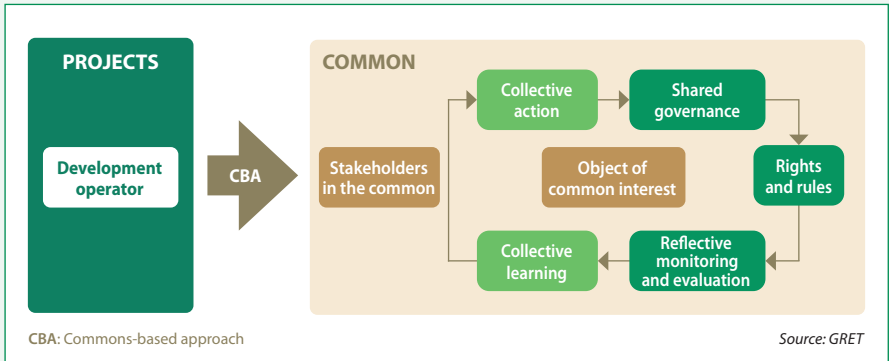
GRET proposes developing a **commons-based approach** that can be adopted and rolled out by development operators wishing to promote such forms of social organisation as part of their interventions (see Figure 1 below). When implemented as part of development projects, a commons-based approach draws from the theory of the commons to promote and support dynamics for social organisation and construction of shared governance “in commons” around resources, services or territories. In this way, the commons-based approach covers everything an operator can implement as part of a project, notably to:

- reveal interdependencies between stakeholders and the common challenges they face;
- motivate collective action of concerned stakeholders to seek solutions together;
- favour fair representation of stakeholders in the shared governance system;
- incite stakeholders to make their action part of a collective learning logic based on a system of internal reflexive monitoring.

This initiative by GRET aims to contribute to and draw inspiration from the commons, the social and solidarity economy, and popular education movements. It explicitly targets the strengthening of civil society, citizen emancipation and democracy. Its specificity is that it focuses on interventions conducted as part of official development aid, an environment that is both privileged and constrained. It is in line with reflections undertaken by Agence française de développement (AFD) and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), while providing an additional contribution to the operationalisation of a commons-based approach within development projects targeting issues related to natural resources, services and territories.

The commons-based approach discussed here is not a panacea. Apart from the fact that it is currently in vogue – which risks relegating it to the level of a slogan, a catch-all word or a

Figure 1: THE COMMONS-BASED APPROACH



travelling model³ – this approach aims to foster exploration of other ways of making society and of governing, locally and more broadly, for greater social and environmental justice.

The commons-based approach invites us to take a step back, to focus on issues of governance and on the manner in which we conduct development projects. It is neither a recipe nor a method, it is a way of guiding our interventions, of reading situations of action, of conducting our actions and thinking about our position as a committed facilitator. The best way to understand what a commons-based approach looks like in operational term, is to see how it is rolled out in concrete actions... and, better still, to test it oneself.

As part of its Commons and Shared Governance programme, GRET is developing and testing a commons-based approach in diverse geographies and contexts with an operational and methodological ambition. The aim of the programme is to think about the operationalisation of a commons-based approach in concrete, practical terms. Tests conducted within projects supplied insights originating from various contexts and situations of action around diverse commons-related issues. Capitalisation on these experiences, focusing on governance and the commons-based approach, is aimed at enriching reflection and the various references of practicians and policymakers wishing to promote forms of social organisation and shared governance inspired by the commons. ●

3. "Any standardised institutional intervention [...], aiming to produce any social change, and that is based on a 'mechanism' and 'devices' [...] assumed to have intrinsic properties inducing this change in various contexts of implementation"; Olivier de Sardan J.-P. (2021), p. 26, (non official translation).



Collection using motorcycle dump trucks

Introduction

This handbook describes the support provided by GRET for the establishment of a waste management service between 2012 and 2020 in Dolisie, the third-largest city in the Republic of Congo. It shows how this support, which was rolled out over the long term, was decisive in creating a bond of trust with local stakeholders and allowed the establishment of a construction dynamic of shared governance around the waste management service.

In a context of growing urbanisation and weak intervention by public authorities, the waste issue creates significant health and environmental problems in Dolisie. The first two projects implemented by GRET between 2012 and 2018 (PROMAISS¹ and GICOD²) served to establish a functional and inexpensive waste management service combining motorised collection on tarred roads and pre-collection by carts delegated to pre-collection operators (OPCs³) who transport waste to a household waste transit area (ATOM), followed by transport of that waste to a landfill. This hybrid service involving the municipality and small private operators was constructed through a participatory approach with consultation and cooperation, through trial and error and successive adjustments.

However, when GRET withdrew in December 2018 at the end of the GICOD project, responsibility for the service was transferred to the city and quickly declined, leading to questions about centralised municipal governance. GRET then chose to test a commons-based approach, aiming to promote shared governance that could revitalise and perpetuate the service. In the N'toto Na Mavimpi (Land and Health) project conducted between July 2019 and December 2020, GRET's team supported stakeholders (residents, OPCs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), neighbourhood authorities, etc.)

1. *City and civil society solid waste management partnership project, 2012–2015 (Projet de partenariat et société civile sur la gestion des déchets solides in French).*

2. *Inclusive and concerted waste management in Dolisie, 2016–2018 (Gestion inclusive des déchets à Dolisie in French).*

3. *Opérateur de pré-collecte in French.*

in constructing shared governance and a “commoning” dynamic, based on an analysis of the balance of power between public authorities and other stakeholders involved in waste management.

This handbook illustrates how GRET used an open discussion process to unite stakeholders around common issues and to shift from a context of competition to mutual aid through service provision. It shows that a waste management service can be designed as a common, and how collective mobilisation emerged from the grassroots during operations to clear organised waste dumps in the neighbourhoods. It presents the complexity of constructing shared governance around a public service with the municipality as the owner of the infrastructure, in a context of strong vertical power. It also highlights how difficult it is to bring about collective dynamics in negative economic contexts, marked by precarity and distrust towards public authorities. Lastly, it presents several general lessons learned from this experience on how a commons-based approach can be adopted to construct shared governance around municipal waste management services. ●

PART 1

The challenge of shared governance to revitalise a failing service

The Republic of Congo is a former French colony in Central Africa that gained independence in 1960. While in 2021, it had a population of 5.6 million⁴, i.e. one of the lowest population densities on the continent, it is characterised by a very high degree of urbanisation (68%⁵ of its population lives in cities). The oil sector accounts for more than 80% of the country's exports⁶, making it one of the ten largest producers in Africa.

In the 1970s, socialism in Congo appears to have created the conditions for the emergence of a welfare State with broad diffusion of services in the fields of education, health and transport. Starting in 1985, however, living conditions deteriorated with the oil price crisis. The 1990s were marked by the appearance of increasingly severe urban tensions, leading to a civil war in 1997. Denis Sassou Nguesso, the first elected president of the country in 1997 after leading it for nearly twenty years (1979 to 1992), has won every election since 2002. Today, oil revenues no longer contribute to the establishment of efficient services. Poor redistribution of public services, precarity and the crisis of trust of a large segment of the Congolese people towards their leaders have led to a feeling of resignation, making it difficult to engage citizens.

4. Banque mondiale, *Données – Congo, République du*, <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/pays/congo-republique-du> [consulté le 7 juillet 2022].

5. Idem.

6. Banque mondiale, *La Banque mondiale en République du Congo, République du Congo – Vue d'ensemble*, <https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/country/congo/overview> [consulté le 7 juillet 2022].

WASTE IN DOLISIE, AN INTERMEDIATE CITY BATTERED BY CRISES

Dolisie is located on the edge of the Mayombe forest, on the road connecting Brazzaville, the country's political capital, to Pointe-Noire, its economic capital. Built around the exploitation of wood and minerals, and after a period of strong growth in the 1970s and 1980s, the city suffered greatly from the political and military upheavals that shook the country from 1997 to 2001, destroying most of its economic and industrial fabric. In the early 2010s, Dolisie experienced a revival thanks to the renovation of the road linking it to Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire (RN1), followed by foreign investments in the forestry, mining and agricultural sectors. However, this momentum was cut short by the economic crisis that began in 2015, linked to the fall in the price of a barrel of oil and aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Since the early 2000s, the city's growing urbanisation⁷ has revealed new problems, particularly in terms of sanitation: persistent illegal waste dumps, lakes and rivers polluted by waste, poorly maintained roads and canals, etc. The health and environmental impacts worsen, and local authorities struggle to respond. Thus, waste management has become a major issue for the community.

PROMISING IMPLEMENTATION THEN DECLINE OF A HYBRID WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICE

It is in this context that GRET intervened to improve the waste management service through two successive projects conducted between 2012 and 2018. The first, the PROMAISS project (city and civil society solid waste management partnership project, 2012-2014) focused on consultation with the municipality. The second, the GICOD project (inclusive and concerted waste management in Dolisie, 2015-2018), focused on the social and technical aspects of waste management. These two successive projects led to the establishment of a hybrid waste management service, combining a pre-collection service using carts delegated to pre-collection operators (OPCs) and a collection service managed under the authority of the municipality. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), neighbourhood authorities and users were also involved in consultation mechanisms to monitor the service. The management model and the

7. In 2012, Dolisie had a population of 120,000 and generated 17,550 tonnes of waste annually. The population growth rate is estimated at 3.5% per year, with household waste production expected to reach 40,000 tonnes per year in 2035 (Marchadour F. et al., 2013).

consultation mechanisms were efficient, under a municipal project management benefitting from GRET's expertise.

GRET withdrew its team at the end of the project in December 2018, and the waste management service quickly collapsed. Its degradation led to a **worrisome vicious circle**: households cancelled their subscription for waste collection, illegal waste dumps reappeared, revenues declined, and the city disengaged.

A COMMONS-BASED APPROACH TO STIMULATE A VIRTUOUS DYNAMIC

GRET considered that this situation was largely the result of a lack of governance, centralised by a financially bankrupt municipal authority that was unable to sustain the consultation mechanisms put in place. Promoting shared governance appeared to be a possible alternative. The idea was to relaunch the service through support allowing all stakeholders to take ownership of its governance. More specifically, it involved analysing the power balance between stakeholders to create conditions to restore an equilibrium in the service's governance, in order to reactivate the collaboration mechanisms that had been put in place during the PROMAISS and GICOD projects. The goal was to create a **virtuous circle**. Improving dialogue between stakeholders could allow for collective mobilisation through joint actions, and ownership of the service by the various stakeholders. At the same time, increasing the number of subscriptions would help give the service a solid financial base. In this ideal cyclical pattern, increasing



Launch of the waste pre-collection service using motorised tricycles, PROMAISS project

the number of involved and motivated stakeholders in the waste management service became a strong way of maintaining pressure on public authorities, and thus protecting service efficiency.

The commons-based approach experiment was designed as a way to construct shared governance that would ultimately guarantee the sustainability of the waste management service developed under the two previous projects.

GRET then evolved its strategy to support stakeholders from the establishment of concerted management to the construction of shared governance. From July 2019 to December 2020, under the N'toto Na Mavimpi project, it implemented a commons-based approach to construct a collective learning process to build and nurture shared governance by public authorities, civil society and service users, able to provide a quality, equitable and sustainable service. ●

PART 2

From concerted management to shared governance: eight years of support

In 2010, as part of the decentralisation efforts initiated in the 2000s, which involved the transfer of skills and resources to local authorities, Dolisie city council decided to delegate its waste management service to two private companies in Pointe-Noire. The municipality's technical sanitation department monitored and oversaw the service. This management mode had a significant cost (between FCFA 15 and 30 million monthly) covered in part by the State (up to FCFA 24 million monthly) but the service was insufficient. The system was based on households voluntarily depositing their waste in bins. However, few of these bins were provided, they were distant for some households, and they were emptied too infrequently. Illegal dumps persisted. Despite State subsidies, Dolisie city council was unable to run the service.

The municipality took over authority for the service in 2011. It then asked for help from GRET, which started supporting the city in 2012 to design and implement an efficient, inexpensive, accessible and sustainable waste management service. GRET spent seven years supporting the municipality in building, implementing and getting a hybrid management mode up and running in consultation with CSOs, neighbourhood authorities and users. Then, in 2019, GRET decided to position itself as a facilitator of a service-oriented shared governance co-construction process. It withdrew its teams at the end of the N'toto Na Mavimpi project in December 2020.



Monitoring and evaluation project for the involvement of stakeholders in governance (OPCs, neighbourhood associations, CSOs, city council)

DESIGNING A MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICE WITHIN A CONCERTED FRAMEWORK

The PROMAISS project was funded by the European Union and implemented by GRET. It initially focused on strengthening ties between local authorities and civil society through the development of urban micro-projects. The mayor at the time, whose ambition was to “make Dolisie the cleanest city in Congo”, asked GRET to reflect more broadly about a waste management service. For nearly two years, from 2012 to 2014, GRET **contributed its expertise** in waste management system design through a **participatory approach** aimed at involving residents and other stakeholders in reflections on the various technical options.

In November 2012, the GRET team conducted an assessment that led to the establishment of a framework for consultation and reflection (CCR⁸). This group consisted of a core of about thirty people from the department and the community (elected officials and municipal managers), local authorities (neighbourhood leaders, arrondissement representatives) and civil society representatives (pre-collection associations and public health associations). The CCR met three times a year to examine and discuss various scenarios for managing the service, its business model and its future governance (post-project).

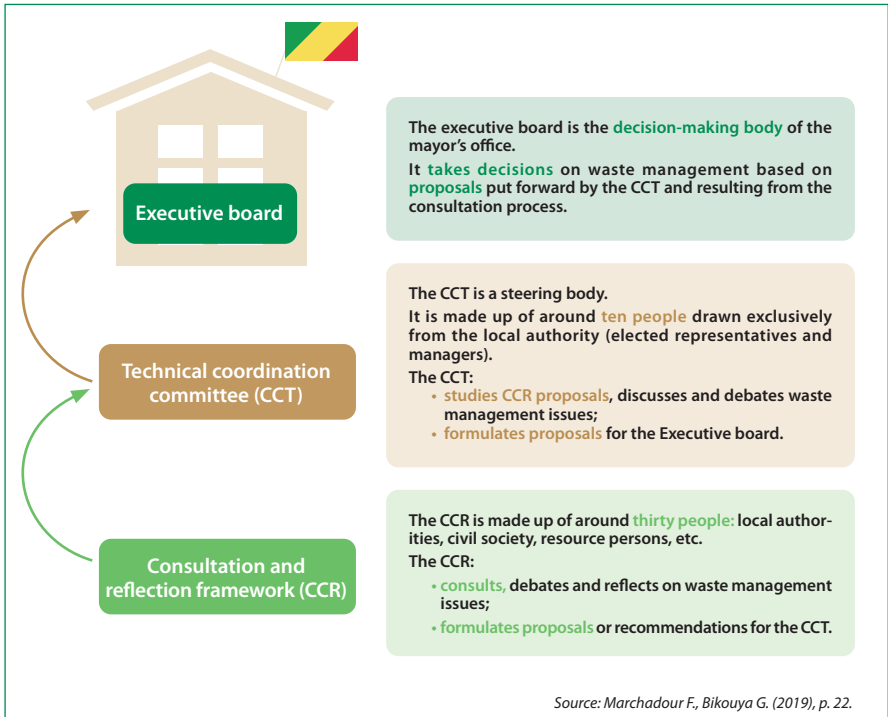
The CCR is relevant due to its relationship with the service’s steering body, i.e., the technical coordination committee (CCT⁹). Created in 2013 at the CCR’s initiative, the CCT is chaired by a municipal secretary general and consists of two elected officials and municipal managers, representatives of the various municipal directorates. This body meets quarterly to monitor the implementation of the service and assist in decision-making by submitting proposals to the executive board based on recommendations made by the CCR. Thus, the CCR and the CCT form a link between residents and the municipality’s decision-making body.

Ten consultation workshops were held with users throughout the PROMAISS project, during which GRET supported the establishment of pricing, service frequency, management method rules, etc. It assisted stakeholders at consultation meetings, aiming to guide reflections and knowledge production around the service. Using a participatory approach, GRET sought to promote dialogue between stakeholders before the final decision was taken by city council, which, as municipal manager, had decision-making power for the general guidelines.

8. *Cadre de concertation et de réflexion in French.*

9. *Cadre de coordination technique in French.*

Figure 1: FROM DESIGN TO SERVICE MANAGEMENT



When selecting the waste collection system, GRET presented and submitted three proposals for debate: collection by motorcycle dump trucks with large waste collection points, collection by carts with small collection points, or voluntary drop-off and mobile collection by small trucks. Although GRET and the CCR recommended a low-tech and less expensive solution, city council opted for collection by motorcycle dump trucks.

The service was launched for 15,000 inhabitants in five neighbourhoods in 2015, and a household waste transit area (ATOM¹⁰) was inaugurated for the temporary storage of waste to protect the local communities from any potential inconvenience.

The service met the expectations of a large part of the population, who agreed to pay the household waste collection tax (TEOM). Although the CCR's consultative nature did not allow private citizens or associations to present their recommendations, the

10. Aire de transit des ordures ménagères in French.

consultation framework did offer stakeholders an opportunity to discuss the shared service collectively. The ATOM was properly sized, the service was viable, and had a lower cost than previous private delegation experiments.

However, this service had limitations, due in part to the technical choice made by city council: practice showed that the investment and operating cost of collection by motorcycle dump trucks was too high. There were also limits due to management under the authority of the city council, the unpredictable nature of State subsidies, insufficient political support and the administrative slowness of the financial circuit (payment/disbursement of money orders). Finally, in a context of significant precarity, waste management was not a priority for the authorities or the residents.

EVOLVING TOWARDS A HYBRID SERVICE MANAGEMENT MODE

In 2015, the country's economic crisis directly impacted government support for communities. Subsidies allocated to municipal sanitation services declined, and the question of the cost of the service became more relevant in the choice of the waste management technical model.

GRET continued to support stakeholders through the GICOD project, which was funded by the European Union, Syctom, the Suez Foundation and the city of Dolisie. From 2015 to 2018, GRET **supported the city council in project management**. Many considered it to be the **service operator** because it had the technical means and skills required, and generally inspired user confidence (unlike the city council).

Under the impetus of the GICOD project, and following consultation with the CCR, technical validation by the CCT and final validation by the executive office of the municipal council, it was decided to change the service's management model to include a waste pre-collection stage provided by private operators with carts to reduce the cost of the service. **This hybrid waste management format** was inspired by what was already being done in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire.

City council delegated part of its competence to twenty-four pre-collection operators (OPCs). They were recruited through a call for tenders, then trained in financial management, health risks and marketing techniques. They were then provided assistance for several months by local associations recruited by the project, creating close ties between the associations and the OPCs. GRET led OPC training using modules developed for the Filipa project (support for private and association waste pre-collection in Brazzaville, 2014-2019).

The waste collection service was launched in 2016 in two stages:

- home waste pre-collection in the neighbourhoods by the OPCs: waste was transferred to the ATOMs, then transported by the city to a landfill by loader and dump truck once a week;
- a dump truck service serving only tarred roads: waste from the markets was collected and then transported directly to the landfill by the city.

The system was implemented in five neighbourhoods, then extended to twenty-four of Dolisie's twenty-eight neighbourhoods in 2017. To increase pre-collection efficiency, three new ATOMs were built in 2018 to complement the existing one. In three of these, paper, cardboard and hard plastics were sorted to be sent to the ATOM in the city centre for recycling or resale. A sorting-recycling ramp was built in that ATOM to sort waste from the central market and recover organic matter to produce compost for the city's market gardeners. This system reused waste and reduced the cost of transport to the landfill.

Weekly service monitoring meetings were held at the ATOMs with managers and coordinators, OPCs, neighbourhood committees, users, CSOs and the city.

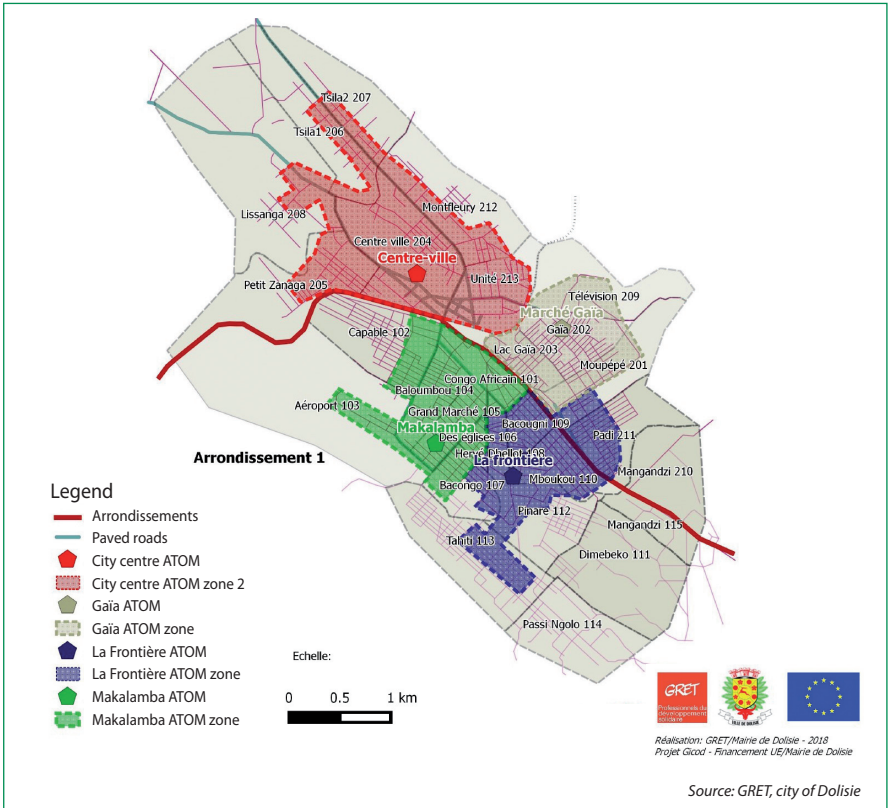


City centre ATOM just after its construction



Waste collection by an OPC

Figure 2: LOCATION OF FOUR ATOM SITES AND PRE-COLLECTION ZONES



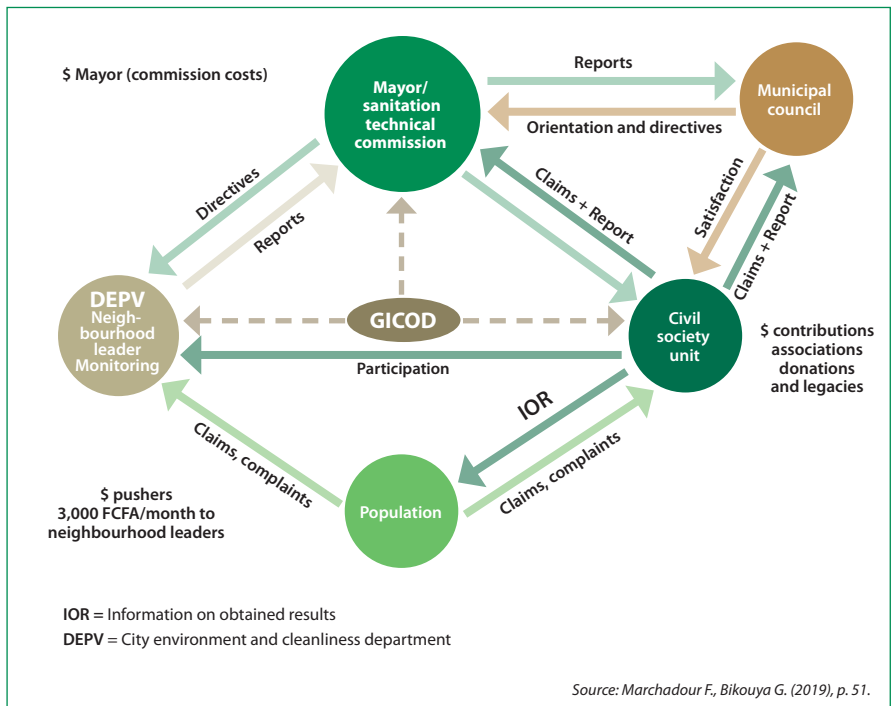
Despite constant criticism from users and civil society regarding the shortcomings observed during the PROMAISS project, the service continued to be run by the municipality for several reasons: sanitation has been the municipality’s domain of competence since 2003, the city owns the infrastructure and equipment, but also – and above all – it seems essential to use the household waste removal tax (TEOM) as the city’s share of financing for the GICOD project¹¹.

11. Under some EU calls for projects, 25% external co-financing is requested, and more specifically, the communities concerned are asked to participate financially. For the PROMAISS project, the city had committed to contribute €100,000, or 9% of the total €1,100,000 budget. Unable to honour its commitment by direct payment, the city agreed to pay its share of co-financing through the TEOM, collected at the source by GRETE, up to €100,000. In the end, 73% of this amount was collected for the project.

The CCR and the CCT, as well as ad-hoc meetings and informal discussions, were useful and necessary spaces for dialogue and coordination between the waste management service's users and stakeholders. However, because the participation of stakeholders in these discussion spaces depended strongly on the impetus given by GRET and the means it provided, the service's sustainability quickly became an issue.

In December 2018, GRET withdrew and officially transferred the entire service to the city, which had already been managing the equipment, human resources and ATOMS for a few months. However, it quickly became clear that the city had insufficient financial and human resources to run the hybrid service, which also found itself without a driving force or facilitator. GRET was aware of the problem, so, before its departure, it assisted the CCR and the CCT in formulating a post-GRET governance arrangement that would allow the service to continue without it. Unfortunately, the governance system resulting from this collective reflection never moved beyond the theoretical stage.

Figure 3: OUTLINE OF THE FUTURE OF SERVICE GOVERNANCE PROPOSED BY CCR MEMBERS IN 2018



CO-CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED GOVERNANCE OF THE HYBRID SERVICE

Just seven months after being transferred to the city, the hybrid waste management service was already showing signs of decline. The governance system conceived at the end of 2018 was never applied.

In July 2019, thanks to the N'toto Na Mavimpi project, under the Commons and Shared Governance programme, GRET was able to return to Dolisie's stakeholders to support them in co-constructing governance capable of maintaining the service. At that time, GRET suggested considering shared governance that recognises and involves more OPCs, neighbourhood leaders, CSOs and users in decision-making, that is more horizontal and less dependent on the city.

For almost two years, until December 2020, GRET served as **facilitator of a shared governance co-construction process**, under a **commons-based approach**.

The first step consisted in a participatory assessment of the service's governance with the stakeholders involved in waste management. Consultation meetings identified each party's intentions and opinions, while focus groups at the ATOM and neighbourhood levels identified the strengths and weaknesses of the actions undertaken. The information collected in the neighbourhood was then combined to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party under joint management of the service. This clarification laid the foundations for the shared governance framework. Finally, consultation meetings were held with the stakeholders to facilitate collective learning of the governance principles that they were responsible for. This process attracted a great deal of interest and led to the establishment of a shared governance system for the waste management service.

In addition to neighbourhood consultations, geolocation data were also collected to create a digital map of the city. This tool was to be used by operators to plan illegal dump cleanup operations. Community cleanup operations in the neighbourhoods, supported by the OPCs in collaboration with neighbourhood leaders and residents, created a feeling of "shared cleanliness", of "building a common" or "working as a community" around the service.

But the project ended, and GRET withdrew its teams from Dolisie in December 2020.

AN UNFINISHED COMMONS DYNAMIC, A SERVICE IN DECLINE YET AGAIN...

Less than a year later, in September 2021, GRET visited the city's stakeholders (council, CSOs, OPCs) to discuss the status of the waste service. In early 2022, the GRET team conducted an in-depth assessment of the work done over the previous eight years, and took note of the status of the waste management service.

It was declining yet again: waste management was not a priority for the city, which was focused at the time on finding sufficient resources to pay its municipal workers, who were owed sixty-three months in back pay and were on strike. The pre-collection link remained, however, thanks to the work of the OPCs, who were commoning around waste: despite tensions, tacit collection area coverage rules had been established. Throughout the sector, the most defective links were still collection (city-run service) and transfer (waste removal from ATOMs).

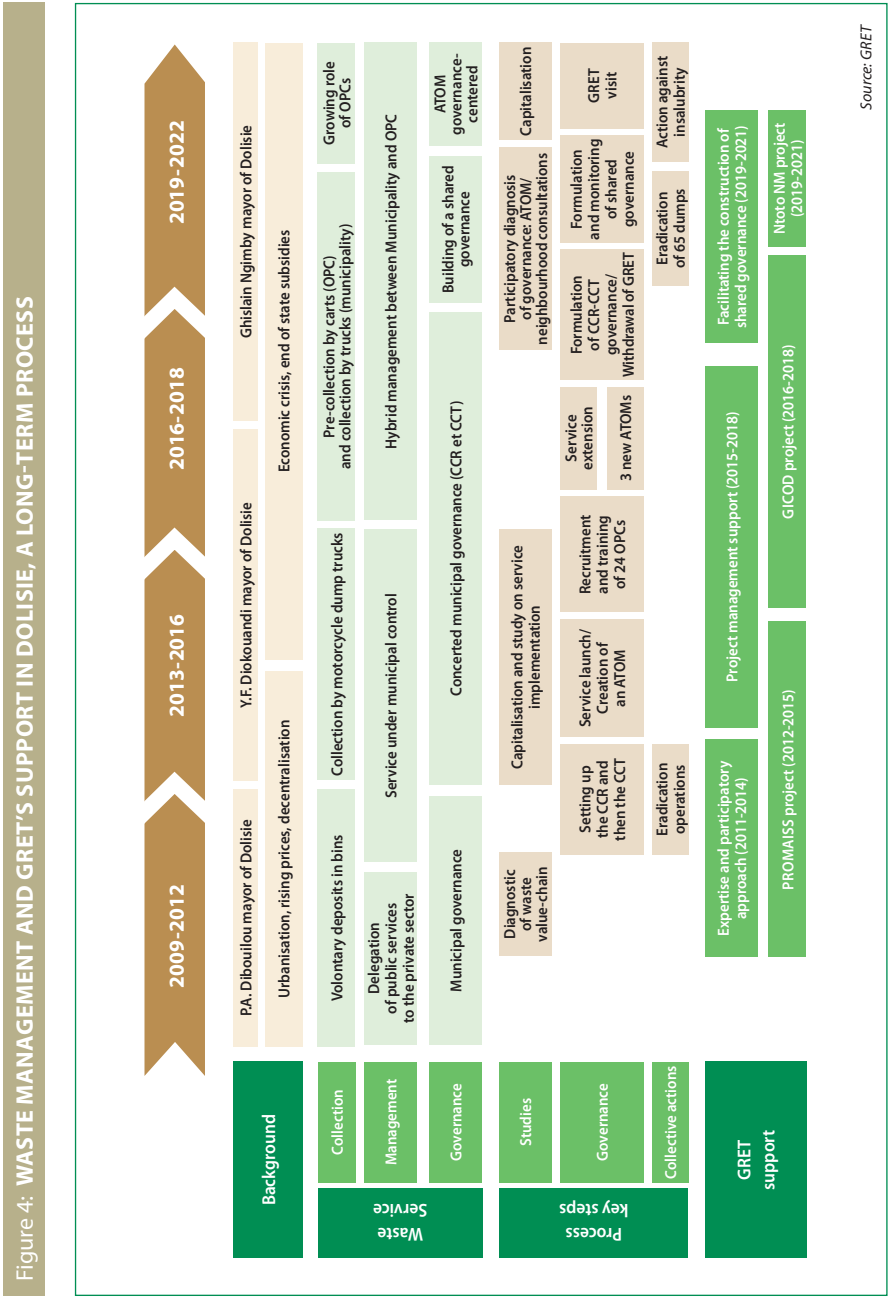
The shared governance building process did not continue after GRET's departure. The commoning dynamics initiated by the OPCs and residents struggled to survive when waste was no longer collected from the ATOMs by the city, due to a lack of resources.

Faced with the decline of the service, however, a few occasional grassroots actions emerged: for example, one of the churches in the city called on a private individual to push the waste in front of the ATOM with a loader, while a group of residents filed a complaint against the city for endangerment. This mobilisation in a time of crisis is interesting: residents seemed to consider the situation sufficiently worrisome to take collective action. With regard to the commons, this "emergency" engagement situation raises questions given usually weak citizen engagement in a context of significant political distrust. ●

FEEDBACK FROM

"The garbage bothers everyone. When the problem is not fully resolved, it can lead to popular uprising. Moreover, we stand in solidarity against the threats made to the OPCs who continue to dump their carts at the illegal dumps they were forced to create. So, we get organised with the neighbourhood youth to dissuade people from creating more illegal dumps in the neighbourhood."

Focus group with households in Grand Quartier, GRET survey, 2022



Source: GRET

PART 3

The commons-based approach in practice

The commons-based approach tested by GRET since 2019 aims to encourage the construction of shared governance at two levels: the waste management service for the entire city, and local waste management in the neighbourhoods and the ATOMs where commons dynamics have been established around illegal dump cleanup operations.

Discussing commons dynamics brings us back to the concept of collective action developed by Elinor Ostrom¹² and which constitutes the heart and the starting point of commons. Essential services do not appear in the “commons” experiments documented and analysed by Ostrom. Nevertheless, GRET considers that collective action, also called “commoning”, can emerge around a service when a group of stakeholders commit to define, establish and follow collective rules around the service of common interest by building a shared governance mechanism.

We speak of shared governance when it involves all stakeholders concerned in decision-making, favouring the principles of cooperation and self-organisation. While this type of governance is not the easiest to imagine for services that are often public and involve technical expertise, experience shows that it is important to focus on both decision-making and management.

12. Ostrom E. (1990).

A PROACTIVE “PRO-COMMONS” APPROACH TO PROMOTE SHARED GOVERNANCE OF THE SERVICE

One of the originalities of the approach adopted by the GRET team was its **open discussion of the governance of the service based on the concepts of commons and shared governance**. Through the organisation and facilitation of a process of dialogue and reflection among the various stakeholders, the approach led to the conception by all stakeholders of a governance system, which was tested and evaluated a few months later. The collective dynamic generated by GRET can be considered an encouraging first attempt at creating a shared governance construction process. It is, however, far from complete, judging by the limited power granted to users and the pervasiveness of political power at every level.

Seven months after GRET’s departure, between August and November 2019, the starting point of this construction process was a **participatory assessment of the waste management service** involving all stakeholders. The goal was to understand the perceptions and suggestions of the OPCs, associations and residents in order to use them as levers to construct a more horizontal type of service governance. All discussions focused on a shared vision: the proper functioning of the waste management service by all stakeholders. Collective discussions were held at several levels and in different ways, from single-stakeholder focus groups to multi-stakeholder workshops. First, **discussion meetings** were held with each of the twenty-four neighbourhood committees. Composed of the neighbourhood leader, a secretary, zone and block chiefs, each committee represents the city council and is a key stakeholder in the neighbourhood. **Focus groups** were then held with households in four neighbourhoods, then with all the OPCs of the four ATOMs, aiming to identify the service’s strengths and weaknesses.



After the discussion groups were held, working groups were organised at Dolisie city hall on the subject of creating a shared governance model

FOCUS GROUP

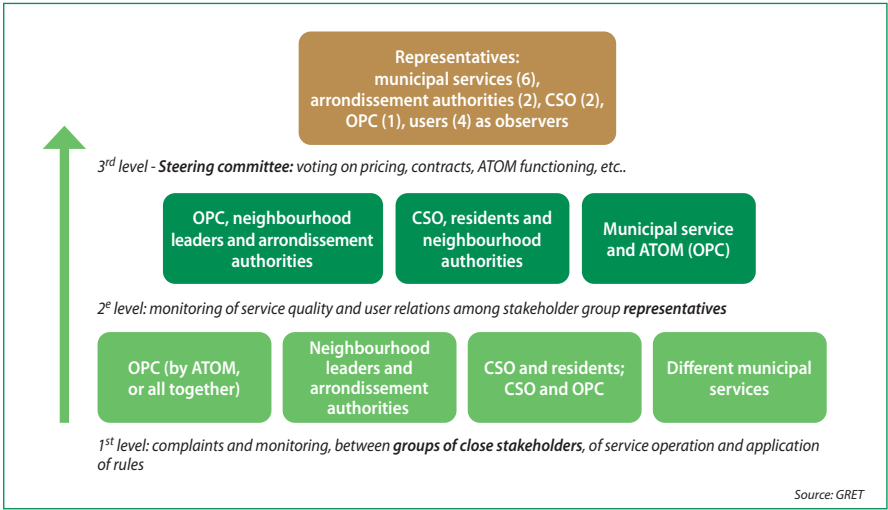
Each focus group held at the household level included between ten and fifteen participants representing the different blocks and zones of each neighbourhood, with about five service subscribers for every ten non-subscribers. A number of points were discussed relating to the role and involvement of the residents in waste management and the pre-collection service. Each group then collectively discussed what shared governance of the service could look like, defining the roles and responsibilities that each could assume. In this way, the various stakeholders became aware of their interdependence and of the need to join forces to ensure the smooth functioning and sustainability of the service. These focus groups also revealed why some households do not subscribe to the service: cost, lack of understanding of health risks or absence of municipal by-laws making the service mandatory.

Meetings held for each ATOM allowed the OPCs to discuss the difficulties they faced in their work, present issues related to the proper functioning of the service and suggest solutions. Lastly, in order to triangulate the information collected, **individual interviews** were conducted with municipal technical managers, neighbourhood leaders and leaders of the awareness-raising associations AADJFM (association for the assistance and development of young mothers) and AVESAP (association of volunteers for public health education), which had been involved since 2012.

Following this discussion and consultation process, GRET held **a multi-stakeholder workshop to report on the studies** in December 2019. The project team explained the concept of the common and, by extension, the commons-based approach. In this way, the team openly promoted the idea of governance “in commons” to the service’s stakeholders, generating interest in formulating a proposal for a shared governance system. During this workshop, the stakeholders reviewed all of the issues related to the functioning of the service, mapped out the stakeholders involved and began formulating a shared governance diagram. The municipal technical departments and the mayor’s office actively participated in the reflections and appeared to be highly motivated in engaging in a dynamic of defining roles for the service. Following the proposals and the debates, the stakeholders consensually validated each party’s roles and responsibilities. Then, they defined discussion mechanisms between them to facilitate the flow of information.

In this way, they **established a three-tiered governance system**: a local level allowing all stakeholders to contribute to monitoring the service and compliance with the rules; a second level with monitoring by stakeholder representatives; and a third level with the steering committee where decisions are taken on pricing, contracts, ATOM operation, etc.

Figure 5: THE PROPOSED GOVERNANCE MECHANISM



A few months later, in 2020, stakeholders assessed the actual implementation of each stakeholder’s commitments at a **multi-stakeholder monitoring and evaluation workshop** during which the representative of each stakeholder category reported on the activities undertaken during the previous period. This workshop laid the foundations for a collective learning process.

Conceived through the prism of a commons-based approach, the approach adopted and the methods used by the GRET team had a significant impact. First, they **encouraged free speech**. They helped stakeholders **become aware of their interdependence, to question the vertical nature of the power** exercised by the municipality and to **formulate proposals together**. They also **strengthened the OPCs’ sense of belonging to a group** around each ATOM, by appointing an OPC representative for each ATOM. Thus, they **clearly helped generate collective action dynamics** for the construction of shared governance, both at the level of the entire service and at each ATOM.

However, the learning process has barely begun, and it **would be premature to speak of shared governance at this stage**. Although the governance system does provide for the participation of residents and their representatives in service monitoring (levels 1 and 2), they play only an observer role in the steering committee. It also seems relevant to question the representativeness and legitimacy of the stakeholders in the system. In a context strongly marked by the vertical nature of power, one might wonder how

the various bodies (whether pre-existing or created through GRET's impetus as part of the process) reproduce power relations. It would be interesting, for example, to more fully understand the process of forming neighbourhood committees, which are composed of the neighbourhood leader, a secretary, and zone and block chiefs, and how reflection and discussion, consultation and subsequently governance spaces can influence these power relationships.

The service remains effectively under the authority of the city and is part of a vertical administrative hierarchy. The prefect, mayor, neighbourhood leaders and the zone and block chiefs all belong to the political party in power, the Congolese Party of Labour (PCT¹³); the population distrusts political representatives, and therefore also the neighbourhood committees.

FEEDBACK FROM

"The neighbourhood committees have very limited mobilisation capacity [...]. The people identify them with the representatives of the central government. And the people reject everything that comes from political and administrative authority."

Moukoko Joseph, member of civil society

SUPPORTING COLLECTIVE INITIATIVES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS AROUND DUMP CLEANUP OPERATIONS

Having observed the difficulty of engaging the city in a true power-sharing process, the GRET team supported collective initiatives in certain neighbourhoods. Backed by the OPCs, these actions took the form of illegal dump cleanup operations, since illegal dumping persisted despite the establishment of the waste collection service.

Participatory assessment helped identify forms of mutual aid and solidarity in certain ATOMs. At the focus groups and consultation meetings held by GRET, the OPCs designed an **illegal dump cleanup strategy involving all local stakeholders** at the neighbourhood level. They devised it around a few simple points: the OPCs propose a schedule to the neighbourhood leaders, then to AADJFM and AVESAP. Each cleanup operation must involve all local stakeholders (OPCs, neighbourhood committees, users, CSOs and

13. *Parti congolais du travail in French.*

Waste management in the city of Dolisie in Congo

Commoning for a municipal service?

municipal technical departments). Large-scale operations will require the use of the city dump truck. A question persists regarding the financing of these operations: the stakeholders have proposed collecting funds from residents living near the dump sites or using part of the taxes collected by the ATOMs.

To boost the momentum, GRET decided to purchase fuel and assist with the first five illegal dump cleanup operations on an experimental basis. Subsequently, OPCs initiated thirteen more operations (the city provided its trucks to clear the largest dumps and paid for fuel). Conducted around specific actions with visible results, these operations helped generate a feeling of “common cleanliness”. They also increased the number of subscribers to the waste management service, which almost doubled between January and December 2020, from 97 to 171 customers per OPC.



Awareness-raising activity in the neighbourhood of Bacougni led by the association AVESAP during a waste dump clearing project

The role of the OPCs in this process was key and recognised socially. For them, these operations also fostered a sense of belonging to a community. These OPCs constitute a social group that is usually demeaned and marginalised both economically and socially¹⁴, so these collective operations were sources of sociability and social recognition for them.

Collective action has strengthened trust and reciprocity among stakeholders (OPCs, CSOs, neighbourhood committees, municipal technical departments), who have decided, organised and conducted waste management actions together. The OPCs' involvement has improved their relations with the city, which helped find concrete solutions to certain problems, particularly in terms of financing. For example, a system for cart repairs has been implemented through a contract signed with a welder (three carts repaired per month). The price of renting out a cart is shared between the welder and the city, which provides OPCs with a new cart when theirs needs to be repaired. Finally, the OPCs have established operating rules and penalties at the ATOMs. For example, one of the ATOMs has established fines if an OPC is absent without a valid reason on a scheduled collection day, with the timetable established and approved by all. The absent OPC must then pay a fine to the ATOM fund.

14. Cirelli C., Florin B. (2015).

We have observed several expressions of a self-organisation collective dynamic and commoning: stakeholders work together to define and conduct illegal dump cleanup operations, confidence in themselves and in their collective action, a feeling of belonging to a community around the issue of cleanliness, their initiative in establishing rules and fines. **In this way, the ATOMs and the neighbourhoods have become spaces that are conducive to the construction of new means of commons-based governance**, made possible by fertile ground that combines collective and individual interests that can be perceived by the stakeholders concerned. The commons-based approach implemented by GRET consisted in facilitating the process and financing the first experiments.

However, this local dynamic remains very fragile, because it depends on both financing by the city and facilitation work by GRET. After GRET's departure in 2020, with the city no longer able to empty the ATOMs or pay their managers, the OPCs were unable to continue cleaning up illegal dump sites.

One OPC interviewed in 2022 during consultations conducted by GRET with service stakeholders mentioned several factors that he believed contributed to the breakdown of this collective dynamic: first, the lack of unity among OPCs and a lack of participation by some of them, and a lack of support from the city and its inability to lead discussion spaces. The degraded operation of the service, with ATOMs no longer being cleared, had repercussions on illegal dump cleanup operations and the organisation of OPCs. Solidarity between OPCs seemed to be crumbling, especially among those with many subscribers and for whom cleanup operations are of little interest.

However, one ATOM was an exception: unity persisted among OPCs, who set up a mutual aid system. If an OPC is absent due to illness, bereavement, etc., the others collect the waste on his route to continue serving his subscribers. One of the conditions of payment for the service is its regularity, so it is in every OPC's interest to guarantee



Operation for the eradication of dump sites
in the Moupéyé district



Operation for the eradication of dump sites

collection. How can we explain this exception and the differences between ATOMs? While ethnic or religious reasons are sometimes put forward to explain the cohesion—or lack thereof—among OPCs, more in-depth investigations are required to better understand the success factors of collective action dynamics.



FEEDBACK FROM

"[Ethnicity] is an obstacle to organising collectively, since some OPCs don't speak the same language so they don't understand each other, and foreign OPCs don't feel the need to engage in collective action because they think they can go home any time they want."

Mboungou Chanel, OPC of the city centre ATOM

GRET's departure also highlights the importance of the role of facilitator. **The OPCs have clearly expressed a need for a facilitator** to lead and relaunch awareness and illegal dump cleanup campaigns, and to monitor the service. The stakeholders we consulted used several terms to designate this function: technical expert, job creator, mediator, arbitrator, facilitator, trainer, coach, organiser and mobiliser.

Since the city is unable or uninterested in leading discussions, **some OPCs have stated that they intend to form an association** to rebalance the power relations with the city, while others plan to join forces to share the cost of purchasing a motorcycle dump truck. ●

PART 4

Lessons learned from a commons-based approach

GRET's experiment in Dolisie shows that a proactive commons-based approach can contribute to generating collective dynamics for the construction of shared waste management governance. However, these collective dynamics did not last after GRET's departure, which leads us to mention several lessons and lines of reflection on the relevance and conditions for the adoption of a commons-based approach around a municipal public service.

ACQUIRE A DETAILED UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERVENTION CONTEXT

Supporting the construction of shared governance requires a thorough knowledge of the intervention context, particularly the diverse social and cultural norms and complex political power relations. Empirical understanding of the context, which GRET's team acquired through long-term support, was an asset, but it would have been beneficial if it had been backed by research. For example, we cannot explain why the OPCs of one ATOM were able to organise a mutual aid system while the others were not. It appears necessary to better equip ourselves in order to be able to identify existing dynamics, as well as the obstacles to and levers for collective action.

It may be that GRET's sectoral approach (around waste), which inevitably affects its understanding of the environment and the actors, does not promote an understanding of the diversity of factors likely to influence collective action. Perhaps a more global, multidisciplinary approach should be adopted. The waste issue raises several social (collective dynamics, individualism, solidarity, etc.), legal (institutional framework) and geographical (relationship of inhabitants to urban public space) issues that need to be better understood.

IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT THE COMMONS PROMOTERS OVER TIME

People from institutions play a key role as relays, facilitators or drivers in collective action and learning processes. In setting up the waste management service in Dolisie, the municipality's general secretary and the director of municipal technical departments (DSTM) were motivated to improve the service, so they facilitated the establishment of an ad-hoc financial circuit that made the service viable for a time¹⁵. These people share a concern for the collective interest and work in this direction. They are able to create trust between stakeholders to galvanise them around a common issue. Qualified as "champions"¹⁶, "commons promoters"¹⁷ or "border persons"¹⁸ in the academic and institutional field studying issues of governance or commons, these individuals help mobilise stakeholders but also guarantee the sustainability of the dynamics they help build and promote.

It can be particularly relevant to identify and establish alliances with these people in a commons-based approach, keeping in mind that the goal is not to instrumentalise them but to support them in the process of social change.

However, these alliances, which are often interpersonal and with low institutional visibility, are subject to change. Staffing changes can occur at the institutional level at any time and these people can lose some of their influence as a result. What legitimacy and power of influence will they then have to continue to promote the dynamics begun? How can we continue to involve them after they leave their posts? These questions deserve to be examined in greater depth, again through research, particularly on the strategies of stakeholders in hybrid spaces of a department, places with cyclical and unstable power relations¹⁹.

15. Faced with the principle of a single account, they set up a parallel fund for current expenses in order to compensate for the slowness of the financial circuit (fuel purchases, machine repair), which is funded by waste service revenues and by the sale of materials (sand and laterite transported with service equipment). This initiative optimised the service's operation.

16. Borrini-Feyerabend G. et al. (2014), p. 70.

17. Aubert S. et al. (2019), p. 17.

18. Presentation by Geneviève Fontaine at the seminar launching the Commons and local authorities programme of the Coop des communs, at the Caisse des dépôts et consignations, 3 December 2021.

19. Djabaye A., Risques potentiels des déchets solides sur l'environnement et la santé des populations en milieu urbain : cas de N'Djaména, *Projet de thèse en géographie, Prodig, Paris*.

DESIGN AND ARTICULATE OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

It is important to distinguish between operational management and governance, and to consider both these levels carefully when designing and implementing the strategy to support the stakeholders. In the first two projects in Dolisie, GRET focused on constructing consultations with local stakeholders to validate technical options, operational management methods, pricing, service frequency, etc. GRET did not deepen its considerations on service governance. However, consultation has only a consultative focus, where governance has a political dimension, that is, sharing decision-making power around the common resource. Consultation and participation allowed the establishment of a service, but did not consider its governance, which fundamentally poses the problem of the service's sustainability.

How and when should the construction of the functional organisation and that of the governance of a service be developed over time? It may seem judicious to encourage the construction of governance when considering the functional and operational management of the service, in order to guarantee its sustainability. Or it might be wise to work first on service functionality, before collectively mobilising stakeholders to construct shared governance on the basis of this functionality. There is no simple rule.



City council inspection of OPCs in Dolisie, GICOD project

It appears important to consider both aspects at the same time, considering the possible implications of the choices of management methods on governance and vice versa, and on the impact of the choices made on the sustainability of the service.

IDENTIFY OBSTACLES WHEN CONSTRUCTING SHARED GOVERNANCE

Experience shows the importance of properly measuring the positive or negative impacts of the municipality's involvement as a stakeholder in the common resource when mobilising other stakeholders, ensuring continuity of funding of the service and sharing decision-making powers. It is especially important to carefully analyse the political and financial aspects.

In Congo, the strong vertical organisation of public authorities, private actors and users creates a feeling of distrust among residents towards the municipality, and prevents them from sharing power for the service. Consultation and the collective definition of the rules of use are not sufficient here to create the conditions for collective action. It appears essential to involve political leaders (here, elected representatives) more, and not just city technical staff, in reflections on the construction of shared governance. It also seems necessary to play more on power relations to create the conditions for a balanced dialogue: mere consultation is clearly insufficient.

More generally, as the owner of the works and equipment on which the service depends, the city is a central and essential stakeholder. Its decisions can significantly affect the continuity and sustainability of the service, depending on current political priorities and the availability of funding.

These findings challenge how to “common” a municipal waste service, but they also challenge the place and role of the municipality in shared governance around this service.

PROVIDE ASSISTANCE OVER TIME

The economic crisis, the vertical nature and low degree of accountability of the public authorities, plus the lack of education in citizenship, are all unfavourable for the emergence of a commons dynamic and shared governance. Despite these difficulties, GRET successfully created the conditions for dialogue among stakeholders around

service improvement, which led to collaborative practices and proposals for a shared governance system, at both the level of the service as a whole and at the level of the neighbourhoods and the ATOMs. These actions allowed all stakeholders to consider their interdependence and power relations. They opened the field of possibilities and contributed to the emergence of dynamics of collective action, part of a collective learning process. However, these dynamics are not anchored sustainably due to a lack of political facilitation and support following GRET's departure. It takes time for perceptions and practices to change, and it is essential to reflect on the conditions for long-term support, and to define flexible and light means that do not necessarily require high funding. ●

PART 5

Future prospects

After eight years of support, local stakeholders in Dolisie set up an original waste management service involving the municipality, OPCs and two local CSOs. GRET has identified three priorities to enable them to sustain and evolve shared governance of the service.

DEVELOP A CITIZEN-BASED CULTURE

Residents' lack of trust towards the authorities remains a major obstacle in Dolisie for the construction of greater shared governance around the service. This distrust concerns all political and administrative authorities, including neighbourhood leaders. Because they are appointed by the central government, both the neighbourhood leaders themselves and residents believe they embody the ruling party. This crisis of authority and trust at the neighbourhood level hinders community mobilisation. While it is above all a question of considering and analysing the perceptions of power by the populations over time, it also seems necessary to conduct a more upstream reflection on citizen engagement. Training populations in citizenship and in the concept of common resources could help develop a citizen-based culture, which has been hampered by politics until now, and create the conditions for collective and solidarity actions in urban areas by empowering residents. It would involve holding workshops with a broad audience to facilitate the collective definition of the desired path of change, and to support new forms of social organisations that are more concerned and respectful of residents' aspirations.

TEST MANAGEMENT MODELS THAT ARE LESS DEPENDENT ON PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

It also seems appropriate to test new management models, with an approach based on waste prevention and reduction at the source. Avenues are emerging: a GRET project currently underway in the Republic of Congo called Novai (Nkayi Owando, “clean and inclusive cities”), funded by the European Union, focuses in part on this topic with the implementation of home composting. It should be analysed how reducing the amount of waste to be transported and disposed of would have a positive impact on the service and even governance. Indeed, while decentralised solutions do exist at the neighbourhood level, they must be paired with residents’ sense of responsibility regarding waste production. On this last point, it would be important to identify and support stakeholders who are considered legitimate in the residents’ eyes at the neighbourhood level, and who are aware of and promote political issues involving waste. At this point, through management anchored at the neighbourhood level, waste would have to be considered commons, “to take control of the negative commons [...], to take responsibility for it themselves²⁰”. If volumes and technical solutions are lower, so are the economic and political stakes, and it might be easier to work more closely with the stakeholders when less human resources have to be mobilised.

MOBILISE FINANCING TO ENSURE THAT SUPPORT IS SUSTAINED OVER TIME

Funding that allows long-term support is essential, given the time needed for citizen education, changes in perceptions and behaviours. Perhaps the decentralised cooperation model should be followed, with interventions conducted in a logic of continuity. These actions would use fewer resources in the short term while maintaining a long-term vision and would cover part of the structural costs, therefore improving service sustainability. ●

20. Translated from Monnin A. (2021), p. 61.

GLOSSARY

BORDER PERSONS. Supporting the construction of commons in a territory involves taking an interest in the positions and interdependencies of the various stakeholders (citizens, users, public stakeholders, private operators, etc.). “Border persons” are key stakeholders who have the power to “speak to several worlds, decompartmentalise and translate”. They play an intermediation and facilitation role between different types of stakeholders having different uses, interests and understandings of the common issue¹.

CHAMPIONS. Concept used by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its recommendations to improve the governance of protected areas. “Champions” are people who are directly concerned, identified for their desire to become involved, for their awareness of the phenomena at stake, for their ideas, enthusiasm and ability to inspire other stakeholders. Facilitating the emergence of champions and supporting them can contribute to a dynamic of citizens reclaiming governance of common resources².

COLLECTIVE ACTION. “Action undertaken by a group (either directly, or on its behalf through an organisation) in pursuit of members’ perceived shared interests (Scott and Marshall, 2009). The theories of collective action refer to the sharing of costs and advantages of collective action to manage public or collective goods³.”

The concept of collective action that we use is part of the theory developed by Elinor Ostrom in opposition to theses whereby individuals only see their own short-term particular interests and are incapable of making decisions in the collective or long-term interest, thereby requiring solutions imposed from the outside, via the State or privatisation. Ostrom demonstrated that individuals, through their collective action, are capable of solving the fundamental problems of collective organisation without solutions imposed by an external stakeholder, by creating a common institution, committing to follow rules and mutual monitoring, i.e., by creating a common⁴. The collective action creating the common is also referred to as “commoning”. Creating the conditions necessary for collective action is a central dimension in the commons-based approach.

1. Presentation by Geneviève Fontaine at the seminar launching the Commons and local authorities program of La Coop des communs, at the Caisse des dépôts et consignations, 3 December 2021.

2. Borrini-Feyerabend G. et al. (2014).

3. Translated from Antona M., Bousquet F. (2017), p. 125.

4. Ostrom E. (1990).

COMMON. A social organisation dynamic in which all stakeholders, who are interdependent and directly concerned by a common issue, decide to undertake collective action to build shared governance. As part of a continuous collective learning process, the latter defines and implements rules of access and use that are deemed equitable and ensure the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the object of the common (a resource, service or territory for example).

COMMONING. “‘Commoning’ is the process that leads individuals to become mobilised in order to pool knowledge, experiences, and human, technical or financial resources with a view to achieving an appropriate, common interest. It is the essence of collective action⁵”.

COMMONS-BASED APPROACH. A way of thinking and conducting a development assistance intervention when this intervention intends to facilitate the construction of shared governance “in commons”. A commons-based approach asserts a political intention of social and environmental justice; mobilises the conceptual frameworks of the commons, of the social and solidarity economy, and of popular education; and uses facilitation methods.

COMMONS PROMOTERS. “Commons promoters are natural persons involved in a collective action on the territory”. In a development project conducted with a commons-based approach, they are identified when defining the “situation of action” and become privileged contacts. Whether they come from the public, private, academic domain, customary authority or civil society, their experience can be used to “build on the existing situation and mobilise existing ecological and social solidarity⁶”.

FACILITATION. Facilitation consists of creating the conditions necessary for cooperation between the various stakeholders, creating the conditions necessary for collective action, and creating the conditions necessary for collective learning. The facilitator helps the collective to become aware of its needs and find its own solutions. As part of the commons-based approach, when a political intention of the assistance intervention is specified, the facilitator is not neutral but is, on the contrary, “committed” to greater social and environmental justice, and a higher level of resilience.

GOVERNANCE. The process through which a set of rules, norms and strategies is created, all aiming to guide the behaviour of stakeholders in a given area of political interaction⁷. A system of governance includes stakeholders and institutions as much as it includes mobilised formal and informal standards, or practices to define rules, their implementation and their monitoring. These rules can be the subject of consensus or competition between stakeholders. In a prescriptive manner, governance refers to the power to decide on rules and to the various registers of authority on which they are based.

5. Translated from Aubert S., Botta A. (2022), p. 240.

6. Translated from Aubert S. et al. (2020), p. 17.

7. McGinnis M.D. (2011).

INSTITUTION. Institutions bring together organisations and rules, modes of doing and being, but also structures of thought, concepts and paradigms generated and used to organise modes of interaction within these organisations with the goal of influencing individual and collective decisions.

For Ostrom, “the term ‘institution’ is not [...] synonymous with ‘organisation’. The term means ‘a set of rules actually put into practice by a group of individuals to organise repetitive activities that have effects on these individuals, and possibly on others’”⁸.

NEGATIVE COMMON. The notion of “negative common” was developed by Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen in 2001 (cited in Monnin A. 2021) to rethink how to manage the negative effects produced by our models based on ownership and private interest, separate from the more global life reproduction cycle. It invites consideration of so-called “negative” resources (waste, nuclear power plant, etc.) as negative common goods, which, since they cannot be eliminated, must be dealt with collectively, while understanding collectively and politically the challenges they represent. To be managed as commons⁹.

SHARED GOVERNANCE. A model of public action which postulates that each of the stakeholders concerned – in particular citizens, but also the public and private sectors – exercises real power in the taking of decisions and monitoring of their application. We can qualify it as **shared governance “in commons”** when the governance is constructed and constantly improved in a social dynamic of commoning, in particular collective action and collective learning. The term “in commons” underlines the dynamic and evolutionary nature of this type of governance.

SITUATION OF ACTION. A social space in which stakeholders observe information, select actions, enter into models of interaction and obtain results from their interaction. The black box where political choices are made¹⁰. ●

8. Ostrom E. (2009), p. 9.

9. Monnin A. (2021).

10. McGinnis M.D. (2011).

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WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF DOLISIE IN CONGO

Commoning for a municipal service?

This handbook recounts the assistance provided by GRET from 2012 to 2018 to establish a waste management service in Dolisie, the third largest city in Congo. It describes how a commons-based approach was used to promote shared governance of the service.

In a context of growing urbanisation and weak public authority intervention, GRET's support successfully forged new bonds of trust between stakeholders and established a dynamic of collective action centred around this service. This proactive approach made it possible to design a waste management service as a commons. The handbook takes a look back at the successes and shortcomings of this type of approach, and explores the complexity of building shared governance of a municipal public service in a context of top-down power structures, mistrust of public powers among the local population, and a lack of resources.

Intended for associations, NGOs and donors promoting commons-based initiatives, this document aims to draw useful lessons from GRET's experience in order to prolong the dynamic established in Dolisie and design and implement similar experimental projects in other contexts.

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Campus du Jardin d'agronomie tropicale de Paris
45 bis avenue de la Belle Gabrielle
94736 Nogent-sur-Marne Cedex, France
Tel. 33 (0)1 70 91 92 00 – www.gret.org

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