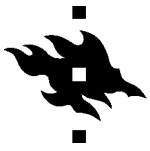


La Maison: Bridging Togolese and European ontologies and epistemologies

Alice Sinicato
Master's Thesis
Intercultural Encounters
Faculty of Arts
University of Helsinki
November 2020



Tiedekunta – Fakultet – Faculty Faculty of Arts		Koulutusohjelma – Utbildningsprogram – Degree Programme Intercultural Encounters	
Opintosuunta – Studieriktning – Study Track Humanities Track			
Tekijä – Författare – Author Alice Sinicato			
Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title La Maison: Bridging Togolese and European ontologies and epistemologies			
Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level Master’s Thesis		Aika – Datum – Month and year November 2020	Sivumäärä – Sidoantal – Number of pages 81
Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>The present thesis consists of an ethnographic study of the encounter between an NGO and the local practices and epistemologies where it operates. Specifically, the thesis provides insights to what extent the NGO <i>La Maison sans frontières</i> takes into consideration the local practices, traditions, knowledge, and overall ecology of the community of Kuma Tsamé Totsi, in Togo.</p> <p>The study mainly focuses on three aspects that emerged during the research: time, hygiene, and upbringing practices, highlighting both incongruences and meeting points between the goals and operations of the NGO and the local ontologies and epistemologies. Given that the local community and the NGO enter in dialogue and develop new practices together, this thesis adopts the metaphor of ‘bridge’ for the NGO, indicating to what extent the local practices have agency on its operation and vice versa. Overall, the meeting of these different realities seems to be permeated by acceptance and understanding, creating a unique practical and organizational system. The encounter between <i>La Maison sans frontières</i> and this Togolese community seems to have created a middle ground between different cultures, where peoples together strive to bridge the gap in cultural diversity.</p> <p>The research study relies on qualitative methodology, comprising fieldwork and structured and semi-structured interviews. Fieldnotes in the form of written texts, photographs and videos have been taken during fieldwork and analysed through a qualitative data analysis software.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords NGO, Intercultural Encounter, Ethnography, hygiene, time, upbringing			
Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited E-thesis			
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information			



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

I am grateful to many people for their contributions to this study. My deepest thanks go to my supervisor Laura Siragusa, who has been guiding me all long this process, always positively supporting me. I wish anybody could have someone like her when embarking on a journey like mine.

I would like to show my gratitude to all my friends, who encouraged me and believed in me during the writing process. I would like to thank Francesca, who was there when I needed comfort and suggestions.

Vorrei ringraziare Susanna che senza la quale tutto questo non sarebbe stato possibile. Grazie per avermi dato la possibilità di fare questa esperienza alla Maison. Sono grata per tutto quello che Susanna e la Maison mi hanno fatto scoprire e conoscere. Un ringraziamento va anche a tutte le persone che hanno condiviso con me questa esperienza fisicamente in Africa, e moralmente dall'Italia e dalla Finlandia.

Alla mia meravigliosa famiglia, che anche se lontana è sempre stata vicina e presente, supportandomi e sopportandomi.

Je voudrais remercier aussi le personnel de la Maison sans frontières qui a toujours été gentil et disponible.

Mais surtout, merci à : Casmir, Romain, Bienvenue, Merveil, Espoir, Sebastien, Alizée, Souzy, Dagan, Natacha, Blessing, Mokpokpo, Julienne, Gracias, et Abolotó, tous les enfants de la Maison sans frontières qui m'ont montré que le bonheur est dans les petites choses.

Thank you, grazie, merci, kiitos, akpe!

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	1
1. INTRODUCTION: LA MAISON AS A BRIDGE.....	4
2. RESEARCH CONTEXT.....	8
2.1. Synopsis of the recent history of Togo.....	9
2.2. La Maison sans frontières (LMSF).....	10
2.2.1. <i>Daily routine</i>	15
3. LITERATURE REVIEW: NGOS.....	17
3.1. Non-profit organizations.....	17
3.2. Organizational structure.....	19
3.3. Involved actors.....	21
3.4. NGOs historical frame.....	23
4. LITERATURE REVIEW: TIME, HYGIENE, UPBRINING.....	27
4.1. Introduction.....	27
4.2. Time.....	27
4.2.1. <i>Time conception and colonialism in ethnography</i>	28
4.2.2. <i>Embodiment of time in practices</i>	31
4.3. Hygiene.....	33
4.3.1. <i>Perception of hygiene</i>	35
4.4. Upbringing.....	37
4.4.1. <i>Influencing aspects in the upbringing process</i>	39
4.4.2. <i>Children learning experience</i>	40
5. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	42
5.1. Methodology and methods.....	42
6. RESEARCH RESULTS.....	48
6.1. Themes.....	51
6.2. Time perception within La Maison.....	52
6.3. Cleansing practices at the centre.....	58
6.4. Upbringing approach and caring.....	60
6.4.1. <i>Multidirectional learning system</i>	66
6.5. Summary.....	69

7. CONCLUSION.....	71
7.1. Does the centre actually work?.....	71
7.2. La Maison as a bridge.....	72
7.3. Future research.....	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	75

1. INTRODUCTION: LA MAISON AS A BRIDGE

«Demain on va faire une réunion» (“we are going to have a meeting tomorrow” in French) said Susanna to the staff of the organization. The meeting in question was held right before Christmas (2019) when Susanna, the operating Officer and President of the NGO *La Maison sans frontières* (here referred also as LMSF or *La Maison*) in Kuma Tsamé Totsi (Togo), was sorting out practicalities before her trip to Europe. She wanted to plan activities and organize tasks with the local staff to be sure that everything would go as smooth as possible once she was gone. We met in the big hall in the morning, including me as I was working there as an intern and for my Master’s research, when the kids were at school. All employees were present. During the meeting, it was decided that F. would then act as the Coordinator and he would be the organization’s reference point during Susanna’s absence. The children would go to visit their families and relatives for the festivity, and A. would take care of the little girl D., who did not have close relatives which could host her. Beside organizational practicalities, it was also discussed how bolster the upbringing actions within the centre. The manager led the conversation which happened with low participation of the staff which were only pronouncing feeble «Oui, Tata» (“yes, Tata” in French) or «Ça va bien» (“it is ok” in French) here and there. As also with the kids living in the centre, Susanna at *La Maison sans frontières* seeks to create an environment open to discussion and confrontation with employees as well. However, difficulties in engaging in dialogue can be detected among the workers: adults as well as kids appear to struggle when debates take place. Susanna often told me about this. She felt that the local people engaged with the NGO were not showing that much initiative or reactivity in respect of their normal duties and of the whole reality of the centre.

This initial ethnographic vignette offers an example of what my research wants to investigate: the intersections between the reality of a community in Togo and the European based non-profit organization called *La Maison sans frontières*, shedding lights on an interesting case of intercultural encounter. This study consists in a critical ethnography on the engagement between NGOs and local cultures and practices, and it aims at investigating on how these realities blend. I will present the entwinements of these different specific contexts, focusing on aspects which emerged during my fieldwork, such as the concept of *time*, *hygiene* practices, and *upbringing* approaches and practices, highlighting the complexities of the case as well as emphasizing the positivity of this encounter. My observations have led me to describe La Maison as a *bridge* between multiple ontologies, and its commitment on bringing different cultures and peoples together, raising awareness on diversity.

It should be also mentioned that the research mainly builds on anthropological sources and theories. The choice has been dictated by the circumstances of the study, which see involved NGOs and anthropological practices. It may be challenging to see at first the relation between these two dimensions.

However, if we look at Anthropology as a discipline, which seeks to create knowledge and build generalities about all human cultures (Nkwi, 2015, p.9), and non - profit organizations as entities aiming at “doing good,” “helping vulnerable group through advocacy, mobilization, or channelling resources, that they sustain their moral claim” (Lashaw, 2017, p.9) we can find similarities. Anthropological engagement with no governmental institutions seems to be in reality a consequence of its similar proximity and interest in small communities and subaltern groups.

My thesis is organized as follows. Firstly, I define the context of the study, describing in more depth the specific research settings. An overview of the African context then follows, showing a cross-section of the Togolese society. Secondly, I outline a general description of NGO praxis. Since my study seeks

to problematize the engagement of an NGO and the context, I illustrate the functioning and internal organizational structure of these specific types of organizations, talking also about NGOs relations with other actors and their involvement in the modern society. Having outlined briefly the geographical and historical settings of the study, a description of the research micro-context, its establishment, and its functioning, come after. This is enriched by some explanatory episodes coming from my ethnography.

The ethnographic work and the experiences have determined the theoretical framework of my thesis, which I outline in the literature review, elaborating on a few salient topics (namely, time hygiene, and upbringing). The theoretical section provides a detailed description of the notion of *time* since this aspect of life was cardinal in the field. I first introduce how time has been examined within anthropology, also stressing its colonial shades. I decided to investigate the concept of time because multiple visions of time management often came into conflict during my fieldwork. Similarly, the presence of several and various *hygiene* practices in the daily routine of the children of the centre, triggered my interest. I thus compare the different perceptions, and meanings of hygiene beyond the aspects of cleanliness and dirtiness. With the support of anthropological sources, I outline a rich characterization of hygiene, and its symbolic connotations. This section is followed by a general overview of the plurality of upbringing practices and the indissoluble entanglement with educational and social aspects. The youth centre seems to have shaped a quite unique upbringing approach that to a certain degree differs from the local customs. A detailed description of upbringing LSMF main principles are illustrated and then compared to the general ideas on upbringing of the community.

To describe my data analysis process, I talk about the used Methodology, and I explain the condition under which the study has taken place, and which approaches have been adopted. Having well in mind my research question

which is “to what extent does the NGO La Maison sans frontières take into consideration the local practices, traditions, knowledge, and overall ecology?”, I then turn to the analysis of my data. Several ethnographic vignettes will be sketched in order to define the outcomes emerged during my observations, which stress the engagement between “European” practices and the local ones.

Finally, after a brief recap, I will complete my work with a few reflections on my findings, emphasising the fact that the encounter between the studied NGO and the local community seems to be an ongoing process where cultures, ideas and practices are constructed, negotiated and reworked (Lewis, 2001, p.105), and where both tension and creativity are present. I will conclude emphasizing on the spurred image of the organization functioning as a *bridge*, which connects peoples and cultures, striving to shorten the cultural and spatial gap that sometimes hinders the acceptance of diversity. Further researches will be then investigated.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

In this section, I provide a description of the context of my research, moving from a brief description of the country where the NGO LMSF is located, to a through explanation on how the NGO is organized.

The republic of Togo is situated in the West part of the African continent. The capital Lomé is the main port of the country since it is located on the coastline (51 km) on the Gulf of Guinea (see fig.1. below). Togo extends for about 515 km northward. The conformation of the land varies distinctly, with Coastal features in the south and tropical rainforest and savanna ecosystem going north. The population goes well over 7 million, and it comprises diverse ethnicities that creates a “strong cultural plurality” (Montgomery, 2017, p.75). Ewe community seems to be the predominant group. It was during the German control that the country was named Togo “from a tribe of the same name settled on the lagoon beyond Porto Seguro. This tribe was the first to accept the German flag in 1884” (Spieth, 2010, p.1).

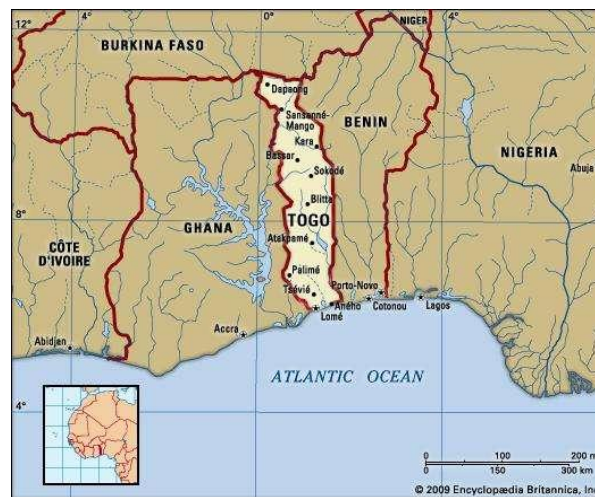


Fig.1. Map of Togo and neighbouring countries. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Togo>

2.1. Synopsis of the recent history of Togo

What is now an independent country, during the 18th and 19th centuries, Togo used to be a conflict area between Asante empire (also called Ashanti) in West African states that occupied part of the current state of Ghana (extending from the Comoé River in the West, to the Togo Mountains in the East) and Dahomey, kingdom in Western Africa that flourished during the same period in the region that is now southern Benin.

During Colonialism, Germany unified Togo and part of Ghana in a protectorate called Togoland (1884). The German control led to an economic growth and an increasing sense of unity as a country. After the German defeat during the First World War, the colony was divided in two Togolands, annexed to the British territory of Ghana on the West, French Dahomey on the East (the two-thirds of the land). In this way, the two colonial powers, England, and Germany, divided Ewe land (Spieth, 2010, p.1), dismembering the ancient Dahomey kingdom territory. During the Cold War, Togo was again backed by “Western” countries, such as the United States and France (Montgomery, 2017, p.72), which supported the country economically. The use of French as official language stand as evidence of the French control. In 1960, Togo declared its independence becoming the Republic of Togo. In the recent history, the state has been witnessing one of the longest dictatorships in the African context, with the president Eyadéma Gnassingbé who ruled Togo for almost four decades (Montgomery, 2017). After his death in 2005, the military force installed his son, Faure Gnassingbé. This action escalated in an intense opposition that led to the elections, won again by Gnassingbé party. Since then, several crisis and crackdown phases have followed, but without undermining the power of Faure as President (Montgomery, 2017).

2.2. La Maison sans frontières (LMSF)

My ethnographic research takes place in a small village called Kuma Tsamé Totsi, situated around 150 km from the capital Lomé, in the so-called Canton de Kuma. Due to an almost complete lack of public transports. It is possible to reach the site only by using local taxis, which are old and poorly remodelled. They usually take on board an average of seven people per ride (driver, plus two people in the front seat, other four on the backseat, and sometimes someone in the trunk of the car). I headed towards LMSF centre on the morning of October 13th 2019, and I took a taxi for a two-hour ride to La Maison. As can be imagined, starting my experience travelling with one these cars (coming from a totally different context) had quite an impact on me which was coupled with noises, smells, dust, glimpses of daily life scenarios from the car window, faces and staring eyes, and “wild” nature. La Maison is set next to the Ghanaian border, on the slopes of lush and great hills. After the overwhelming travel, the arrival to the youth-shelter felt as relieving. The pleasing to the eye and quiet environment made me feel safe, and it gave me the impression of having landed in an oasis.

La Maison sans frontières (meaning literally “home without borders”) site consists of a fenced area that is somehow secluded from the village, as to preserve its peacefulness. Colourful and low buildings represent the core of the centre. Big fruit trees and plants surround the constructions (see fig.2. below). Since 2013, the NGO La Maison sans frontières has been present and active in the territory, closely collaborating with the Development committee of the village, striving for an improvement of the local living standards. The organization aims to support the «défavorisés» (quoting the manager Susanna), as disadvantaged children in their growth. La Maison is a youth shelter which has been created to host around fifteen minors (from 4 to 15 years old) and give them a place where to live. The children are mainly followed by the Coordinator of the organization and a few other local

collaborators. Together, they work in order to make children grow as independent individuals in a safe and healthy environment, “paying particular attention to improve their relational and professional skills to give them an opportunity of a better future, considering in the first place their cultural environment” (Organization Website).



Fig.2. Partial view of La Maison sans frontières settings. Picture taken by me in October 2019.

The children can live in the centre for a temporary period, or until they reach 18 years of age. They usually come from the surrounding areas. They have often faced violent situations, familial economic problems or they may be orphaned by one parent or both. The process of recruiting the young guests is driven by the combined work of the village committee and the Social Action institution of Kpalimé. These institutions receive alerts and notices of difficult situations occurring in the area and inform La Maison sans frontières operators, who study the case and decide whether to intervene and how. The NGO tends to accept self-sufficient kids (minimum around 4 years old), but exceptions are common. As an example, I could report an episode that happened while I was operating at the centre that involved a 2 year old girl: she was brought in the centre temporarily to prevent her from staying with her mother in the women prison. The girl was supposed to go to a foster home in the village, but LMSF committee decided to take care of her in the attempt to

avoid new traumas that would have occurred in a new familial context (quoting Susanna). The girl well adapted to the environment, being followed by a nanny from the village and feeling loved by the other children who cared for her like older siblings.

After having examined the case, and after the child has been accepted at the facility, the president usually sets a meeting to plan and agree on the general conditions of kid's stay. The president then becomes the legal tutor of the minor. What I noticed is how easily families give a child in foster care, renouncing to their parental responsibility. Many families ask voluntarily to hand their children, probably to make their life situation easier (sometimes mothers are still teenagers themselves and do not have a stable financial situation), but also knowing that their children will be carefully supervised in the shelter. As soon as the children turn 18, they have the right to leave the shelter or choose to stay. Normally, after a period of adaptation, children willingly remain at La Maison, feeling like part of a big familial community, growing up with their foster brothers and sisters.

As generally in the rest of the country, the population conditions tend to be precarious. For this reason, the organization provides also social and economic assistance in the village, focusing especially in improving the conditions of the children (e.g. contribution to school fees, providing health care for children in need). Depending on the fund's availability, the organisation commits to support the local community in developing the quality of life, and in case of emergency situations. In this regard, we could mention the programme of providing food to elderlies of the village during festivities (usually Christmas time). Another episode that took place during my stay: a woman of a close village came to ask for help, suffering of strong abdominal pain. The journey to the closest clinic and the medical assistance expenses got covered by the organization that also let the woman and her two sons stay overnight in the facility.

La Maison is entirely supported by donations that generally come from private donors and associations that came across the reality of LMSF through online channels or thanks to the organization's projects. In fact, the NGO is constantly developing projects not only to raise new funds, but also to engage more local people and the ones living overseas. For instance, distance adoption program has assured the total financial coverage of hosted children's life expenses. There are also several on-the-spot volunteering programs thanks to which Europeans can live in the structure and support the activities of the centre according to their will and capabilities.

La Maison sans frontières was founded in 2013 thanks to the strong will and determination of a young Italian woman (she was 27 when she first went to Togo), Susanna, who is now the President of the organization. During a sultry and hot afternoon, while lying on the paved floor of Susanna's room trying to cool off, she told me how everything started. During her period of voluntary work in the school of the village Kuma Tsamé in Togo, she was touched by the children conditions, and she decided to start a project to support kids in difficult situations. The idea was to build a centre - home for children needing support. The planning started immediately and after nine months Susanna was able to establish a new No profit organization in Italy to start officially raising funds. With the approval and support of the village committee, an accurate analysis of social-health care conditions of the setting was conducted to detect the main needs of the community. The first construction - site started in 2013 with enthusiastic participation of villagers and European volunteers. Already during these preliminary works, Susanna realized the difficulties of the project. The constant needs of funding, the precarious physical conditions of Europeans due to the harsh weather and the malaria weighed remarkably to the developing of the site. Moreover, the local peoples, initially motivated participants, started to be less and less involved, and ask for compensation for their help. The building up continued during 2014 till the 10th of April 2015,

when La Maison sans frontières opened. Even if with still a number of concerns, Susanna moved permanently to Togo to monitor the development of the project. The children were selected with the help of a local nanny. Susanna defined the initial rules and routines in the centre, relying on her experiences and on the local support, bearing in mind her strong belief in the power of affection, respect and caring.

She described the beginning as a “disaster:” «It was a mess. They had no rules, no education; they were eating from the ground, because they had suffered from hunger and they had no notion of hygiene. » She also explained how the local nurse initially living with her in the shelter, was totally accustomed to such behaviours, and so would laugh when such episode occurred. Her reaction was in total contrast to Susanna’s, who was screaming and trying to maintain the order. Little by little, she started to introduce hygiene routines typically recognized as such in “Western” contexts, such as for example brushing teeth and washing hands. Additionally, she also arranged a precise time schedule within the organization of the centre, in contrast with the relaxed Togolese attitude toward time. While we were talking, she also mentioned the need to convey to kids the meaning of silence as a moment for resting and relaxing. Whereas, in the local practices resting would occur anytime and anywhere. She then created a fixed time for resting (“le repos” translating as nap time) in the centre right after lunch, where kids could sleep or quietly lying down in their rooms. Susanna faced a few difficulties, especially while she was laying the foundations of the youth shelter’s upbringing system. Her background and knowledge prevented her to accept several approaches, which were part of local way of raising children. That is the case of physical punishments which are used and considered an effective way of educating. Children fear that and therefore, they listen. «When they were realizing that I would not use any violent punishment, » she said, «they

took advantage of that, and they started to misconduct. » Susanna then decided to mediate between the local approach and NGO's principles.

2.2.1. Daily routine

I now describe a typical day in the shelter, at least as it was during my fieldwork. The routine may differ depending on the age of the children, but generally they all wake up early in the morning (around 5 am) and have a shower outside in the yard, like Togolese kids are accustomed to do. They wear their school uniforms and swipe and clean the patio under the close supervision of a nurse, who takes care of the general cleaning. They receive money for the breakfast that they will buy while commuting to school. The younger ones will be taken to school by pre-arranged taxi motorbikes, instead the others will be walking at school all along the main road by themselves, in company of other kids. Lessons indicatively last till mid-day and are followed by the lunch at school provided by La Maison. After having come back to the shelter, children and staff have two hours of quiet time, and they usually take a nap. The afternoon is usually reserved for homework, tutoring, carrying out household tasks and for playing within the spaces of the centre. After a long and hot day, children shower again around 5 pm and they gather in the dining area to enjoy the supper (prepared by the cook). The sleeping time is at 8pm. This is preceded by reading and playing time in the dorms and a personal hygiene routine. During weekends children have more free time. They can decide to attend recreational activities such as dancing and acrobatics, playing music instruments. On Sundays, they can go to the village and visit friends and families. There is no doubt of the strictness of the schedules, but that seems necessary for maintaining the well-functioning of everybody's routine. Moreover, children in the village have more or less the same routine, with more freedom of hanging out by themselves, but also heavier domestic tasks. It appears in fact, that they are more involved in the familial livelihood that they support taking care of siblings helping parents in their job, like for

example collecting woods or selling products. The LMSF appeared to act as a bridge between multiple ontologies, in particular with what concerns time (management), hygiene and upbringing practices and overlaps among them. In the next section, I thus present a summary of the definition of NGOs, adding my angle on NGOs as bridges, which is followed by a literature review on the concepts of time, hygiene, and upbringing.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: NGOS

This section wants to be a critical assessment of what NGOs are, have been and are developing into. I assess NGOs and their actions as a bridge, a metaphor I borrowed from Minoia (2012, p.80), taking into consideration in more depth the context of LMSF and its peculiarities.

3.1. Non-profit organizations

Denominations such as non - governmental organization (NGO), non-profit organization (NPO) not-for-profit organization are generally used interchangeably all over the World. However, they seem to describe distinct entities in “doing good” scene. “Although each of the above terms can be seen to be culturally generated, and its usage can be historically traced back to specific social, economic and political contexts” (Lewis, 2001, p.34), it should also be pointed that the quite wide terminology referring to charity organizations may be due to “the enormous diversity of third sector organizations around the world” (ibid:34). To shed some light on the topic, some explanation regarding the most used labels follows.

The non-state actor (NSA) term is generally used internationally as a general definition of the whole category of third-sector organizations, including corporations and agencies, such as for instance the Red Cross (ICRC). Non-profit organizations (NPOs) are substantially official charity organizations, which operate independently of the government, place constraints on redistribution of earnings and have a voluntary membership (Salamon L. in Ahmed, 2006). NPOs usually cooperate with churches and small entities, aiming at improving local areas situations.

There has been a large debate whether “not-for-profit” organization label (instead of “non-profit”) would illustrate a further category of organizations that, in contrast to the previous one, it would hand out the extra funds to members and workers who contributed to the work. It can be said that labels centring around non state actors is wide and complex, and there is not a unanimous approval regarding the actual differences among the meaning’s terms. Lewis (2001, p.34) states that it is “more than just a semantic problem, because labelling has important resource and policy implications in terms of ‘who is in and who is out’.”. In this regard, it may be necessary to outline the characters of the researched organization: La Maison sans frontières has been funded as ONLUS (Italian acronym meaning “non-profit entity for social utilities”) which would then link it to non-profit sector. However, the fact that the organization is now supported by collaborators who are paid on commission, implies that La Maison sans frontières operates more similarly to an NGO. Therefore, it should be stated that, acknowledging the peculiar nature of my research context, I adopt the UN definition of NGOs, “Any international organization which is not established by inter-governmental agreement shall be considered as an NGO” (Ahmed, 2006, p.8). Different appellations may be used as synonyms to define the examined organization.

Non-governmental organizations are generally described as institutions dedicated to providing support and assistance to unrepresented communities or in critical situations and in times of crisis. Their principles anchor on pursuit the benefit of global conditions in respect of peace, Diversity and Equality, working outside the government body. For this latter reason, non-governmental organisations appear to “operate more effectively and liberally than state authorities when dealing with civil society [...]. Therefore, they are considered to be in the best position to support grassroots initiatives and empower communities” (Minoia, 2012, p.78). They are active in different areas that amply vary from social, humanitarian, education, and health care

sectors, to environmental issues and research matters. Despite of their apolitical character, these organizations do collaborate with government agencies through contracts and allocations of funds.

The international recognition of NGOs is due to their lofty mission of providing benefits to the community. However, their accountability is even more popular than to their international engagement and their openness towards any person or agency which is willing to support the cause they pursue. They somehow serve as a “bridge” (Minoia, 2012, p.77) between the global society and communities which they operate for. Their international character, professionalism, and financial potential enable them to have a greater capacity of connecting and engaging with worldwide actors. De facto, they are provided with “sufficient structural organization and financial capacities, which make them accountable towards donors” (ibid:78).

Having acknowledged that, we could describe LMSF as a non-governmental organization, which operates in the humanitarian sector, providing support to Togolese children, who cannot afford education and/or health care for a number of reasons. With its networking, the organization is able to connect and engage with the community of Kpalimé and non-African people, engaging them towards the understanding of a different reality. Thus, the metaphor of “bridge” suggested by Minoia appears to well apply to the activities and practices implemented at LMSF.

3.2. Organizational structure

As any organization, NGOS present an organized hierarchal system, which can result more tangled and structured than other agencies, given their common affiliations to international secretariats. Developing an effective internal structure of an organization can be crucial for the effectiveness of the

central goal and the development of projects (Catlin-Legutko, 2011) and to establish authority and responsibility. This leads to a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities as for any type of association or entity. In fact, although the purpose of the organization establishment is substantially different, NGOs present similar hierarchies and internal structures of any business enterprise (Wong, 2012). At the top of the management pyramid, we could find the Board of directors and the executive Director- Coordinator alongside with advisors. Together, they are responsible for the overall direction of the organization. The executive Director oversees on the staff members tasks, supporting and implementing projects and programmes. Depending on the type of the NGO, the fixed objectives, the actual capacity, and targeted audience, the internal structure might vary and differ. However, in the generic outline an administrative office would be established to take care of bureaucratic, financial and membership matters. It would be complemented by the Communication department that works on maintaining public relations, promoting, and marketing the visibility and the accountability of the NGO within communication channels such as Media and Social platforms. Finally, the Programme department, as executive core of the programmes, should be also operating and developing projects putting them into practice. Field staff and local - external consultants usually refer to this division and closely cooperate with it. The collaboration and communication between the different internal committees and especially between employees can help “create a team that works together collaboratively to accomplish the organization’s mission” (Catlin-Legutko, 2011, p.39).

According to Wong, it seems that “early human rights and humanitarian NGOs chose structures largely for perceived expedience and/or the personal tastes of leaders” (2012, p.54). This probably applies to the LMSF organization, which has been funded in Italy due to founders’ familiarity with the country context. Because of that, laws and bureaucratic norms follow the

Italian praxis. Since the lifetime of the organization is relative short, LMSF is still shaping and developing. At the moment, the internal structure includes a few members: the operating Officer, President, and only manager Susanna, the treasurer who is an Italian man, an advisor who lives in Italy, and another advisor who lives in Togo and he has Togolese origins. All the organization activities are then supported by a team of ten individuals, who are officially employed by the NGO, and who act also as advisers on practicalities of some kind. The top management carries out its responsibilities voluntarily, meaning that they do not receive any compensation. To directly follow the project, the manager lives on permanent basis in Togo, in the youth centre with the children. Volunteers, coming mainly from Europe, visit and stay at the centre regularly. It should be noted, the internal structure of La Maison appears to be based on a more European organizational system, even if it respects Togolese institutions and managements style.

3.3. Involved actors

This internal system of the NGOs seems to be complemented by external entities, which profoundly impact the organization, “facilitating, altering, or even undermining NGOs’ projects” (Lashaw, 2017, p.9). In fact, even if NGOs give the impression to work independently, they are strongly embedded with actors belonging to “wider social, political and economic context” (ibid:12). Donors are a remarkable example of entanglement: they provide resources, such as funds and expertise that NGOs need for their work and sustainability. State authorities have a dual impact on the functioning of non-governmental organizations. They monitor NGOs activities, but at the same time, they provide them with grants and programs. I should also mention other important agents in the development of a non- profit system which are the competing NGOs, and other social activist movements. What probably

characterizes this NGOs operating is the close engagement with two different groups: volunteers who participate to activities driven by same ideals as NGOs leading the projects has, and of course the target community “the people they are supposed to help” (ibid:14). After having named what the main engagements NGOs has, it appears clear that these organizations manage their whole activities primarily according to their involvement with these agents.

Looking at LMSF case, it can be said that the overmentioned actors deeply shape and influence the research context. Despite few self-financing activities, donors are the main financial support of the NGO, making the donor - organization relationship crucial for the survival of the projects. They are private citizens, families, but also companies and associations from mainly Italy and France. Agreeing with the organization, they decide how their donations will be deployed. Volunteers are another valuable resource for the NGO in question, which established volunteering projects within and outside the centre to attract people and to make the youth shelter known internationally. Volunteers usually are hosted in the centre that can accommodate a maximum of four visitors. LMSF provides food and services in exchange for a small sum which will be used to cover general expenses. The engagement with the target community seems to be notably strong, as well as the relationship with the competing NGOs. This links may be attributed to the fact that the subjects in need are kids and, therefore, the assistance needs to be comprehensive. For this reason, NGOs and similar organizations in loco appear to be very willing to cooperate and improve the services. Even though the LMSF is full-fledged established under Italian and Togolese regulations, it is lacking communication with higher level authorities, collaborating only with the local jurisdiction.

3.4. NGOs historical frame

Being aware of the importance of the literature on the NGOs history and the reasons why they have developed, I have decided not to elaborate this topic in too much depth, considering the limited relevance to the purpose of my thesis. However, it may be helpful to mention that the ethical concept behind the objective of NGOs to help and support those in need “has existed in different forms in most cultures throughout history, often driven by religious tradition” (Ilchman et al in Lewis, 2001, p.29). Third-sector organizations “have worked relatively unnoticed in most societies for generations in the form of religious organizations, community groups and organized self-help ventures in villages and towns” (Lewis, 2001, p.29). They may have had their initial official recognition during the twentieth century, when issue-based organizations and labour unions were funded in order to defend and improve rights of workforce and to pursue the “abolition of the slave trade and peace movements” (Lewis, 2001, p.40). With the establishment of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919, the involvement of NGOs in international matters remarkably increased, but it was only after the Second World War that NGOs implemented their international visibility, collaborating also with UN and UNESCO. Among the first established NGOs, we could mention Save the Children which was created right after the First World War, and the English Oxfam, funded in 1942. “NGO influence at international level has continued to grow” (Lewis, 2001, p.41), enabling NGOs to become an active part of the development mainstream.

Taking into consideration the Togolese settings within the historical context, it is necessary to mention the colonial events that irreversibly marked, not only Togo, but the whole African continent. “With its colonial history, Africa shares aspects of the missionary histories of Asia, where external

organizations have interacted with local ‘third sector’ structures and ideologies” (Lewis, 2001, p.42). There is no doubt that these interactions have led to a remarkable shift towards “empowerment approaches” (Lewis, 2001, p.42) that made African governments and economic more stable. However, the ethnocentric attitude adopted by most of the Europeans powers during colonization has not fully considered and respected local practices and cultures. On the contrary, they appeared to have imposed their ideologies, manipulating natives, and affirming their superiority.

Togo has undergone several colonial waves during which it has been brutally divided. German settlements first and French ones later (19th century), have triggered a consistent economic growth and political stability that nevertheless may have instilled a reverential awe in some African believes towards Europeans. It is probably in the controversy of Colonialism that we could detect the first activities aimed at supporting people in need in the South of the World: institutions and missionary groups being active “into the fields of education, health service provision and agricultural development [...] can now arguably be seen as a diverse set of prototypical NGO ventures” (Lewis, 2001, p.42). The presence of external inference into the local sovereignty (Minoia, 2012) has led to a fuzzy blending between local practices and European ones that still permeates the non-state sector and public infrastructures (for instance, the school system).

NGOs have recently been “catapulted into international respectability such that governments and multilateral institutions now see NGOs as important actors in development” (Lewis, 2001, p.29). In fact, non-state actors have experienced a great transformation by shifting from small-scale and usually locally based realities, to actual internationally established entrepreneurships, with considerable operational and financial capacity. They are not just spearhead of social movements, they have now become active participants in public-private partnerships that “market themselves and promote their brand,

competing with other NGOs, private firms, and state agencies for lucrative contracts” (Lashaw, 2017, p.3) and grants. Additionally, they act as “watchdogs” (Minoia, 2012, p.79) and observers over public authorities’ practices, in highest levels of government.

Another occurring phenomenon, involving NGOs and many governments around the World, is defined by Minoia (2012, p.79) as “state disengagement:” more often than ever, non-governmental institutions appear to take charge of services that were previously provided by public administrations. Their efficiency and international high qualified work force have evidently led the public sector to consider and endorse more partnerships with the private sector and especially with non-state actors, involving them in the development mainstream. Because of NGOs increasing influence and responsibilities, “stringent financial regulations, including surveillance of NGOs activity and foreign funding,” (Lashaw, 2012, p.3) have been stipulated in order to monitor the accountability and transparency of these new actors in the economic scene.

This massive growth of non-profit organizations international engagement has been lately individualized as cause of the undermining local organizations. Grassroots organisations, and new local entities, as trade unions and cooperatives, appear to be “too new to compete with strong, established, experienced NGOs” (Minoia, 2012, p.80), which consequently limit developing organisations possibilities for action. International NGOs are criticized by local non-governmental actors “for their paternalistic attitude towards grassroots organisations” (ibid:80), also overshadowing projects that may consider more accurately local needs, given the fact they have been planned by people who experience and face those issues on a daily basis. In this regard, doubts have been raised about INGOs approaches that could appear “business-oriented in project implementation” (ibid:85). On the other hand, as the study case of activist struggles in Czech Republic carried out by Synková H. shows, the resistance to professionalization from grassroots

organizations in order to keep their authenticity, may lead to a deprivation of obtaining granting and approval (Lashaw, 2017, p.75).

Because of its developing establishment, LMSF is not closely involved in any partnership with state authority. Instead, it is probably the case of small organizations being overcome by established ones: with its wobbly management and the narrow range of action, LMSF struggles to prevail over greater organizations and missionary organizations.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW: TIME, HYGIENE, UPBRINING

4.1. Introduction

I take an emic approach to research, which means that the topic and concepts I present in this literature review emerged during my fieldwork. Thus, in the following section, three main topics are elaborated: time perception, hygiene practices, and upbringing approaches and practices. An outline of notion of *time* precedes insights concerning how it is perceived and lived in different cultures. The concept of *hygiene* and its symbolic aspects is then explained, investigating also how the hygienic practices are lived differently. Finally, a general overview of *upbringing* facet and its overlapping with social and educational aspects is also outlined, considering influencing and assimilating aspects.

4.2. Time

The conceptualization and notion of *time* has been widely examined in ethnographic studies through years. In fact, “the difference between standardized clock time and other methods of measuring provides the puzzle to be resolved” (Fabian, 1983, p.29). In the Judeo- Christian tradition, time is thought as a sequence of events that occur to people. This “linear time trajectory of the Western world” (Bergman, 2006, p.153), appears to be in contrast with the pagan, cyclic or static view of different ones (Bloch, 1977, p.282). For this reason, in the embryonic stages of Anthropology as a social science, in which mostly ethnography is applied, time perspective would detect “the posited authenticity of a past (savage, tribal, peasant) to denounce an inauthentic present (the uprooted, évolués, acculturated)” (Fabian

J., 1983:11), distancing the mainstream ideas of time from the “Others” ones.

The process of secularization of time view led to a:

conception which contains two elements of particular importance [...]: 1) time is immanent to hence coextensive with, the world (or nature or the universe, depending on the argument); 2) relationships between parts of the world (in the widest sense of both natural and sociocultural entities) can be understood as temporal relations. [Fabian, 1983, p.12]

In the attempt of understanding Anthropology’s temporal discourse, it is important to mention its strong embedment first with the Enlightenment, and especially later with evolutionism. Although “early evolutionism is replete with puzzles, paradoxes, and inconsequential reasoning” (ibid:12), it marked a further evolution of concept of *time*. For instance, Darwin’s theory has demonstrated “the operation of evolutionary laws in the history of mankind” (ibid:12), and generated the need of thinking about time as a more extensive entity defining difference as distance, relying then on the spatial dimension (Boroditsky, 2010, p.1636). With the establishment of Newtonian physicalism and the consequential denial of abstractions, a radical naturalization of time ensued and recognized the temporalizing as “a universal variable in equations describing nature in motion” (Fabian, 1983, p.16). This new perception triggered ethnographic research to adopt “an equal treatment of human culture at all times and in all places” (Fabian J., 1983, p.16) within its studies. Therefore, as Fabian argues, “temporal discourse of Anthropology as it was formed decisively under the paradigm of evolutionism, rested in a conception of Time that was not only secularized and naturalized but also thoroughly spatialized” (1983, p.16).

4.2.1. Time conception and colonialism in ethnography

Keeping in mind “the epistemological conditions under which ethnography and ethnology took shape” (Fabian, 1983, p.17), it is worth noting the presence of links between colonialism and the concept of time in

anthropological praxis. Because of the historical concomitance of the establishment of Anthropology and colonial period, the mentioned scientific discipline's alliance with the force of oppression is not unequivocal (ibid:2). As Fabian claims, anthropological studies contributed in a sense to the intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise. The common thrust of exploring and discovering the "Other" may have contributed to their intertwinement. Under this premise, it is clear how the concept of time was influenced promoting "a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, other down-stream" (ibid:17). A practical example is mentioned by Bergman in her research on Sami population:

The Julian calendar, introduced to the Sami in association with Christian missions, probably starting during the Medieval period, may have influenced the indigenous Sami Time reckoning to some degree. Following Christianization, the Sami were obliged to keep records of Sundays and regular festivals. [2006, p.153]

By doing so, circum - Mediterranean perspectives which reflected the standardized trend, tended to overcome the non - standardized ones aiming at "secularizing Judeo-Christian Time by generalizing and universalizing it" (Fabian, 1983, p.2). Therefore, other time conceptions in ethnographic studies tend to be separated and distanced, assuming that "the savage significant to the evolutionist's Time is that he lives in another Time" (ibid:27). Nowadays, there is still an ongoing debate whether Anthropology would still somehow pursue a "political and moral complicity with the colonial enterprise" (ibid:35). Bergman's study somehow relates to that, illuminating the conflicting perspectives on concepts of time and landscape affiliation between this indigenous community and the "Western" world, acknowledging the existence of "perceptions of time parallel to each other" (Bergman, 2006, p.151). She claims the closeness of Sami to environmental phenomena and the sense of "timeless and eternal human existence" (2006, p.154), juxtaposing it

with standard practices and believes which for instance were stressing the flow of time considering times of birth and the individual age; for Sami instead, “age was measured on occasion, it was not by length of time since birth, but in relation to significant events e.g. the birth of fine reindeer” (2006, p.154).

Another interesting example referring to the perception of time and context that is closer to the researched settings of my project, is the well-known work of Evans- Pritchard with Nuer in Sudan. Together with Meyer Fortes, he remarkably contributed to the development of social anthropology through their ethnographic researches. They coedited a comparative anthology in which different African political systems were described through ethnographic data for the first time. Even though Evans Pritchard was mainly active in North-Eastern part of Africa (initially working with Azande, ethnic group approximately living in the North-Central Africa, and then starting a new research project on the Nuer indigenous population whose settings spread from the Nile areas to Ethiopia), his classical research draws near references to the Togolese context regarding the perception of time, as:

time perspective is here not a true impression of actual distances like that created by a dating technique, but a reflection of relations between lineages, so that traditional events recorded have to be placed at the point where the lineages concerned in them converge in their lines of ascent. [Evans Pritchard, 1940, p.108]

Diverse ways of living the time surface in the encounter between different realities. This happens also in the context of La Maison sans frontières, where different time perspectives clearly emerge and meet. As a matter of fact, systematic and strict schedules belonging to a view where time value is stressed, appear to prevail over the local embodied experiences of the flow of time. Nevertheless, at a closer look, the two colliding realities seem to amalgamate and entrench tacitly, generating a wider understanding of the “others” practices. I admit that my observations regarding time might be limited comparing the actual complexity of time aspects in my field site, given

the temporal constraints of an MA project. Time was might indeed comprise other dimensions, like for example during ritual events (Blonch, 1977), and this would surely be an interesting project to follow up with further research.

This may lead us to consider more specifically how the concept of time is taken into consideration into Ethnographic studies. This “persistent and systematic tendency to place referent (s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (Fabian, 1983, p.31) de facto denies the temporal coexistence of the researcher and people with in the field in a same time. This could guide the anthropologist to collocate the “Other’s” reality “somewhere else” as a mere cognitive necessity to create order. However, this may also be the result of “ultimately political practice” (ibid:35) rooted in the discipline since its initial stages. Although most ethnographers rely their research almost exclusively on coextensive principles (assuming that we all co-exist in a common temporal space), “when it comes to producing anthropological discourse in the forms of description, analysis and theoretical conclusions, the same ethnographers will often forget or disavow their experiences of coevalness with the people they studied with ritual invocations of “participant observations” and the “ethnographic present” (ibid:33).

Despite of “these disjunctions between experience and science, research and writing, will continue to be a festering epistemological sore in the discipline” (Fabian, 1983, p.33). During my research, I attempted to refer to the targeted context and actors considering the coexistence of our diverse realities and our parity.

4.2.2. Embodiment of time in practices

Based on the assumption that:

as soon as culture is no longer primarily conceived as a set of rules to be enacted by individual members of distinct groups, but as specific way in which actors create and produce beliefs, values, and other means of social life, it has to

be recognized that time is a constitutive dimension of social reality [Fabian, 1983, p.24]

it can be said that “representations of time can strikingly differ from each other” due to “cross cultural difference more than a matter of style or preference” (Boroditsky, 2010, p.1638). Because of that, experiential dimensions also might be approached and lived differently depending on the concept of time. For instance, as time is often embodied with spatiality, the research carried out by Boroditsky L. and Gaby A. shows how some people represent time relying on a physical spatiality (left-right or right-left, back to front or front to back), whereas others, in this study case belonging to an Australian Aboriginal community, arrange time differently, according to cardinal directions. How Munn N. explains, time takes different connotations depending on “action of systems” or “systems of movement” (1983, p.280), creating a relative temporalizing set.

Still related to the conceptualizing of time, another interesting research within the field of Archaeology demonstrates how this discipline mainly relies on a stratigraphic understanding of time (Simonetti, 2014), which verticalizes the diverse temporal phases from “bottom to top.” The ecology of the context and the used practices seem to have led areas as geology and archaeology toward this unique conceptualization of time, whose “influence has also spread into many aspects of the non-academic world” (Simonetti, 2014). The suitability of this perception “clearly does not prevent archaeologists the understanding and [...] the familiarity with other non-vertical ways of conceptualizing time, such as the common horizontal chronologies used by historians” (Simonetti, 2014).

Understanding of time within the academic culture has been widely examined from different angles in varied disciplines such as Psychology, Anthropology, and Philosophy, among others. It is worth noting that also in Linguistic and Linguistic Anthropology, insights relating culture-linguistic experience and time representations have been broached. Hopi time controversy is a clear

example of how time concept debate has been largely framed by linguistics as well. The study of B. J. Whorf on the Hopi language investigates language relativity, drawing attention to the categorization of the world based on language. In point of fact, languages seem to lead people to “automatically access culturally specific spatial representations when reasoning about time” (Fuhrman, 2009, p.1446). How people experience time appears to be then different and this can be also noticed on time concept grammaticalization.

For example, Nu´n`ez and Sweetser (2006) observed that the Aymara (Native American people) talk about the future as being behind them and the past as being ahead of them, and gesture accordingly. English and Mandarin speakers differ in terms of how often they talk about time vertically, with Mandarin speakers being more likely to use vertical metaphors for time than are English speakers. [Chen, 2007; Chun,1997; Scott, 1989 in Fuhrman, 2009, p.1431]

Acting on this knowledge, in the section where I analyse my data, I aim at problematizing time concept within the encounters of diverse embodied practices and customs in the non-profit organization La Maison sans fronti`eres, emphasising the emerged conciliatory and bridging aspects.

4.3. Hygiene

Considering the findings of my research, it may be good to examine the concept of *hygiene* and how it is perceived differently in various contexts, corroborating the idea of “dirt” as relative. To be able to conceptualize hygiene and its practices, it is important to reach a proper understanding on this matter, firstly having an overall view of concept of dirt and related “symbols as the building blocks of socio-religious worlds” (Leathem, 2020, introduction), in order to be able to critically analyse different practices. According to Douglas M., dirt is essentially disorder and as such it hinders and disturbs the order of things. “Dirt is a by-product of a systematic ordering and

classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements” (Douglas, 1966, p.36). In other words, human beings tend to have this inbuilt instinct and necessity of ordering, and this causes a selection, a distinction between entities that are then classified as good, suitable, and not appropriated or impure. The general idea of pollution seems to refer to everything which is “unclear and contradictory (from the perspective of social definition)” (Turner, 1967, p.97) and that consequently “tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean” (ibid:97). Therefore, the action of ordering acquires a positive connotation, since it is perceived as an attempt of organizing the environment (Latour,1993), pursuing standardized ideas and cherished classifications; it is described as “creative moment to relate form to function, to make unity of experience” (Douglas,1966, p.2). On the other hand, dirt is classified as something not right, illicit, and therefore in disorder, out of the standard.

The symbolism hidden in the combination of these dimensions (order vs cleanliness) may be not so granted, but it can be easily inferred by observing human social behaviours. In fact, even though uncleanness mostly describes a practical reality, it also refers to a moral context. The dualisms of hygiene - dirt and order - disorder are intrinsically chained together and they seem to be hidden in the foundations of contemporary society. At this regard, strongly relying on Durkheimian theories, Douglas explains that “the whole universe seems to function on a men’s attempt of forcing one another into good citizenship. The consequences of falling into missteps push humans into a fear of transgression. This belief reinforces social pressures” (1966, p.3) and establishes the need of distinction and hierarchy, leading to a clear connection of hygiene and rule (Bashford, 2004). The mentioned association finds high confirmation in the relatedness of public health and governance over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during colonial period. The idea of cleanliness as “whiteness” was pursued to implement the idea of purity “of the

public health, as well as the project nation” (Bashford, 2004, p.3). Related to that, an explanatory example may also be found on Anderson’s study on American influences in Philippines within medicine, race, and hygiene. The research problematizes the shift from a racial “cleanliness,” (2006, chapter 2) to a more physical and hygienic enquiry towards the Filipino people.

4.3.1. Perception of hygiene

Keeping that in mind, I should now investigate how the concept of hygiene differs from a standardized cultural context to the other ones, noticing our specific research setting. What has been said about how the notion of pollution differs is that “there seem to be many correlations between religious rules and practices and uncleanness: what it is constructed as myth, an act with symbolic meaning, in reality it appears to hide acts to physically avoid dirt and disease” (Douglas, 1966, p.30). In other words, the rituality of religion is questioned and put into a conversation with scientific approach, analysing the emerging idea of the “materiality of religion” (Leathem, 2020). In fact, especially in Christianity, preconceptions regarding defilement appear to be decided and defined by following “rules of holiness, by contrast, disregarding the material circumstances and judge according to the motives and disposition of the agent” (Douglas, 1966, p.11). On the contrary, ancient practices and religions would consider the factual situation - action which implies impurity. De facto, still some “rules of uncleanness pay attention to the material circumstances of an act and judge it good or bad accordingly” (ibid:11). Consequently, it can be argued that mythology or exotic, cosmological theories and beliefs may be not that much related with morality and ethic, but instead they would somehow describe real events and phenomena within nature. Of course, some repetitive patterns are discernible, and they seem to aim at explaining the character of the event, which could “procure benefits” or “avert harm.” Specifically, “primitive peoples are medical materialists in an extended sense, in so far as they tend to justify their ritual actions in terms of aches or pains which would

afflict them should the rites be neglected” (ibid:23). A good example can be the practice put into action by Ndembu people settled in North-western Zambia, when there is the need of reinstating the purity of a body: part of the therapies in fact includes “sweeping the patient’s body with a medicine broom to get rid of the “ impure things” on it or in it” (Turner, 1967, p.303). Some religions appear then to emphasize more the body uncleanliness, as believes were more perceived as social norms. They “did not exist for the saving souls but for the preservation and welfare of society” and religion for humankind “was simply one side of the general scheme of conduct, prescribed for him by his position as a member of society” (ibid:20).

As one can imagine, over the years, the topic of cleanliness has been broadly elaborated in ethnographic contexts, examining it from diverse facets. A good example could be the study of Turner that, illuminated by Douglas’s view, has considered the concept of pollution within situations, individualizing statics, and dynamics of states. He claims that “in the first case, we are dealing with what has been defectively defined or ordered, in the second with what cannot be defined in static terms” (1967, p.98) referring to particular liminal moments and life transitions. Moreover, he widely described the Lunda Medicine and treatment in details and doing that, he brought up many examples of symbolism related to dirt such as the association of white with a “clean, pure” state, and black with “ill, lack of” concept, and the use of substances with these specific colours to treat patients. Even though Douglas refers to ancient populations, the salience of the topic is anything but outdated, it is still applicable to more recent contexts (Leathem, 2020) and related to the contemporary hygiene idea rooted into pathogenicity. Although the vision of pollution of the Western religious tradition “recognizes in the history of Christianity an ever-present tendency to slip into purely formal and instrumental use of ritual” (Douglas, 1966, p.19), the avoidance of dirtiness is now commonly connected to the quite recent (100 years) discovery of

bacteriology. For this reason, it may result difficult to detach the concept of dirt from the scientific meaning of it, which implies the idea of impurity coming from the presence of germs and bacteria. Nowadays, “dirt avoidance for us is a matter of hygiene or aesthetics and is not related to our religion” (ibid:36), instead other’s practices of hygiene are still “symbolic: we kill germs, they ward off spirits” (ibid:33).

During my fieldwork, encounter between diversified cleanliness conceptions became quite evident. As previously elaborated, general practices belonging to the European dimension and adopted by the NGO, are solidly based on hygiene, and dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms (Douglas, 1966, p.36). Local practices appear to follow partially this idea of cleanliness with hygienic intentions, even though in a more superficial extent. In fact, they may be more perceived as pragmatic necessities and as social obligations. What also transpires is the strong connection with nature as an entity with a distinct spiritual essence and the meteorological phenomena, which literally dictate the daily life occurrences. Within the centre, the plurality of approaches and concepts of “dirt” have blended into a unique practice, which aims at hygienic conditions associated to the “Western vision”, often englobing local practices. I show this in details in the data analysis.

4.4. Upbringing

The concept of upbringing aims at describing actions and treatments which are in general adopted by caregivers (who may be parents or whoever acts in the infant’s stand), in order to support a child in his/her own physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development from infancy to adulthood. Supporting children emotionally and socially is an “increasingly complex endeavour” (Strickland, 2015, p.613), which has remarkable effects not only on the cognitive development of the child, but it also shapes the kid’s personal

identity. Despite the importance of initial close bonds especially during early childhood, children face also other experiences in a more comprehensive environment, socializing with the surroundings, comprising humans and nonhumans. Therefore, socialization also appears to strongly influence the “process of becoming an active, competent participant in one or more communities” (Ochs, 2000, p.230). As everything that happens when we educate is in one way or another bound up with the social system (Mollenhauer, 2014), the internalization of upbringing activities into the sociological dimension of education occur by implication. In fact, upbringing elements are often associated to school settings, as “modern upbringing has become institutionalized subdisciplines whose specialized and characteristic problems are now studied and treated within the broader academic discipline of education” (Mollenhauer, 2014, p.9). Within the schooling environment, children approach relational engagement through interpersonal experiences that could engender refinements within dominant constructions of self-identity and social inclusivity (Capobianco, 2017, p.325). In order to have a clear understanding of development dynamics, it should be acknowledged that these different dimensions comprehend considerable alternatives, applications, and variables that make their representations challenging. Education, upbringing practices and social aspects seem in fact to overlap to some extent, but also to clash. It is not rare then that discrepancies occur, as it is shown by Heath S. in her ethnographic research in Piedmont region in Carolinas. Two similar communities, geographically close, that present a substantial diversity in their way of approaching their infants during childhood: one community supports more this idea of parents as “trainers” and the consequent link between child - caregivers; whereas, the other folks rely on a more collective type of upbringing, where the whole community introduces new individuals to social interactions (Heath, 1983, p.145). This difference clearly emerges in children learning process, and in their school performances. In other cases, for instance the one indicated by McCarty (Puente de Hózhó school, 2014, p.112)

differences seem to attenuate, and upbringing approaches and educational system appear to move towards the same goal of linguistic inclusivity.

According to the collected data, the different educational approaches present in this research study, engage with each other. Even though they are not exclusive in some aspect, they overlap and mutually aim at similar child development approaches. Not only LMSF creates an engagement between different ontologies, but it also appears to take the figurative form of a bridge that brings together locals and peoples with different origins. It is then evident the bidirectional trait of LMSF's educational system: surely, are kids the main interested parties, but there is an attention to other recipients, who are non-Togolese people. As a place where intercultural communication occurs, there is an attempt of raising awareness and appreciation on the diversity of the World through the encounter of different cultures and patterns.

4.4.1. Influencing aspects in the upbringing process

From the first days of life, human beings are subjected to continuous flow of stimuli, impulses, and experiential practices that in a sense form conscience, personality and build up human's social skills. For this reason, it is important to deliver and offer to children incessant inputs to make them able to relate with the community. Accordingly, "children should actively participate from the very beginning (and to the extent that their powers allow) in human struggles to carve out an existence in the material world" (Mollenhauer, 2014, p.28). In this process, parents, family, or care takers, cover a fundamental role in the raising of a child: since individual's reality lives through personal belief and actions, all activities of upbringing are thus permeated by her/his valued heritage that is, therefore, conveyed to children. As more experienced persons, caregivers deliver a series of inputs within socially and culturally organized interactions that will help less experienced individuals in the structuring of knowledge, emotion, and social action (Ochs, 2000, p.230). Hence:

it is both necessary and unavoidable that adults present to children the lives they live and the values they live them by. Children are thus taught fundamental lessons about becoming growing ups within a specific structure – that of their own culture, a culture that supplants instinct-driven animal cognition.

[Mollenhauer, 2014, p.19]

Adults must then select materials to convey, tools to provide to the young person in an understandable form. Moreover, they “should “respect” the child’s “rights,” having the greatest tolerance for the child’s feelings, and a willingness to actively learn from [the child’s] behaviour” (Miller, 1990, in Mollenhauer, 2014, p.7). An explanatory example of this is shown by Philips S.: her comparative perspective sheds lights on differences of language use between adults having different gender. According to their gender, caregivers produce different kinds of language, also shaping a different approach to children (Philips, 1987, p.194).

4.4.2. Children learning experience

Having examined the caregiver’s role in the upbringing approach, it is also important to analyse the role of children within the process. Since the variability of the upbringing, children as well may receive and incorporate inputs in different ways. They could assimilate external stimuli differently or they might be subjected to different experiences and influences. As previously mentioned, the complexity of development process includes several dimensions and variable probably impossible to specifically define. Therefore, the child learning – assimilating experience seems to be depending on several factors, not only dictated by the surroundings, but also coming from the individual cognitive ability. In this regard, an interesting study case is made by Kulick D. (1992) who has carried out a wide ethnography research in a Papua New Guinean village: during his fieldwork, he noticed that even though parents and villagers speak Taiap M3r and proudly value it as part of their heritage, Gapun children under 10 years old do not actively use the vernacular language for macrosocial ideological reasons and larger factors that seems to

affect cultural conceptions. Moreover, a child cannot be receptive also due to a different approach, not suitable or not known by him/her. Approaches adopted in contexts or dimensions may differ, and sometimes clash against each other, perhaps creating discrepancies and deficiencies into the child assimilating process and in relational behaviours. This can be seen in the example of Indian children (Philips, 1987, p.371) coming from the Warm Spring Reservation attending the official public schools. Their resistance to school “style of learning” (ibid:370) and to communication has been noticed and examined in this study. Their family upbringing and social practices appear to substantially differ and lead them to behave differently.

Bearing all this in mind, I present educational and upbringing practices at LMSF in my data analysis. The whole LMSF project should be seen as an attempt to establish an environment where a child can grow up safely, having a positive and stimulating support in their journey from infancy to adulthood, and being aware of her-his origins and traditions, but also being aware of other perspectives. Once again, I highlight how LMSF acts as a bridge between sometimes more, sometimes less different educational and upbringing ideologies and practices.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

Having acknowledged the purposes of the research, the methods that I adopted to carry out my study can be now discussed widely.

The data collection occurred between October and December 2019 during my stay at La Maison sans frontières youth shelter situated in a small village called Kuma Tsamé, in West of Togo. I spent two months in Togo as an intern and as a researcher for my MA thesis. My tasks there consisted in assisting the functioning of daily routines of the centre and supporting the management on development process. For the whole period, I lived in the centre in a tightened contact with the guests, staff and especially with the manager of the organisation. As agreed with my supervisor and the director of my MA program before my departure, the gathering of data would be conducted in my free time not to hinder work situations and in order to respect the regulations regarding University traineeships during which it is not possible to perform thesis work. The typology of the collected data has allowed me to do that. In fact, the data mainly consisted in personal field notes, which do not directly require an intentional involvement of others; they do imply participant observation, listening and engaging in conversations, and asking questions to people (Bryman, 2012, p.432), but these actions do not necessarily interfere with normal occurring of everyday routine, they can actually merge with it. I could take notes in my spare time.

5.1. Methodology and methods

The research has been conducted through ethnography as “description as an account of facts and experiences captured under the label of context” (Blommaert, 2010, p.5). Ethnography is de facto associated to Anthropology methods, and it can be defined as a complementary part of it. Anthropology

aims at “describing how people form and then experience their world” (Lashaw, 2017, p.4) with a particular interest in “less powerful or subaltern groups” (ibid:4). Looking at “informal, interactional foundations of human behaviour in everyday life,” the anthropologists try to go “beyond the formalized, official, structure trying to discover and explain the informal, oral secondary network or underground aspects” (ibid:4), usually studying specific communities or group of peoples, who may share common knowledge and practices, not known by non - locals. Researchers immerse themselves in communities, villages, networks, or groups, for some time (sometimes even for years) to observe and listen, aiming to gain a general understanding of the culture, practices and believes of the examined social group. In this research context, I opted for ethnography, as my methodology, aiming at “opening up new possibilities for thinking about experience” (Ingold, 2017, p.62). “The timing, location, and particular interplay of people and historic and social conditions make this like every ethnography, a unique piece of social history” (Heath, 1983, p.7). Therefore, what emerges from my data might not reflect a comprehensive reality that fully describe this particular African culture, but it can offer a cross-section of this specific Togolese community.

Since the nature of the research, the methods at the basis of data collection process were individualized between the range of techniques favouring qualitative research: participant observation (with fieldnotes), and interviews.

5.1.1. Participant observation

Just like Ravhal V.’s research (2012, p.415), I participated in the daily activities with the youth (e.g., household tasks, play, personal care), conversing with the staff at different level of hierarchy, and being a part of the shelter (2012, p.415). Moreover, I also supported the teachers, leading learning activities for students in a school of the village Kpalimé, and activities and meetings during my leisure times. Overall, staff and children within the La Maison context accepted me, addressing me as “Tata Alice,” a

French term that means “auntie” and it is used quite widely in Togo to approach adult female figures respectfully. Outside of the centre instead, locals in not a particular context (e.g., office, banks, schools) but in public places like at the market, stores, on the street, addressed me as “yevu,” a term in Ewe language which means “White.” It was evidently referred to my physical appearance, with no negative connotation, but with the implication of a surprising acknowledgement of the presence of a white person, which was underlined by staring and sometimes by touching.

Considering these initial conditions, it is already clear that my position did have an impact on the research context: my physical presence created changes in the unfolding of events. While observing what happened around me, I was aware that my presence affected the unfolding of events, given the fact that I was living the same reality and had a role in it. At this point, it may be natural to question about the objectivity and the transferability of data since the strong participation of the researcher.

The alleged contradiction between participation and observation is no more than a corollary of this excision of being from knowing, ontology from epistemology. If ever we are to understand, according to science, we must set aside the subjective experience that comes from swimming in the midstream and regain our foothold on the banks, whence we can look back on it objectively, from the safety and security of our respective positions. In this very move, what we have undergone with people is converted into a test that we have willingly put ourselves through in order to make a study of them. It is, so to speak, to put in brackets the attentional ‘doing undergoing’ of common life, only to reframe it as an undergoing within the intentional doing of fieldwork. And this is what happens when we say that what we were actually doing, with participant observation, is ethnography. [Ingold, 2017, p.61]

Hence, we ought to acknowledge and accept the idea and ontological commitment that “we can know the world only because we are part of it” (Ingold, 2017, p.59).

5.1.2. *Fieldnotes*

I took my notes in the form of a diary of around 180 hand-written pages, where specific dates times and names have been noted. Consensus and anonymity agreements have been settled in advance with the management of the organization, which has given me the permission of taking notes, collecting interviews and photos within the centre. Since the sensitive environment (the youth shelter and the school) and the involvement of minors with a problematic familial situation, further clarifications regarding children details protection have been discussed and agreed with their tutor.

Part of the written paper consists in the transcription of 14 informal interviews/conversations to the manager of the facility, guests, staff, locals, teachers, and European visitors and one of the three conducted interviews. The notes have been taken in Italian (my mother tongue). However, a relevant amount of English and French words (French used in later stage of the experience, when I assimilated the language more) have been mixed with Italian. Additionally, I collected a great amount of visual materials, such as photos and videos, but also drawings and paintings that supported and helped to focus on my observation. These data become useful also for my data analysis.

5.1.3. *Interviews*

As mentioned, the data consisted of formal interviews. Three formal interviews have been conducted by me to the chief of the village, to one of the manager assistants and to a schoolteacher. The latter one has not been recorded. In this regard, I would like to discuss the challenge of conducting interviews in the field. I myself found it difficult due to the different role I had had to play during the interview. Having already established relationships and

bounds and a certain level of confidence with the interviewees, did not make the interviewing process comfortable.

What it should be also mentioned is the struggle of interviewing the children living in the centre. Some of them were of course too young to understand the situation and questions, a few others struggled to understand French and therefore, the communication was challenging. The children who were suitable for being interviewed were five out of fifteen (from 10 to 14 years old). However, when questions were formulated, children did not respond and looked confused. It could be assumed that their discomfort may come from the fact that they were not used to be consulted about these matters, to give their own opinion. Their disorientation was evident.

Adults instead, seemed to be more willing to talk and answer to questions. I was able to interview a staff member, who was a lady in her thirties, mainly in charge of children supervision and other errands, and the English schoolteacher in his thirties too. The interviews were carried out in French. Questions were prepared by me in advance and they aimed at investigating what staff and locals think of La Maison and its educational methods and the engagement with the local community. The interview made to the chief of the village differs from the others. In fact, it mainly covered information regarding the village and its historical background.

5.2. *Language*

The importance of language as “architecture of social behaviour itself” (Blommaert, 2010, p.7) lead me to acknowledge the linguistic settings in which the research occurred. As already mentioned, I am an Italian native speaker, with a good language proficiency in English and French. At the beginning of my experience in the field I struggled to communicate with people because I was not comfortable speaking in French. Successively, I accustomed, and I could interact more easily. Communication was not always

simple in the first place, due to the language circumstances of the country. The official national language in Togo is French, which is normally used in formal situations and educational environment; the majority of the population master it discretely, except for the elderlies. Ewe and Kabiyé (spoken mainly in the Northern Togo) are the native languages that people use in everyday life and consider as their mother tongue. Conversations and interactions occurred mainly in French with the locals, sometimes in English (at school), and in Italian with the Coordinator of the centre and with other Europeans present in the centre. Having said that, we should be aware of linguistic difficulties encountered during the fieldwork. Impossibilities of expressing correctly and misunderstandings have been considered on the findings of the study. It should be also noted that the use of French as spoken language recalls to some extent colonial nuances.

6. RESEARCH RESULTS

I began my data analysis in January 2020. Firstly, I identified my research focus: data would have been considered relevant if referring to practices, knowledge, and cultures (European/ “Western” and Togolese ones), or where the considered youth shelter settings was mentioned. After having done that, I went through all the notes I had taken, identifying “thematizing meanings” (Braun, 2006, p.4). I highlighted the interesting annotations differently according to their specific theme. In the meantime, I took into consideration the chronological developing of the events and I wrote down comments.

My data analysis employ an inductive or bottom – up way (Braun, 2006, p.12) thematic analysis process by setting an area of interest, locating thematic codes seen as pieces that “capture something important in relation to the overall research question” (Braun, 2006, p.10) on data corpus, and then identifying relevant data items (2006, p.6). It should be mentioned that a first draft of the research questions and contents had been outlined before my fieldwork started. Therefore, I have been probably directed by these preliminary ideas while I was taking notes, because they seemed to cover widely those points of interest. Nevertheless, my attitude and approach were open to all environment and practices. Based on the assumption that in the field, “we study so that we can grow ourselves, in knowledge, wisdom and judgement, and in order to be better prepared for the tasks that lie ahead in building a common world” (Ingold, 2017, p.63), I dealt with new habits and traditions, firstly trying to understand them and respect them, without judgment or critics. I also attempted to embrace them, immersing myself completely in the situation to better understand the context. I acted keeping in mind the idea that there is no right or wrong and “no way of being is the only possible one, [...] for every way we find, or resolve to take, alternative ways could be taken that would lead in different directions” (Ingold, 2017, p.59).

Given my initial unfamiliarity with the research context, it clearly emerges from the fieldnotes a first moment of adaptation to the environment that lasted for ca.10 days. Despite this, it was already clear from these first steps of thematic analysis the prevalence of major themes of interest, which “were identified based on frequency, extensiveness, and intensity” (Brummet, 2016, p.775). Since the focus of my research, I accepted as relevant preliminary patterns, all comments and mentions concerning “Western” and Togolese dimension, ideas, practices and influences in the African context. I also included notes concerning myself, as everything related to my thoughts and personal feelings as researcher, and as a person unfamiliar with the social environment, and the “tacit understanding, on unspoken routines and conventions, on shared experiences and outlooks- and none of that belongs to the researcher’s background” (Blommaert 2010, p.16). Surely, these main categories were not clearly separated, on the contrary, they were intertwining, overlapping, and completing each other. In accordance with Bryman (2012, p.389), I focused on the data looking for “repetitions: topics that recur again and again, similarities and differences, indigenous typologies or categories: local expressions that are either unfamiliar or are used in an unfamiliar way.”

For further examination of the data gathering, I have utilized ATLAS.ti 8. program, a data analysis software which simplifies the decoding process to the upstream of research. This program provided tools to narrow down initial codes into more specific patterns. All the themes have been “identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and [...] not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written” (Braun, 2006, p.13). Having clear in mind the core themes, I started then to identify repeated patterns, tagging and naming the extracts which were showing similarities, and always keeping in my mind that I “can code individual extracts of data in as many different themes as they fit into, and so an extract may be un-coded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant” (Braun, 2006, p.19). I was able

to devise fourteen candidate themes well distinguished between them. Some of them were more frequent within the data set, but overall, they were emerging a minimum of three as we can see from the following table:

- Cleanness: 16
- Education: 10
- European practices and knowledge: 30
- Health/sickness: 18
- Hygiene: 17
- Inconsistencies: 26
- Kids copying adults: 9
- Language: 5
- Manager's purposes: 3
- Organizational structure: 17
- Researcher's observation: 16
- Time conception: 18
- Togolese practices and knowledge: 27
- Upbringing aspects: 24

Having done that, I re-examined categories to see if it was possible to identify potential subthemes and to “to ascertain whether the themes work in relation to the data set” (Braun V, 2006, p.21). Themes appeared to have a clear adherence to the topic of each category. Even though “health/sickness” category presents a relevant amount of data, I decided not to focus on that because of a matter of space, but especially because several data within this category overlap with other ones.

6.1. Themes

I am now going to give a brief definition to each theme in order to clarify my further analysis operations and to highlight the relevant data for the development of my study.

Cleanliness: situations where local people habits concerning hygiene, dirt and cleanliness are mentioned.

Education: researcher's observations, people's comments, and statements in regard of schooling system, teaching, and learning methods.

European practices and knowledge: concepts, ideas, and habits belonging and coming from a "Western" context are observed.

Health/sickness: situations where diseases, conditions of sickness, health caring are described.

Hygiene: situations and episodes where the concepts of cleaning and being dirt are brought up.

Inconsistencies: situations that I experienced or witnessed, where cultural diversity was causing sort of incomprehension and misunderstandings.

Kids copying adults: descriptions of episodes, where the children's behaviours recalled adults' habits.

Language: consideration on the use of the language, with great attention on the use of French (official language) and the engaging of it with local languages.

Manager purposes: personal approach of the manager regarding the development of the NGO and educational - upbringing approaches. The perspectives and values of the coordinator heavily overlap with the personal ideals of Susanna, the actual manager. This blending creates hybridity on her role.

Researcher's observations: my personal thoughts, considerations and suppositions concerning facts and happenings.

Organizational structure: comments and observations regarding the management of the NGO and its internal functioning, focusing on relationship between staff and operating Officers.

Time conception: how the time is perceived and lived in general.

Togolese practices and knowledge: concepts, ideas, and habits belonging and coming from a Togolese context are observed.

Upbringing aspects: researcher's observations, people's comments, and statements in regard to upbringing approaches.

Considering the great amount of collected data, I could only probably examine a selected part, focusing on matters which in a sense would be more compatible with the purpose of my study.

To proceed with the analysis, it may be useful to recapitulate the key questions, refocusing on the study purpose: the research seeks to define how La Maison sans frontières organization has considered and engaged with practices and habits of the country where it is located, focusing on how the time is perceived, the hygiene practices that are common in the centre, and finally, the upbringing approaches adopted with the children.

6.2. Time perception within La Maison

In this section, I analyse data concerning time (management) and how at first, it appears to be deconstructed in the local perspective, but it is in fact very much hinged and responsive to the local conditions. Knowing that, it is interesting to elaborate how La Maison has somehow shaped a unique ecosystem, having an internal highly organized time management, but also

creating a bond with the external setting, adjusting to the reliance on the ecology of the Togolese context.

It took me some time to accustom to the environment and the daily life routine in general. Since my arrival day, I could perceive a substantial difference in people's approach toward time and scheduling. After having spent the first night in the capital Lomé, LMSF arranged for me the journey to my destination. I only knew that someone would come to pick me up, but time and further details were not clear, a very unusual practice for a person coming from an environment where time control is consistently present. This diverse attitude created in me a sense of uncertainty, reminding me how "the activity of Ethnography is always plural and beyond the control of any individual" (Clifford, 1983 in Gay y Blanco, 2007, p.141). But it also made me realize that in the context I was, actual time and scheduling were not that crucial since the planned events would happen sooner or later anyway. I experienced this several times while I was participating as the assistant of the professor to English and French classes at the Martin Luther King school at Kpalimé. This educational institution, partially still under construction (see fig.3. below), was constructed and financed by an American project in Lomé US Embassy. At that moment, the school has circa 200 pupils, attending the Nursery, the primary school, and the secondary education. Given the fact that French language is used in official domains, everybody needs to use it. People speaking Ewe, however, are not frowned upon. Additionally, French influence also permeated the education aspect of the school, since the adopted educational system heavily relies on the one used in Francophone countries. No clock or visible timetable are present at the school. The end of the period is marked by one of the older kids, who oversees the whistling every hour. My little knowledge of the school organization forced me to often ask information about timetables and classes. The answers I usually received were vague and not accurate, even though I was simply asking when the classes started or

ended. Professors seemed not to be concerned about the actual time. They were often taken by surprise by the whistling and for this reason lessons were prolonged or suddenly interrupted.



Fig.3. Martin Luther King school, Kpalimé. Picture taken by me in October 2019.

Another similar episode happened during a dance festival, to which children living in the centre also performed. The following day, they were invited to attend the award ceremony in the early morning (7.30 am), but this did not take place until 11 am, leaving kids and staff to wait with no explanation under a scorching sun. This detachment from time management appears to be accepted and embraced by the locals, which recognize it as a distinct component of their ways of living, defining it as “Le temps africain.” Although the LMSF reality lays its foundations on the local perspective, it seems to be chained to a strict routine, which does not leave room to downtime or delay. Events follow each other, often marked by specific times that usually are announced by the staff in charge, who animatedly call to order the children. A funny anecdote related to that involves the little girls of LMSF, S. and D. Since their tender age, they spoke only in Ewe and they knew very few French words, but as soon as they realized that those term, which people so insistently screamed, determined shower time and the start of the meal, they

acquired the new vocabulary and they began to warn the older kids joining the chorus of “à la douche!” “à table!” shouts. This diverse approach to time coupled with specific practices is taken seriously by the kids and workers, who appear to have comfortably accepted the norms of the centre as routines, which incorporate to local habits and practices. For instance, children still take the shower in the morning before going to school, washing themselves outside with a bucket of hot water, and they sometimes sleep on the floor. As Susanna explained to me during one of our long chats, when children arrive to La Maison, at first, they struggle to follow the “new” timeframe that differs from the external circumstances. After a period of confusion, they eventually find a balance, enjoying the new practices, such as the story time before going to bed. In this regard, many European volunteers, who stayed in the centre, questioned the “almost military methods” adopted by the organization. The president with the support of the staff has brought up the necessity of timetable to effectively manage the centre and to provide same treatment to all the children.

Generally, mutual respect appears to be present between the local surroundings and the NGO. I have detected discrepancies and tensions very seldomly and they have usually been peacefully dissipated. Something that I can think of is the opening of the centre to visits. It is surprising the amount of people that every day go to visit the centre for the most diverse reasons: people come to greet and thank, people ask for help and money, people offer money, friends, workers, people bring fruits and wood for the fire, officers, taxi drivers and tourists. In order not to disturb the kids during their nap time and to maintain a quiet environment, a sign has been hanged at the entrance to forbid the access in the early afternoon.

What seems to bring closer LMSF and its local reality is the strong bond with nature and “an ecological measuring of time” (Bergman, 2006, p.153). The passing of the time is dictated by the natural surroundings and phenomena,

which hinder and sometimes prevent the agreed routine. The impossibility of action during hard heat and heavy raining is well accepted and considered as normality. Since moves are usually made by motorbikes or walking, sudden heavy rain usually impedes the travelling. For this reason, during my stay at La Maison, many meetings were delayed because of the rain. Some had to wait till the end of the shower to be able to leave. It was interesting to see how these circumstances were perceived as part of life by both the locals and staff, and with a little bit of resignation by Susanna. Whereas, for me they took a different connotation causing frustration and concern. Similar feelings stirred in me whenever I needed to wait for a long time for something to occur.

Another aspect related to timing is in fact the recurrence of waiting times. In different situations during my experience, I have encountered the action of remaining on standby, holding, waiting to receive a service, as was the case during one of my first days in Togo, when I went to a store. The shop was supposed to open at 9 am and it did, but clerks did not start working until 9.45 am for apparently no reason. They seemed to be stalling, or busy with other tasks. And this made me feel very confused and impotent because it was not clear why I was waiting for so long, and if it was because I was a foreigner. Later, I realized that long waiting times were a normal occurring aspect in the local setting. Waiting was accepted with admiring resilience by the locals and even by children such as B, a 11 year old girl living at LMSF. She had suffered from an attack of malaria for few days. She was weak and fevered, and she did not want to eat and talk. Susanna decided to take her to a close clinic to do some tests. They left early in the morning and after a few hours, Susanna communicated to me that B's tests were showing a high level of malaria and she was then being treated with quinine. Around 2 pm (so after circa six hours) they were not yet done. I then decided to reach them bringing some food and water. When I arrived there, the girl was sleeping and still having the I.V., and Susanna was exhausted. They explained to me that they

had to wait a few hours before someone visited B., and that the doctor of the clinic had left without giving his consent for the discharge of the girl. This episode may stress how sometimes these waiting moments could create difficulties in taking advantage of general services and accomplishing simple tasks. Similarly, LMSF sometimes faces during its operations, putting staff and president's determination to the test. The will of moving projects forward permeates actions of the NGO, but it is often challenged by external practices that hinder the pursuing of its goals. This can be well shown with another anecdote I was witness of: during an ordinary day at La Maison, we were waiting for a team of workers to come from Lomé to install the new solar panel system, which would have provided electricity to the whole structure during the frequent power blackouts. For the centre, this was a big step towards the ongoing project of making La Maison a self-reliance structure, able to survive with its own resources. The excitement of the staff was palpable. Team arrival was expected to be around 2.30 pm and focusing on something else was difficult, even though we needed to deal with other formalities. The long-awaited electricians calmly drove in the centre two hours late, forcing Susanna and the staff to cancel or postpone other plans, interfering with the achieving of other targets.

These glimpses of my ethnographic fieldwork data offer "a subjective representation of facts and events out there" examined through "an interpretative analysis" (Blommaert, 2010, p.63). The resulted comprehensive picture describes how time is perceived and experienced in the context of the NGO, an otherwise apparently "Western" institution, and it proves that the NGO reality and the local context share some similar practices, but do not intersect in some other domains. Thus, it underlines the necessity of conducting ethnographic researches to better define the complexity of practices.

6.3. Cleansing practices at the centre

During my stay, I started to get familiar with the life within the centre and learned routinized behaviours (Siragusa, 2017, p.74). For instance, I noticed how routines were marked by commands of the staff. These acts to draw the attention of the children consisted in screaming some orders, such as “à la douche!” Punctually, those shouts were reaching the playful children of La Maison to warn them that it was shower time. Every day at sunset time, when there is still some light, the kids of the youth centre prepare to have their shower. In turns, boys and girls together take their towel and they scamper unclothed next to the fireplace to receive their bowls of hot water previously warmed up by the educator in charge. They take a tin bucket, and they add cold water coming from the wellbore, and in pairs they head to the outdoor area of the patio used to shower. With the help of little bowls, they pour the water on themselves and they brush away dust by scrubbing their bodies with rough rag and soap. Little ones are helped by older ones or by some Tatas. In the morning, the process is repeated to go to school, and in general the kids of the local families do the same. If it is very hot, showers and games with water are usually allowed and well accepted by children. Generally, personal hygiene care appears to have patterns similar to the local habits. However, late afternoon cleaning routine does not seem as common as the morning one among locals. According to the organization, they have tried to introduce the evening showering time to “get rid of the dirt and the sweat after a long day wandering around” (quoting Susanna).

Another interesting thing that happens in the morning and it is related to the Togolese perspective of cleaning, is the sweeping of the patio (see fig.4. below). According to custom, after having worn the school uniform, Togolese children spend some time sweeping away leaves and sand from their home

yard, helping their relatives. The kids of La Maison accomplish their duties as well, cleaning the common areas in order to keep their house in order and presentable for possible visitors. Little attention is given to the cleaning of the indoor places which are later in the day cleaned by the staff. At a first glance, it transpires a congruent vision of dirtiness as “care for hygiene and respect for conventions” (Douglas, 1966, p.7). In fact, cleaning practices aim at avoiding the dirt in material circumstances, but they also have a correlation with a community commitment in which a common set of values are recognized and adopted for a development of the society. However, it becomes clear that new practices based on a broader pathogenic knowledge have been introduced. It is the case of evening showers, frequency in washing hands, and the practice of brushing teeth before going to sleep, uncommon habit among people living in the village, who usually chew a teeth-cleaning twigs coming from roots or certain types of plants.



Fig.4. E. sweeping the patio in the morning ready to go to school. Picture taken by me in November 2019

Like the shower time, all the hygienic practices are completed outside in the yard between the structures that form the centre, from brushing teeth to mealtime. Before any meal, happening under a simple canopy, all the kids

wash their hands under the supervision of a chosen kid who hands the soap to others. The food is served in tin plates and quickly consumed by children with bare hands. In the local settings, the hand sanitation importance may be not as granted as it can be in other contexts, like the one to which the NGO belongs. Because of that, hand-washing practices have been introduced by LMSF, especially before meals given the fact that dishes are normally eaten with hands that if dirty, would contaminate the food. In this regard, I have noticed also that dishes coming from a more international cuisine have been adopted and accepted by staff and children in the centre. When C. saw the spaghetti pasta for the first time, he did not want to eat them because he thought they were worms. Now, he likes them, and he remembers smiling that funny episode. Another interesting fact is the use of cutlery. In the village where the centre is located, forks and knives are known, but seldomly utilized for eating. The kids at La Maison are probably more aware of their use since they were in contact with foreigners, who basically only ate with those tools. When the menu included spaghetti, the kids used forks too. Every time, they were playing pretending to be having dinner at the restaurant. Their closeness with diversity enabled them to accept this and know it more from the daily practices, such as eating habits. Because kids are permanently living in the centre, they fully experience the encountering of Togolese ecology with the “foreign” one and they make it their own naturally. Therefore, it emerges that the tendency of having an accepting attitude is not one-sided. It does not only come from the organization which attempts to act respecting the local practices, but it does involve at first-hand the targeted group, which is the children, who live according to this new combined system.

6.4. Upbringing approach and caring

Considering the topic of upbringing, I outline a general frame of main educational approaches adopted within LMSF taking into account what has emerged from the data. Through the narratives, the entwinements between local practices and the NGO reality are also considered, shading lights where they overlap, and whether there may be divergences. Finally, the permeability of the system and the consequent multidirectional approach is broached.

As a case of educational community, LMSF seeks to adopt an upbringing approach, which promotes children's development, health, and wellbeing. It aims to create learning opportunities, motivating youth to think and act autonomously, and to become able to properly relate to this African - Togolese community and social reality. Local parenting style is in general supported and respected, even though discontinuities between the spheres of upbringing, education and culture have come to light. Despite this, what clearly emerges from LSMF's view is "the desire to support both traditional and evolving ways of cultural connectedness" (McCarty, 2014, p.117), embracing a culturally responsive education. De facto, interculturality seems to be an intrinsic aspect of LMSF educational program, and this appears to "influence the nature of the interactions and relationships that develop between parties" (Capobianco, 2017, p.325).

As the legal tutor of all the kids at LMSF, Susanna oversees children's livelihood, supporting their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. Although she may not have a comprehensive pedagogical qualification, she still acts as a volunteer, and she is firmly committed to make the kids' existence easier relying on her personal experiences and on principles of love and empathy that she follows with endless dedication. The fact that Susanna's foreign heritage and background experiences to a certain extent influence and affect her vision on the centre's educational system becomes evident. As Mollenhauer K. argues "it is simply unimaginable for an adult to undertake any act of pedagogical significance – deliberately or not –

without conveying some aspect of him or herself or the way he or she lives” (2014, p.9). However, step by step, she has shaped the NGO’s upbringing methodology through experiences and constructive discussions with the children and staff. The collaboration with the locals was an important piece of the project vision since the beginning. Her determination to totally immerse herself in the Togolese context to responsibly take care of the children clearly transpires. In fact, the valuable assistance of the local staff helps LMSF manager to enable kids to “have access to local knowledges, including the language” (McCarty, 2014, p.119). The children are motivated and supported to explore their interests and to improve their skills in a healthy and safe environment.

La Maison, as the name already implies, is perceived as their home by the kids, the place where their family lives. They are all “frères et sœurs” (“brothers and sisters” in French) and they are taught to rely on older brothers and sisters, who are expected to patiently take care of the little ones. Everything is equally managed, and every child has the same opportunities as the others. The idea of a democratic approach clearly merges through the motto “la majorité gagne” (“the majority wins” in French) which Susanna often uses, whenever there is a decision-making process. An example of this, which occurred basically every weekend was the election of the “screening of Saturday movie”, a much-awaited activity. The children voted for their favourite movie and the one with more votes was watched by everybody.

Other key principles of La Maison educational system match those indicated by McCarty, i.e., “respect, reciprocity responsibility and the importance of caring relationship [...], the four Rs” (2014, p.103). The already familiar reverence towards older peoples within local traditions is joined to a general respect for human beings, regardless of their gender, their origins, and their conditions. As is customary, youth usually acknowledges the presence of someone to be respected heading toward the person, greeting him/her, and

bowing the head. This also happens at La Maison, where the kids address Tatas and adults with a “bonsoir” upon arriving back from school. Listening to others, treating them with dignity, and respect their diversity represent the main values that the NGO promotes. Here is a vignette that could be quite significant to show how Susanna and staff are implementing the understanding of diversity. This directly involves a girl living in the centre, D. She was accepted at La Maison a few years ago, after she was subjected to a severe episode of mistreatment, which left her disabled. In the local community, but especially in the rural areas, it is a general belief that physical disability has somehow negative outcomes that affect the person’s cognitive condition as well. That was the case with D. According to Susanna’s narrative, she was treated as she was mentally ill, and she was often mocked by both adults and children. When she joined LMSF program, she was submissive, and she did not speak French at all. To explain D.’s situation, Susanna decided to call a meeting which should have been attended by the children and the whole staff. She wanted to reinstate D.’s position within the community and raise awareness about diversity and empathy. Today D. is an independent 14-year-old girl, who fluently speaks French, goes to school, watches over her brothers and sisters, and quickly progresses towards her adulthood. Through this episode, it clearly stands out “the importance of acknowledging the emotional dimensions” as well as “love, loss, empathy, compassion” (McCarty, 2014, p.117) within the context of La Maison, but also the emerging colonial nuances since she embraced French as her main language.

A particular attention is paid also to nature and animals. A sense of respect for the environment and its inhabitants is inculcated by experiential activities, which allow the kids to be more conscious of their surroundings. Fruit trees are growing here and there in the centre, and kids are asked to check on the fruits and pick them if mature. Two dogs, two cats and a bunch of chickens quietly cohabit with the children, who learn from their infancy to relate with

animals and respect them. Contrarily to the tradition, in the centre, these animals are perceived as pets and treated as such (see fig.5. below). It is taught to take care of them and love all alive entities in general. I remembered when an afternoon the boy C. killed a lizard with a rock with apparently no reason, while he and the other kids were playing. Susanna scolded him for a long time, stressing that of his actions made no sense.



Fig.5. M. reading a book with the company of a kitty. Picture taken by me in November 2019.

What is probably the most peculiar and important characteristics of the centre, is the willingness to dialogue and discussion that permeates any approach. Not only the kids and staff are driven to a dialogue, but also, they are somehow pushed to critically analyse situations and events, and to have initiatives. All this is put in into practice through praxis driven actions, such as general meetings as coming together to discuss either ordinary or special matters. I could attend a few of them and see how they were implemented. One evening, Susanna called a kid reunion, after they did not behave well with tata A. in the afternoon. Kids gathered in the girl's room and the meeting started with Susanna's question: "I would like to find a solution with you. What is the

matter?” After some silence, a shy response of the question came: “we do not listen to A.” The conversation continued:

S: and what do you think we should do to make things better?

A few kids together: we need punishments.

E: “le bateau” (you could use the stick to punish us).

S. (another kid): you could lock up kids in the rooms.

S: we already talked about it many times, no violent punishments here.

A few kids together: you could punish only the “bad ones.”

S.: No, you know that if someone misbehaves, everybody will be affected by his-her behaviours. “The majority wins” and you all are subjected to rules, for better or worse. How many times did I tell you to behave like brothers and sisters?

As can be seen, Susanna engaged with the kids an explicit communication to resolve the conflict and pushing them to think and make sense of the actual problem. On the other side, the kids in general seem sometimes to struggle to actively react in these situations, probably due to the different approach commonly used in the local community, which does not often stress to the development of logical thinking and to open “space for the children to express their personal thoughts” (Strickland, 2015, p.613).

As it may have been noticed, overall, the educational treatment promoted by the centre does not directly clash or go against the upbringing practices rooted within the local vision. However, different occasions drew attention on a discrepancy between the local and NGO educational approaches concerning the use of violence as an educative method. In the Togolese community it is normal practice to employ physical actions to raise the children up in order to make them pay attention or to punish them for misconducts. The children are

used to this method because it is also applied at school. Although it is not that common anymore, some nuances still surface. For instance, some professors utilize a wooden rod to point at the blackboard, but also to restore the order and threaten kids. At La Maison no-one should use any type of violence. Despite of some rough yelling and threatening, the repercussions coming from mischiefs are usually extra homework, or deprivation of playing time and some activity, following then the idea of action - consequence: “if you fool around, you will not do that.” Situations where children did not behave, took place on a daily basis. To end the chaos, after several verbal reproaches, the adult in charge of the surveillance grounded the hecklers, forcing them to seat and stay quiet for a while, or if the messing around included more kids, the tutor could decide to cancel the weekly movie screening. Actions like that, strive to prevent violence (Chen, 2003, p.203) and stimulate the use of reasoning, the request for explanations and justifications. Moreover, the openness to dialogue aims at teaching conflict resolution behaviours “offering alternative proposals, a willingness to compromise, and, in general, the use of conciliatory gestures such as apologizing and sharing” (ibid:204).

6.4.1. Multidirectional learning system

During my fieldwork, I could notice that a quite relevant amount of narratives describing Togolese settings, were associated with non-local sources, like for example, the manager of the organization, whose origins are “Western.” This interesting aspect led my analysis to further ponderings on the role of Susanna within the centre. There is no doubt of her pivotal position on the practical NGO functioning, and on her central figure as a caretaker. What is not that obvious is her involvement in creating awareness on cultural diversity from multiple views. Susanna, in fact, turns out to be a tutoring figure not only for kids, but also for the volunteers coming from Europe: like a mentor, she shares her knowledge with newcomers and visitors, hoping to create “innovative ways to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable equity gap” (McCarty, 2014,

p.112). As in the “Puente de Hózhó” study case largely examined in McCarty’s research, here as well there is a specific intent of raising awareness and shaping a more comprehensive and inclusive vision to connect and valorise peculiarities of different realities. It should be then said that the general approach in the centre seems to go beyond the simple training and tutoring of the children living in it. In fact, the purpose of the organization appears to be also directed to Europeans or non-Togolese people that, by staying in the centre and being part of the LMSF community, are able to learn more about a different environment. Under the guidance of the president and La Maison family, new perspectives are offered to the international audience. Kids and staff as well become promoters and acts as guides through the local culture and practices, which is revealed to visitors through their knowledge and their experiences. They somehow become also “intermediaries” of this new perspectives and motivate the locals to “bridge the gap” (Minoia, 2012, p.77) between cultural differences. I could experience that, while I was going to MLK (Martin Luther King) school. During the recreation, I was used to seat with a few teachers in the shady part of the internal courtyard. From there, I could see what was happening in the patio. The kids were running and playing or eating. One day, four boys of approximately 13 - 14 years of age approached me. I knew in which class they were, but I was not attending their classes, so I did not know them at all. One of them, backing up by the others, asked me if I could give them a “cadeau” (“gift” in French). I was familiar with these requests, not because I experienced them before, but because the president of La Maison had warned me. Kids, and sometimes adults as well, ask quite often for money or presents to foreigners, assuming that their situation is wealthier. My first reaction was happy laughing, thinking that it was a kind of joke. They told me that each of them wanted a ball, suggesting that I could buy them “lá bas” (meaning the place where I live) and bringing those to them on my following trip to Africa. I replied making them aware of my student status and telling also I was not rich as they thought. They,

however, insisted, without minding my words and telling me that they did not have enough money to purchase them themselves. Our conversation was interrupted by two teachers who chased them away, accusing them of having bothered me. The same evening during dinner at La Maison, I heard a few kids talking about the episode. In fact, five of them (the oldest ones) attend the same school I was working in, and the word about my dialogue with the boys must have spread around the students. Especially D., a tall and strong 14 years old girl, wanted to discuss what happened with Susanna. D seemed very disappointed and she said that she had scolded the boys for not being nice to me, taking therefore my side. She added also that she explained to the guys in question that “they,” referring to “Western” peoples, do not like to be treated like that, as their help and support would be due. They ultimately can bridge the gap between different worldviews, and may also “call individuals to take a reflexive look at their ideologies so as to help others to integrate and coexist within particular societies” (Capobianco, 2017, p.326). Looking at this multidirectional learning system attempt from a wider perspective, a strive for improving intercultural understandings, making several different worlds encounter can be recognized and emphasized.

This idea of multifacial learning for a global community building may lead also to a more introspective transformation that can affect interactants’ identities and worldviews (Capobianco, 2017, p.326). Openness to diverse practices, and the consequent endorsement of multiculturalism could contribute to develop more self-awareness. Moreover, the capability and the will of viewing and experiencing the world brings with it a sense of curiosity and active engagement with one’s environment (Marcia, 1980 in Syed, 2012, p.492), followed by a more open attitude to identity exploration.

As hypothesized by Syed, “both a general tendency to be open to experience and active engagement in the developmental process of learning more about

one's identity (i.e., exploration) are uniquely associated with valuing a multicultural ideology" (2012, p.494).

6.5. Summary

My study research has as its objective to problematize the encounter between different realities and practices within the specific context of La Maison sans frontières NGO in Togo. According to my findings and analysis, it can be said that LMSF community remarkably engages and considers local practices and traditions, which to some extent are adopted and accepted. Although it emerges that there may be some discrepancies between the local and “Western” perspectives, overall, the meeting of these different realities seems to be beneficial for everyone.

Driven by my findings, I decided to focus on three different aspects of the mentioned encounter. I firstly explored the notion of *time* and how it is perceived since it was a recurring theme in the data. Then I took into account *hygiene* practices, defining the deep meaning of dirt and cleanliness, explaining the symbolism beyond cleaning actions; finally, since the purpose of La Maison is related to the raising of the children living in the centre, I decided to focus on the *upbringing* approaches in the centre, comparing them with the mainstream ideas of educational system in the local settings.

My research study relies on qualitative methodology that has been applied through ethnography. The data were collected in the fieldwork from October 2019 to December 2019 by observing, taking fieldnotes, interviewing people and interacting with them, immersing within the context. After the work on the field, I carried out my analysis, individualizing similar patterns and recurring themes, and outlining the most relevant ones. The analysis results showed a similar pattern within the three chosen aspects: the practices in Togo and LMSF presented some differences on all the different studied dimensions. However, the encounters between the two realities appeared to be permeated by acceptance and understanding, creating a unique practical and organizational “melting pot.” In the specific, time management within the

centre seems to follow a so-called “Western” approach, even though the local ways of living the time sometimes interferes and effects the timing organization. Considering the hygiene routine, the local practices have been included and adopted with a more accurate attention to the cleansing of the body, familiar aspect in the “Western” tradition. In the context of upbringing practices, there is the aim of raising children connecting them to their origins and habits. However, stimuli for improving receptivity and openness within the child growth have been integrated and added to the local perspectives. Physical punishments are openly not accepted, despite the context’s customs.

To sum up, the NGO appears to have integrated local traditions in its course of action, even if only to a certain extent. The encounter between La Maison and this Togolese community seems to have created a middle ground between different cultures where peoples together strive to bridge the gap in cultural diversity.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Does the centre actually work?

During my stay at La Maison, a project held by a European musician was in act. Children of the centre as well as the kids of the village were involved, and they needed to attend music classes with the musician weekly. One afternoon after one of these lessons, I approached G., the European musician, and asked how the project was going. He told me that sometimes he was struggling to make himself understood by the kids, not only because some of them did not speak French, but also because it was clear to him that they had difficulties to interact and relate to that new context. He also added that the children living at La Maison appeared to some extent to be more receptive and open to the interaction. They were sometimes mediating between G. and the other kids by warning and translating related activities and instructions.

What emerged from this episode can be associated to the functioning of the system created by La Maison. In a sense, it could be seen as an evidence that the centre is approaching children and actually influencing their behaviour. Even though it should be said that kids of La Maison got in contact with G. more than the other kids, perhaps thus instilling in them a stronger desire of participating to the developing project, they seemed to be more willing towards interaction. Talking about the project in general, we must point out that LMSF reality is relatively new and still under development. The children that are now living in the facilities are the first ones to have joined the project. Therefore, it is hard to evaluate the level of effectiveness of the whole organization since there is no previous data to rely on for an accurate evaluation. However, considering in the short term, the NGO has managed to actively support the development of the children, and in addition, to also assist the local community proactively.

7.2. La Maison as a bridge

Observing the local people around me, I started to recognize similar patterns in their behaviours and one in particular took my attention. Whenever someone drank some water to rinse their mouth, he/she would spit it out spurting the water far away. From my personal perspective, I did not see the reason of spitting in that way, and I found it impolite and unnecessary, also given the fact of the value of water there. But when it happened to me to be in the same situation, I spit out the water in the same way, and then I understood. Being in the same situation made me realize that if I had spit it close to me, I would have soiled myself with the dirt of the ground.

This episode, however simple and perhaps not closely related to examined themes, has had a profound effect on me and taught me the importance of the fieldwork as act of experiencing the environment first-hand as “participant observer.” The fact to put myself in someone’s else position helped me to understand better the reason of others’ habits and behaviours. Decentring oneself enables to “understand the other’s perspective [and] to see one’s own assumptions from the other’s perspective” (Capobianco, 2017, p.326). This approach could anticipate misunderstandings, and maybe overcoming them, together with “the willingness to interact with others in no stereotypical and unprejudiced way” (Capobianco, 2017, p.326).

Being in contact with different cultures and individuals having different origins and believes, appears to make people more aware of themselves and of others ‘worldviews, leading them towards “a living understanding of the ways of behaving, feeling, believing and valuing” (Heath, 1983, p.13) of another culture. La Maison as a bridge between multiple ontologies, has become an environment where this interaction is emphasised and embraced. The mutual exchange between Togolese and European perspectives occurring in the centre creates opportunities to experience the cultural diversity under the premises of

respect and reciprocity, in an attempt of globally “harmonizing without homogenizing” (McCarty, 2014, p.114).

7.3. Future research

Due to the relevant amount of collected data and the fixed length of my study, I could examine only a limited section of my data and, therefore, I could focus just on a few aspects directly related to the areas of interest. Further investigations would be then required and needed to better define the context and create a more comprehensive and accurate overall view. For instance, it would be worthwhile examining the forthcoming development and performance of LMSF. As previously mentioned, it is not yet possible to evaluate the centre’s impact on the target community. Hence, future studies on this matter may lead to interesting insights and observations that could also assist the implementation and integration of La Maison.

Another interesting study could investigate situations where race issues emerge. During my stay in the community, I could witness several episodes where “white” people were treated differently. What is more, colonial nuances were still quite strongly perceivable in many aspects of the Togolese life. Although the sensitive theme, a more complex research problematizing racial matters could enrich the already wide literature concerning racism and colonialism, shedding new lights on the topic, and perhaps improving people’s life conditions.

It would be useful to also further elaborate on the aspects related to NGOs from a broader level. There seems to be little or no mention of NGOs in the academic literature before 1985, save for brief discussion of “humanitarian” organizations; only in recent years the interest in the topic has grown, leading to a composition of a great number of writings. NGOs context can be then

considered not only as “object of anthropological research,” but also as portal, “a vehicle for studying developments project and actors” (Lashaw, 2017, p.6) crossing then disciplinary and theoretical boundaries. Therefore, new NGOs studies may lead to a specific investigation within the internal structure of the organizations, examining the management, the business-related aspects, and its ongoing professionalization. Other studies instead, could take a more anthropological perspective, and focus on the purpose of “doing good” assisting and caring for other individuals beyond the NGO’s action, problematizing it in relation with colonial extends.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson W. (2006), *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Durham (USA), London (UK). Duke University Press. Chapter 2.
- Bashford A. (2004). *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* Department of History University of Sydney, Australia. Pp. 1-14.
- Bergman I. (2006). *Indigenous Time, Colonial History: Sami Conceptions of Time and Ancestry and the Role of Relics in Cultural Reproduction*. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2.
- Bloch, M. (1977). *The Past and Present in the Present*. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Vol.12, No. 2, pp. 278-293.
- Blommaert J, Dong J. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork, a beginner's guide. Multilingual matters*. Bristol.
- Boroditsky L. & Gaby A. (2010). *Remembrances of Times East: Absolute Spatial Representations of Time in an Australian Aboriginal Community*. Stanford University and University of California, Berkeley.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.77-101.
- Brummett Erin A. (2016). "Race doesn't matter": A dialogic analysis of interracial romantic partners' stories about racial differences. Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, USA.
- Bryman A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Fourth edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Pp. 379- 589.
- Capobianco P. (2017). *Transfiguring identity: Social relationships and intercultural communication between foreign "children" and Japanese "parents"*. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*. Vol.10, No.4, pp. 324-341. Retrieved from:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2017.1300311>
- Catlin-Legutko C., Klingler S. (2012). *The small museum toolkit. Organizational management*. Book 3. Lanham, Md. Alta Mira Press. Pp. 38-60.

Cazden C. B., John P. V., Hymes D. (1972). Functions of language in the classroom. Teachers colleges press. Pp. 370-393.

Chen D. W. (2003). Preventing Violence by Promoting the Development of Competent Conflict Resolution Skills: Exploring Roles and Responsibilities. Early Childhood Education Journal, Vol.30, No.4.

Douglas M. (1966). Purity and Danger. An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo. London and New York, Routledge.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1940). The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people. Oxford, The Clarendon Press. Pp. 94-130.

Fabian J. (1983). Time & the Other how anthropology makes its object. Columbia University press.

Fuhrman O., Boroditsky L. (2009). Cross-Cultural Differences in Mental Representations of Time: Evidence from an Implicit Non-linguistic Task. Department of Psychology, Stanford University. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21564254/>

Gay y Blasco P. and Wardle H. (2007). How to read Ethnography. London and New York, Routledge. Pp. 140-162.

Heath Brice S. (1983). Ways with words. Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms. Cambridge, University Press.

Ingold T. (2007). Radcliff – Brown lecture in social anthropology. Anthropology is *not* Ethnography.

Ingold T. (2017). Anthropology contra ethnography. Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory. University of Aberdeen. Vol.7, No.1, pp. 21-26.

Ingold T. (2018). Anthropology and/as Education. London (UK), Routledge.

Kulick D. (1992). Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction: Socialization, Self, and Syncretism in a Papua New Guinean Village. Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language, 14. Cambridge, University Press. Pp. 317.

Lashaw A., Vannier C., and Sampson S. (2017). Cultures of doing good: anthropologists and NGOs. Tuscaloosa, Alabama, The University of Alabama press.

Latour B. translated by Catherine Porter. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.

Leathem H. (2020). Our (Dis)Orderly World: Thinking with Purity and Danger in the 21st Century. *History of Anthropology Review* 44. Retrieved from: <https://histanthro.org/bibliography/generative/our-disorderly-world-thinking-with-purity-and-danger-in-the-21st-century/>.

Lewis, D. (2001). *The Management of Non-Governmental Development Organizations: An Introduction*. Aston Business School. London and New York, Routledge.

McCarty T., Tiffany S. L. (2014). Critical Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy and Indigenous Education Sovereignty. *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 84, No.1, pp.101-124.

Minoia, P. (2012). Included or excluded? Civil society, local agency and the support given by European aid programmes. *Fennia - International Journal of Geography*, Vol.190, No.2, pp.77-89. Retrieved from: <https://fennia.journal.fi/article/view/7394>

Mollenhauer K. (2014). *Forgotten Connections On culture and upbringing*. Edited and translated by Norm Friesen. London and New York, Routledge.

Montgomery E., Vannier C. (2017). An Ethnography of a Voodoo Shrine in Southern Togo of Spirit, Slave and Sea. *Studies of Religion in Africa*. Vol. 46, pp. 1-80.

Munn, N. (1983) Gawan Kula: spatiotemporal control and the symbolism of influence. In: *The Kula: new perspectives on Massim exchange* (eds. J. W. Leach & E. Leach), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 277-308.

Nkwi, O. N. (2015). *The Anthropology of Africa: Challenges for the 21st Century*. Published by African Books Collective. Langaa RPCIG, Cameroon. Introduction.

Ochs E. (2000). Socialization. University of California, Los Angeles. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. American Anthropological Association. Vol. 9, No.1-2, pp. 230-233.

Philips, S. U., Steele S., and Tanz C. (1987). *Language, Gender, and Sex in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 163-249.

Raval V.V. (2012). Fight or flight? Competing discourses of individualism and collectivism in runaway boys' interpersonal relationships in India. Vol. 30, issue 4, pp. 410-429. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.libproxy.helsinki.fi/10.1177/0265407512458655>

Simonetti C. (2014). With the past under your feet: on the development of time concepts in archaeology. Pp. 283-313. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.4000/aa.1306>

Siragusa L. (2018). Promoting Heritage Language in Northwest Russia. London and New York, Routledge. Chapter four, pp. 73-97.

Spieth, J. (1906). Ewe People a Study of the Ewe People in German Togo. Accra, Ghana. Sub-Saharan Publishers. Pp. 1-61.

Strickland M. J. and Marinak B. A. (2015). Not Just Talk, But a ‘‘Dance’’! How Kindergarten Teachers Opened and Closed Spaces for Teacher–Child Authentic Dialogue. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (2016) 44, pp. 613–621. Retrieved from: DOI 10.1007/s10643-015-0750-1

Syed M. (2012). Identity exploration, identity confusion, and openness as predictors of multicultural ideology. University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 37 (2013) pp. 491– 496.

Turner V. (1967). The forest of symbols, aspects of Ndembu ritual. New York, Cornell University press. Pp 93- 110, pp. 299-359.

Wong W. H. (2012). Internal Affairs: How the Structure of NGOs Transforms Human Rights. Cornell University Press. Pp. 53-83.