



Topic document

Call for applications

Shaping Greater Tamale: towards a planned and resilient metropolis

International Urban Planning Workshop
29 June - 9 July 2026
Greater Tamale, Northern Ghana



Funded by
the European Union



**EXPERTISE
FRANCE**
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Les Ateliers de Cergy is a non-profit association created in 1982 at the initiative of the urban planners of the New Town of Cergy-Pontoise. Today, it is an international network of professionals, academics and decision-makers in urban planning. Focused on the practice of urban project management, the association organises workshops conceived as spaces for collective design and creativity.

In France and abroad, these workshops provide project managers with an international perspective and illustrated proposals for territorial strategies and urban development projects. Through the convergence of different professions and cultures, they also serve to question learning processes and provide exchange opportunities at the highest level.

Greater Tamale workshop

Pilots of the workshop

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WORKSHOP GENESIS

Les Ateliers de Cergy organizes **collaborative workshops** all over the world to support urban projects, in order to promote innovative, creative and relevant urban development, integrating both short and long-term perspectives. Les Ateliers serves as a tool and methodology available to cities and their partners to **help define urban development strategies** and identify promising initiatives. It also acts as a catalyst for projects thanks to its platform of longstanding partners.

The International Urban Planning Workshop in Greater Tamale is launched within the **Sustainable Cities Project**, funded by the European Union, and implemented by Expertise France through the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (MLGCRA). As part of the operational implementation of **Component 2 - Supporting Urban Planning** in the 6 target cities, which specifically aims at helping municipalities to develop or update urban and sectoral master plans - Les Ateliers will play a key role with an **intensive 10-day international workshop** to feed the local urban planning processes. The preparation and updating of **statutory spatial plans** – Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs), Structure Plans, and Local Plans – is critical to guide sustainable growth, optimise land use, coordinate infrastructure investment, and integrate climate resilience.

The workshop brings together 15 selected professional volunteers from around the world and locally, representing a wide range of disciplines (urban planning, geography, economics, landscape design, sociology, art, engineering, environment, etc), **from 29 June to 9 July 2026 in Tamale, Ghana**. After a few days of collective visits and collective work, the three teams will **build a shared vision** that will be integrated in the urban planning documents perspectives.

This document presents the topic of the urban planning workshop that will take place. It also constitutes the **international call for applications**, which will allow for the selection of professionals who will participate in the workshop.



RATIONALE

Greater Tamale is changing rapidly, but unevenly.

Urban expansion is reshaping settlement patterns, land use, infrastructure, and the ecological structure of the territory—often faster than planning instruments can respond.

Reading this geography as a **bioregion** helps keep the relationships between urban form, landscapesystems, and territorial change in view. The territory is not produced by a single planning logic. It is shaped through overlapping statutory and customary land systems, movement corridors and nodes, and shifting edges between built-up areas, agricultural land, wetlands, and open space.

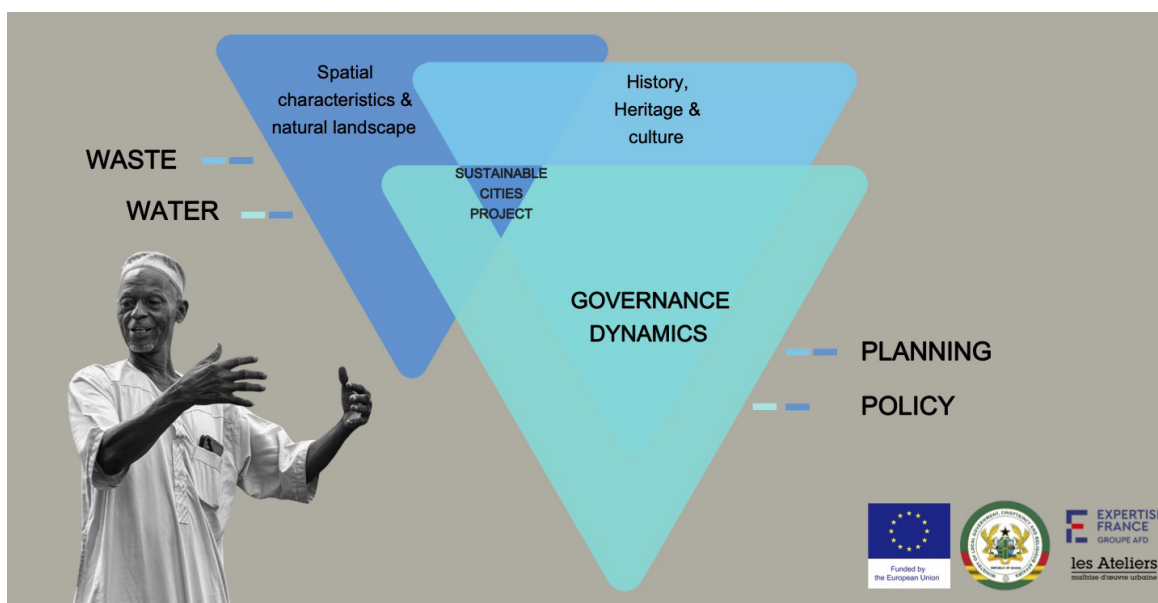
Any **territorial reading** must therefore account for how the city extends into its surroundings, and how those surroundings continue to function as active parts of the whole. These same dynamics are interpreted differently by different actors. What may appear as growth,

fragmentation, or encroachment from one perspective can be understood as negotiation, adaptation, or continuity from another.

Rather than fixing a single interpretation, this document seeks to **support a shared territorial understanding**—one that planners, architects, and geographers can engage with collectively. The workshop format is designed to operate within this complexity. It establishes a temporary **common ground** where customary custodians, Assemblies, planners, technical agencies, traders, farmers, and residents can **read the same territory through multiple lenses**.

Insights generated through this process are intended to **inform Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs), Structure Plans, Local Plans**, and sectoral investments, helping to anchor planning approaches in the lived spatial realities of the bioregion.

How can Greater Tamale grow as a unique territory where everyday life, ecological systems, and productive activities coexist?



1 GREATER TAMALE IN THE WESTSUDANIAN SAVANNAH ECO-REGION

1.1 A specific geographical identity in a wider Sudanian Eco-region

Long before colonial borders were drawn, West Africa was structured around networks of trans-Saharan trade routes rather than fixed territorial divisions. The first major polity to emerge was the Ghana Empire, located at the western edge of this commercial network. By the 8th century, Arab traders were exchanging salt from the central Sahara for gold from Ghana.

Subsequent Sahelian empires, including Mali Empire and Songhai Empire, consolidated authority along these trade arteries, linking distant ecological regions into a shared economic system.

Situated within this broader Sudanian landscape, **Greater Tamale reflects a historical pattern in which territory was defined less by fixed boundaries and more by mobility, trade, and negotiated access.** As a central node of the West Sudanian Savannah ecoregion¹ –one of four ecoregions in the Sudanian Savanna Bioregion—it sits within the Volta River Basin as an agro-ecological belt of open woodlands, parkland agriculture, and seasonal streams.

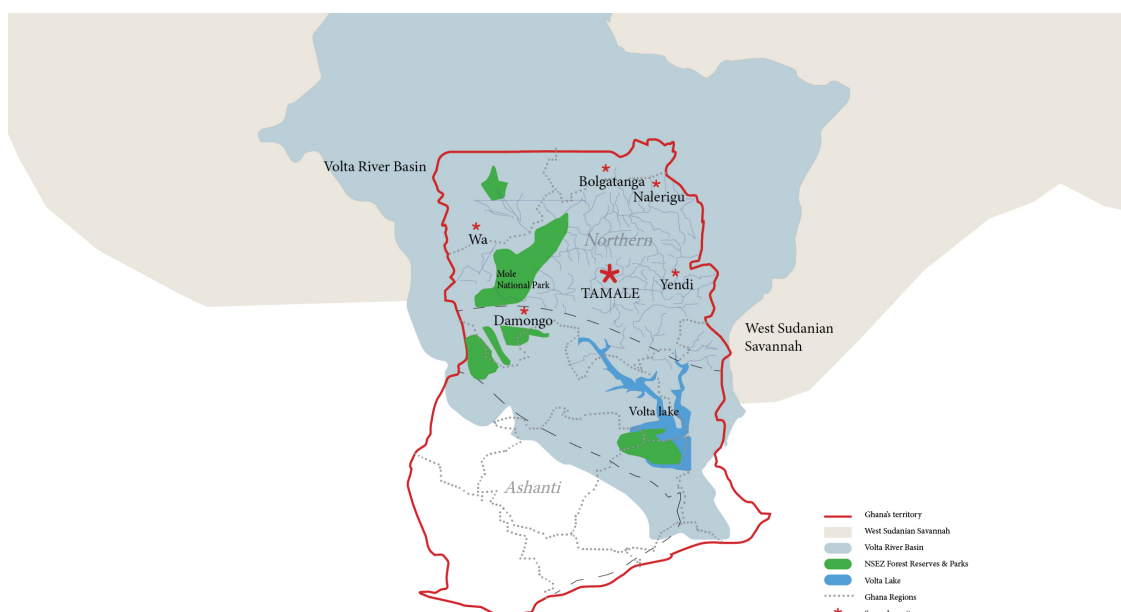
These geographical assets underscore Tamale's role as a hinge within a larger ecological system, where rainfall patterns, soils, and river networks continue to shape cultivation and settlement.

These historical and geographical frames introduce Greater Tamale as a Sahelian **bioregion** as defined by the environmental sociologist William Catton – “A territory of life, a place defined by its life forms, its topographies and its biota rather than by human dictates; a region governed by nature and not by legislation.”

In the current context of metropolisation and extensive acceleration, how can Greater Tamale² be approached through its unique history, geographical characteristics and natural resources?

Can Tamale be addressed as a bioregion within the larger Volta basin?

What are the implications of this reading for areas such as Nanton, Savelugu and Tolon?



Regional map showcasing the geographical assets of Greater Tamale within the Northern Region (Les Ateliers de Cergy, 2026)

1.2 Agricultural potential & climate change impacts

In the first quarter of 2025, agriculture stood out as one of the strongest contributors to Ghana's economy, accounting for 23.5% of GDP³. Unlike the agroforestry systems prevalent in Southern Ghana, the Northern Region is characterized by **agro-pastoralism**⁴—an integrated farming system that combines crop cultivation with livestock rearing to enhance food security in arid and semi-arid environments.

This approach relies on the mutual relationship between crops and animals: manure sustains soil fertility, while crop residues provide fodder. By interlinking these activities, agro-pastoralism increases land-use efficiency and reinforces resilience to climate variability.

Today, many residents of Greater Tamale are facing intensifying climate impacts. Extreme weather events are closely linked to shifts in land use and land cover. Erratic rainfall—marked by delayed seasons, heavy storms, and intermittent water shortages—has led to river flooding and substantial crop losses, while prolonged droughts are degrading soils and weakening agricultural productivity.

These impacts fall unevenly: smallholders, peri-urban farmers and women-led households with limited access to secure land, water and credit are often least able to absorb crop losses or invest in adaptation.

These overlapping pressures pose serious risks to food security, income generation, and rural stability. They also strain essential infrastructure and services, including waste management and water supply, in a rapidly growing urban area. Without targeted adaptation and resilience strategies, climate projections suggest that ecological systems will continue to deteriorate.

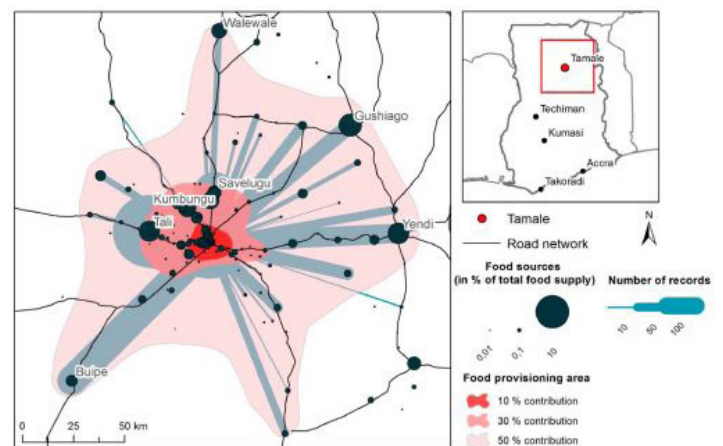
The interplay between urban and peri-urban agricultural potential and global warming thus represents a central development challenge: ensuring stable food provision amid climatic uncertainty. Safeguarding green spaces and soils, conserving water resources, diversifying crops, and promoting climate-smart, resilient farming practices are essential to maintaining long-term, self-sustaining productivity and supporting rural and urban livelihoods.

As the Tamale city-region food-system map shows, these chains radiate well beyond the metropolitan core, with cereal crops, vegetables and livestock moving in from a wide hinterland and processed goods and income circulating back out through the same corridors.

How can Tamale leverage its agricultural strengths to drive the development of a resilient, productive, and sustainable metropolitan region?



Left: Irrigated vegetable farming in Nyohini illustrating the continued importance of open-space cultivation inside the metropolitan fabric



Right: The Tamale city-region food-system map, showing how the city draws supplies and redistributes them through urban markets (Karg et al., 2016)

1.3 Landscape richness & green spaces encroachment

In Greater Tamale, landscape richness encompasses the ecological diversity, productivity, and cultural meaning embedded in woodlands, wetlands, parklands, farms, and watersheds. These open spaces sustain livelihoods and biodiversity, provide essential ecosystem services, and support social and cultural life.

Iconic trees such as shea, mahogany, baobab, and dawadawa are central to Tamale's visual and ecological identity. They are not only environmental assets but also cultural landmarks—providing shade, anchoring memory, and shaping everyday activity. By framing streets and compounds, structuring gathering spaces, and moderating heat in a Sahelian climate, these trees and green systems function as living infrastructure rather than vacant land awaiting development.

Yet urban expansion increasingly follows roads and ridgelines into former farmland and low-lying areas, driven as much by accessibility, soils, and water as by formal planning frameworks. Housing, cultivation, and improvised drainage now overlap, exposing tensions between ecological processes, inherited settlement patterns, and contemporary planning tools. Plot-level decisions made by chiefs, households, and planners accumulate into broader patterns of vulnerability—flooding, heat stress, and the steady loss of productive soils.

Green space encroachment occurs as built-up areas, infrastructure, and informal settlements progressively occupy ecologically valuable land. The resulting tension between landscape richness and encroachment highlights a fundamental planning challenge: how to accommodate growth without eroding the ecological foundations of long-term resilience.

Tamale is not built on an empty hinterland. It functions as a Sahelian hinge—shaped by trade, circulation, and negotiated authority—and as a post-colonial urban node in a region where governance and succession remain sensitive. Situated within the West Sudanian Savannah, it is a “territory of life” structured by watersheds, soils, parklands, and climate variability.

Here, land is simultaneously ecological, political, and cultural, positioned at the intersection of historical governance, modern planning, and local aspirations for cohesion and resilience.



Left: Open space farm site in Gumbihini residential area, Urban Food Plus, SP8, Freiburg University (2014).
Right: Green space encroachment with a peri-urban farm showing two story level housing construction

1.4 Regional scale & tourism opportunity

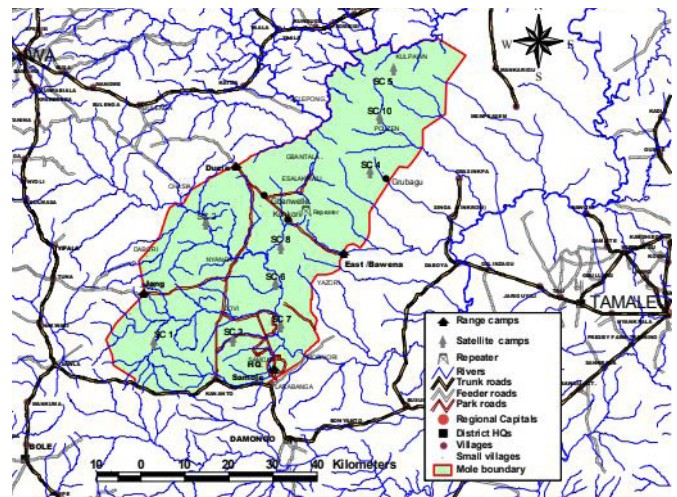
In Greater Tamale, climate and landscape are most immediately experienced through water. The ongoing crisis of intermittent and insufficient supply is not only a technical shortfall, but a territorial expression of how rapid urban growth, ageing infrastructure, and fragile ecosystems intersect (GBC, 2025; SuSanA/GIZ, 2022). Daily demand in the metropolitan area is estimated at 90,000 to 95,000 cubic metres, while existing treatment and transmission systems deliver only around 35,000 to 38,000 cubic metres—leaving a structural deficit that routine management alone cannot resolve (GBC, 2025; Tamale City Profile, 2017).

This gap is compounded by the region's physical geography. Greater Tamale has limited perennial surface water and relies heavily on the White Volta, alongside a small number of seasonal streams and reservoirs that often dry up during the long dry season (SuSanA/GIZ, 2022; Tamale City Profile, 2017). At the same time, extraction, sand mining, and construction along the White Volta are disrupting flows and threatening intake operations at Dalun, as well as the future Yapei scheme—undermining the reliability of the city's primary raw water source (Radio Tamale, 2026; Biwater, 2020). As pressures intensify, many peri-urban and low-income households turn to distant or unsafe sources, reshaping everyday mobility and increasing the social and gendered burden of water collection (GhanaWeb, 2024a; Graphic Online, 2024).

At the regional scale, Tamale serves as the primary urban center of northern Ghana and a gateway to the Sahelian zone. Its road and air connections, administrative status, and commercial functions position it as a pivotal transit and coordination hub for movement within the Northern Region and across national borders.

This strategic centrality also underpins strong tourism potential. Tamale acts as a launching point for major cultural and ecological destinations, including those dedicated to contemporary art such as Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art (SCCA), Red Clay Studio and the newest Nkrumah Volini ; the Mole National Park, celebrated for its savannah ecosystems and wildlife, and Larabanga Mosque, one of West Africa's oldest surviving Sudano-Sahelian earthen mosques. The city is similarly connected to traditional settlements and regional festivals that reflect the area's rich cultural heritage.

Beyond individual attractions, the wider savannah landscapes, wetlands, and parklands create opportunities for integrated ecotourism and heritage circuits that link natural systems with living traditions. With coordinated infrastructure investment, conservation strategies, and community-based tourism initiatives, Tamale's regional role could support a more sustainable tourism economy—one that reinforces local livelihoods while safeguarding environmental assets.



Left: Intergenerational gathering to collect water near Nyohini area dam
Right: The Mole National Park near Damongo (Management Plan, 2010)



2 TAMALE, ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING CITIES IN GHANA

2.1 From colonial history to growing settlements facing infrastructural lag

Greater Tamale's present form is inseparable from the histories that produced it. The city and its surrounding territory carry the traces of colonial administration, customary landholding, market circulation, and ecological adaptation, all of which continue to shape how the area is inhabited and understood. Reading the area through this lens means treating memory not as a separate layer, but as the living residue of history in land use, settlement patterns, and everyday territorial practices.

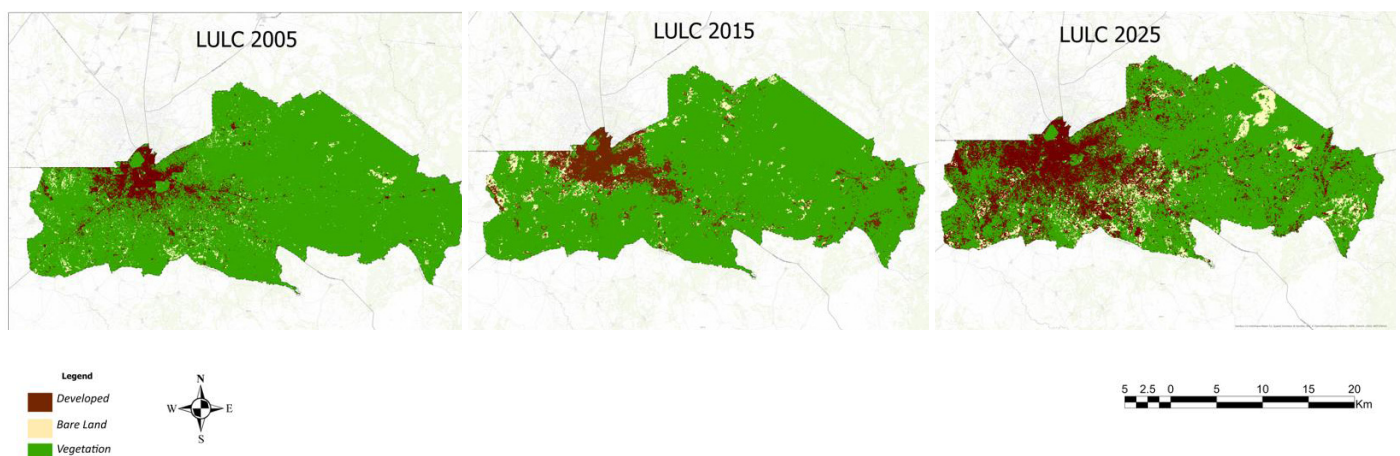
Tamale, the capital of Ghana's Northern Region, has grown from a small cluster of villages into a major metropolitan node. Formally established in 1907 under colonial political economy to serve as an administrative center and facilitate transit trade, it has since become the region's primary urban hub.

Its growth has not unfolded on an empty landscape, but across inhabited terrain already structured by customary authority, seasonal livelihoods, and inherited routes of movement and exchange. The city's expansion therefore reflects not only demographic change, but also the persistence of older territorial logics within newer urban forms. This growth is spatially uneven. Younger households, recent migrants, and lower-income groups are increasingly concentrated in

peripheral neighborhoods, where land is more accessible through customary allocation systems and entry costs remain comparatively lower. Rapid land conversion has outpaced the capacity of statutory institutions to provide coordinated infrastructure. Built-up areas have expanded faster than piped water, sewer systems, engineered drainage, and all-weather roads, with new settlements often developing beyond existing service networks. Peripheral communities frequently rely on informal waste disposal and improvised drainage, increasing risks of flooding and erosion.

The typical sequence follows a familiar pattern: land allocation, construction, later regularization, and delayed, uneven infrastructure provision. Over time, this creates spatial inequalities. Low-lying, densely built peri-urban neighborhoods face heightened vulnerability to flooding, heat, and service deficits, while older central areas and key corridors benefit from more consistent planning and investment. Fringe settlements, dependent on boreholes, makeshift roads, and informal waste management, exemplify the uneven distribution of urban services across the city.

How can Tamale's growth be shaped into a more sustainable metropolis that reduces these spatial inequalities and prioritizes the most exposed peri-urban neighborhoods?



Expansion of urban built-up area in Tamale between 1984 and 2013, showing the rapid urban growth as development extends along main corridors and into surrounding rural land. Maps prepared by the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly 2025 with yearly data from the United States Geological Survey (2025).

2.2 Urban Tamale as an economic and urban node pulsing through a network of secondary cities

Tamale occupies a strategic location along the Accra-Ouagadougou Corridor, strengthening its role as a regional economic node within a wider network of secondary cities, market towns, and rural production zones.

Rather than operating only as an administrative center, the city helps organize the movement of cereals, yams, vegetables, livestock, fuelwood, shea, charcoal, and manufactured goods across northern Ghana and beyond. These flows connect districts such as Savelugu, Tolon, Nanton, Yendi, Damongo, and Buipe, while also linking the region to southern markets and cross-border trade routes.

This makes Greater Tamale more than a city with a surrounding hinterland: it is part of a regional circulation system in which rural production, urban markets, transport corridors, and informal logistics are tightly interdependent.

Cereal crops and livestock are consolidated through periodic markets and redistributed through Tamale, while shea and charcoal move from parklands and savannah woodlands into processing, household consumption, and export chains.

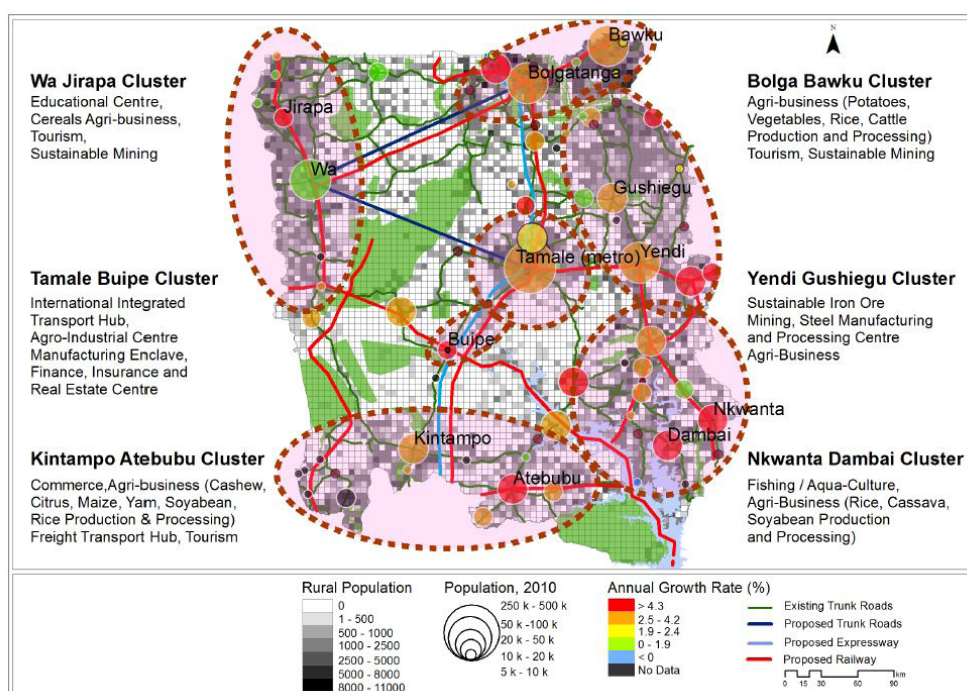
The same corridors also carry construction materials, manufactured goods, income, and services back into northern settlements, reinforcing Tamale's role as both a market hub and a transfer point.

The spatial impact of these value chains extends beyond the economy to ecological and environmental conditions.

Charcoal and fuelwood supply chains contribute to pressure on savannah woodlands and multipurpose trees such as shea and dawadawa, while rain-fed cereal and yam systems remain vulnerable to rainfall variability and rising temperatures.

Peri-urban vegetable cultivation competes with housing expansion for land and water, and informal dumping and burning in expanding settlements further degrade soils and water bodies.

How can these regional value chains be supported through a multi-scale planning approach that strengthens livelihoods, protects savannah ecosystems, and improves returns for farmers, traders, and workers?



Mixed Economy with settlements cluster in Greater Tamale and the impact on the regional value chains (2014).

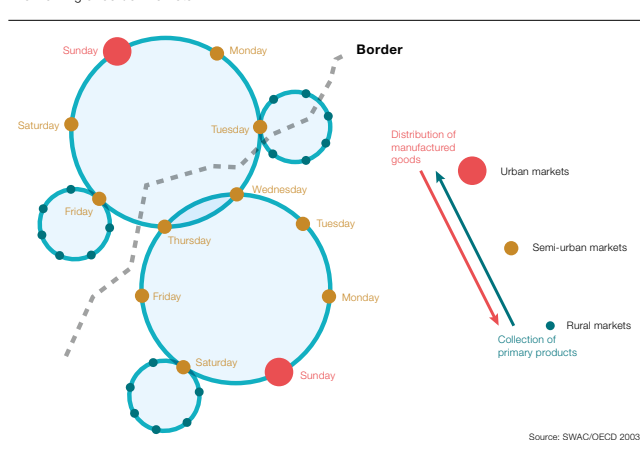
2.3 Learning from informality through the caravan economy and its organic hubs

Weekly and seasonal market calendars generate a shifting spatial rhythm across rural, semi-urban, and urban settlements. On market days, cereals, yams, livestock, shea, firewood, and charcoal flow into town from surrounding villages, while traders move back with manufactured goods, processed foods, and cash.

Traders and transporters described this system less as a sequence of isolated trips than as a connected circuit, in which the same vehicles, routes, and relationships link multiple markets over time. The caravan economy is sustained by informal and semi-formal arrangements, including shared trucks and minibuses, small freight operators, mobile retail stalls, motorcycle networks, rotating savings groups, and trust-based credit between traders, transporters, and producers.

For households in and around Tamale, Yendi, and Damongo, these circuits function as everyday infrastructure that supports survival and exchange, often more reliably than formal systems. At the same time, they concentrate risk, debt, and bargaining power, which means they should be understood not only as economic activity but as a spatial system with its own rules, intermediaries, and hierarchies.

Map 7.3
The working of border markets



The working of boarder markets : Stylised illustration of weekly market circuits along a West African border corridor, showing how traders rotate between rural, semi-urban and urban markets on different days, moving primary products one way and manufactured goods the other. (SWAC/OCDE,2014)

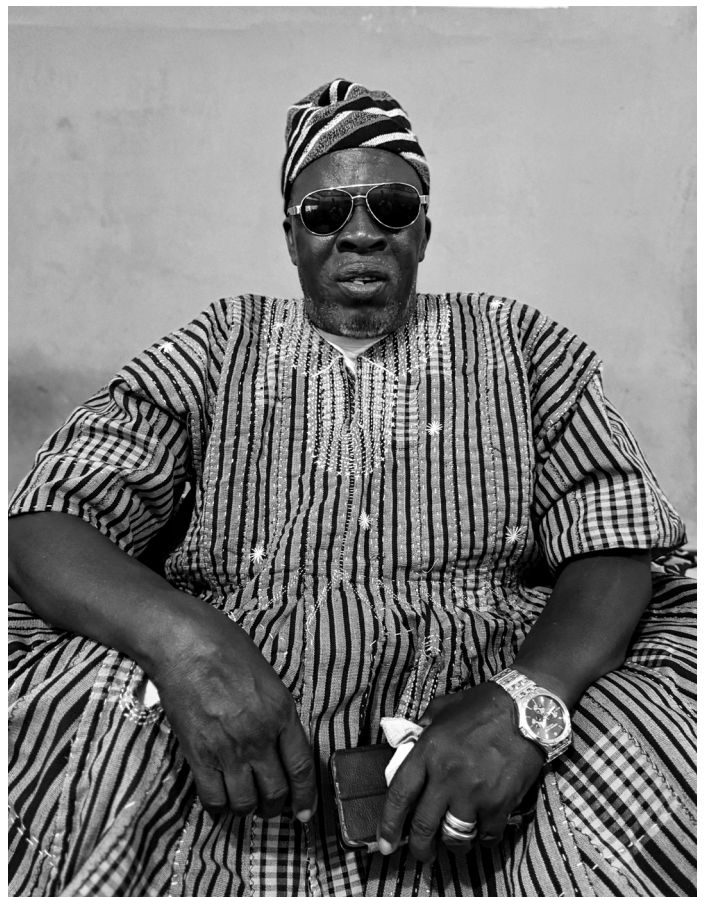
2.4 A strategic opportunity to build planning synergies towards an urban metabolism vision

Existing spatial plans and infrastructure investments only partially account for these dynamic systems. Wholesale markets, truck parks, fuel depots, charcoal yards, shea-processing clusters, agro-processing sites, and informal recycling hubs often locate themselves according to operational logic—junctions, transport corridors, water points, or the edges of residential neighborhoods—rather than statutory zoning or planned infrastructure. These flows constitute an urban metabolism, a circulation of food, biomass, people, and materials through which the city functions.

For greater Tamale, planning sustainable urban growth requires engaging directly with this metabolism. This involves reserving and servicing space for markets, truck parks, and logistics activities; protecting key agricultural and woodland areas while promoting greener biomass chains; and integrating informal waste pickers and recyclers into solid-waste management strategies. Workshops such as the one this document supports provide rare opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue, bringing together customary authorities, Assemblies, traders, utility providers, and residents to map flows, assess externalities, and determine what territorial adjustments are needed. In this context, territorial intelligence means understanding the origins, routes, nodes, and impacts of these flows and embedding that visibility into spatial planning and strategy.

How to learn from informality and activate an integrated urban system?

How to structure comprehensive and citizen-oriented access to services?



3 INSTITUTIONAL MULTIPLICITY & LEGAL PLURALISM AS PLANNING INSTRUMENTS

3.1 Customary authority as territorial governance

In Dagbon, land is held as “skin lands,” entrusted to chiefs and allocated in ways that tie households to chieftaincy structures rather than individual ownership. Across Northern Ghana, tindamba (earth priests) act as spiritual custodians, linking land to ancestors and rituals, while chiefs and government increasingly handle day-to-day allocation. Land allocation is both political and spatial: peri-urban expansion often starts with family negotiations and petitions to chiefs, long before formal surveying or registration. As a result, what appears on statutory maps as planned subdivisions is often the product of ongoing customary arrangements and local interventions. Similar logics are visible in Yendi and Damongo, where customary custodianship structures continue to shape who can access land, on what terms, and with what expectations of future renegotiation, even when statutory planning instruments are defined. Therefore, even where formal planning exists, customary authorities continue to shape organically the urban fabric demonstrating that urban space is actively produced through these local governance systems.

How to integrate Chieftaincy governance as a strong asset and comprehensive participatory tool?

3.2 Statutory Planning as an instrument of spatial governance

Under the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act 2016 (Act 925), this abstracted geometry is further codified through a three-tier system of Spatial Development Frameworks, Structure Plans and Local Plans.

Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs): National & regional spatial policies that addresses long-term strategies for growth, land use, infrastructure, environmental management, and risk reduction.

Structure Plans: Medium-Term citywide translation of SDFs into zoning, infrastructure development, and service delivery.

Local Plans: Detailed land subdivision and use in priority neighborhoods, supporting building permits, infrastructure coordination, and property-rate collection.

In the Greater Tamale area, these statutory instruments intersect with the eco-regional realities shown in regional maps; watersheds, parklands, floodplains; and with the historical circulation systems described above, producing a layered but often contradictory spatial ordering.

Statutory planning assumes that territory can be stabilized and managed through formal layouts, enforceable zoning, and administrative procedures. These plans define growth corridors, nodes, and land-use designations, with Local Plans supporting permits, infrastructure coordination, and property-rate collection. Similar frameworks exist in Yendi and Damongo, though coverage, staffing, and technical capacity vary. Comparing the administrative map of Northern Ghana districts with a map of Aboriginal Dagbamba Land shows that formal statutory boundaries do not align neatly with historical customary territories, highlighting that planning operates across overlapping governance systems.

How to reverse the approach from an enforced planning to a bottom up, owned vision?

Today in northern Ghana, land is governed through two parallel authority structures:

Customary chain: In Dagbon, the Ya Na (King) sits at the top, with paramount and divisional chiefs overseeing areas like Tamale and Yendi. Sub-chiefs, village chiefs, and tindamba (earth priests) work directly with families and buyers to allocate plots, resolve disputes, and uphold customary claims.

Statutory chain: At the national level, the

relevant ministry and LUSPA set planning frameworks. Regional Coordinating Councils oversee implementation, while city-level Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies (e.g., Tamale, Sagnarigu, Yendi, Damongo) handle planning, permitting, and property-rate collection.

These two hierarchies operate over the same land: families and developers navigate customary allocation through chiefs while also obtaining layouts, permits, and services from the statutory authorities.

3.3 Hybrid governance as a planning asset

In Tamale, urbanization occurs at the intersection of customary and statutory governance.

Chiefs and family heads allocate land according to traditional social and political norms, while the Metropolitan Assembly and LUSPA regulate land use, approve layouts, and issue permits, meaning allocation generally happens before formal regulation. In practice, chiefs request Local Plans, which planners draft and submit for approval.

Chiefs then engage surveyors to subdivide plots and install boundaries, establishing the

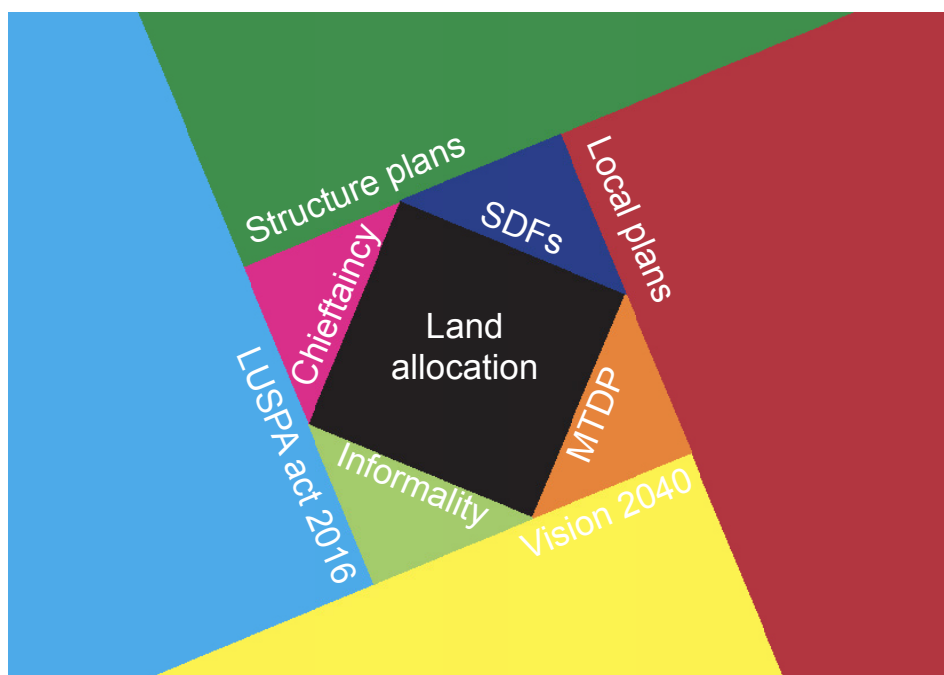
basis for sales and development. When public agencies are slow or under-resourced, chiefs often hire private planners, so land can be allocated or developed before appearing in official records.

Regularization measures—including retrospective approvals, partial incorporation of customary layouts, and negotiated enforcement—help align these parallel systems. Similar patterns in Yendi and Damongo indicate that this hybrid governance is common across northern Ghana.

Governance as a tangram: This dual system produces an urban form shaped more by negotiation than by top-down planning, with two overlapping authorities of unequal power operating over land with deep historical and ecological significance.

For the Sustainable Cities project, this hybrid framework is the starting point: statutory SDFs, Structure Plans, and Local Plans must navigate the combined influence of customary custodians, Assemblies, technical agencies, and residents, rather than assuming a single centralized authority.

How to optimize land use for a shared negotiated spatiality?



Governance as a tangram : Stylised representation of how statutory planning bodies, customary authorities, technical agencies and residents' practices interlock over the same land, illustrating the hybrid decision-making space within which SDFs, Structure Plans and Local Plans must operate (Les Ateliers, 2026.)

4 NYOHINI AS A PROPOSED FOCUS AREA FOR TAMALE & SAGNARIGU

4.1 An epicenter of circular metabolism

During the mission, Noyohini repeatedly emerged as a focal point where many of the dynamics discussed earlier converge. Located along a key approach corridor in the Greater Tamale area, it is a zone of rapid peri-urban conversion where customary land allocations, statutory layouts, and infrastructure projects intersect visibly on the ground. Residents and officials described Noyohini as a frontier between older farming landscapes and newer residential belts, where questions of tenure, service provision, and shared public spaces are experienced in very tangible ways.

For the Sustainable Cities project, Noyohini represents a compelling focus area. It concentrates on hybrid governance arrangements, accelerated land-use change, and the everyday metabolism of food, water, waste, and mobility within a manageable area. Focusing experimental efforts here allows the project to test circular-economy approaches, participatory planning, and negotiated authority in a real neighborhood before scaling or adapting lessons to other parts of the city.

4.2 Nyohini for a negotiated authority and shared space

Governance in Noyohini reflects the broader hybrid system described above but at a scale that can be engaged directly.

Chiefs and family heads continue to allocate plots and mediate disputes; Assembly members, unit committees, and Physical Planning staff manage layouts, permits, and basic services; while youth groups, women’s associations, and religious bodies organize around local priorities such as water points, markets, and prayer spaces.

Each actor occupies a piece of the “tangram», and the interactions between them shape what is feasible on the ground. A focus area in Noyohini would work through these relationships and would also test how statutory tools—Local Plans, service contracts, and by-laws—can better accommodate lived practices and customary claims instead of attempting to override them. In this way, Noyohini becomes both a laboratory for negotiated authority and a testing ground for circular urban metabolism.



Noyohini proposed focus area, (Les Ateliers 2026).

CONCLUSION

Greater Tamale emerges from this mission as a living territory shaped by overlapping ecologies, institutions, and economies rather than as a single administrative unit. Its present form is rooted in historical settlement patterns, customary landholding, and regional circulation systems that continue to structure movement, access, and exchange across the wider metropolitan area.

At the same time, rapid urban growth, climate stress, and uneven infrastructure provision are intensifying pressures that are not evenly distributed across the territory.

What becomes clear is that the challenge is not simply how to manage growth, but how to understand the territory in a way that aligns land use, service provision, and ecological systems with the realities on the ground.

Regional value chains, informal logistics, caravan markets, agro-pastoral livelihoods, and everyday forms of exchange all contribute to the functioning of Greater Tamale, yet they remain only partially visible in formal planning instruments.

The result is a landscape where planning, governance, and lived practice often overlap without fully converging.

Within the Sustainable Cities project, this workshop is a catalyst for translating territorial insights into future planning and pilot actions.

The expectation is that what emerges here will not remain at the level of analysis, but will help inform how future interventions are framed, prioritized, and implemented across Greater Tamale and its wider network of towns.

Nyohini is not proposed as a prescriptive solution, but as an indicative site that seems to hold these interrelated dynamics particularly well and therefore offers a useful setting for further exploration.

It provides a place where governance, metabolism, public space, and service provision can be read together at a manageable scale, and where broader territorial questions can be tested without claiming to offer a universal model.

WORKSHOP

Sanitation, water, and waste management:

How to tackle the increasing issues of sanitation, water scarcity & management and & waste collection coordination?

Local economy and jobs:

How to implement cross disciplinary frugal solutions towards local economy and sustained economic participation?

QUESTIONS

Shared spaces and gender-responsive design:

How to showcase collective shared spaces & strengthen gender responsive local identities?

Institutional learning:

How to strengthen the local building capacity towards a comprehensive planning methodology?

CREDITS

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²Boundaries of Greater Tamale to be defined through a geographical vision and may include other territories such as Sagnarigu, Gurugubaani, Tunayilli and Fuo.

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WORKSHOP FORMAT

An international workshop in Northern Ghana

Les Ateliers de Maîtrise d'Œuvre Urbaine de Cergy-Pontoise (or Les Ateliers de Cergy) is a non-profit organisation. Solicited by local authorities, it has been organising innovative workshops addressing urban and regional development in France and all over the world since 1982. While Les Ateliers de Cergy remains a small organisation, its vast network of professionals, students, researchers, universities, local decision-makers and private stakeholders extends across the world.

The intensive 10-days workshop, set to be held from 29th of June to 9th of July 2026, will bring together 15 local and international professionals from diverse nationalities and disciplines to work on site in multidisciplinary teams (urban planning, geography, architecture, ecology, hydrology, engineering, agronomy, landscape design, economics, sociology, arts, etc.). Working closely with the support of and inputs from both Tamale Metropolitan District and Sagnarigu Municipal District as well as other stakeholders such as academia and civil society, these experts will work towards developing localised, innovative and actionable solutions for Greater Tamale's sustainable urban future.

At the end of the workshop, the teams will present their proposals to an international jury chaired by local authorities. The teams' projects will combine long-term visions with operational and illustrated propositions incorporating multiple scales of urban resource management, thus offering a locally grounded basis for statutory documents.

Format of the Greater Tamale workshop

The workshop will take place over a period of 10 days in Tamale, Ghana. The actual workshop is a culmination of several preliminary stages involving an international roundtable building up to the main event.

Research and preparation prior to the workshop

An international preparatory roundtable will be held online with participation from international and local experts as well as relevant stakeholders. Podcast of the roundtable will be made available, and a context document gathering all the main information on the topic of the workshop and Tamale's history and challenges will be shared with the participants prior to the workshop.

Immersion

Organised visits of the Tamale metropolis and of the focus areas, with inputs from local stakeholders, combined with thematic conferences and meetings with experts and civil society.

Teamwork and discussions

The participants will be divided in 3 different teams, with support from Les Ateliers and the local actors. An "exchange forum" allows for an open exchange with local actors and workshop partners on the progress of the teams' proposals at the half-way point of the workshop duration.

Presentation of proposals

The workshop will conclude with the presentation of the teams' proposals to a panel of decision-makers, consisting of Tamale Metropolitan District and Sagnarigu Municipal District representatives, as well as Ghanaian and international experts. The proposals will feed the Spatial Development Plan of Greater Tamale.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

This workshop is open to professionals of all ages, disciplines and nationalities, having an interest in the topic of the workshop. Town planners, designers, architects, geographers, engineers, hydrologists, artists, environmentalists, landscape designers, agronomists, entrepreneurs, journalists, etc. are welcome to apply.

Place and Dates

The workshop will take place in Tamale, Ghana, from 29th of June to 9th of July 2026.

Conditions and requirements

- Proficiency in English to effectively collaborate with international teams.
- Full availability during the workshop dates.
- Participants will be accommodated in Tamale and will work in the premises provided. All participation costs are covered, including travel to Tamale, accommodation, regional transportation, organised visits, group meals, lectures, and drawing materials. The participation is not paid.

The selection of the 15 participants will be made by the workshop's committee based on the candidates' professional capacities, experiences with similar themes, ability to communicate (language, graphic skills) and motivation.

How to apply

To apply, complete the online application form and add your CV (one or two pages) and a motivation letter outlining your interest in the workshop and the skills and experiences you bring.

www.ateliers.org/l/application-form-tamale

If you have any issues with the online application form, fill the following form and send us your documents to ghana@ateliers.org

Deadline and results

Deadline: May 3rd, 2026

The results of the selection process will be announced mid-May 2026.

Find all the links and information on the workshop page:

<https://ateliers.org/en/workshops/249/>

Do not hesitate to contact our team if you have any questions via e-mail : ghana@ateliers.org



Application form - Participant Greater Tamale International Urban Planning Workshop

Photo (optional)

Family name : _____

First name: _____

Date of birth : _____ Nationality : _____

Postal address : _____

E-mail : _____

Mobile phone: _____

Somebody to contact in case of problem: _____ Tél.: _____

Degrees: _____

Current situation: _____

Participation to other collective works: _____

How did you hear about Les Ateliers?

Former participation	
Friend/colleague	
University/professors	
Internet	
Other (please specify)	

SKILLS (FROM 0: NUL TO 4 : MASTERY)

LANGUAGES	0	1	2	3	4
English					
French					
Other (please specify)					

EXPRESSION	0	1	2	3	4
Hand drawing					
Computer drawing					

Indesign software					
Oral / written presentations					
Team work					

SPECIFIC.SKILLS	0	1	2	3	4
Urban Planning					
Design					
Economy					
Rural development					
Engineering					
Landscape design					
Sociology					
Other (please specify) :					

Describe yourself in 80 words (in English)