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Actors in the road transit of goods from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso and regional integration of WAEMU

Vincent ZOMA

Université Joseph KI-ZERBO/Department of Geography, Burkina Faso, E-mail: vincentzoma3@gmail.com

Abstract

The international road transport of goods, which accounts for 90% of trade in West Africa, should be an essential sector for the strengthening of regional integration in the area of the West African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU). This article therefore aims to analyze the roles of the main actors in the road transit of goods from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso in relation to the process of regional integration. This research is essentially based on qualitative interviews with the main actors in the field and a quantitative survey carried out among road drivers in Mali and Niger involved in the transit of goods through Burkina Faso. Overall, the analysis shows that multi-sector integration institutions, the West and Central African Ports Management Association, chambers of commerce and shippers' councils are institutional actors that have missions to promote regional integration. Truck drivers, for their part, are real players in regional integration from below. However, the security or control forces are above all those which, through their actions in the transport sector, constitute obstacles to the strengthening of the regional integration process.

Keywords: *Transport, regional integration, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, WAEMU.*

INTRODUCTION

To be competitive, several countries in the world have opted to unite within the framework of regional integration. Thus, Africa is not on the sidelines of these groupings. African societies have always organized their space to ensure exchanges between them. In recent decades, African states in general and those of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in particular, have made regional integration one of the main drivers of their economic progress. This integration aims to solve their development problems. WAEMU states have also recognized the importance of the road transport sector, which accounts for 90% of trade (WAEMU, 2017a), as a key sector for their development. Indeed, in many discourses it is not uncommon to hear: "transport and (therefore) development" (J. Debrie, 2001). They also recognized that this sector is essential for the reinforcement of their integration thanks especially to the exchanges between the landlocked countries and the coastal countries.

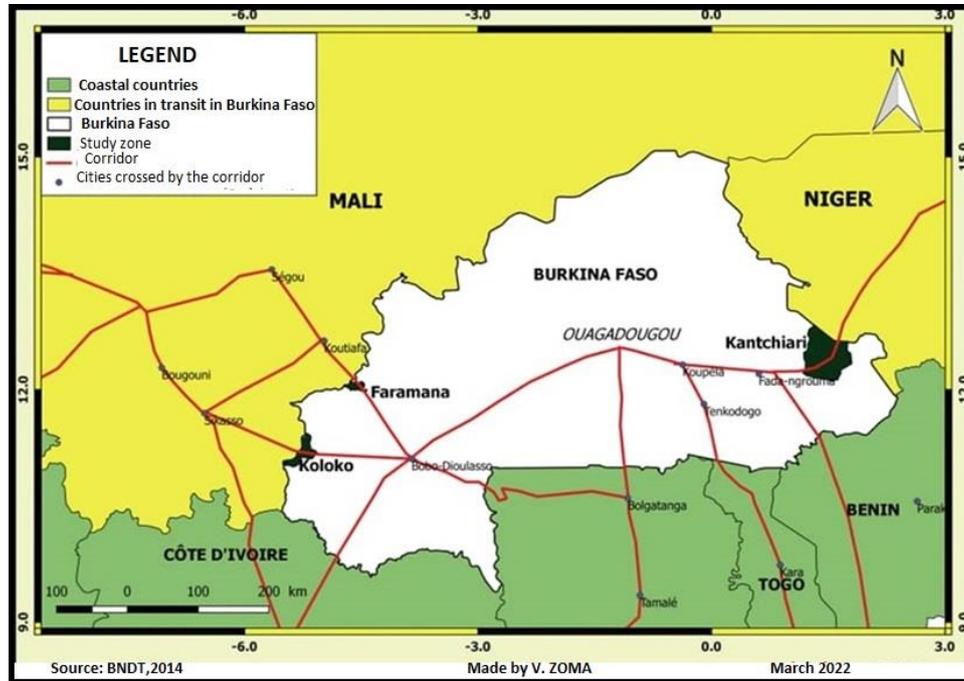
For landlocked countries, T. Noyoulewa (2009) points out that given their landlocked situation, the foreign trade of these countries is influenced by the cost of transporting their goods. While transport costs account for 10% to 15% of the cost price of goods in countries with a maritime coastline, it is around 60% in certain countries such as Burkina Faso. Landlocked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) are particularly affected by the problems of freight transport. The lack of direct access to the sea distances them from the world market and makes them dependent on neighboring countries. However, despite its situation as a landlocked country, Burkina Faso is a road transit country for the transport of goods from Mali and Niger. The transit of goods from these countries via Burkina Faso is therefore important in the context where all these countries are members of WAEMU.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the roles of the main actors in the road transit of goods from these two countries via Burkina Faso in relation to the strengthening of WAEMU integration.

1. METHODOLOGIC APPROACH

The study combines the documentary and primary data collected mainly in three border municipalities concerned by the road transit of goods from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso (map n°1).

Map 1: Mali and Niger transit data collection sites via Burkina Faso



The communes of Koloko, Faramana and Kantchiri are entry and exit points for the road transit of goods from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso. Surveys were carried out in these municipalities which house customs, police and gendarmerie checkpoints. The surveys (the sampling of which is based on data from the transport ministries) concern 5% of the total workforce (1,079) drivers of road freight transit via Burkina Faso from Mali (345) and Niger (734). Interviews were also conducted with the heads of the police, gendarmerie and customs brigades of these municipalities. We also spoke with the unions of road drivers, carriers, agents from the services in charge of the international transport of goods from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger; as well as with the heads of the transport, infrastructure and land use planning departments of WAEMU to better understand the roles of the various actors in the integration process.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This analysis addresses respectively international and regional organizations, national institutional actors and non-institutional actors in the countries concerned.

2.1. International and regional organizations and international freight transport

Several actors are involved in the institutional chain of international freight transport at the global, continental and regional levels. These are multi-sectorial bodies that work globally and some transnational structures. Thus, at the global level, the World Trade Organization (WTO) deals with the rules governing trade between countries. The main function of the WTO is to promote smooth, predictable and free trade as much as possible (H. Hammouda, 2004 & WTO, 2018). At the level of the United Nations, the World Maritime Organization also intervenes in the international transport of goods. Its role is to establish and harmonize the regulations of the States in the fields of safety and security of ships, by setting construction standards and pollution prevention from ships.

Still at the supranational level, multinational firms such as Bolloré Africa Logistics and hydrocarbon companies are players that operate in several countries. After having signed agreements with governments, these firms work in the supply chain, particularly in certain ports or in the supply of goods to countries or in the operation or sale of fuel used for the international transport of goods (J. Lombard and *al.*, 2014). Alongside them are very often banks and insurance companies. Indeed, according to K. Adegbe (2017) the banker and the marine insurer intervene in the transaction for the financing or settlement of the commercial transaction. Insurance companies provide coverage for the risk associated with the movement of goods.

Among all the actors who intervene at the supranational levels, the multi-sectoral integration organizations are the true promoters of regional integration. At the level of the African continent, the African Union (AU) aims at the integration of the continent from the regional economic communities. In West Africa, ECOWAS and WAEMU were created to promote regional integration so that they work for the facilitation of exchanges in the transport of goods with in particular the promotion of free movement, the adoption of texts for international road transport, the creation of juxtaposed checkpoints and above all the establishment of an observatory of abnormal practices in the hallways.

Beyond these multi-sectorial integration bodies, there are some transnational associations working in the international transport of goods. For example, the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa is a structure that works in the international transport of goods. It is responsible for promoting cost-effective, secure maritime transport services, working to build the capacity of the actors, sustainable financing of the maritime transport industry as well as the facilitation of transport in transit to landlocked Member States. One of these specialized structures is Union of African Shippers Councils.

Apart from this organization, it is necessary to take into account the Port Management Association of West and Central Africa. This (intergovernmental) institution plays a role in the pooling of skills and reflections on the future of ports on the West African coast : “ *its main objectives mark the political will for consultation, harmonization, integration, in a competitive industry,, underpinned by the sovereign discourses of independent states*” (J. Lombard and *al.*, 2014, p.248). Our interviews with shippers from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger also enabled us to learn of the existence of an association of shippers from landlocked countries: Association of Transport Sector Actors in Landlocked Countries of West and Central Africa (ATPSALC/WCA). It aims to establish a consultation framework on transport and logistics for the promotion of foreign trade in landlocked countries of West and Central Africa (ATPSL/AOC, 2008). This association would be an asset for the defense of the interests of landlocked countries vis-à-vis coastal countries. Periodic meetings are held between the members for a synergy of action and for more efficiency. But beyond this asset, an analysis of the establishment of this association leads us to think that the creation of this association could reveal the shortcomings of regional integration in the international freight transport sector. If all the member states of the economic integration communities applied the regional conventions, the reasons that prevailed for the creation of this association will no longer be relevant. This association can then, on the one hand, be considered as proof of the weak involvement of the various actors in the strengthening of regional integration. But on the other hand, it can be considered as an asset for regional integration because it aims to work towards compliance with conventions on the facilitation of international transport of goods and to offer a framework for meetings and exchanges between actors from landlocked countries.

Thus, at the global or regional level, multi-sectorial integration organizations such as the AU, ECOWAS, WAEMU and the Port Management Association of West and Central Africa are especially true promoters of regional integration in international freight transport. The analysis of the roles of road transit actors from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso must also take into account the main actors operating in these countries.

2.2. Multiple institutional actors at the national scales

At the WAEMU level, ministries of transport, chambers of commerce, shippers' councils, transporters' unions and control forces are institutional actors working in the road transit of the Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso.

2.2.1. Ministries of transport: weak players in regional integration

In a vast landlocked country like Mali or Niger, the competitiveness of their economy depends on the efficiency of the transport system. In this context, the ministries in charge of transport of these two countries with regard to their specifications have essentially the mission of implementing national policies in the field of transport. In Mali, according to the AFDB (2014), the main responsibilities of the ministry in charge of transport in the road transport sector are, among others:

- The development of types of transport, the development and implementation of measures aimed at ensuring the internal and external opening up of the country; -The design, construction and maintenance of roads;
- The development and control of the application of regulations in the fields of topography and cartography;
- Research and experimentation in the field of public works;
- The development and implementation of rules relating to traffic and road safety, etc.

In Niger, the Ministry of Transport in the road sector is mainly responsible for:

- Designing and implementing policy and developing the national transport plan;
- Designing and building basic infrastructure;
- Developing and apply transport regulations and control the operation of transport infrastructure (roads, dry ports, bus stations, etc.);
- Check the qualification and control the educational establishments for driving (the case of driving schools), repair and automotive expertise;
- Mobilize sufficient human, financial and material resources for the implementation of transport policies and strategies;
- Design and implement a national program for the modernization of means of transport as well as their rational management (M.T., 2017b).

The main terms of reference of these ministries of transport indicate that they make very little reference to a mission to facilitate the transport sector in connection with regional integration. However, States ratify conventions at the regional level. In addition to the ministries in charge of transport, the role of chambers of commerce and shippers' councils in the international transport of goods should be addressed.

2.2.2. Chambers of commerce and shippers' councils: players facilitating regional transport

Chambers of commerce and shippers' councils are involved in the international transport of goods. The Chambers of Commerce are the national guarantor of the Inter-State Road Transit Convention (TRIE). The TRIE is one of

the key conventions for the implementation of regional integration in the WAEMU space. As such, the Chamber of Commerce receives and manages the TRIE Guarantee Fund.

As for shippers, they are represented by companies on shippers' councils. These are the Burkinabe Council of Shippers, the Nigerien Council of Transport Users and in Mali the Malian Council of Shippers and the Malian Council of Road Carriers. According to our interviews with the managers of these structures, their explanations corroborate those of H. Cissé (2005), M. Sounouvou (2007) and USAID (2010) according to which, the mission of the shippers' councils consists, among other things, of researching, studying and implementing all measures making it possible to improve the efficiency of transport. The establishment of these structures should enable the various economic operators in the transport sector to better assess their needs and problems and to work effectively to resolve these problems in conjunction with the administrative authorities.

Overall, the main objective of setting up these structures is to allow shippers to group together, to combine their energies in order to build power, a negotiating force to obtain at the lowest cost and in the best possible delays of efficient transport services. They aim to promote and encourage an integrated maritime development program in the region. Chambers of commerce and shippers' councils participate also to the facilitation of regional transport because they house some representatives of the Organizations for the fight against Abnormal Practices (OAP) on the corridors of the regional space.

Like the chambers of commerce and structures of shippers who work for the interests of shippers in landlocked countries, we are interested in trade unions in the goods transit sector from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso.

2.2.3. Absence of trade union coordination: a handicap for regional integration

The main trade unions operating in the road transport of goods in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are partly made up of carriers. These are the Union of Goods Transporters of Niger (UGTN), the Organization of Road Transporters of Faso (ORTRAF) and the National Union of Road, Urban-Interurban and International Transporters of Mali (NURUIT-Mali), etc. In addition to carriers, there are also road driver unions. These are the Union of Road Drivers of Burkina Faso (URDB), the National Union of Road Drivers and Drivers of Mali (NURDD-Mali), the National Union for the Coordination of Road Drivers and Carriers (NUCRDC), the National Syndicate of Road Drivers of Niger (NSRDN), etc.

The road transport unions are responsible for finding goods for trucks, to represent and defend the interests of all transporters in their country (O. Sigué, 2015). Thus, when it makes an inventory of the available freight and distributes it, the syndicate plays an intermediary role. However, there is no union of trucking unions at the regional level to defend the interests of their members. Each union has a national competence, even if the various actors at the national level often meet during the meetings organized by WAEMU.

Despite the holding of these meetings, all the unions of carriers, road drivers and even freight forwarders confirm the persistence of the non-application of transport facilitation agreements in the regional space. However, the establishment of coordination at the regional level would facilitate the exercise of the profession of international freight drivers because currently these intermediary actors only have national competence. In addition to this shortcoming, transport unions and even drivers have practices contrary to the promotion of regional integration. Instead of defending the interests of their members, these unions levy mandatory taxes on drivers at each passage. The absence of regional coordination in this sector favors these abusive and compulsory levies which are in no

way assets for the strengthening of regional integration. The Directive N°08/2005/CM/WAEMU and Decision No. 15/2005/CM/WAEMU of December 16, 2005 indicate that the only forces authorized to carry out checks on inter-State roads are Customs, the Police, the Gendarmerie, Waters and Forests and the sanitary, phytosanitary and zoo-sanitary control services (WAEMU, 2006). The taxes imposed by the truck drivers' unions are deplorable not only by their illegal character but above all by their compulsory character; because union membership cannot be compulsory. The latter, who should be working to defend the interests of drivers, are themselves a real problem. They thus hinder the ongoing regional integration process.

Apart from all these structures at the level of the countries which are actors in the road transit of goods from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso, it is necessary to analyze among the institutional actors the role of the control forces.

2.2.4. Control Forces and Obstacles to Regional Integration

According to Directive No. 08/2005/CM/WAEMU and Decision No. 15/2005/CM/WAEMU of December 16, 2005, the only forces authorized to carry out checks on the inter-state highways in the region are customs officers, police, gendarmerie, water and forests, sanitary, phytosanitary and zoo-sanitary control services. Their presence on the corridors should make it possible to ensure the safety of transport players and to ensure that these players comply with the various regulations in force in the regional or national space. But, in general, these actors in practice constitute real obstacles to regional integration. According to a study by IMF and *al.* (2008), the customs of the landlocked countries of the WAEMU remain focused solely on their mission of collecting duties and taxes. Their mission of trade facilitation (which is closely related to regional integration) is therefore much neglected. USAID (2004) reveals that the two major customs problems are corruption and lack of clarity. At customs stops in the interior of the country (Mali for example) and at border crossings, customs officers collect state fees which are fair as well as their negotiated "facilitation fees" which vary around 11,500 FCFA per transaction. Before arriving at the border, a trucker can pass up to five customs posts inside the country. At each stop, customs officers pretend to check documents that may or may not exist in order to collect their facilitation fees. When we asked the question to the heads of customs posts in the three border communes of Burkina Faso with Mali and Niger, they refuted these facts. Yet 80% of our respondents complain of harassment by the security forces, citing customs, the police and the gendarmerie.

In addition, in the localities crossed, drivers are very often obliged to pay parking or territorial crossing taxes and tolls. It should be pointed out that with the exception of toll charges which are a contribution for the construction and maintenance of roads, the other two taxes are illegal. During our interviews with the truck drivers' unions, some drivers and their apprentices told us that some municipalities force them to pay taxes (1000 FCFA for example for parking in a municipality in Burkina Faso).

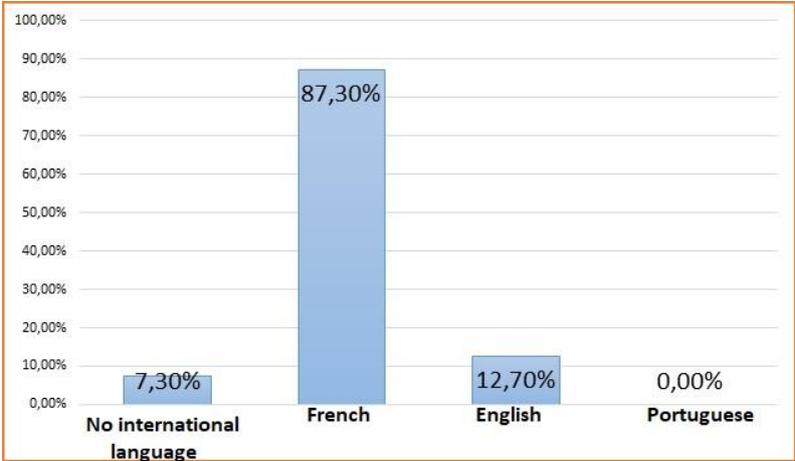
In general, according to the 26th report of the OAP (WAEMU, 2017b), on average, on a corridor of the WAEMU space, a driver with a truck in good standing is checked 20 times per trip, i.e. (07) times more than the community standard which is 3 checkpoints per corridor, i.e. two (02) checkpoints over 100 km, i.e. 1 checkpoint over every 50 km. Still according to this report, the average of illicit collections along a corridor of the WAEMU space is 26,562 FCFA. One of the consequences of road harassment in the field of road transit is undoubtedly the increase in the cost transport which does not contribute to the strengthening of integration. Regarding landlocked countries, B. Steck (2015, p.455-456) "*it is urgent, when it is officially stated that the cost of transport can represent up to 77% of the value of flows destined for landlocked territories*".

After analyzing the role of these institutional actors, it is important to take into account certain non-institutional actors who intervene in road transit from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso.

2.3. Road drivers, non-institutional actors, real actors of “regional integration from below”

Freight forwarders, *coxers*, carriers and drivers are non-institutional actors of road transit in landlocked WAEMU countries. The freight forwarder is a professional responsible for carrying out the formalities allowing the goods to cross the border of the country. As for the coxer, he is also a non-professional road transport intermediary. He is responsible for finding the goods for the drivers or connecting the driver with the owner (the shipper). As far as the carrier is concerned, he is responsible for physically moving the goods from point A to point B. All these non-institutional actors are then important for the international transport of goods. They contribute to transnational exchanges. Between different countries. They are essential for the strengthening of regional integration even if in practice, the analysis of their role, and interviews with the unions of these actors, they are above all not currently concerned for the regional objective. Alongside these non-institutional actors, it is important to take into account road drivers because they are the ones most often encountered on corridors across all WAEMU countries. Through their multiple trips on the corridors of the regional space and by staying in several localities, these drivers are real actors of regional integration. Indeed, one of the important elements in the analysis of regional integration is undoubtedly languages. In the context of international transport, languages are powerful tools for regional integration because, in addition to their ability to bring people together, they promote commercial exchanges between populations. According to the results of our surveys, two main international languages (French and English) are used in road transit from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso (Graph 1).

Graph 1: International languages spoken by drivers

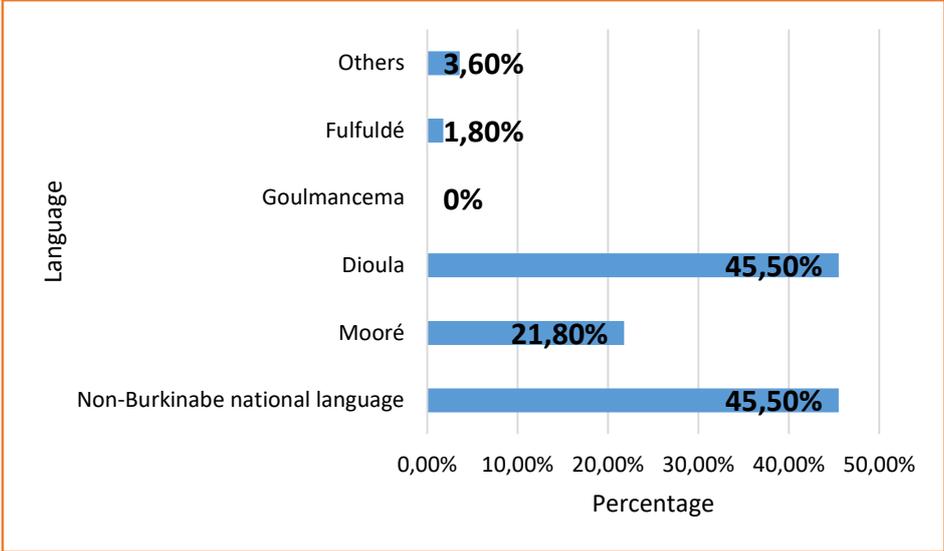


Source: fieldwork, V. Zoma

Graph 1 reveals that 87.30% of drivers involved in road transit from Mali and Niger through Burkina Faso have French as their first international language, followed by English (12.70%). These results can be explained by the fact that 85.5% of drivers in transit in Burkina Faso come from WAEMU member countries which share French as an official language. The 14.5% are nationals who are only members of ECOWAS (outside WAEMU). Those who speak English come from Ghana which a country is hosting a port used by Mali and Niger. These results show that there is a close relationship between languages and the ongoing regional integration process in the WAEMU space (where French is the first international language spoken). This situation is justified beyond the traditional process of regional integration (process qualified as integration from the “top” or through regional institutions), by the colonial heritage maintained by the political authorities of the new independent States.

Ghanaian drivers speak English because Ghana is also a former British colony. As for the rate of 7.30% of drivers who do not speak any international language, the low levels of education of drivers (according to our study, 61.8% of drivers have a low level of education) could be an explanation. But beyond international languages, we are entitled to wonder whether local languages are not real factors of regional integration (graph n°2).

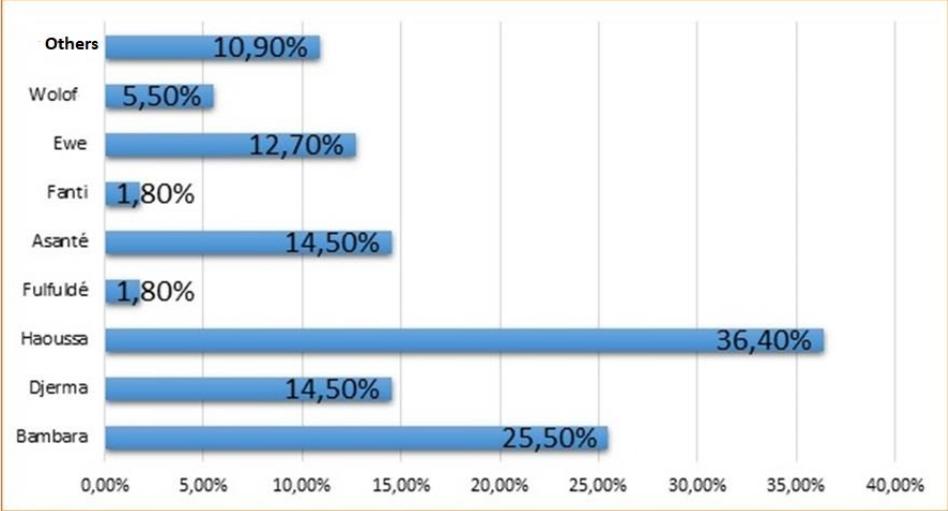
Graph2: National languages spoken by drivers in Burkina Faso



Source: fieldwork, V. Zoma

45.50% of drivers speak Dioula and 45.50% speak national languages not spoken in Burkina Faso.

Graph 3: National languages spoken by non-Burkinabe drivers



Source: fieldwork, V. Zoma

Graph n°3 shows that among those who do not speak languages known in Burkina Faso, 36.40% speak Hausa followed by Bambara (25.5%), l' Asanté (14.50%) and Ewe (12.7%) in fourth position. These languages are spoken respectively in Niger, Mali, Ghana and Togo. The ports of Ghana and Togo are used to open up Mali and Niger so that the probability of meeting drivers from or to these countries is high. Thus, the results presented through graphs n°2 and n°3 make it possible to conjecture that language is an essential factor of regional integration. Indeed, Dioula is the national language of Burkina Faso spoken by the drivers involved in road transit from Mali and Niger via Burkina Faso. Also, we simultaneously observe that this group of drivers has more than 20 years of experience in the profession (according to our study). This is partly explained by the fact that, when the driver

spends several years in the profession, the probability that he understands the local languages is high. Dioula is also the most spoken language because it is a commercial language which facilitates trade within the region. The example of Dioula proves that local languages are a factor of regional integration. Our results corroborate those of P. Somé (2010) according to I. Igué (2010). The author relates that:

Dioula has some similarities with English in terms of commerce and communication. There was a time when we didn't want to hear about it, then another when we can't live without it. The lesson to be learned is that we cannot integrate peoples, their cultures and activities without renunciation or sacrifice. Language is the first vector of integration. In the case of West Africa, we integrate at the top, in English or French, convenient languages for writing texts. However, "integration from below" goes through local languages (I. Igué, 2010, p.77).

The example of the Dioula shows that language would be a key factor in regional integration from below in the WAEMU space.

CONCLUSION

It emerges from this analysis that, in addition to the multi-sectorial integration institutions and the West and Central African Ports Management Association, which have a mission to promote regional integration at the supranational levels, most of the national institutional actors involved in road transit, work in one way or another to strengthen regional integration. This is done through certain transport facilitation missions, the exercise of their professions and especially thanks to languages. Truck drivers who regularly travel through the countries of the region are above all key players in regional integration. They thus participate in the structuring of the regional space thanks to languages but also and above all thanks to the goods they transport. However, the study reveals that the ministries in charge of transport and a large part of the intermediary actors give low priority to regional integration. The security or control forces, together with the transporters' and drivers' unions, are currently the main obstacles to strengthening regional integration in road freight transit. However, the transport sector should contribute to strengthening regional integration, particularly for the three WAEMU landlocked countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

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