

It is not always acknowledged that development is a disruptive, sometimes irrational, process. My portrait of a changing Dakar spotlights these aspects. My pictures document a disquieting scenery where the urban sprawl advances relentlessly, offering variegated combinations of cement, laterite and people involved in an intense socio-economic transition. This transition includes a new highway that rips through the centre of Dakar and leads to Senegalese hinterland where a thirsty countryside spreads as far as the eye can see.

In Senegal, this difficult task has the texture of concrete and the smell of smoky asphalt struggling to conquer the sand. I photographed this project four months between 2007 and the end of 2008. In 2011 the thirty four kilometres motorway have been completed with new roundabouts, interchanges, viaducts and bridges. The engineer of this vast infrastructure is a 'slimmed-down' state that is still trying to pursue a 1960s development dream.

Dakar is now a huge, surreal building site. The Senegalese relate to the new road, and its promises, in many ways. Basically, they adjust to it by seeking their space in a changing environment. While some people have directly occupied the new space, others reinvent a daily living at its margins. Finally, while all around people bargain, build, chat, do the laundry, have a rest, play, run, walk, wait, some also find a sandy corner to unroll their small carpet and engage in the five-minutes dialog with God.

Although "development" is generally referred to as a positive step forward towards "civilization", disruption and insecurity characterise the capital as it undergoes this transition.

What my portrait suggests is at the very centre an open question: are the inhabitants being crushed and swept away by this complex transition or are they slowly taking possession of the new space?