

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETING STRATEGY OF LAND PROMOTERS IN KORHOGO

DOSSO Ismaïla, Department of Geography, Université Peleforo GON COULIBALY, Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire.

KONE Kapiefolo Julien, Department of Geography, Université Peleforo GON COULIBALY, Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire.

COULIBALY Ibrahima, Department of Languages (English Section), Ecole Normale Supérieure, Côte d'Ivoire.

Abstract:

Since the end of the military-political crisis from 2002 to 2011, the city of Korhogo witnessed rapid population growth (RGPH, 2014; 2021) and urban expansion that is gradually engulfing the peri-urban area. The capture of land rents has led to the emergence of several land promotions companies in the city of the same name. This dynamic in the land economy is taking place in a context of ICT democratisation and the digitalisation of economic activities (Dosso, 2021). What is the contribution of digital technology to the marketing strategies of land promoters operating in Korhogo? This study aims to understand the role of ICT in the land economy in Korhogo. It shows that land promoters have become privileged users of ICT. Indeed, 88.5% of the land promotions companies surveyed are users of digital marketing. Digital tools contribute to the efficiency of the land economy and accelerate the commercialisation of rural land, which is gradually being swallowed up by urbanisation. In addition, several land promoters have become drivers of spontaneous urbanisation by engaging in unapproved land subdivision. This unplanned transformation of rural areas deprives neo-urban neighbourhoods of basic social services. Consequently, the urbanisation of peri-urban rural areas must be a planned action that takes into account the future of the populations affected.

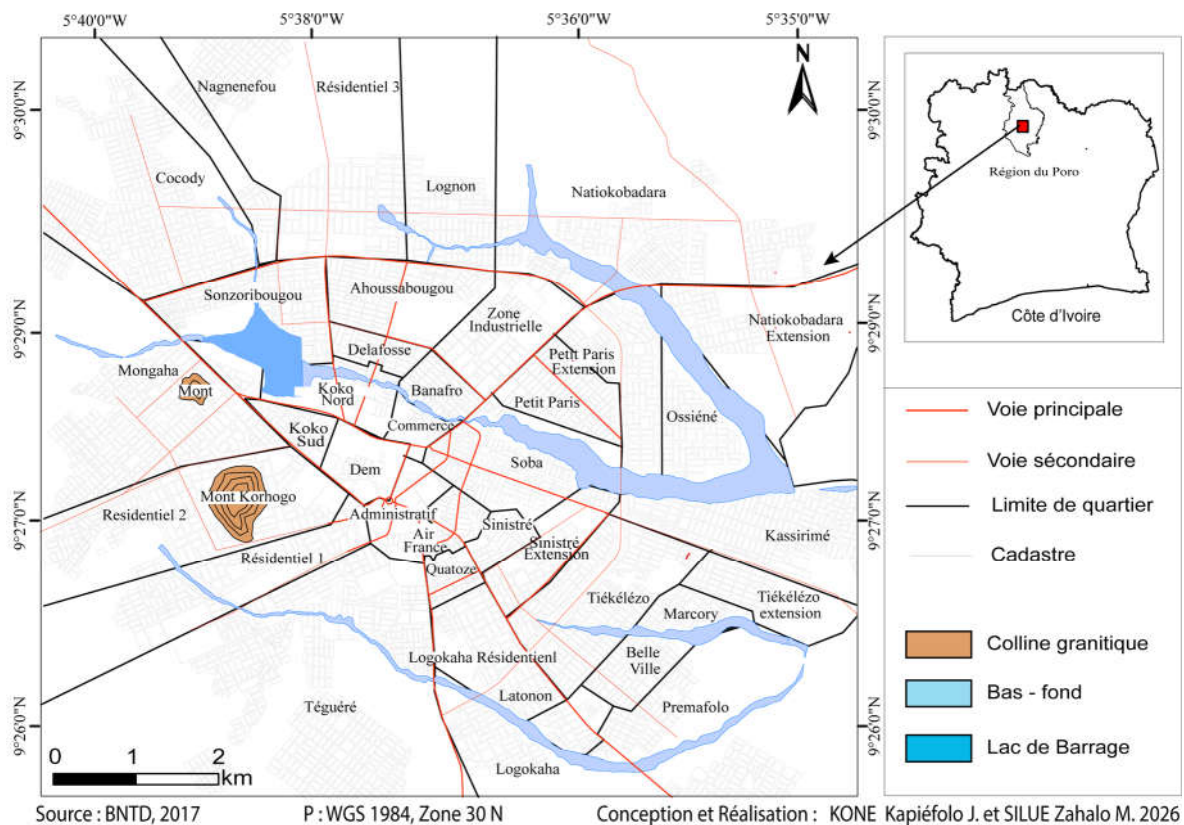
Keywords: ICT, Digital Marketing, Land, Peri-urban areas, Urban-rural relations

Introduction

From 2007 to 2021, the population of the town of Korhogo increased by xx% (RGPH, 2007; 2021). This demographic change has led to accelerated urbanisation and the sprawl of the city of Korhogo, which is gradually engulfing the peri-urban rural area. As a result, the city is facing an exploding demand of land for construction. The dynamism of the land economy is driving the emergence of numerous land promoters in Korhogo. Operating in a context of ICT

democratisation and integration into commercial practices, these actors specialising in the marketing of rural and peri-urban areas are called upon to implement digital technology in their marketing strategies. This commercial technique is defined as all actions planned with the aim of promoting the offer in order to win and retain customers. When digital technology is used as a means of promoting the commercial offer, it is referred to as digital marketing. What is then the contribution of digital technology to the marketing strategies of land promoters in Korhogo? This study analyses the digital marketing practices of land promoters. It aims to understand the role of ICT in the relationship between Korhogo and its peri-urban area. It contributes to our understanding of the role of digital technology in the evolution of urban-rural relations.

Figure 1 : Presentation of the study area



1. Data and Methods

To carry out this study, we collected data from the web, followed by a field survey. The web research consisted of consulting websites to collect data on land promoters in Korhogo who use digital marketing. It was conducted on four digital platforms, namely Facebook, Google, Jumiadeal and Bings, in February 2026. We chose these platforms because they are the most popular websites for web research in Côte d'Ivoire. Technically, the experiment consisted of running several queries on these platforms and performing a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results displayed (see Table 1).

Table 1 : Liste of queries and digital platforms surveyed

Platforms surveyed	Facebook.com	Google.ci	Jumiadeals.ci	Bing.ci
queries				
« House for rent in Korhogo »	X		X	
« Land for sale in Korhogo »	X		X	
« House for sale in Korhogo »	X	X	X	X

Source : Our Surveys, 2024

The web experience enabled us to compile a list of land promotion companies using the digital technology in their sales strategy and to observe their visibility on social media. We were thus able to draw up a provisional list of land promotion companies operating in Korhogo. This list was then supplemented by field surveys in different neighbourhoods of the city.

During this second step of our study, we visited the Regional Office of the Ministry of Construction and Urbanisation (MCLU) and land promotion agencies. These activities aimed to collect data on the number of land promoters based in Korhogo, telephone numbers, gender, location, areas of operation, date of establishment of the agency, nature of activities carried out, use of ICT in the agency's operations, administrative status and number of employees. To collect data on the use of ICT among land promoters, we observed whether they use personal websites, email, social media profiles, and their agency's access to the internet. This data was collected using a questionnaire completed by 26 land promoters' agencies.

With their collaboration, we conducted an opinion survey of 155 prospects and customers to find out the role of ICT in the effectiveness of marketing strategy. This survey was bimodal because the survey population was interviewed face-to-face and online on the KOBOTOOL platform. Users were asked the following question: 'How did you get to know your land promotion agency? They were then given a choice of the following answers: via the web, through an acquaintance, by passing by the agency, thanks to a street advertisement (posters). This sample was obtained using the reasoned choice method. During this bimodal survey, customers and prospects who agreed to take part in the online questionnaire or face-to-face interview were interviewed. The composition of the sample surveyed is as follows (see Table 2).

Table 1 : Population surveyed in Korhogo by gender and educational level

Level of Education \ Gender	Gender		TOTAL
	Female	Male	
No Schooling	20	21	41
Primary	5	12	17
Secondary	10	23	33
Higher	15	49	64
TOTAL	50	105	155

Source : Our Surveys, 2025

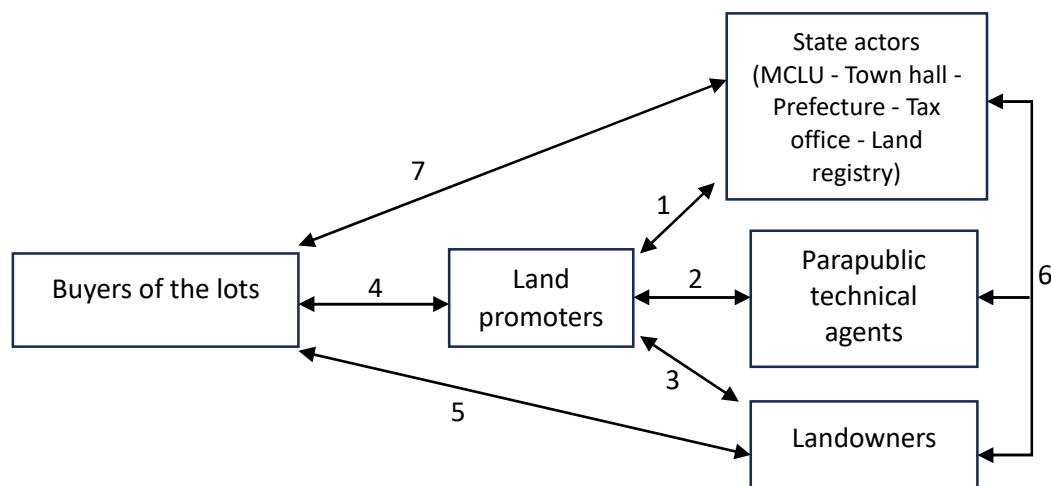
Although this sample is not mathematically representative of the potential market for land promoters in Korhogo, it has the advantage of revealing consumer habits with regard to the process of searching for information on land products. Semi-structured interviews with land promoters made it possible to identify the different links of the property value chain, understand how they use digital tools in their marketing strategies, and gather their impressions of the contribution these tools make to the efficiency of their business. Collaboration with these stakeholders made it possible to assess the contribution of ICT to the functioning of the land economy in Korhogo.

Visits to the MCLU Regional Office enabled data to be collected on housing developments underway in rural and peri-urban areas of Korhogo. This data includes the name, location, developer and year of the development. It was combined with satellite imagery to map Korhogo's urban growth. The satellite images used were captured by the LANDSAT 9 OLI satellite on 31 December 2014 and 5 March 2024. The mapping and processing of the satellite images was carried out using QGIS 3.22.16 GIS and the SPC (Semi-Automatic Classification) extension. The questionnaire was analysed using Excel spreadsheets.

2. Results

3.1 Stakeholders in the land economy in Korhogo

A number of different types of actors have been observed in the process of rural land fragmentation and commercialization. The various links in the property value chain are represented in the following model (see Figure 1).

Figure 2: Operating model for the links in the urban land value chain in Korhogo

- 1; 2: Subdivision management
- 3: Land acquisition
- 4: Land transactions
- 5: Acquisition of village certification
- 6: Authorisation and compliance control of the subdivision
- 7: Acquisition of land title or ACD (Final Concession Order)

Source : Our surveys, 2025

The land economy involves actors with diverse profiles. Each category of actor is involved in specific links in the land value chain. This activity is mainly driven by two categories of actors: state actors and private actors. State actors are the regulators of the land economy. These include the Regional Office of the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning (MCLU), Korhogo Town Hall, Korhogo Prefecture, the Land Registry and the Land Conservation Department of the Tax Office. These actors authorise, control and validate the administrative compliance of land subdivision operations initiated by private actors (1; 6; 7). Several private actors drive the land market, namely landowners, technical operators and land promoters. Landowners are indigenous people who hold customary titles (3; 5). The land offered for sale was originally used for agricultural purposes.

Technical operators are service providers who are essential to land subdivision operations. This group consists of certified surveyors, certified urban planners and topographers. They are responsible for subdividing plots of land in accordance with urban planning standards established by the Government. They work on behalf of landowners and property promoters (2; 6). The latter are legal entities whose business is the sale of land and properties. They are responsible for acquiring rural plots, financing and managing subdivision

work, marketing plots, and managing and selling land assets. After signing contracts with landowners, they commission the subdivision and sale of lots. They also ensure the distribution of profits among the various players in the property value chain (1; 2; 3; 4). Land promoters include both small entrepreneurs and large and medium-sized companies with premises in Korhogo. They are the main drivers of the land market in Korhogo. They operate on subdivided land on the periphery of the town of Korhogo, Karakoro, Tioniaradougou and Sinematiali. Thus, the activities of land promoters are concentrated in peri-urban areas. Due to the commercial competition between property promoters, marketing is essential to their business operations.

3.2 Digital marketing practices among land promotion companies

Through fieldwork and online research, the following companies were identified:

Table 2 : Land promotion companies identified in Korhogo according to economic and marketing model

	Virtual Promoters	Mixed promoter (physical + virtual)	Non-digitalised promoter
Social Reason	1. TIEF Immobilier 2. Ivoire concept immobilier 3. Sozabat multiservices 4. BSCI Sarl (Billion Services-Ci) 5. LBCK-IMMOBILIER 6. Chap chap immobilier 7. SN- Agence Immobilière du Nord 8. Samad Habitat Immobilier du Nord 9. KC immobilier et services 10. Universal Construction of Africa 11. Pro-immobillier korhogo 12. C.A.S (Entreprise et services immobiliers) 13. Ivoire Concept immobilier 14. ETRAKO-BTP 15. Ivoire concept immobilier 16. Mano Busines	1. PoroHabitat Immobilier 2. Kolotcholoma Group 3. Nord Services 4. Cool Service 5. Savane immobilier 6. SOMMET + MULTISERVICES 7. ST-Immobilier et Services	1. KM Immobilier 2. SO.GIM.CI 3. Nasra immobilier
Total	16	7	3
(%)	61,5%	27%	11,5%

Source : Our Survey, septembre 2025

This non-exhaustive list presents the land promoters operating in Korhogo who could be identified through their online advertisements and branding. Furthermore, during telephone conversations with these promoters, it was discovered that some of them did not have any offices. Their businesses are exclusively virtual. This field survey and web research identified 22 land promoters divided into three categories based on their economic and marketing models.

With 61.5% of the workforce, virtual promoters are the most numerous, followed by mixed promoters (27%) and non-digital promoters (11.5%). Thus, digital marketing users account for 88.5% of the workforce. This overwhelming majority shows that the use of digital technology has become the norm among land promoters in Korhogo. Those surveyed say they use ICT because it allows them to quickly reach a large number of customers. In practice, digital technology is used to publish advertisements on social media, as shown in the screenshots below (see photo board 1).

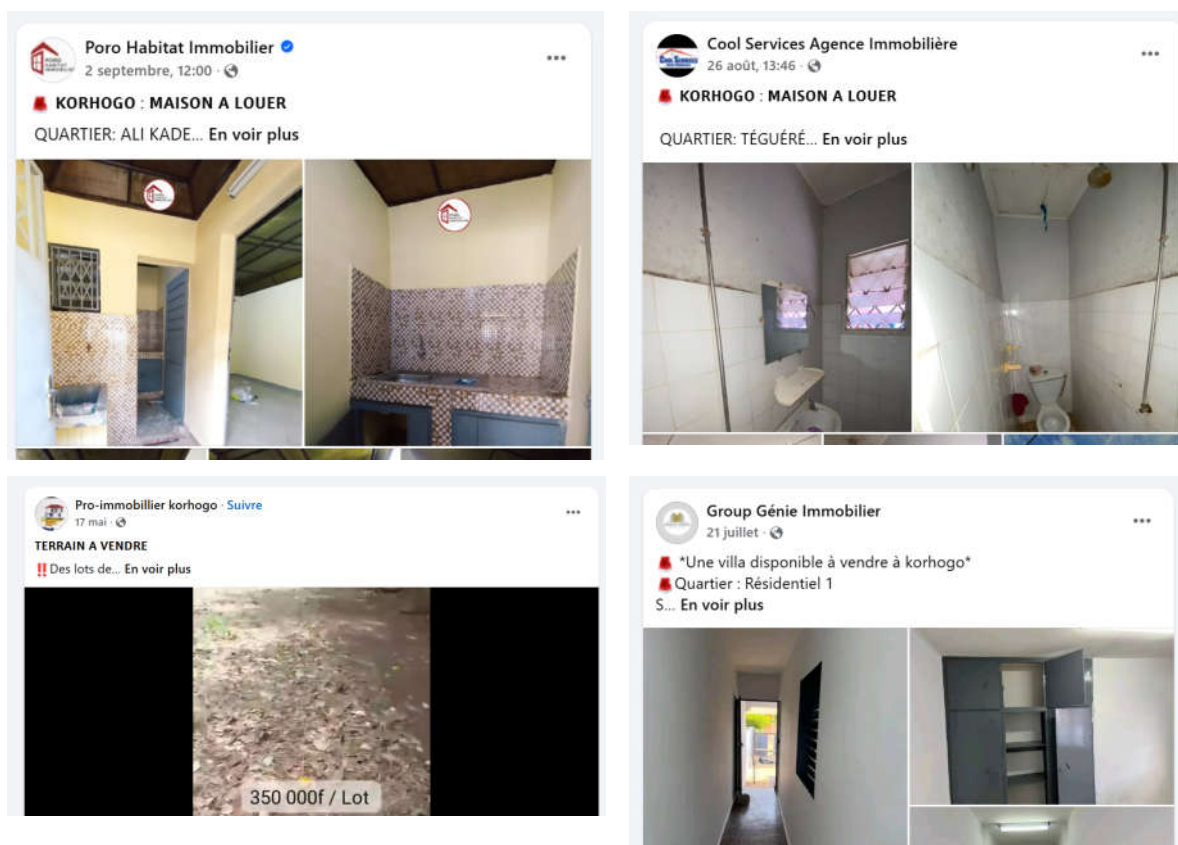


Photo board 1: Some screenshots of commercial offers from property promoters on Facebook

Source: Research via Facebook, September 6 2025 from 07:30 to 7:41

All of the developers surveyed said they use Facebook exclusively for digital advertising. This choice could be explained by Facebook's accessibility, its high impact in Korhogo, and its simplicity of use, which does not require any particular computer skills.

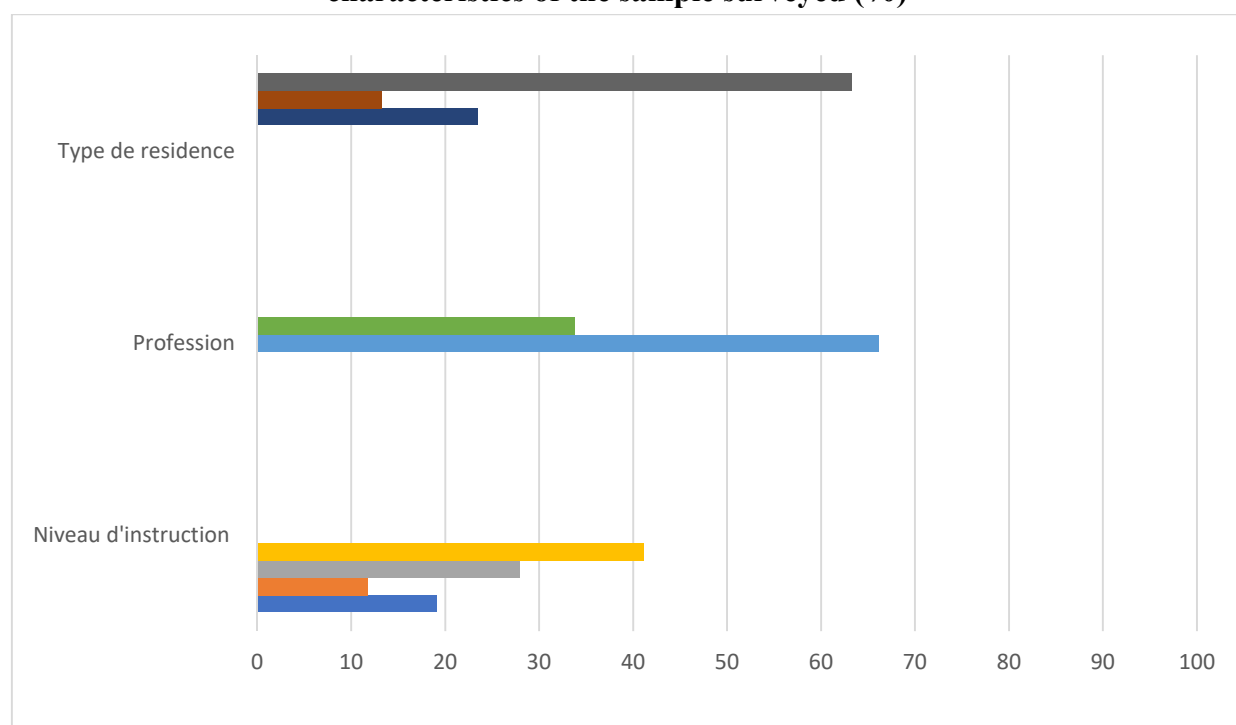
Virtual agents exclusively advertise their services on the web, and when clients contact them, they meet with them and then take them directly to the property they are interested in. This technique allows virtual agents to avoid the operating costs associated with setting up an office, such as rent, electricity, office staff, and even taxes. The presence of virtual developers shows

that with a mobile phone and an internet connection, it is possible to set up an agency without any other form of legal existence.

3.3 Mixed penetration of digital marketing in the land sector

A survey of a sample of 155 prospective customers of land promoters in Korhogo yielded the following results regarding the penetration of these economic operators (see Figure 2).

Figure 3 : Use of land promoter services according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample surveyed (%)



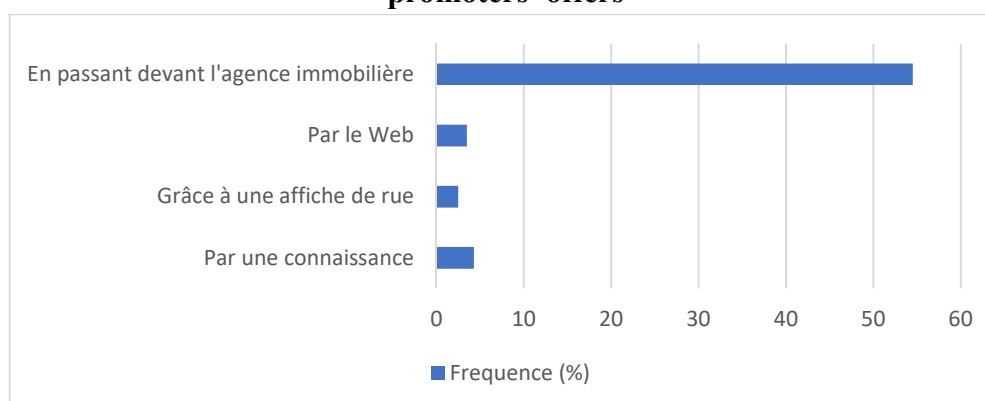
Legend:

- Level of education : ■ Non scolarisé ■ Primaire ■ Secondaire ■ Superieur
- Profession : ■ Libérale ■ Salarié
- Type of residence : ■ Quartiers Residentiels ■ Quartiers populaires du centre-ville ■ Quartiers populaires peripheriques

Source : Our Survey, 2025

Out of 155 people surveyed, 87 said they did not use the services of property dealers, while 68 said they did use a property dealer to purchase land or find a house to rent. Thus, 63.23% of these property dealer's customers reside in working-class neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city. This finding is justified by the fact that this type of neighbourhood is located on the urban fringe of Korhogo and is home to the majority of newly built houses. The majority of these clients are professionals, and 80.88% of land promoters' clients have a school education. This is because this socio-demographic category corresponds to the emerging middle class in Korhogo. The following graph shows the communication channels used to gain access to land promoters' services (see Figure 3).

Figure 4 : Channels through which users claim to have learned about their property promoters' offers

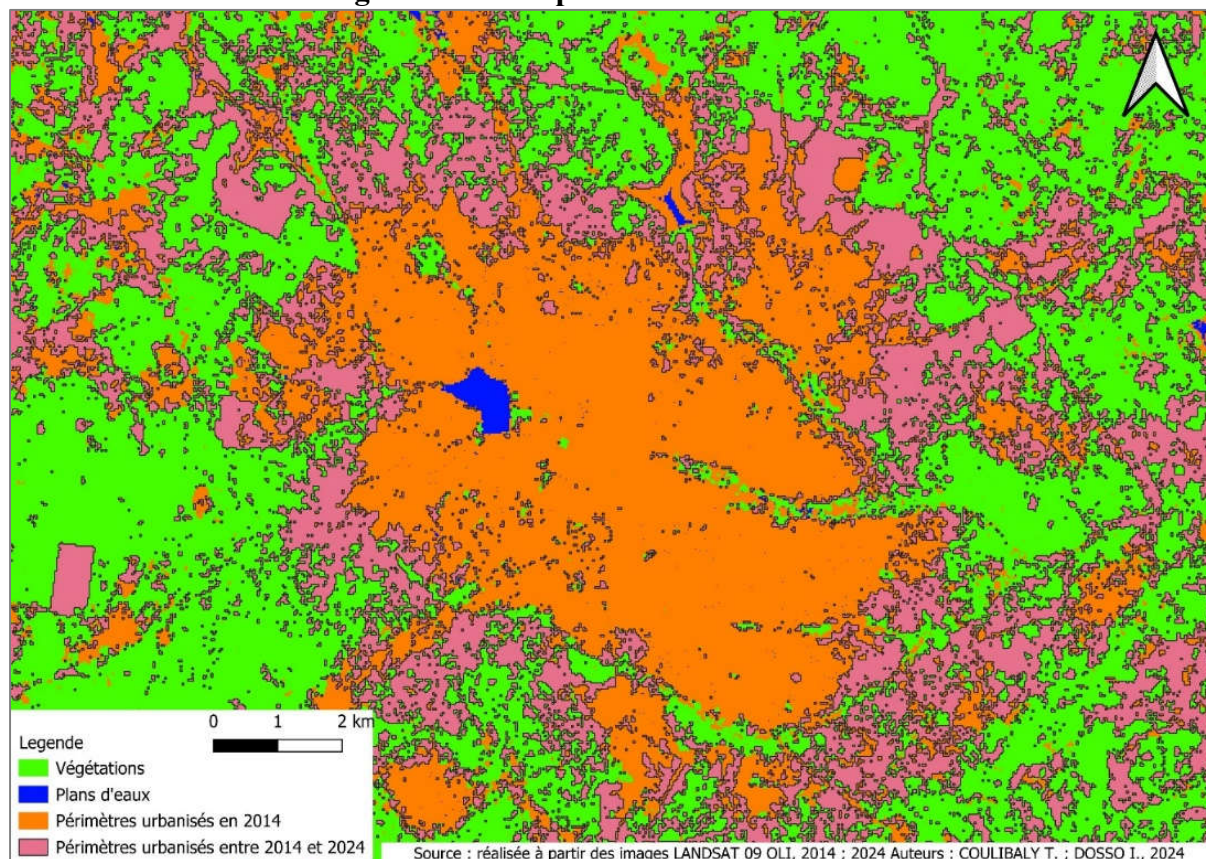


Source : Our Survey, 2025

Even though the majority of customers are educated, written and/or digital sources of information (web and posters) are rarely used in the process of researching information on land promoters' offers. This observation shows a relative weakness in the penetration power of digital marketing. This observation is no exception to the rule of oral tradition among the local population. However, given its widespread use in the land sector, digital marketing has become an essential tool for land promoters and property agents in Korhogo, contributing to the advancement of the urban front.

3.4 Urban expansion and agricultural decline in rural areas

The dynamic land market is accelerating the consumption of rural land by the city of Korhogo. The figure below shows the evolution of the urban perimeter between 2014 and 2024 (see Figure 4).

Figure 5: Urban perimeter in 2024

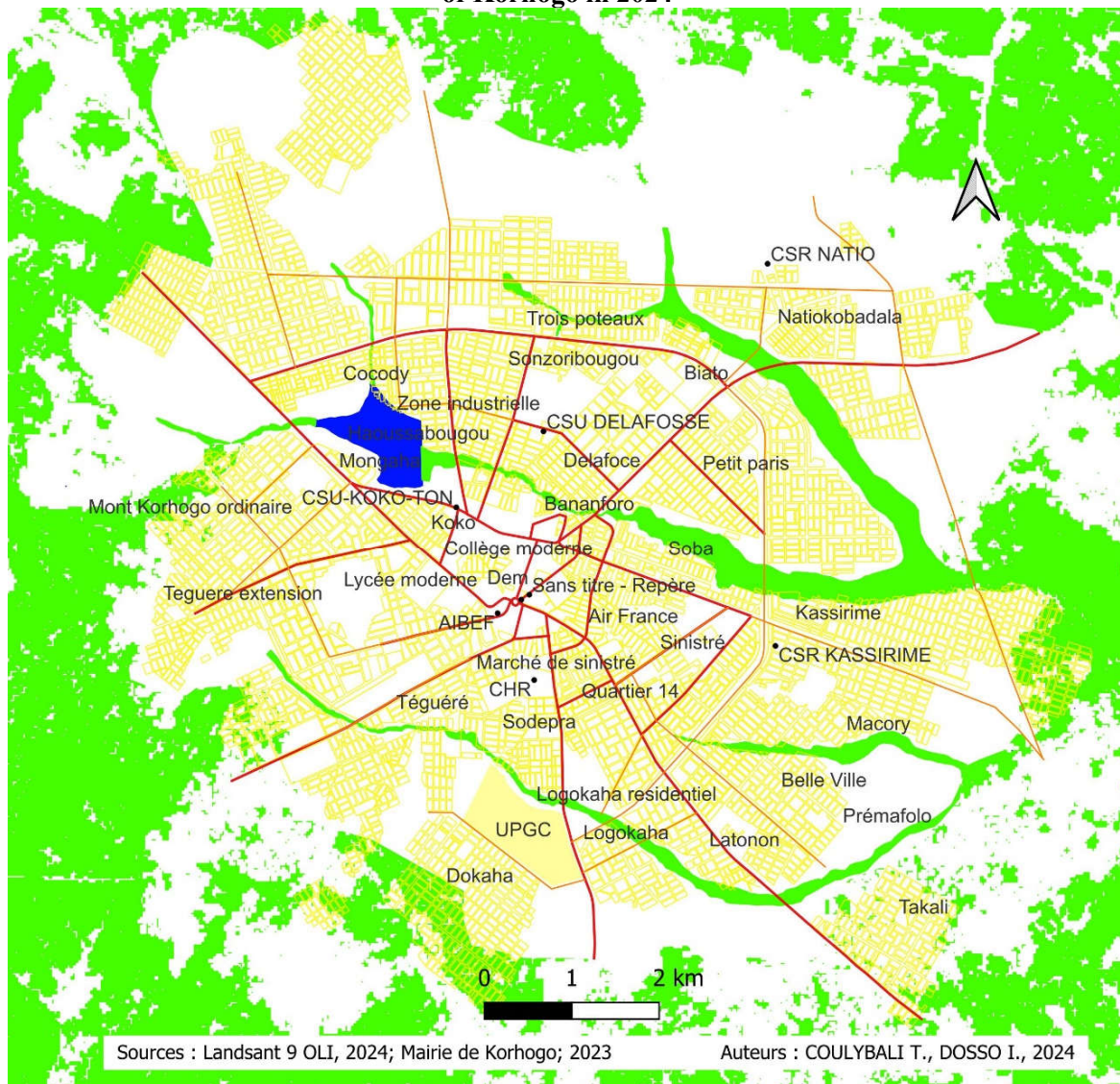
Source : Our survey, 2024

The map shows an accelerated transformation of agricultural land into housing developments. In the space of a decade, the urban perimeter of the town of Korhogo has increased by more than 25%. The urban front is advancing in all cardinal directions. It is particularly active in the direction of the villages of Karakoro and Tioroniaradougou, which are satellite localities located in the south of Korhogo. By accelerating the development and sale of rural properties, the marketing activities of land promoters are creating a predatory link between Korhogo and its rural periphery. As a result, the peri-urban area of Korhogo has become a zone of gradual transformation from rural to urban. This change in the geographical reality has repercussions on access to basic urban services.

3.5 Spontaneous urbanization of areas targeted by land promoters and difficult access to basic urban services

The rapid transformation of peri-urban rural areas is accelerating the phenomenon of spontaneous urbanisation, as some of the new housing projects are not listed in the Korhogo Town Council's master plan. The following figure shows the discrepancy between the actual urban perimeter and the municipality's records (see Figure 5).

Figure 6: Recognised urban perimeter and unrecognised housing areas by the municipality of Korhogo in 2024



Legende

- Equipements socio-sanitaires
- Routes non bitumées
- Route bitumées
- Lotissements non repertoriés par la mairie de Korhogo
- Lotissements repertoriés par la mairie de Korhogo
- périmètres boisés
- Lac du Barrage de Koko

Source : Our survey, 2023 ;2024

These observations show that spontaneous urbanisation creates blind spots for the municipality. These are mainly located on the urban periphery. The uneven distribution of social and health facilities shows that these unrecognized areas are served by basic urban services. Thus, property promoters who undertake unapproved housing projects have become drivers of uncontrolled urbanisation.

4. Discussions

4.1 Digital technology strengthens the sales force of property promoters, making digital transformation a development imperative for local authorities.

The study shows that land promoters have become privileged users of ICT. Digital tools contribute to their commercial efficiency and accelerate the marketing of rural land, which is gradually being swallowed up by urbanization. Indeed, digital inclusion makes it possible to quickly reach several potential buyers, thereby increasing the bargaining power of land promoters. Malherbe (2002) showed that the advent of the internet has led to the development of services that better meet consumer expectations. Consumers can now carry out transactions without going through a land promoter, access price comparison and property valuation tools, and take virtual tours of properties that may interest them. This new way of searching saves time and allows for the full promotion of properties (Malherbe, 2002, p. 37).

Digital technology also facilitates the practice of certain professions in the property sector. These include archiving and managing property assets, geolocation, managing customer databases, collaborating with partners outside one's local area, etc. Malherbe (2002) explains that “For promoters, setting up a website makes it possible to offer a wider range of housing options, facilitate their marketing, and reach potential customers who are far away or outside the region. Finally, the use of the Internet to supply the construction sector could lead to a drop in construction prices thanks to better functioning of supply and demand.” (Malherbe, 2002, p. 37). It is becoming clear that digital transformation is increasing the commercial efficiency of property promoters. As a result, digital tools are contributing to the dynamism of the property economy. This case of digital inclusion of land stakeholders is in line with the vision of the Banque des Territoires, which advocates in France that the energy and digital transition calls on local authorities to renew their methods of intervention and to experiment with more innovative tools (Banque des Territoires, p. 4).

ICTs now represent a huge opportunity for rural populations to improve their productivity, food and nutritional security, access to markets and find employment opportunities in a revitalised sector (GIZ, 2018, p. 4). The dividends that digital technology brings to land management should encourage local authorities in developing countries to accelerate their digital transformation. This concern is legitimate, especially since several authors have shown that establishing, developing and maintaining quality customer relations are essential conditions for the success of firms (R. Morgan and S. Hunt, 1994 cited by Chokri et al, 2008, pp.121). Similarly, Domegan (1996) believes that ICTs are a strategic resource for

improving customer service by establishing a link between the marketing and technological orientation of the company (Domegan, 1996, cited by Chokri et al, 2008, pp.122). The process of developing relationship quality was traditionally based on face-to-face interaction between service provider staff and customers (Moorman et al., 1992, cited by Chokri et al, 2008, pp.121).

However, major revolutions in the development of information and communication technologies (Domegan, 1996 cited by Chokri et al, 2008, pp.121) have provided new opportunities to create and maintain customer relationships. Appendino et al (2023) have shown that land promotion companies are not immune to the digitalization movement, which involves taking a digital turn in their strategy and organization in order to connect more easily with the outside world (Appendino et al, 2023, p2). Land promoters in Korhogo have understood that and have taken the lead over the municipality, which has been left behind in the management and planning of urban growth. The fact is that in Korhogo, it is the land promoters who create the city and then leave the administrative authorities with the task of developing it.

4.2 The marketing activities of land promoters lay the foundations for a city-countryside relationship that turns out to be a form of predation between the city and its rural periphery.

In Korhogo, several land developers have become drivers of spontaneous urbanisation because they are subdividing land without approval from the land-use planning authorities. This unplanned transformation of rural areas deprives these neo-urban neighbourhoods of basic social services. However, it is becoming a business opportunity for landowners, who see it as a chance to enrich themselves by selling plots. GIZ (2018) has shown that ICTs are expanding the reach of local communities and offering new business opportunities (GIZ, 2018, p. 6). This is why the desire for rural land is leading to the emergence of land promoters in Korhogo. However, there are concerns about preserving the interests of rural communities and controlling rapid urbanisation. It is imperative to strike a balance between land use for agriculture and its use for urban housing construction. The food security of peri-urban rural populations depends on it. The situation in Korhogo is stark. The advance of the urban front has a significant impact on the management of local land assets. In Côte d'Ivoire, there are two types of land tenure: rural land tenure and urban land tenure.

The first is governed by Decree 2023-238 of 5 April 2023, which stipulates in Article 4 that 'Only the State, public authorities and Ivorian natural persons are authorised to request the

registration of land owned by the Rural Land Agency in their names'. As for urban land, it is governed by Law 2020-624 of 14 August 2020 establishing the Urban Planning and Urban Land Code. Article 217 of this law stipulates that 'Any natural or legal person may acquire land ownership'. As a result, while rural land cannot be permanently transferred to non-nationals, who make up 25% of the national population, its subdivision reclassifies it as urban land, making it accessible to all economic actors, including both nationals and non-nationals. This opening up of the market contributes to increasing the desirability of rural land, thereby increasing land pressure and the risk of land conflicts. Amon (2020) has shown that the overconsumption of agricultural land through urbanisation is a factor that exacerbates land conflicts. Referring to the case of Abouabou, a village in southern Côte d'Ivoire, the author states that: *"Like all Ebrié villages in Abidjan, Abouabou was surprised by the rapid pace of urban growth in the metropolis. This led to sudden development for which the villagers were unprepared. This situation gave rise to numerous intra- and extra-community conflicts."* (Amon et al, 2020, p. 6487). Thus, the urbanisation of peri-urban rural areas must be carried out in consultation with the indigenous population in order to take into account their future.

Conclusion

Property promoters are the main forces driving the land economy in Korhogo. The digital inclusion of these actors contributes to the dynamism of this activity and accelerates the consumption of rural space by the city of Korhogo. The agricultural decline of peri-urban rural areas poses a threat to the food security of rural populations. Led by the illusion of wealth from the sale of their lands, rural populations are gradually being stripped of their agricultural land. In addition, the proliferation of unapproved housing developments is creating gaps in the provision of basic urban services in these new neighbourhoods. It is therefore imperative that the urbanization of rural areas be a planned action that takes into account the future of the populations affected.

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Webography

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