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EVICTION AND RELOCATION IN WEST AFRICA

A Socio-Anthropological Essay on Bureaucratized Processes

The French term *déguerpissement* describes a particular way of regulating urban land tenure in African cities, in use since the colonial period¹. In west Africa the concept is closely interlinked with the notion of public land ownership (*domaine national*). *Déguerpissement* is an evacuation, a collective coercion and expulsion² of people who do not officially own the plots of land they occupy, but who may have lived there for a very long time and, on other conceptions of land rights, be considered to own them. The use of violence, physical or symbolic, is usually part of *déguerpissement* operations, where people are forcibly displaced or summarily ordered to leave their place of residence. The term has also been used in the context of the forced relocation of urban street vendors. *Déguerpissement* can thus be defined as the forced displacement of established urban dwellers on land whose tenure is contested by public authorities³.

The term *déguerpissement* has its origins in colonial West Africa⁴. Dorier-Apprill explains that »the process was employed by the French colonial administration in Dakar (expulsion *manu militari* of slum dwellers from the La Médina neighbourhood in Dakar towards the dunes of Pikine) has since been used by many administrations of the Third World«⁵. According to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *déguerpissement* can be described as »forcible and authoritarian expulsion from precarious and non-legalized neighbourhoods«, highlighting »the extent to which this type of operation contributed to dispossessing African citizens of their rights to urban land, both in the colonial period and afterward«⁶.

This quotation reflects the deeper meaning and history of the term *déguerpissement*, which is often employed in works of urban, social, or political geography, but much less in social anthropology. It is generally understood as the »mass eviction« of occupants of informal neighbourhoods⁷. A different definition, from Spire, emphasizes the public authorities' view of the

- 1 Catherine COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, Villes coloniales et histoire des Africains, dans: Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire 20 (1998), p. 49–73, p. 1–2.
- 2 Catherine BOONE, Property and Political Order in Africa. Land Rights and the Structure of Politics, Cambridge 2014 (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics).
- 3 Amandine SPIRE, Julie BLOT, Déguerpissement, in: Hypergeo, URL: <http://www.hypergeo.eu/spip.php?article567> (11.10.2013), HAL ID: 01887353 (last visit: 11 October 2020).
- 4 Patrick TALIERCIO, Un déguerpissement exemplaire à Ouaga (Burkina Faso), in: Benoît EUGÈNE, Louis CHEVALIER (ed.), Villes et résistances sociales, Special issue, in: Agone 2008, n° 38/39, p. 89–107; SPIRE, BLOT, Déguerpissement (as in n. 3).
- 5 Élisabeth DORIER-APPRILL et al. (eds.), Vocabulaire de la ville. Notions et références, Paris 2001, p. 75.
- 6 Catherine COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, De la ville en Afrique noire, in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 61 (2006), p. 1087–1119, p. 1103: »l'expulsion autoritaire et brutale des quartiers précaires et non légalisés«. Coquery-Vidrovitch stresses how such operations involved a company or real estate agency dispossessing city-dwellers of their rights to urban land, both during the colonial period and after independence.
- 7 DORIER-APPRILL (ed.), Vocabulaire de la ville (as in n. 5), p. 75; SPIRE, BLOT, Déguerpissement (as in n. 3).

existing land uses as illegal. On this definition, the term refers to the expulsion of all inhabitants of an »illegally« occupied neighbourhood (informal settlement, slum) by public authorities⁸. »Forced removal« is a term commonly used in the South African literature: the process may not always involve direct physical threat or force, but sometimes legal coercion or other tactics which the evictees are not in a position to challenge⁹. Inspired by this definition, the present study distinguishes between eviction (*déguerpissement*) and relocation. Both processes include the removal of people from land, but the first is forcibly imposed, while I use the second to refer to a displacement grounded in a voluntary agreement.

This paper first describes the history of the principle of public land ownership, and then focuses on two case studies in the urban contexts of Dakar/Thiès (Senegal) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). In both contexts, eviction and relocation have often been analysed as violent acts of dispossession and forced removal. While it does not disregard this violent aspect of such removals, the focus of this article is to explore bureaucratic practices that play a central role both at the level of public land tenure regulation and at the grassroots level of claiming and defending usufructuary land rights. Bureaucratic practices are mobilized by both bureaucrats and grassroots people. Bureaucrats in public services such as municipal and national departments for transport and infrastructure create new urban plans (the allocation, mapping and parcelling of land serving as an instrument to secure land tenure and fight speculation). Grassroots people interact with bureaucrats (governors, prefects, municipal councillors) through associations or movements of people who have been removed or are threatened with removal, and who claim their right to decent housing. Such associations have been created all over West Africa. This paper will address two examples: the Mouvement de Solidarité pour le Droit au Logement (MSP-DRO.L) in Ouagadougou and the Collectif des habitants des villages riverains de l'AIBD in Dakar/Thiès.

When urban dwellers in Dakar/Thiès or Ouagadougou are evicted from so-called illegal settlements because of public urban renewal or development programmes, associations of *déguerpis* (and those threatened by forced resettlement) usually become immediately active throughout the country in order to assert their (customary) rights to the land where they live¹⁰. I argue that as urban redevelopment programs are bureaucratically institutionalized acts, associations react to them by using bureaucratic tools as well. In a process of self-bureaucratization and institutionalization, after beginning with social norms and practices from local, endogenous, or even religious sources, they eventually try to formalize them by creating internal hierarchies, producing documents, and using bureaucratic techniques¹¹ in interaction with public policies. They thus use the »language of the state«, and often refer to official decisions and decrees.

8 SPIRE, BLOT, *Déguerpissement* (as in n. 3).

9 Laurine PLATZKY, Cheryl WALKER, *The Surplus People. Forced Removals in South Africa* (The Surplus People Project, vol. 5), Johannesburg 1985; Alan BALDWIN, *Mass Removals and Separate Development*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 1 (1974/1975), n° 2, p. 215–227.

10 Thomas BIERSCHENK, Jean-Pierre OLIVIER DE SARDAN, *How to study bureaucracies ethnographically?*, in: *Critique of Anthropology* 39 (2019), no. 2, pp. 243–257, DOI: 10.1177/0308275X19842918; Emmanuel SULLE, *Bureaucrats, investors and smallholders. Contesting land rights and agro-commercialisation in the Southern agricultural growth corridor of Tanzania*, in: *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14 (2020), no. 2, p. 332–353, DOI: 10.1080/17531055.2020.1743093.

11 SULLE, *Bureaucrats, investors and smallholders* (as in n. 10); Matthew S. HULL, *Government of Paper. The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Berkeley, CA 2012; Béatrice HIBOU, *La bureaucratisation du monde néolibérale*, Paris 2013.

»Domaine national« or the theory of state ownership:
evolution and contestation

The so-called Code Faidherbe of 1865 states that only regular (individual) title of ownership is recognized¹². This legislation excluded the usual (communal) appropriation of land, which was the pre-colonial norm of land use regulation¹³. Subsequently, the colonial administration in French West Africa (AOF) introduced a compulsory immatriculation procedure for individual ownership from 1906¹⁴. But endogenous/customary regulations recognizing communal land ownership were resilient, and continued to be widely applied. This paradox persisted after independence in the context of widespread land nationalization. The 1984 Réforme agraire et foncière (Burkina Faso) and the 1964 Loi sur le domaine national (Senegal) are an expression of this. Again, while state ownership (*domanialité nationale*) allowed for increasing state intervention in land use, customary land use practices persisted.

According to James C. Scott, social engineering is a form of development and planning intervention, that, under a set of four conditions, is liable to produce tragic results on a large scale. First, it requires a rational and intelligible administrative order of nature and society (»legibility«). Second, it requires a »high modernist ideology«, which means that the actors should believe in the ever-increasing power and scope of science, industrialization, and rational planning and control. Third, an authoritarian state is indispensable: this, he argues, is the element that ensures the normative and political application of the high-modernist ideology. The fourth and final requirement is a civil society that is submissive enough to prevent deviation from development plans. These four elements together, Scott argues, may lead to disaster. In terms of social engineering and thus of urban planning, the process of land governance happens in an arena¹⁵ in which institutions, urban planners, administrators, civil society groups and other protagonists demand the same resource: land. In this arena, the state attempts to make society and nature comprehensible through measures of simplification and standardization: »State simplifications such as maps, censuses, cadastral lists, and standard units of measurement represent techniques for grasping a large and complex reality«¹⁶. Scott explains how the Weberian state uses bureaucratic techniques and technologies to shape its governance or domination. The principle of public land ownership is a rational bureaucratic element of such governance.

There are multiple conceptions of state ownership and its implications for land policies. State ownership refers to the regime applying to property that belongs to the state, but on different continents this corresponds to very different realities. Historically, state ownership in Europe and its former colonies has taken various forms depending on the nature of the legal instruments held by public authorities: seigniorial, colonial, public, and private types of state ownership, amongst others¹⁷. In Africa new concepts of state ownership have arisen that demand clar-

12 Alain ROCHEGUE, La logique foncière de l'État depuis la colonisation: L'expérience malienne, in: Étienne LE BRIS, Étienne LE ROY, François LEIMDORFER, Enjeux fonciers en Afrique Noire, Paris 1982, p. 141–148, p. 145.

13 Mamadou DIAWARA et al. (eds.), Le manguier et le champ, in: Über das Kolleg hinaus. Joachim Nettelbeck, dem Sekretär des Wissenschaftskollegs 1981–2012, Berlin 2012, p. 68–92.

14 Alain ROCHEGUE, L'expérience malienne (wie Anm. 12), p. 145.

15 Thomas BIRSCHENK; Jean-Pierre CHAUVEAU; Jean-Pierre OLIVIER DE SARDAN, Local Development Brokers in Africa. The Rise of a New Social Category, University Johannes Gutenberg, Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Working Papers 13, Mainz 2002, URL: <https://openscience.ub.uni-mainz.de/handle/20.500.12030/591> (last accessed 11 October 2020).

16 James C. SCOTT, Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, New Haven, CN 1998, p. 77.

17 Gérard CHOUQUER, Aspects et particularités de la domanialité en Afrique de l'Ouest, Agence française de développement, Comité technique »Foncier & développement«, Fiches pédagogiques,

ification. Contrary to resources in the public domain, resources in the private domain can be transferred to the private sector. The latter includes real property held by the state, which can lease or sell it to individuals. Private property includes rural land that the state may grant to private individuals, as well as urban land that municipalities may transfer to private individuals through subdivision operations.

»National domain: a new concept frequently used in Africa (at least in French-speaking countries), and which can correspond to very diverse legal situations, such as in Mali, where national domain is an overall legal framework for all land statuses [i. e. the national domain includes all land], or in Senegal, where it refers to the status of all land that is neither in the public domain nor legally appropriated¹⁸.«

Senegal was the first West African country to codify this concept in law, in 1964. The law defines national domain as automatically including »all land not classified as in the public domain, not registered or whose ownership [had] not been transcribed in the mortgage registry on the day when the law came into effect«¹⁹. The Senegalese national domain thus de facto includes land formerly held under customary principles, thenceforth held by the state in view of »ensuring its rational use and development in accordance with development plans«²⁰.

Land management in Burkina Faso is governed by a series of laws and policy documents, the main ones being the 1984 Réforme agraire et foncière, the National Policy for Land Tenure Security in Rural Areas (PNSFMR), and, more recently, law no. 034–2012 on rural land tenure. The major innovation in this recent law is its official recognition of customary rights (which can be formalized through certificates of land ownership and loan agreements), along with the transfer of land management to rural municipal councils. It also offers valuable tools for natural resource management through local land charters, which are established through negotiations between local populations and can be officially recognized by public services and local authorities. Land in Burkina Faso is thus now divided into three distinct domains: those of the state, private individuals, and local authorities²¹.

January 2011, URL: <https://www.foncier-developpement.fr/publication/aspects-et-particularites-de-la-domanialite-en-afrique-de-louest/> (last accessed 11 October 2020).

- 18 Alain ROCHEGUDE, Caroline PLANÇON, Décentralisation, acteurs locaux et foncier, Agence française de développement, Comité technique »Foncier & développement«, Fiches pays, November 2009, p. 441–442 URL: <https://www.foncier-developpement.fr/publication/decentralisation-acteurs-locaux-et-foncier-fiches-pays/441-442> (last accessed 11 October 2020): »Domaine national: Nouveau concept fréquemment utilisé en Afrique (au moins francophone), et qui peut correspondre à des situations juridiques très diverses, comme au Mali où le domaine national correspond à un cadre juridique d'ensemble pour tous les statuts des terres, ou au Sénégal, où il correspond à l'ensemble des statuts fonciers qui ne se rattachent pas au domaine public, ni au domaine approprié juridiquement.«
- 19 Law no. 64–46 of 17 June 1964 on national domain, article 1: »Constituent de plein droit le domaine national, toutes les terres non classées dans le domaine public, non immatriculées et dont la propriété n'a pas été transcrite à la Conservation des hypothèques à la date d'entrée en vigueur de la présente loi.«
- 20 Ibid., article 2: »L'État détient les terres du domaine national en vue d'assurer leur utilisation et leur mise en valeur rationnelles, conformément aux plans de développement et aux programmes d'aménagement.«
- 21 Law no. 034–2012/AN portant Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière du 2 juillet 2012, article 5: »Il est créé un domaine foncier national au Burkina Faso. Le domaine foncier national constitue un patrimoine commun de la nation et l'État en tant que garant de l'intérêt général, organise sa gestion conformément aux principes énoncés à l'article 3 ci-dessus.« Article 6: »Le domaine foncier

Although exemplary in its drafting process (the law was the fruit of lengthy negotiations with all stakeholders at the national and regional levels) and in the tools it proposes, law no. 034–2012 nevertheless faces many operational difficulties. First of all, it comes into play in the particular context of a recent decentralization, where there is a strong link between membership in a political party and the exercise of the prerogatives of a local elected official. Moreover, there is no consensus on details of the law, such as article 36, which specifies the procedures for obtaining certificates of land ownership and excludes migrants (who are not recognized as traditional land holders, regardless of the length of time they have been using the land)²². Finally, the law is confronted with a kind of legal incompleteness, as will be demonstrated with field data below.

Relocation blocked by bureaucratic practices in Ouagadougou

This section describes a »removal« action that residents requested due to the fact that the industrial zone of Ouagadougou extended into the village of Palsogo. During my ethnographic fieldwork in Ouagadougou in August and September 2017 and February 2020, I focused on the social movement called *Mouvement de Solidarité pour le Droit au Logement (MSP-DRO.L)* and the »Clinique de consultation foncière« [land tenure consultation clinic] run by Seydou Traoré and Innocent Bagoro, which I visited several times. Their signboards (see Figure 1) are an important mark in their quest for legitimacy vis-à-vis public institutions and administrative legality. In the eyes of these activists, their presentation (denomination, abbreviations, logos, etc.) is a way to gain the trust of the state and the people.



Figure 1: The office of the *Mouvement de Solidarité pour le Droit au Logement (MSP-DRO.L)* in Ouagadougou. Photograph by the Author, fieldwork, 2017.

national est composé du: domaine foncier de l'État; domaine foncier des collectivités territoriales; patrimoine foncier des particuliers.»

22 Cf. e.g. in Burkina Faso: Comité technique »Foncier & développement«, URL: <http://www.foncier-developpement.fr/pays/burkina-faso/> (last accessed 11 October 2020).

This movement's role is to mediate between, and sensitize different actors around urban land tenure. It has set itself the goal of improving the living conditions of citizens with regard to land access and decent housing. This includes protecting the rights of grassroots people and defending them against government regulations that do not align with people's realities and aspirations. Another goal of MSP-DRO.L is to inform citizens about universal and regional instruments of human rights and sustainable social justice. The organization has an international affiliation to networks of activists such as No Vox and Amnesty International, and a national coordinating office with permanent activist volunteers who operate in a bureaucratic manner, similar to state administration. For example, all assemblies, meetings, press conferences, platforms of demands, etc., without exception, are codified. Correspondence is addressed to state institutions, and the responses are all filed and digitized for the website as a means of exchange with local, national, and international networks of activists. According to activists, this, too, is intended to gain the confidence of the state and the parties concerned.



Figures 2 and 3: The CIMFASO factory, viewed from the Diallo compound; the Diallo brothers and a son in front of their compound. Industrial zone of Kossodo/Polsogo village. Photographs by the author, fieldwork, February 2020.

In February 2020, during my fieldwork on MSP-DRO.L, I went to Kossodo, the industrial zone of Ouagadougou, along with Seydou Traoré and Innocent Bagoro as well as my research assistant. In this industrial zone, the residents of the village of Polsogo have been affected by the expansion of the CIMFASO and CIM Burkina cement factories and the CIM Metal steelworks (see Figures 2 and 3). Legal action started in 2007, and MSP-DRO.L took over the case of the residents, who were supposed to be relocated in 2014. The noise and dust from the three factories are unbearable for these mostly agro-pastoralist Fulani people who have been settled in the area for many generations based on a tacit agreement with the Mossi people who make up the majority in the area around Ouagadougou. The case concerns the process of delocalizing/removing the residents due to pollution from these industrial sites. A resettlement site (*trame de recasement*) is 1 km away, but the process is bureaucratically stuck. Traoré reported on the role of the bureaucracy in French from his point of view:

»La bureaucratie ça faut pas tourner, ici c'est la bureaucratie qui fait que les choses ne bougent pas ça c'est clair, je ne peux pas comprendre que dans un pays y a des lois qui ne sont pas respectées et lorsque vous interpellez l'autorité sur la loi en question, il tâtonne. Ça devait être respecté automatiquement. Mais à cause de la bureaucratie vous partez écouter voilà... donc patientez-vous et jusque-là de patience en patience nous sommes là... ce qu'on demande à CIMFASO, voilà des conventions qu'on a signées. Je les ai assignés [en justice]. Voici des conventions ils ont dit eux-mêmes qu'ils vont faire une

trame d'accueil. Les trames sont en fait posées, on les a recensés avec un cabinet qu'eux-mêmes ils ont pris. Nous sommes allés avec le cabinet, nous avons recensé toutes les familles, et leurs enfants, ils ont pris l'engagement qu'ils vont construire pour 5 grandes familles et leurs enfants. CIMFASO aussi a dit qu'il va construire, donner à des familles, ça c'est les papiers que nous avons signés entre nous. Mais maintenant, la trame d'accueil est là depuis 2014, faut sortir les attribués et lorsqu'ils auront les parcelles, les usines vont s'engager à construire pour les familles. Voici ce qu'ils ont pris comme engagement. Mais jusque-là, toujours pas d'attribution²³.«

Before this interview took place, an agreement for regulating the conflict between the factories and the residents was already in place. In fact, there has been no open dispute since the factories were launched, and the families who are the veritable protagonists, through the mediation of MSP-DRO.L, have agreed to their relocation. Instead, according to Diallo (see Figure 3, at the centre) and Seydou Traoré, the case is bureaucratic in nature. The process is blocked within the municipal administration, which is in charge of issuing the construction permit and setting the compensation for the relocation to the new site. Since 2009 the usufructuaries (grassroots people who, without formally owning the land, had the right to use it for housing and agriculture) should have been issued a document called an *attestation de possession foncière* [certificate of land tenure/possession]. This procedure has not been effectively followed, as Innocent Bagoro, the deputy president of MSP-DRO.L, indicated to me. This example demonstrates that the challenge of land rights concerns not only forced removals, but the right to a decent life on a decent site. The local people living on this site, which is progressively deteriorating as the factories expand, are prepared to leave – but the required administrative framework is not yet in place or is not functioning.

Eviction and bureaucratic practices in Dakar/Thiès

My fieldwork in Dakar/Thiès, in contrast, presents an example of forced removal that grassroots actors described as »manu militari« (through the intervention of an armed state agency)²⁴. The project for the new Blaise Diagne International Airport (AIBD) was part of the territorial planning and development scheme for the area between Dakar, Mbour, and Thiès, which form a triangle stretching eastward from the Senegalese capital. This plan entails a radical transformation of the entire region. The construction of the new airport required the relocation of

23 Author's translation: »Bureaucracy, it doesn't make things work, here, it's the bureaucracy that keeps things standing still, that's clear. I cannot understand that in a country there are laws that are not respected and when you question the authorities on the law in question, they fumble around. It should be respected automatically. But because of the bureaucracy you go and listen that's it [voilà]... so [they tell you] be patient and then after patience upon patience here we are... What we're asking from CIMFASO, well, agreements that we have signed. I took them to court. There are agreements; they said they'd even create a temporary site [trame d'accueil]. The plots are established; we identified them with a firm that they hired themselves. We went with the firm; we registered all the families, and their children. CIMFASO made a commitment that they are going to build for five large families and their children. CIMFASO also said that they will build, give to the families; those are the documents that we signed between us. But now, the plots of land have been there since 2014, we have to get out the families [to which the plots had been assigned] and when they will have the plots, the factories will commit to build for them. This is what they have committed to do. But until now, still no allocation«.

24 Parts of this ethnography were published in: Lamine DOUMBIA, Le nouvel aéroport et la résilience des Sereer riverains, in: La bureaucratisation des sociétés africaines, research blog, URL: <https://ihacrepos.hypotheses.org/1157> (last accessed 11 October 2020).

three villages in the rural community of Keur Moussa: Kessoukhatt, Kathialick, and Mbadatt. On 13 April 2014, the Collectif des habitants des villages riverains de l'AIBD [Collective of inhabitants of the villages bordering the AIBD] published an open letter to Senegalese president Macky Sall. Abdoulaye Diouf, Secretary General of the Association pour la défense des intérêts des villages de la communauté rurale de Keur Moussa riverains de l'AIBD [Association for the defence of the interests of the villages of the rural community of Keur Moussa bordering the AIBD], described the airport's impact as follows:

»Sur le plan matériel, les populations de ces trois villages qui vivent d'agriculture et d'élevage sont en parti expropriées de leur terre sans fondement légal, surtout les habitants du village de Mbadatt qui ont été déplacés de force le mercredi 12 mars 2014. Aujourd'hui le village de Mbadatt est rayé de la carte du Sénégal sans respect des droits fondamentaux de la personne humaine, entraînant un traumatisme psychologique chez les personnes âgées et les enfants qui sont en âge de scolarisation et qui ont mené une grève d'une semaine avant les vacances de pâques²⁵.«

Here, two processes can be distinguished: bureaucratization and reconfiguration. First, the bureaucratic organization of the implementation of the territorial planning and development scheme was instituted by decrees and laws. Second, this motivated a bureaucratic reconfiguration of the community's actions into the form of an association. While the airport represents an important driver of social transformation in itself, it also initiated a social dynamic which includes both Senegalese state technocrats and rural communities. In this context, the association produced a discourse representing its members as victims, affected by evictions that violated their fundamental human rights. It referred to international norms in order to act locally to demand compensation and resettlement or even the right to stay put. To quote from their open letter: »Aussi, est-il logique que si besoin en était, que les trois villages sont visés par le décret n° 2002-435 du 29 avril 2002 qui prévoit en son article 2 une indemnité totale de 15.258.700 francs [CFA] pour l'ensemble des occupants du terrain de l'aéroport. Ceci démontre à suffisance que la surface concernée a été dépassée«²⁶.

Within the framework of a policy of »deconcentration« away from Dakar, an official statement said Blaise Diagne International Airport had to be built in the rural community of Diass, because after more than half a century, the old airport had come to be situated among densely populated neighbourhoods in Dakar. The new development scheme resulted from a technocratic and bureaucratic decision, which was imposed on two rural communities and which caused a radical socio-spatial transformation of the area and the affected populations. Decree no. 2002-435 of 29 April 2002 pronounces the »decommissioning« (»désaffectation«) of a

- 25 Open letter by the Collective of inhabitants of the villages bordering the AIBD, 13 April 2014: »In material terms, the populations of these three villages, who live from farming and animal husbandry, have had a part of their land expropriated without any legal basis – especially the inhabitants of the village of Mbadatt, who were forcibly displaced on Wednesday, 12 March 2014. The village of Mbadatt is now erased from the map of Senegal without respect for fundamental human rights, causing psychological trauma among the elderly and school-age children, who led a week-long strike before the Easter holidays«.
- 26 Ibid.: »It is thus logical that, if need be, the three villages are covered by Decree No. 1–2 of 29 April 2002, Article 2 of which provides for a total compensation of 15,258,700 francs [CFA] for all the occupants of the airport grounds. This is sufficient proof that the area concerned has been exceeded«.

1350-hectare area of land in the national domain²⁷, located in Diass, to be used as the site for a new international airport. According to the populations of the villages, there would have been no problems if the boundaries of the area specified for expropriation in this decree had been respected. But another decree of 30 June 2010 extended the area allocated to the airport project by 4000 hectares²⁸. The residents of the villages considered this to be wrong, and initiated legal action.

The quotation above offers a concrete example of the dynamics of reconfiguration and bureaucratization discussed above. The secretary general of the association referred to the 2002 presidential decree, arguing that the state itself had allowed them to stay on their site even though the 2002 decree already included compensation for their eviction. The members of the *Collectif des habitants des villages riverains de l'AIBD* therefore demanded the application of the earlier decree. Moreover, they refer to a report from the African Development Bank Group clearly mentioning that the populations of the rural community of Diass were the most affected by the eviction, while only some of the rural communities of Keur Moussa were also affected. These details highlight the multiplicity of processes that form the imbraglio.

Shortly after the opening of the airport, the communities had become increasingly angry for having given up sites they had inherited from their ancestors. An inhabitant of Mbadatt exclaimed in a Senegalese newspaper: »Nous avons cédé nos terres héritées de nos ancêtres. Ce n'était pas du tout facile surtout avec la délocalisation du cimetière de Mbadatt (le site qui abrite actuellement le pavillon présidentiel). Nous tenons beaucoup à notre tradition«²⁹.

The interviewees mentioned misunderstandings at different levels between the grassroots movements and the authorities. They analytically illustrate the clash between the social embeddedness of land use and the political alienation of land, which involves the contrast between communal use and public (and individual) land ownership. Land governance is thus torn between the political alienation of this resource and its socially embedded appropriation and use³⁰.

In July 2018, the village chief of Kathialick explained that the problems with the authorities dated back to 2002, when the government decided to build an airport in Diass. The former representative of the rural community of Diass had shown them land for the airport. Afterwards, they had carried out censuses and identifications. Yet, the censuses were conducted in a haphazard way. He and his sons were counted, he said, but in the database, they were assigned a single house in the resettlement area. So, he declared to me:

27 So this is no longer the land of communities but it was affected to national domain through the mentioned decree of 2002 and the loi sur le domaine national of 1964 for public utility purposes which is the Airport construction. Cf. Décret no. 2002-435, 29 April 2002, Journal Officiel de la République du Sénégal, no. 6066, 28 September 2002, URL: <http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article1559>.

28 Cf. Décret no. 2010-894, 30 June 2010, in: Journal Officiel de la République du Sénégal, no. 6558, 27 November 2010, URL: <http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article8343>.

29 »We gave up the land we inherited from our ancestors. It wasn't easy at all, especially with the relocation of the Mbadatt cemetery (the site that now houses the presidential pavilion). We cherish our tradition«. Impact de l'Aibd sur la communauté. Diass attend son décollage, in: *Le Quotidien*, 16 December 2017, URL: <https://www.lequotidien.sn/impact-de-laibd-sur-la-communautaire-diass-attend-son-decollage/> (consulted on 30 April 2020).

30 Lamine DOUMBIA, Land Tenure and the Grassroots' Concern in Bamako, in: *Modern Africa: Politics, History and Society* 6/2 (2018), p. 33–54.

»Donc, il n'est pas possible pour moi de rejoindre le site de recasement. Ces villas comportent 3 chambres alors que j'ai trois épouses. Dans cette concession personne n'a rejoint le site de recasement. Le site de recasement n'est pas propice à l'habitat. Avant jamais personne n'avait osé habiter là-bas. Il est maudit et hanté. En plus, les gens qui étaient partis au site au moment des déguerpissements, exceptés les gens du village de Mbadatt, tous on leur avait prêté ces maisons. C'est ce qui nous a poussé à maintenir cette position de refus. Comment on peut obliger des gens à quitter leurs maisons et les détruire de suite et une fois arrivé au site de recasement on lui dit que la maison qu'il devait obtenir en dédommage lui ait prêté? Et des papiers avaient été délivrés pour ça. Le mur de clôture de l'aéroport a occasionné la perte de mes deux champs³¹.«



Figures 4 and 5: The airport boundary wall stopped on either side of the Ndiassaw concession. Keur Moussa/Blaise Diagne International Airport. Photographs by the author, fieldwork, July 2018.

The wall around the airport was stopped on both sides of the concession as if to tell the inhabitants to clear away so that the wall could be completed (see Figures 4 and 5).

One of the local communities had entirely opposed the construction of the fence, which would have denied them access to their place of worship (sacred trees) and cemeteries. The village chief explained that he met AIBD Director Abdoulaye Mbodj, who visited the community in order to try and understand the problem. The village people asked him to change the path of the wall so that it would bypass this place of worship and the village cemeteries: »He gave us his word and we are waiting for what will happen«³². This case study illustrates the complex social dynamics (reconfiguration and bureaucratization) that arose in negotiations, interactions

31 Interview with the chief of the village of Kathialick, July 2018: »It is not possible for me to go to the resettlement site. These villas have three bedrooms, while I have three wives. In this compound no one has joined the resettlement site. The resettlement site is not suitable for housing. No one has ever dared to live there before. It's cursed and haunted. Also, the people who went to the site at the time of the evictions, except for the people from the village of Mbadatt, all of them had these houses loaned to them. That's what pushed us to maintain this position of refusal. How can you force people to leave their houses and destroy them immediately and once they arrive at the resettlement site they're told that the house they were supposed to get as compensation was loaned to them? And documents had been issued for that. The fenced wall at the airport caused the loss of both of my fields«.

32 Interview with the chief of the village of Kathialick, July 2018.

and litigations between different actors. It also reveals the resilience of grassroots people (their strong ties to land) and highlights the important question of the right to the city for social anthropology³³.

Conclusion

This study argues that land tenure, urbanization, and precarious and/or vulnerable neighbourhoods are at the core of social spatial reconfiguration and governance in both Senegal and Burkina Faso. For municipal and national public administrations, the allocation and parcelling of land serves as an instrument to secure land tenure and fight speculation. The ethnographic data from Senegal presented here examine a situation of forced removal (*déguerpissement*) in the municipality of Keur Moussa in order to make way for a new international airport. Those from Burkina Faso explore the situation of people in the village of Palsogo who asked to be relocated because of the impacts of the extension of the industrial zone of Ouagadougou.

The grassroots people in the Burkinabé case want to be relocated to escape from the noise and pollution of new factories nearby, but they have struggled with the municipal government, which has blocked the procedure (see the interview with Traoré and Diallo). Those in the Senegalese case do not want to be evicted for fear of being cut off from their livelihood and of not being compensated by the state for the loss of their land. All actors, not only public administrations, have used bureaucratic practices to identify plots and users of land, while land is taxed on the basis of registration and codification through topographical surveys, laws and decrees. Government administrations and grassroots associations both feature materialities and bureaucratic traceability as well as social engineering³⁴. These associations are participating in the »bureaucratization of the world«³⁵ and in shaping a new urban citizenship³⁶ by codifying and disseminating all assemblies, meetings, press conferences, and platforms of demands, and by filing and digitizing the responses to correspondence that they address to state institutions.

Legitimacy is based on customary land tenure, which includes a set of fundamental principles for regulating social relations around land³⁷. Customary land rules are still in force today in Dakar/Thiès and Ouagadougou. These norms are resilient, and should not be understood as static rules from an ancestral period, but rather as the result of history and the fruit of societal adaptation and compromise. They thus represent transitional and transactional dynamics.

33 Mathieu HILGERS, À qui appartient la ville? Urbanisme néolibéral et propriété dans trois petits centres urbains du Ghana et du Burkina Faso, in: *Politique africaine* 2013/4, no. 132, p. 95–113, par. 1–2, DOI: 10.3917/polaf.132.0095.

34 Cf. e.g. HIBOU, *La bureaucratisation du monde* (as in n. 11); HULL, *Government of Paper* (as in n. 11); SCOTT, *Seeing like a State* (as in n. 16).

35 HIBOU, *La bureaucratisation du monde* (as in n. 11).

36 Ndiouga Adrien BENGHA, *Entre Jérusalem et Babylone. Jeunes et espace public à Dakar*, in: *Autrepart* 2001/2, n° 18, p. 169–178, DOI: 10.3917/autr.018.0169.

37 Hubert M. G. QUÉDRAOGO, *De la connaissance à la reconnaissance des droits fonciers africains endogènes*, in: *Études rurales* 2011/1, no. 187, p. 79–93.