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Convoluted Urban Planning

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Discussion Research ID	DPR-2026-1479
Year	2019
Field	Social Sciences
DOI	10.1007/978-3-030-28419-0_4
Author ORCID	0000-0003-0491-3889
Licence	CC-BY
Original source	Future city
Permanent link	https://discussionpublishers.com/research/e3806fc7-ddd8-468a-85cb-4221b957cf10
Publisher	Discussion Publishers discussionpublishers.com

Abstract

The efforts made to plan cities in emerging and developing countries are confronted to multiple issues, especially in small and middle sized cities which can be considered as poor through several criteria: socio-economic level of majority of population; low levels of public investments, weak quality of local administration, and large dependence of external donors. Following several authors, one of the main reasons is that philosophy and methods of urban planning applied to these specific contexts are directly reproduced from a Western tradition which doesnt correspond to the local and national context in terms of needs, priorities and organization of the financial resources. The case of Koudougou, a medium sized city of about 100.000 inhabitants, third largest city in one of the poorest countries in the world, Burkina Faso, will give the opportunity to understand concretely how these deficiencies are translate in an urban context. And foresee, more globally, alternative models of urban planning better adapted to poor cities, whose number of inhabitants is growing steadily. In Koudougou, as in many African cities, the urban planning process is exogenous, not really consistent with the requests of the people, nor with the human, material and financial resources of the city, and therefore rarely applied. This is easily explained when we know that urban planning in its design, is initiated as part of a collaborative framework between the central government and foreign donors. The initial diagnosis is made by quality professionals but who are disconnected from local administrative and social realities. In fact it is a census of all needs to be met. Without guidance on how to implement a program of urban improvement when the facilities to be created whose costs are more than ten times that of the annual municipal budget reserves? In fact, plans produced in this context do not serve to guide local authorities in the current and future development of the urban territory. Neither are they an instrument of dialogue between the said authorities and the population. On the contrary, any consultation with the community that does not result in expected and desired deliverables will strengthen the distrust, or even defiance towards public, political, and administrative powers. At best, the plans, losing their principal essence, become promotional tools, pure marketing products, a catalogue of intentions of penniless communities at the mercy of the donors desideratum, whether they be State or

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Cite as: JeanClaude Bolay (2019). Convoluted Urban Planning. Discussion Publishers, DPR-2026-1479.

Chapter 4
Convoluted Urban Planning

Koudougou, a Poor African City

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J.-C. Bolay, *Urban Planning Against Poverty*, Future City 14,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28419-0_4

Discussion Publishers edition DPR-2026-1479

This distortion of urban planning destroys any coherence in the process, both in establishing priorities in infrastructure and equipment to realize, in the economic and social sectors to be favored, as in the implementation timeframes. Nothing more can be programmed, since all work is done depending on external funders, without continuity, without a guiding principle, and without any possible guarantee that things will be done on time, potentially creating more long term disorganization than anything else.

Based on this experience and in comparison with other researches on urban development in African cities must be entirely reconsidered. The essential point – too often overlooked – is to begin from a participatory diagnosis in which the actual situation of the city is examined in its various dimensions, both demographic and spatial, infrastructural, but also economic, social and environmental, permitting all the stakeholders to position themselves.

Keywords African cities · Non-standard development · Koudougou · Burkina Faso · Poor city · Regional pole · Financial and human resources · External dependence

4.1 African Cities: Non-standard Urban Development

As Chenal (2013) says with humor, urban city planning in Africa is a bit like of the video game SimCity; everything seems possible. The recipe for a "good city" is simplistic: housing estates for the middle class, sanitation for the poor, fresh food markets scattered here and there, a bit of land regularization to squeeze money out of squatters to whom one promises a land title, a few basic technical networks and paved road to boot, and presto, you're done! So why do we continue to see slums? Why do the poor continue to negotiate their way along potholed streets? What is the actual status of these markets with their DIY stalls to which customers rush? However, the urban reality is more complex than the many plans produced by private offices in Africa and in North countries and elsewhere would suggest. And very few result in actual projects in the field. Alas, there is no magic formula (i.e. "you just have to…..!"). Demographic growth, territorial extension, increasing poverty, environmental degradation, the informal nature of most urban activities - be they for artisanal, commercial or construction purposes - are all challenges to urban planning in terms of the approaches to take and the goals to set. They are likewise so for the actors who have the enormous responsibility of managing an ever-changing present while trying to plan the African city of tomorrow.

According to UN-Habitat (2014), the African population was approaching a billion in 2010 and is expected to rise to 1.29 billion in early 2019.[1] By 2040, it will have reached two billion, and by 2070 will have exceeded three billion. This increase

[1] http://population.city/world/af (Accessed 23 May 2019).

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will be most marked in cities. Africa has been the world's most urbanized region since the 1990s. Although the urban annual growth rate has gradually decreased over the decades to 3.29% in the 2000s (versus 4.16% in the 1980s), it remains very high. In 2015, the 404 million city dwellers represented 46% of the African population. This figure is expected to rise to 49% by 2035 (UNECA, 2017). By 2050, 1.2 billion urbanites will account for 58% of the continent's population. As we recently stated, this spatial and demographic extension and its effects in terms of poverty and urban precariousness should serve as the foundations of urban planning in Africa (Bolay 2011). In 2006, UN-Habitat said that poverty would be the main challenge for African cities' in the future (UN-Habitat 2005). This accelerated urbanization is also characterized by a skyrocketing slum population (166 million poor urban dwellers in Africa in 2001). This trend continues today, with nearly 200 million in 2010.[2] The United Nations regretfully states that no real pro-poor policies exist in Africa (Güneralp et al. 2017).

Forecasts suggest that the African urban population will represent 1.4 billion in 2050 and will account for 21% of the worldwide projection. All this in just 30 short years, and with a mass of individuals who will represent 55% of the total African to contend with. More than anywhere else in the world, the urbanization process on the African continent is a real revolution in progress, with urban growth rates that, though they will gradually decline, may still reach 8% depending on the country. This urban transformation concerns not only major cities but all types of agglomerations. According to figures analyzed by Kessides (2007), more than half of city dwellers live in cities of less than 200,000 inhabitants (Fig. 4.1).

All of this occurs in national contexts that, in many cases, are still unstable due to exacerbated political centralism, authoritarianism, nepotism and oligarchism. They are also accompanied by a lack of democratic alternation, civil war and a fear of terrorism, food crises and famine with repercussions on citizens' trust with regard to elites and investors. Although macroeconomic figures this past decade have been encouraging in terms of job and wealth creation, the social effects of this accumulation of capital are not clearly perceptible. According to Cohen (2006), sub-Saharan Africa is home to a third of the world's poor, an increasing number of whom live in urban areas.

Economic growth in Africa was negative between the 1960s and the late 1990s, as reflected by the increase in mass poverty. However, positive growth has been observed since the beginning of the twenty-first century, according to the McKinsey Global Institute[3]: "Overall, the continent achieved average real GDP growth of 5.4% between 2000 and 2010, adding $ 78 billion annually to GDP (in 2015 prices). But growth slowed to 3.3%, $ 69 billion, a year between 2010 and 2015." Although private and public investments have increased, exports are down from 2013 (ADB 2018). The year 2016 marked a low point in the continent's economic growth rate,

[2] https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2012/towards-african-cities-without-slums (Accessed 23 May 2019).

[3] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/05/what-s-the-future-of-economic-growth-in-africa/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).

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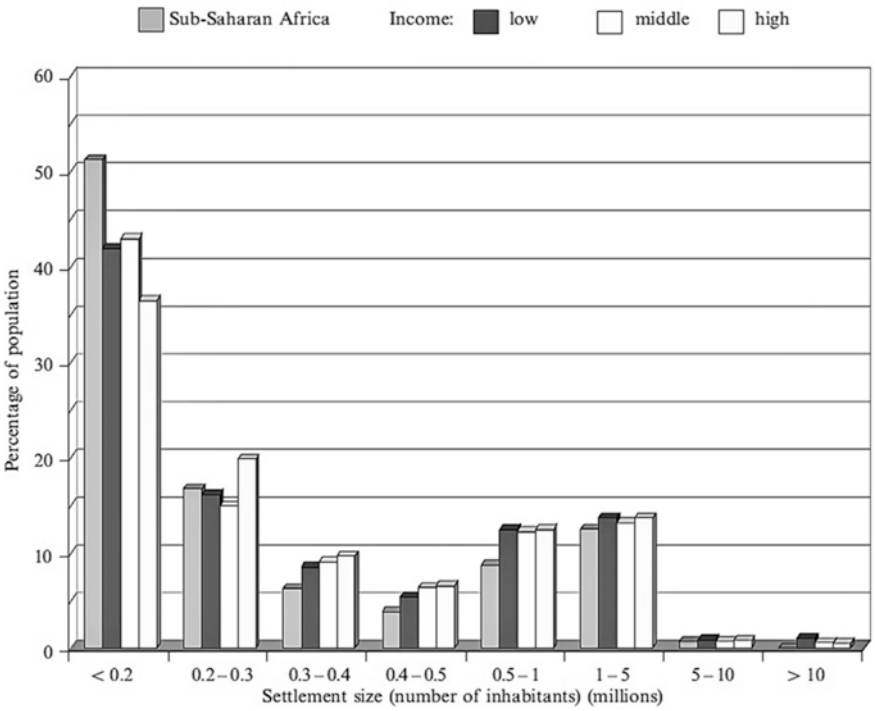


Fig. 4.1 Africa's urban population distribution by settlement size. (Reproduced from Kessides 2007)

which fell to 1.7% in contrast to 3.7% in 2015. This was partially due to instability in a number of North African and Middle Eastern countries, lower oil and raw materials prices on international markets and adverse weather conditions. Some countries, however, such as Ivory Coast, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Senegal, continue to ride this wave with economic growth rates of more than 5%. A more general recovery can be felt. According to the World Bank, Sub-Saharan Africa's growth was expected to reach 3.1% in 2018 and 3.6% in 2019–2020,[4] which is feasible so long as oil and commodity prices remain stable. Curbing these fluctuations requires diversifying the economic fabric, improving infrastructures, strengthening electrical systems and tighter control of the public debt, with 18 African countries now considered "at risk" versus eight in 2013.

In an analysis of Africa's urban economy based on a study of 90 developing countries, UN-Habitat points out that only in sub-Saharan Africa were the positive relationship between urbanization and poverty reduction and positive correlation between urbanization and economic development not confirmed. This is likely due to urban immigration largely resulting from rural poverty, versus a strong, diverse

[4] http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/04/18/economic-growth-in-africa-rebounds-but-not-fast-enough (Accessed 23 May 2019).

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urban job supply (UN-Habitat 2013). In its report on the African economy and urban development, UNECA insists that compared to other regions of the world, African cities face low productivity that in turn generates little job creation (UNECA 2017). According to this commission, a significant amount of fundamental data must be modified in order to enhance the economic potential of these cities. To begin, there is a critical lack of infrastructure and services as well as crying need for an institutional and regulatory framework that supports entrepreneurialism and financial investment. Without these foundations, the urban economy as it exists today will remain poorly connected to rural areas and continue to have negative repercussions on the environment, social equality and efforts towards formalizing the economy. The informal nature of the urban economy cannot be denied and, according to Alter Chen (2017), represents 66% of non-agricultural jobs in sub-Saharan Africa (ranging from 33% in South Africa to 82% in Mali). The problem of urban employment is also gendered, with 74% of non-agricultural employment for women versus 61% for men. According to an ILO (International Labour Office) study cited by Africa Expansion, the informal sector represents 93% of new jobs created, while the formal sector employs only 10% of the continent's workers (Afrique Expansion 2012).

This reality, which has been quantified and observed in all African cites, not only is undeniable; it also cannot be eradicated or fought, as it is the economic driver of the urban environment. Informal work must be analyzed in order to be better understood, improved, galvanized and humanized. Chen specifies that two-thirds of urban workers in Africa are freelancers, either individually or in family micro-units. These freelance jobs help alleviate poverty but do not offer any security (ILO 2014). Moreover, they are critical in strategic urban areas such as food supply (two-thirds of urban households buy their food from undeclared street vendors) and construction. Such facts support the need for urban governments to acknowledge the informal sector's existence and to take measures to integrate and protect small producers, artisans and business owners by gradually formalizing African cities' most dynamic economic and socially inclusive sector in an acceptable way.

In many sectors, informality has become more the rule than the exception, be it land appropriation, building construction, infrastructure, technical networks, health care or social protection. Continuing to ignoring it impacts both the organization of the city as a whole and the mobilization of its assets. "Ordinary" African cities today are still poor, with little tax revenue that might be invested in medium and long-term projects to improve land use planning and environmental protection.

Many African cities have in common fragmented territorial development in their peripheries and low land use, whose influence extends further and further into the suburbs. Arable land thus changes uses at the expense of the peasant populations and cities' food supply. Territorial expansion also has environmental impacts by upsetting the natural balance through deforestation, water contamination and groundwater depletion – phenomena that, when combined, can pose a real challenge in terms of coherent regional development between the city and countryside (Nunes Silva 2015).

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Fig. 4.2 Douala 2013 (Nylon area) 200,000 slum inhabitants. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

The problems African cities face are not only economic. There are also imbalances in the urban network that are marked by the influence of a few multimillion-dollar cities that control much of the political and economic power, at the expense of smaller cities. This is the case for many capital cities, as we can see in the table below, be it Lagos, Kinshasa or Cairo, which are among the world's most populous megacities, or other large African cities of over a million inhabitants.

Below are some images of these sprawling capitals with their poor neighborhoods, low land use and budding business centers – globalization of the urban image and international positioning vying for the "Manhattanization" of the twenty-first-century city (Figs. 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6).

But the question remains as to what is happening *outside* of these cities. How are cities (and city life) organized in less attractive small and medium-sized agglomerations? These secondary cities replicate another characteristic of African cities: that of territorial sprawl. Few cities are, in fact, concentrated, vertical and dense. Rather, their boundaries are fuzzy and their peripheries – comprised of dirt roads, public lighting (in some cases) and cookie-cutter housing developments and parcels with buildings under construction – unclear. And yet we know that any posteriori large-scale development in the urbanization process is extremely expensive, particularly with regard to technical networks, roads, drainage, schools, health centers and other collective services. Other logics therefore govern the implementation of suburban

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Fig. 4.3 Urban sprawl in Yaoundé 2013. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

housing and development of central business and commercial areas. The city of Koudougou, which we will examine more closely later in this chapter, will help us understand this logic of making the city and watching it grow.

We must keep in mind the wide variety of urban agglomerations (Fig. 4.7). Small and medium-sized cities have the largest number of urban inhabitants in Africa and

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Fig. 4.4 Kinshasa 2015, Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa's third largest city. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

are home to the largest number of migrants of rural origin. Though their populations are smaller, these cities nonetheless have the highest population growth. 52% of the urban population in Africa lives in cities of less than 200,000 inhabitants (Fig. 4.7), versus 42% for developing countries (Kessides 2006). These small and medium-sized cities, both in size and in number of inhabitants, are also intermediate cities (Bolay and Rabinovich 2004), given their central position in the surrounding rural area (i.e. the rural-urban continuum) (Montgomery et al. 2004) and distinction as regional urban centers (Bolay et al. 2004). These centers have not only urban and local services and infrastructure, but also regional ones (public administration, markets, businesses, banks, hospitals, etc.). But like small and medium-sized cities in Europe and other industrialized regions (Knox and Mayer 2009), these African agglomerations benefit less directly from globalized economic exchanges and can sometimes even suffer the consequences (i.e. a local market undermined by highly competitive Asian imports). Their dynamics are and will remain largely dependent on their physical and economic integration into national urban networks, notably through the quality and density of the road network, public transportation and as centers for processing and distributing agricultural products).

Comparing different African cities, Myers (2011) attempts to move away from the Western models that shape thinking about African cities by highlighting the variety and distinctiveness of urban development patterns on the continent. Though

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Fig. 4.5 Abidjan, business center, in 2013. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

aware of the strong colonial influence as regards the physical manifestations of urbanism and the neo-colonialist thinking of "city makers," he stresses that African city dwellers develop their own forms and standards for building and managing the city, and are often obliged to do so due to their living conditions and the local government's inaction. Though poor, these inhabitants are active in that they create their jobs (often informal), homes and neighborhoods. All this self-construction of the city clashes with other forces, such as the land market, the real estate sector, technical networks, local governments and their administrative departments.

Though seemingly conflictual, these logics are often subject to negotiations. People know the rules, even if they then misappropriate them. Land ownership is governed both by modern, official law and traditional authorities with power over customary land. In the African context, such factors often lead to arrangements between stakeholders that differ from those on other continents. The practices – both formal and informal – that make up the African city are anchored in innovative modes of urban governance based on the realities and actions of their residents. If we take housing and economic activities as an example, unlike the local government, most poor African urban dwellers consider that their informal, undeclared or even illegal activities are not only legitimate but normal and functional (Tranberg and Vaa 2004).

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Fig. 4.6 The skyline of Abidjan 2013, the capital of Ivory Coast, and long considered the modern metropolis of West Africa. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

Here we touch on an African specific feature that makes African cities not only a dichotomy between historical colonial centers and recent informal extensions, or between self-construction in poor neighborhoods and modern technical networks (water, drainage, electricity, waste management, etc.). Of greater importance here are the superposing references, such as the customary land rights that underlie the "modern" laws passed down by European colonists. Stakeholders both utilize and fight these underlying frameworks with the aim of developing strategies to maximize the financial value of land and real estate. Neighborhood residents, however, remain in fearful expectation of the hypothetical application of master plan decisions taken in high places and their obligation to pay land rights in order to legally stay on their plots and in their homes.

Faced with this seeming "cacophony," the situation is evolving and awareness is growing everywhere in Africa in an attempt to better align urban theories, planning methods and the resulting actions.

For Agboda and Watson (2013), African cities are changing rapidly, and considerable investments (notably in real estate and amenities) are reshaping the landscape. According to their study, the problem is that these changes have no real impact on what is needed to implement sustainable urban development. For the authors, the majority of these large-scale projects are and remain climatically, socially (as they target African and foreign elite) and infrastructurally inappropriate. These forecasts, which are often designed at the federal level, either draw their

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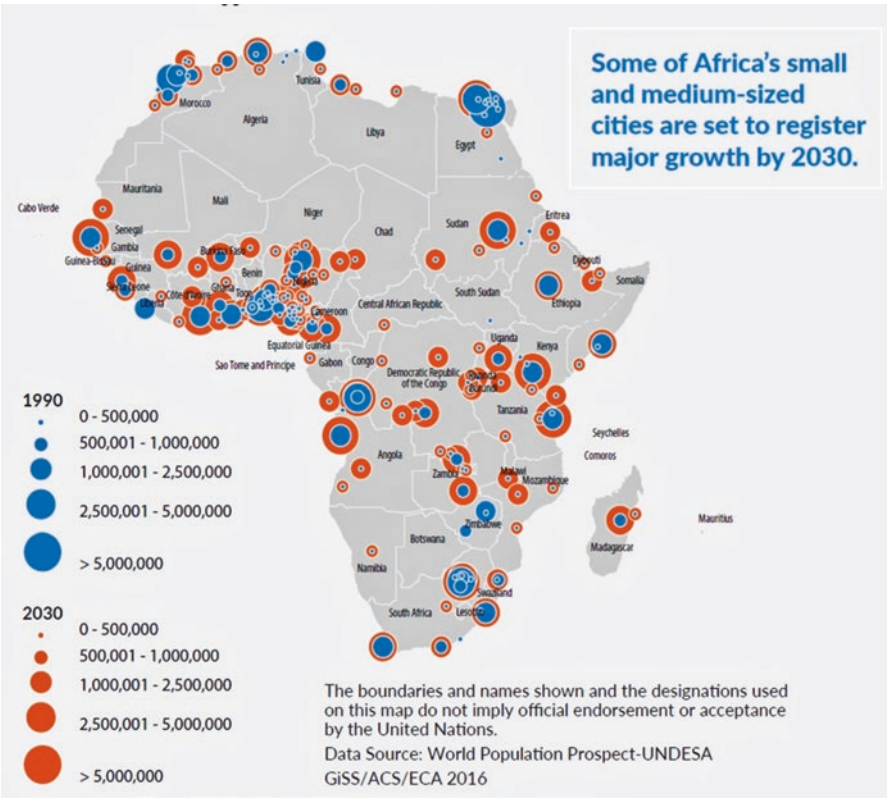


Fig. 4.7 Types of urban agglomeration in Africa (1990–2030) (Economic Report on Africa 2017: Urbanization and Industrialization for Africa's Transformation). (Reproduced from UNDESA 2017)

inspiration directly from colonial planning norms, or are original and extravagant but turn a blind eye to the informal city, or worse, simply eradicate it. Hence, the formal city is becoming increasing inaccessible to ordinary people each day, as informal settlements spread to the outskirts.

In response to this trend, the Association of African Planning Schools, a network of 43 institutions that are training urban planners in an effort to reform planning education on the continent, was created in 2008. According to its coordinator,[5] we must first realize that urbanization in Africa "does not follow the "conventional" patterns of industrialization and concomitant job creation in the North, where rapid urban growth was first experienced. Rapid urbanization in Africa is simply not matched by the job creation required to secure livelihoods, and public intervention is not keeping pace with the demand for shelter and land." Most urban master plans

[5] http://www.citylab.com/design/2011/11/improving-urban-planning-africa/549/ (Accessed 23 May 2019).

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do not take into account the informal nature of urban, social and economic life, real estate and land. Yet, these dimensions – which greatly impact the lives of the poor – must be reintegrated in planning and in training curricula for future professionals so that they can develop new approaches. Thus planning should not serve to sanction norms that are inappropriate to the context, but rather to reorganize and standardize what already exists and to better plan cities in the future by considering their inhabitants first and foremost.

As Harrison et al. (2008:17) say in their introduction to *Planning and Transformation*, taking stock of the post-apartheid experience in South Africa, "The purpose of planning is to contribute to the realization of socially just and sustainable cities and regions, although if we recognize that there are different interpretations of what these concepts may mean. To this end we believe that both the process and products of planning are important and that they cannot be considered separately from each other." We fully agree with this idea of how urban planning should be done in Africa in the future.

4.2 Koudougou, a Regional Hub in Burkina Faso

To illustrate these considerations, the history of Koudougou in Burkina Faso will serve as an excellent example.

With just over 100,000 inhabitants, Koudougou (Fig. 4.8) is located 100 km west of Ouagadougou and connected to it via a wide asphalt road. It is the administrative



Fig. 4.8 Aerial view of Koudougou. (Reproduced from Google Earth, 2019)

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Fig. 4.9 Koudougou, city entrance in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

center of the province of Boulkiemde, which is the departmental prefecture of the same name and capital of the Centre-Ouest region. This major city is the country's third most populated after the capital and Bobo Diolasso. Koudougou's role as an urban center dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of French settlers and the forced immigration of rural populations to increase its number of inhabitants (Hilgers 2005).

Our first impression of Koudougou is that of spatial sprawl and extremely low building density. As one enters the county, one finds few parcels that are not yet overdeveloped (Figs. 4.9 and 4.10). With hesitating constructions (houses made of raw earth or bricks), everything is designed and made for in a short term vision. The houses are inhabited, but often only partially as they are still under construction. At the same time, a new, luxury private housing development at the city limits, whose construction was launched with pomp on the occasion of the Independence Day celebration on December 11, 2012, accommodates the city's most affluent residents.

Beyond its suburbs, Koudougou resembles an open-air shopping mall (Fig. 4.11). The city center is home to every business activity imaginable (fresh food, restaurants, cafes, workshops, taverns with music pouring out of open doors, shops that sell everything from mechanical parts to clothing imported from abroad). People everywhere on bikes, motorcycles and on foot (though rarely in cars) make Koudougou a lively, vibrant city. Its mish-mash collection of modest-sized build-

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Fig. 4.10 Koudougou suburbs under construction in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

ings seems cramped in so vast a territory. The overall tone is that of raw earth, from the beaten dirt tracks that branch off from the main roads to the houses: beige to brown and sometimes ocher. Koudougou is a rural town where rural farmers who come to sell their produce at the market can feel at home.

Crossing the center, one immediately observes this mixture of urbanity and rurality, with empty plots, houses still under construction and billboards. A city more that is more like a gigantic village, and that one would not suspect – compared to other cities of the same size – is home to 100,000 people of all ages.

Our final impression is that the city is extraordinarily clean: the downtown with its gleaming stalls, the orderly markets and little garbage along the roadsides at intersections.

In Burkina Faso, 77.30% of the population lives in rural areas while 22.70% lives in urban ones. Clearly, the Burkinabe population is predominantly rural. 46.4% of the country's urban population lives in Ouagadougou, the nation's capital (Fig. 4.12).

76.8% of Burkina Faso's urban population is concentrated in its ten most populous cities, with an average annual growth rate of 7.26% in the urban population between 1975 and 2006.[6] While the country's urban population accounted for only 10.8% of the national total in 1975, this number rose to 18.5% in 1990, 24% in 2010

[6] Urban development plan for Koudougou, p. 19.

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Fig. 4.11 Downtown Koudougou market and its business activities in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

and 28.7% in 2018, according to the World Bank.[7] If this trend continues, this figure could reach 37% to 44% by 2030.[8]

For World Bank experts, contemporary urban development in Burkina Faso can be divided into three periods. Between 1960 and 1983, urban development began emerging from the colonial era with two types of zoning: one for poor indigenous populations and the other equipped with houses, roads, drainage and electricity for Western expatriates and African officials. In 1983, the Sankara revolution had an urban impact, resulting in the nationalization of lands and the creation of national public lands. A highly centralized national policy emerged to regulate land and housing issues, marking the beginning of the development of many housing estates and the allocation of parcels. After the fall of the regime in 1990, the new government began negotiations with the World Bank to create and strengthen technical departments responsible for urban issues within the local government in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Diolasso, the country's two largest cities (World Bank 2002).

[7] https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=BF (Accessed 23 May 2019).

[8] Profile of Burkina Faso's urban sector, IAGU (UN Habitat 2005:10).

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Fig. 4.12 View over Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso in 2017. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

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4.2.1 A Central Pole in Its Region

The surface area of the commune is approximately 580 km^2. In 2006, its urban population totaled 88,184 inhabitants (plus the municipality's 15 villages), with an average density of 11.91 inhabitants/hectare for a surface area of 7407 ha. In 2030, in other words the horizon of the City's Urban Development Plan (SDAU), the commune will be home to 235,085 inhabitants (rural and urban populations combined), following an annual communal population growth rate of 4%. This constantly increasing population generates enormous needs which must then be met. Moreover, Koudougou is in an area where natural resources are scarce and the environment is facing challenges in terms of balance.[9]

Koudougou has inspired numerous studies, planning documents and foresight. The first was the Communal Development Plan (PCD), developed via a long participatory process that started in 2002 and ended in 2006. This plan identified the priority needs for a budget of more than seven billion CFA francs[10] and was incommensurate with the municipality's financial capacity. The term expired in 2006 without any third party financing, and the plan was never implemented. During a 2014 field study, the plan was reviewed with more modest ambitions (to the tune of one billion CFA francs this time), which was more in line with the municipality's limited means. The City Council's approval was expected in March of that year.

There was also the first development and urban planning master plan (SDAU) (Fig. 4.13), which covered the period from 2002 to 2017. Its creation was overseen by the Directorate General of Urban Planning in 2002, but it could not be implemented. A new version of the plan was adopted by the Council of Ministers in December 2013. Among the key initiatives was a strategic sanitation plan financed by France (FDA, French Development Agency) and adopted in 2005 for a 10-year period. The plan provided for the construction of 7000 latrines, 5000 of which have been installed to date. Additionally, a study on household waste management in Koudougou resulted in a strategic plan in 2007 that is still pending. At the federal level, two directives incorporate Koudougou's urban planning: the national regional development plan for 2025, whose final stage is currently underway, and a city contract financed by the World Bank for six regional capitals, which was completed in 2011 as part of the "Regional Development Poles (RDP)" national program.

Multiplying along the way, plans are developed one after the other at the request of the federal government or at the suggestion of international donors. In reality, however, they are not used and have no real outputs; though they are based on the needs identified, they do not take into account local resources or possible outside support. This is a conundrum that many poor cities, which lack the means to realize their goals or have little say in national decisions, must face.

[9] Urban development plan (2012) Koudougou urban development plan Portrait (Word doc in AB archive).

[10] At a rate of 1 euro per 655 FCFA, this represents a total of 10.7 million euros.

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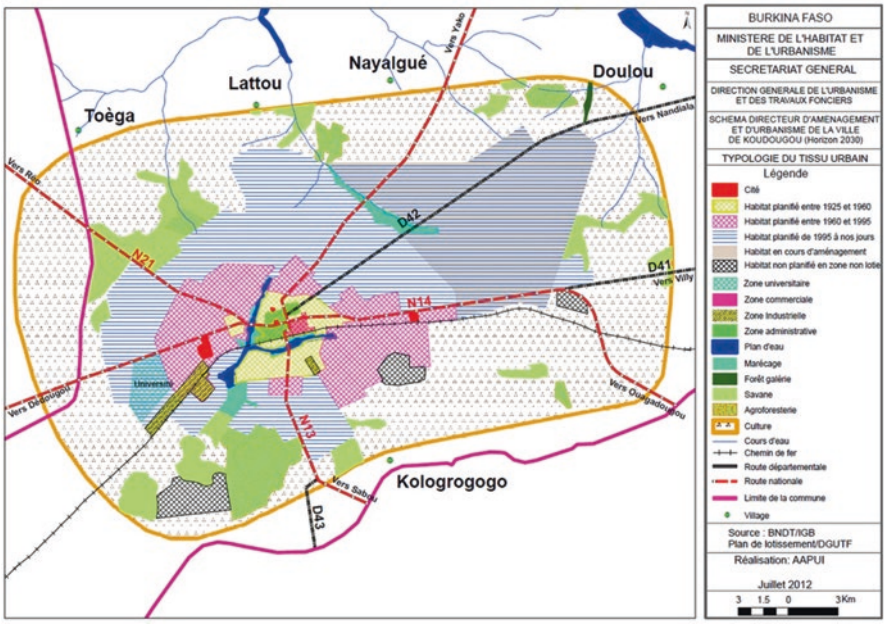


Fig. 4.13 Typology of the urban of Koudougou, urban development plan 2012 – SDAU. (Reproduced from Ministry of Housing and Urbanism 2012)

The issues, however, are elsewhere and remain unsolved. According to Léandre Guigma (2010), Koudougou's urbanization has gradually extended both linearly (along the main Ouagadougou-Dédougou road and the railroad tracks) and concentrically (around a first housing development built in 1925). Today, the city spans over 10 km from east to west and 9 km from north to south.

The city has an administrative area, a commercial area, an industrial area, a university area, as well as residential areas. The latter represent both lawfully developed neighborhoods (mainly in the highly urbanized center), informal housing on undeveloped land with unmarked roads and former villages that are now administratively attached to the town. This is problematic as, with the exception of one area in the southwest of the city, these informal settlements do not actually figure on the Koudougou urban development master plan reference map created by the supervising Ministry in 2012. Yet, this issue is crucial to the city's future development. It is clear that the so-called cultivable lands (i.e. for agricultural production) closest to the recently urbanized areas have become peripheries that are not covered by any formal planning projects in the transition towards urbanization (Fig. 4.14). To date more than 60,000 parcels totaling nearly 7000 ha of the city's public lands have been made available to third parties, which is considerable for a population of almost 113,000 inhabitants and will pose major issues in terms of land regularization and development of these parcels in the future. The reasons for this are both political and nepotistic. Depending on the period, mayors sell plots of communal land to fill the city's coffers…and line their pockets along the way. However, this is

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Fig. 4.14 Peri-urban land near Koudougou, first developments in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

done without any reference to the various urban development plans that have marked the city's recent history.

4.2.2 Of Texts, Resources and Projects

How does this all of this translate in concrete terms? How are these institutions and texts turned into specific concrete actions, given that this is not merely an abstract idea but an actual medium-sized city that, in Burkina Faso's case, is one of the five or ten cities that constitute the country's urban fabric (Fig. 4.15).

Like Fada N'Gourma and Ouahigouya (other cities in Burkina Faso), Koudougou has benefited from the development program for medium-sized cities financed by the Swiss Cooperation that, in addition to the investments in collective utilities (which, in Koudougou's case, includes two fresh food markets (Fig. 4.16)[11], a soon-to-be operational bus station and a future slaughterhouse) also helped to create a

[11] The Koudougou central market was renovated in 2005. The rehabilitation project was financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and designed by the Swiss architect Laurent Séchaud, whose project won the Aga Khan Architecture Award in 2007.

The jury noted that the project was the fruit of a genuine participatory process that involved the whole community in the choice of the site, and the design and construction of the market.

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Fig. 4.15 Burkina Faso and its main cities (Reproduced from http://www.ohada.com/etats-membres/burkina-faso.html. Accessed 23 May 2019)

specific organization to design, implement and monitor these projects under the supervision of the local government in 1997. The EPCD,[12] a municipal public development institution, was initially the program's oversight division but later established itself as the City Council's delegated contracting authority. As such, it designed and created all of the infrastructures and activities that were jointly selected to promote the city's development on behalf of the municipality. In Koudougou, the EPCD's director is also the director of the City's technical services, which has three departments: buildings, roads and water/sanitation. Each sector is represented by a single technician. To make up for the lack of competent staff, the City Council appeals to the various departments, which provide it with a few specialized officials.[13] Local and regional representatives also intercede in areas ranging from the economy to agriculture, water resources, land, infrastructure, education, social action, sports and leisure and health. Three public companies are responsible for water and sanitation, electricity and telecommunications.

[12] http://www.google.ch/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDMQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cooperation-suisse.admin.ch%2Fburkinafaso%2Fressources%2Fresource_fr_92982.pdf&ei=K_wiU5eVCMGetAbklYCQCA&usg=AFQjCNGFnmplr-_Q_CpoNUCb5BLaTgOOGg&bvm=bv.62922401,d.Yms (Accessed 23 May 2019).

[13] Currently, the city administration has a treasury inspector, an educational advisor and a communications specialist. The City Council has likewise requested an urban planner, a real estate specialist, a quaestor and a human resources director.

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Fig. 4.16 The central market in 2014 (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

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Fig. 4.17 Water fountain in a Koudougou neighborhood, overseen by the municipality in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

The fact remains that, in a context of decentralization, the municipality is responsible for the maintenance of schools, health centers, cultural/sports facilities, markets, bus stations, parking areas, streets, rainwater pipelines, green spaces, boreholes and wells (Fig. 4.17).

In 2014, Koudougou's annual budget totaled 450 million CFA francs (686,350 euros[14]). Of this, the Mayor estimates that 85% was used for operating costs (salaries and other recurrent charges). The city's actual financial capacity is currently 70–80 million CFA francs[15] per year. The EPCD's outside delegation responsible for managing the two fresh food markets succeeding in accessing an extra 35–40 million CFA francs per year depending on the year, which in turn is reinvested in new markets or in the maintenance of existing ones[16] (Fig. 4.18). Including the federal government's funding for municipal infrastructure and facilities, the total public budget for 2014 was one billion CFA francs (approximately €1.5 million). From this, 75% of the expenditures were for the local administration's operating costs, while 25% was invested in the municipal territory (SDAU 2012).

This immediately sheds light on three dimensions of urban planning that we will examine based on respondents' answers and the documents we consulted: (1) the public budget is very low given the needs identified by the authorities and the population; (2) the municipality has few employees, and (3); many consider the compe-

[14] One euro equals 655 CFA francs (March 2014).

[15] 106,750–122,000 euros.

[16] Following social unrest in Koudougou in 2011, shopkeepers stopped paying rent on their shops and stalls. Taxes fell to about five million CFA francs. The financial situation has improved with calm restored.

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Fig. 4.18 Shops at the Koudougou central market in 2014. Maintenance provided by the municipality and taxes paid by the shopkeepers (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

tence level of the political, administrative and technical staff relatively low, thus necessitating the involvement of third parties.

In short, one can say that at first glance, Koudougou has neither the financial nor the human resources to deal with the problems its territory faces autonomously; it must rely on outside partners in a relationship which, while not directly dependent, nonetheless fuels a relationship of interdependence wherein the municipality's position is weak.

Taking this analysis one step further, one can say that from the outset, all of the written and oral communication on planning in Koudougou is primarily technical and functional. Without pretending to be objective, it rarely refers to concepts specific to the urban sciences or other key areas. General documentation that use international concepts undoubtedly exist. For example, in its National policy on housing and urban development (2008), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning mentions the need to "find a comprehensive approach to urban issues in order to create the conditions necessary for sustainable urban development." In turn, it describes a holistic understanding of the urban reality and takes a step towards "strategic planning." In 2005, Bayili and Aweh (2005) developed a national profile report on Burkina Faso's urban sector at the request of UN-HABITAT. According to the authors, the goal was "to help develop policies to reduce poverty at the local, national and regional levels in African and Arab regions, through needs assessment and response mechanisms to help implement Millennium Development Goals

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Fig. 4.19 An active population in a Koudougou shopping street in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

(MDGs)." In 2011, Alain Bagré reminded us that cities are not built by urban planners but by the people (Figs. 4.19 and 4.20). The new vision of urban management must reflect the idea of cities "for and by the people" and strengthen its efforts to support the dynamism, creativity, democracy and sustainability of the latter. Professionals (city planners, administrators, engineers, etc.) must be convinced that it is in their best interest to move away from the old urban management principles that mainly benefit a powerful minority and move towards a new approach. (Bagré 2011)

These references are highlighted to emphasize both their importance (actions in the field do not come out of nowhere) and the fact that they are consistently absent from most technical and administrative reports on and for the city. Rather, these concepts are disappearing in favor of almost exclusively descriptive diagnoses. The documents we saw – be it official municipal texts or requests to consultants working for a national or local public officials (often financed by third-party organizations, international organizations (such as the World Bank) or bilateral cooperation agencies) – did not offer any real perspective or allow for broader, more critical thinking on the immediate objectives.

Our second observation was that there is very little urban research on Burkina Faso,[17] and even less on Koudougou. Those that do exist either focus on Ouagadougou

[17] This is not to say that none exist, but few are easily referenced and discernible using Internet search tools.

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Fig. 4.20 Community leaders and crafts in a suburb of Koudougou in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

(Hauer et al. 2018; Delaunay and Boyer 2017; Biehler 2006; Fourchard 2001; Van Dijk 1986) or are done at the national or international level (as comparisons) (Baron and Peyroux 2011; Potts 2009; Beauchemin and Schoumaker 2005). At the sectoral level, the vast majority of articles about urban life in Burkina Faso available on the Internet concern health and medical issues, not urban planning issues (Niakara et al. 2007).

Nevertheless, a number (though not exhaustive) of these works can be cited as emblematic of the centers of scientific interest with regard to the cities of Burkina Faso. One is based on a comparative approach Obrist et al. (2013), but does not focus exclusively on the intentions and actions of public institutions and the experts they appoint. For Söderström, Dupuis and Leu (2013) who describe urbanity in Ouagadougou, models of urbanization are simply replicated from one African city to another: the same experts, the same funders for the same products, whose quality is questionable at best. This is what Chenal (2013) also questions in his book on planning urban space in West Africa: plans produced by national and/or foreign experts do exist, but are rarely followed given that financial resources – even with the support of international donors – do not allow for it. They do, however, sometimes serve as an argument for more specific actions. Hilgers (2009), the only author to have worked on Koudougou, shows how in this rebellious city, a shared urban identity founded on urbanity, collective belonging, mutual recognition among citizens and identification with the rebel city has been created, giving rise to a sense of belonging that in turn produces a global vision of the city. The author does not go

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further into the daily life of this urbanity, which is at once the essence of its future development, the current management of the territory and its inhabitants and its future planning.

With a body of scientific literature that planners simply do not utilize, the official texts are more concrete and operational. Thus, Koudougou's urban development master plan for the horizon of 2030 (which was adopted at by the government in December 2013) recalls that with a demographic growth rate of 4% for the coming years, the needs are great and the environmental balance fragile, which thus present a major obstacle to stable development of the territory and its population.

At the same time, these bibliographical references should be compared to what can be learned from the field itself. In total, 16 people[18] were interviewed at length about their vision of the city and its present and future development.

A key word used by many of the respondents was "vision." For them, having a vision and imagining the future of the city and its inhabitants were necessary to regional planning development. Though rarely spoken of in detail, this vision was rather optimistic. The mayor who served between 2012 and 2014 was driven by such a vision that highlighted Koudougou's potential as a young, economically dynamic, geographically strategic city.

Another topic respondents mentioned that of "development," for which the city had great potential. However, they felt that this development should be more pragmatic, i.e. be based on the needs and capacities of inhabitants and the local economy. Development cannot be exclusively endogenous, as the city's resources do not allow for it, neither financially nor humanly, and must involve cooperation with the State, international donors and foreign cities as part of decentralized cooperation projects.

In the case of Koudougou, and by extension Burkina Faso, the political dimension of urban development was a matter of major concern for all respondents. Generally speaking, the people lacked trust in the political world ("the people feel that we do not care about them"). The second criticism was of the unfinished decentralization process in a country where power is highly concentrated. Currently, the State gives itself a considerable amount of decision-making powers, at the expense of the regions and municipalities. This makes the latter highly dependent, both financially and ideologically. For the respondents, the State does not like Koudougou. This politicized nature of the debate on the city's future makes urban planning difficult and unpredictable, given that the city's needs are significant, resources are lacking and inhabitants are wary of politicians, who prefer "megaprojects" to a more coherent, long-term organization of the municipal territory. According to those interviewed, good governance should be the fruit of a genuine political desire to foresee problems and develop strategies to deal with them.

[18] Among them, nine were directly involved in studies on the management of Koudougou; six were urban specialists with extensive field knowledge of Burkina Faso and one was an association manager.

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4.3 What Urban Planning Means for Koudougou

Many plans have been developed for Koudougou, especially in the past 15 years; some (like local development plans and master plans) have a comprehensive vision while others are more sectoral (like the strategic plans for sanitation and household waste). Their advantage is that they provide an idea of the investments needed to improve the situation in the municipality. Their disadvantage is that they are not executed because they are not in line with the municipal government's financial resources or skills. Rather, they are used to reassure potential donors during financial negotiations. We will look at this fundamental contradiction in greater detail in order to better grasp and go beyond the prevailing pessimism.

What do the actors say? What are the intentions of this urban planning that has largely developed in Burkina Faso since the 2000s, in accordance with the strategies of international organizations that support the government in its development efforts?

The plans do not meet the classic goals of planning the urban future, but rather are a tool that serves the government's purposes when it comes to organizing the territory. Given the multitude of issues, it is clear that setting priorities in terms of areas and sectors is challenging both politically and technically. Everything immediately becomes urgent, with no criteria explaining the choices made. While both desired and considered useful, the consultative process between decision-makers, service providers and the population are gradually being put aside due to lack of time and resources. As such, there is a strong focus on the tool, which requires technical prowess (that of consulting firms appointed to do so), and on the results to achieved. Little emphasis is put on the approach or the objectives targeted by applying this tool.

The second major difficulty concerns the production conditions of urban development plans in Koudougou and in the other cities in Burkina Faso. Three pitfalls can be highlighted here: the first is that these local plans are decided on by the national government and "imposed" on municipalities; the second is that, like many other cities in Burkina Faso, Koudougou's municipal government lacks competent staff and as such cannot participate in the design, supervision and monitoring of local plans. The glaring lack of financial resources also does not allow the municipality to implement this planning, which is more akin to wishful thinking and used mainly to appeal to funders, rather than as an actual blueprint for local urban development. Funding primarily comes from the donors with whom the federal government negotiates. The municipal government and local inhabitants only play a supporting role during this process, though they become key players during the planning implementation phase. In sum, work is done "on behalf of the municipality" but not with the city as its starting point, or even in direct collaboration with its authorities or citizens. Hence, regardless of the quality of this technical production, a disconnection exists between the designers, operators, users and beneficiaries that greatly weakens the foundations.

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Two other points likewise trouble this process. The first is the public's lack of trust in both the local and national government, which makes them less likely to participate. The second is the lengthiness of official procedures. In the early 2000s, for example, Koudougou's participative process planning took more than 5 years. Approval by the national government delayed the process even further. In the end, the whole process was relaunched in 2010 in order to finally obtain government support…in early 2014. This leads to a dichotomy between centralized planning and the municipal government's action.

The experts consulted during the case study agreed. Planning tools do exist but are not used as such and, to date, are unusable in the contexts for which they were designed. In fact, the findings show that they are misappropriated and become tools for urban marketing and communication with the donors. Indeed, donors believe that it is essential that every city in their agency intervenes have a master plan. In the amused words of one speaker, "The master plan is a catalog of everything that needs to be done in the city; donors choose what they want to finance!"

Again, we would like to point out that none of the respondents contested the usefulness of the planning, but that all were skeptical about its impact; "As it is not really used, it is impossible for us to evaluate it." Two logics prove to be completely conflicting with the overall interests of coherent, sustainable urban planning. The first is the wishes and desires of foreign donors (to which the national and local government acquiesces) are priorities that guide investments. On the other hand, national and local political leaders prefer to leave their "mark" with dazzling projects that attest to their presence in power rather than through wise, long-term management. In 2014, the political authorities of Koudougou were proud to showcase the new housing estate reserved for the construction of villas for the middle and upper classes at the city's entrance – the fruit of a partnership between the local government, financial backers and private companies.

4.4 From Marketing to Local Urban Action

The remarks made by local respondents highlight areas that could point to ways forward.

The field study shows that Koudougou has strong potential for regional and national development. At the regional level, this is due to the fact that it is a regional business hub that is centrally located in a major agricultural area; at the national level, Koudougou's geographical proximity and excellent road connection to Ouagadougou (100 km away) increase its attractiveness as a secondary hub for the sale of agricultural products from the entire region, business, tourism, conferences and events (the atypical nights organized annually at end of the year are proof of this[19]) (Fig. 4.21).

[19] http://www.fasomoov.com/agenda/evenements-burkina-faso/nuits-atypiques-de-koudougou-2013.html (Accessed 23 May 2019).

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Fig. 4.21 Main road in downtown Koudougou, heading east towards Ouagadougou in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

The most critical and complex issue that merits immediate attention is that of land regularization. While numerous housing development projects exist on paper, little of the land has actually been developed in recent decades. Property tax in Koudougou is extremely low and yields return to the municipality. The current allocation of building plots, which is highly politicized and often conflictual, requires a complete overhaul so as to overcome the current impasse and allow for the construction of low-income housing. The latter settle on agricultural land by obligation, thus extending the city's boundaries through informal settlements in new areas with little infrastructure or basic networks.

This brings us to two other frequently cited sectors: water (through improved drinking water and sewage systems) and sanitation (by improving all forms of waste management, i.e. human excreta and household waste, which must be systematically collected and deposited in landfills created for this purpose). Other areas that also came up frequently during the interviews include various aspects of road improvement (asphalting, maintenance, extension) and road use (traffic congestion and public transportation modes). They also mentioned the privatization of public spaces by formal or informal businesses that have come to monopolize Koudougou's main streets, with little financial compensation for the municipality.

Some also mentioned housing in passing. Again, everything revolves around the priorities and beneficiaries to support in order to move from informal, self-built housing to social housing that is better served by basic networks and public amenities. The topic most likely lingers on the margins of discussions, as it is considered above all as a private issue. The experts we spoke to recognized that the problem of informal housing existed in all African cities and has rarely been solved in a satisfactory way.

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Fig. 4.22 Urban public transportation in poor condition in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

The organization of the political governance and public administration only partly meets the repeated observation of the low numbers and weak/poor skills of the administrative staff. To quote a senior government official, "there are 134 municipal employees, and only 10% of them have an acceptable level of training." Strengthening the municipal government's technical and administrative skills is considered a priority, with continuing education for staff as a way to improve the current situation. As mentioned previously, technical services are already running on empty, with three managers in all and for everything, with no permanent staff and faulty equipment as no budget is available for their maintenance or other repairs.

Working conditions are hazardous: currently set up in temporary premises following a fire at the technical offices, there are few computers, the machines are often broken down (Figs. 4.22 and 4.23) and there is no internet access in the technical services department. As such, personal equipment (motorcycles, mobile phones, laptops) is often used. It is difficult to imagine doing more and doing better without reorganizing these departments. But how, and with what means? For the mayor and his deputies, nothing is possible without complete overhaul of communal taxation regulations, i.e. by increasing business and property taxes, taxing real estate, etc. Any measures that would allow the municipality to increase its financial base and strengthen its project management capacity, including raising the salaries of communal staff to attract more skilled workers, would undoubtedly displease the many beneficiaries of this laxity that has prevailed for so long.

The social conditions that favor such changes are based on the dynamism of a population that is very much attached to its city and its development. Many groups exist and are active in creating economic activities, promoting their products,

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Fig. 4.23 Defectuous material belonging to the municipality 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

defending community interests, public interest works such as sanitation, keeping public spaces clean and raising the population's awareness about social, economic and family issues.

The population's mobilization, either autonomously or at the local government's instigation, is certainly the cornerstone of this "miracle" that allowed Koudougou – with its derisory means, weak administration and grave social conflicts – to preserve a quality of life (at least in downtown areas) of which the political authorities and inhabitants are proud. That said, the majority of the issues concern the public's mistrust of politicians. The local government must recognize the crucial need to establish a more direct link with residents, regardless of their socio-economic status. On numerous occasions, respondents spoke of the need for consultative processes in planning that more actively involve the population, both directly and through representative groupings.

4.5 Planning the African City, a Veritable Challenge for the Twenty-First Century

Today, urbanization in Africa is an irreversible series of changes that are shaping a continent in major transformation, regardless of the country or city. Driven by both the massive migration of rural populations to urban centers and strong natural growth, the spatial, social, economic and environmental issues urban settlements

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face are the same as those that all cities face. It is critical to structure this ongoing demographic development and spatial expansion, particularly given the limited financial and human resources. African cities, capitals and other economic/political centers enjoy comparatively greater attention from the government as well as donors, while small and medium-sized cities are still tend be off the radar. The latter are largely neglected or, at best, are addressed in a sporadic, sectoral manner, and often without any continuity. These cities have glaring needs but lack real means to meet to social demands and invest in infrastructure and public facilities. Hence, these issues go unanswered. When they are tackled, it is generally in a state of urgency or when national governments or foreign funders decide to allocate specific funds.

This urban context of prevailing instability and uncertainty about the future allows us to speak of "poor cities." Their poverty stems not only from the fact that the majority of their residents actually live on the edge of poverty, but is also linked to insufficient resources. This can only be addressed through decentralization and public funding. Yet, city governments do not have the financial resources to make the types of investments that are essential for improving citizens' daily lives. What is more, their administrations lack competent staff at every level of the professional hierarchy.

This situation has certain risks, namely planning African cities based on assumptions that will only serve the interests of a small minority of affluent citizens. Such planning will result in economic and territorial development that marginalizes the lower strata of the population, i.e. those living in informal housing in the most underserved neighborhoods. Conversely, it is also an extraordinary opportunity to rethink these cities' futures based on their realities and what actually exists in terms of resources (both financial and social), and to develop planning that targets the fight against poverty and investment in amenities, thus making a lasting impact on the living conditions of the poor.

In this respect, we learn a great deal from the analysis performed in Koudougou. Located a hundred kilometers from Ouagadougou, the provincial capital is the commercial and political center for a large rural area, but has long been considered a rebel city that is unwilling to comply with the dictates of the central government.

As in many intermediate African cities, the urban planning process in Koudougou is exogenous and out of step with the demands of the population, the priorities defined by the local government and its own human, material and financial resources. As a direct result, it is rarely applied and does not act as a management tool or compass for the future.

This is easily explained because planning in its current state is simply an inventory of the needs to be met, but without any real instructions. How then is it possible to create developments that cost more than ten times the municipal budget for annual expenditures, as is the case in Koudougou? In reality, the plans produced in this context do not serve to guide the local government in planning the urban territory now and in the future. Nor are they a tool for dialogue between said government and the population. On the contrary, any consultation with the community that does not lead to the expected deliverables reinforces citizens' mistrust or distrust of

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public authorities, political and administrative bodies. Once they no longer serve their original purpose, plans become promotional tools at best, pure marketing products to showcase the good intentions of destitute communities at the mercy of donors, be it the State or foreign cooperation agencies.

This denaturing of urban planning is dangerous, as it destroys any coherence in the process as well as the in priorities to be established in terms of the infrastructure and facilities to be built, the priority economic and social sectors and scheduling timelines. Nothing can be planned ahead of time, as any intervention depends entirely on outside funders, with no continuity, guiding principle or guarantee that things will be done in due course. The risk here is greater disorganization in the long run.

Urban planning for African cities must be completely rethought. The key point – and one that is all too often neglected – is starting with a participative diagnosis in which the city's actual situation is examined in its various dimensions – demographically, spatially and infrastructurally, economically, socially and environmentally – thereby allowing all actors to take a position. This cartographic, documentary and anthropological information will serve to create a computerized database that can be added to in real time, thus facilitating the monitoring of "urban development" and concerted, up-to-date decision-making.

At the same time emerges the question of priorities in terms of projects as well as standards, rules and plans adapted to the context in view of the needs identified by specialists, requests from various social actors and the resources available locally and from outside sources. These are the three foundations of any diagnosis. Two principles must guide this initial phase. The first is urban investments, which contribute directly or indirectly to the fight against poverty. The second is overall coherence, which must govern specific actions in the short, medium and long term.

These precepts can only be applied if framework conditions are respected: local governments must have the human skills and financial resources that will allow them to take action. This is not impossible if political ambitions are clear and target gaining legitimacy among the population. This inevitably involves consultative processes that will fuel the dialogue between representatives of the population, the public administration, the political authorities, professionals and other special interest groups (private sector, social/religious/political groups, NGOs, etc.). Training plays a vital role, as does communication and dialogue. It is these same directives that will guide planning's implementation.

This reinvention of urban planning in Africa opens the field to innovation based on completely informal social practices at the local level. While relying on the technical know-how of urban and corporate experts (who are all too absent) is crucial, it is also important to recognize that inhabitants have not waited for them to build their homes, community facilities and neighborhoods (Fig. 4.24). This vital, dynamic force of the population must not be neglected or cast aside, for it comprises the core of a participatory process that includes not only consultation but conception and action as well. This force must be integrated into the planning process and, as such, concretely participate in the implementation of collective decisions.

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Fig. 4.24 An outlying neighborhood in Koudougou that faces economic and environmental issues on a daily basis in 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

Communication is also a key issue. How to learn from other cities in the age of internet and increasingly frequent exchanges on urbanity at the planetary scale. Think of the plethora of UN summits on such issues, or the intercontinental visits of municipal delegations. If, as Campbell (2012) points out, we learn from both near and far, and that learning no longer occurs unilaterally from North to South, but from South to South and South to North (like the bus rapid transport experiment in the 70s in Curitiba that has since been replicated on every continent). Nevertheless, there are three reservations to be made in this regard. The first is that urban technological innovations, even those from emerging countries, are often the work of the largest, wealthiest agglomerations; however, small and medium-sized cities continue to be marginalized by these innovative processes and rarely have the chance to apply them due to a lack of resources. The issue of informal housing and urban poverty is generally considered inevitable, thus ignoring the lessons to be learned from similar contexts. To conclude, it is clear that African cities are rarely cited as examples in their approach to and handling of urban issues.

Two recommendations emerged from these reflections: the first is to put intermediate cities back on the urban agenda in African countries and developing countries by extension, given their demographic importance and expansion dynamics. The second is to share information regarding the progress being made in terms of territorial management and future planning in many African cities, to serve as examples for other cities.

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This is not to purport that all the problems will magically be solved, but rather that we are emerging from a vicious circle in which urban planning does not play its role and is totally disconnected from the complex, changing reality. Instead, we must develop an innovative, realistic, pragmatic vision based on what exists for the gradual improvement of the well-being of all, especially the urban poor. More inclusive urban planning in line with anti-poverty policies would form a winning combination.

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