Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum. 34 (5): 2441 - 2458 (2026)

PERTANIKA JOURNALS

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Journal homepage: http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/

Actor Logics and Urban Informality in the Context of Subdivision Operations in Koudougou (Burkina Faso)

Zongo Baowendsom Simon* and Sory Issa

Department of Geography, Human and Social Sciences Research Laboratory (LABOSHS), Norbert Zongo University, 40000 Koudougou, Burkina Faso

ABSTRACT

With a view to improving the organisation and harmonious development of its various towns, the Burkina Faso government has incorporated subdivision into its urban development policy. However, the implementation of these subdivisions is fraught with conflict, leading to the informal construction of towns. This paper is therefore devoted to analysing the logics of the actors involved in the formation of informal settlements in the context of subdivision operations in Koudougou. To this end, primary and secondary data were collected on urban fabric. The processing and analysis of these data revealed the illicit allocation of plots at the expense of the rightful owners, which provoked indignation among residents and triggered planning conflicts. These conflicts paralyse the continuation of subdivision operations and encourage the emergence of an urban informality that manifests itself both in the configuration of the urban fabric and in the practices of local urban planning actors.

*Keywords: A*ctor logics, Burkina Faso, conflict, Koudougou, subdivision, urban informality

INTRODUCTION

Rapid population growth in West African cities is leading to urban sprawl (Coquery, 1997). This reality calls for the use of tools to achieve rational resource management in the urban fabric process (Chenal, 2009). Long considered the prerogative of the State, urban planning has produced tools deemed inappropriate to the situation of rapidly expanding cities (Sory, 2017). In this context, the introduction of Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs) in the late 1970s

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 20 August 2025
Accepted: 16 July 2026
Published: 30 October 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.34.5.05

E-mail addresses:
simonzongo48@gmail.com (Zongo Baowendsom Simon)
soryssa@yahoo.fr (Sory Issa)
* Corresponding author

© Universiti Putra Malaysia Press

fostered the emergence of local governments and private actors in the production of urban space, helping to address the shortcomings of centralised urban planning (Domergue, 2003). As a result, we are witnessing the participation of several actors (city dwellers, the private sector and decentralised authorities) in urban development operations. This marks a shift from traditional urban planning, considered obsolete, to strategic territorial planning (Sory, 2017). It was in this context that municipal development projects emerged, reinforcing the process of state disengagement, administrative and budgetary decentralisation, and devolution of state powers (Osmont, 1995). Indeed, the aim is to boost the development of local authorities, while at the same time intensifying the process of involving the population in their own development, by triggering citizen motivation (Ribot, 1999). In this respect, decentralisation promotes the participation of grassroots players (private individuals, city dwellers and municipal authorities) in the urban development process, with a view to giving the State real legitimacy (Lajugie, 1985). This reality often results in a situation where social power predominates (Costes, 2010), characterised by the appropriation of urban space by city dwellers.

Against this backdrop, the June 2, 1991, constitution established the organisation of Burkina Faso's territory into local authorities: regions and communes. This led to the emergence of local governments, with the first municipal elections held in 33 communes in 1995, and the third nationwide in 2006. As a result of the decentralisation process, each commune is responsible for urban planning and development (Sory, 2019). The application of this new governance by local governments requires citizen participation. In this power game, social actors often lead to more or less visible forms of resistance, in order to correct institutional actors who do not always seem to protect their interests (Legros, 2008). In reality, the interplay of actors involves power relationships that reflect each actor's capacity for influence and action in the urban planning process, the effects of which give rise to the transformation of the urban fabric (Sory, 2016). According to a report on urban land use, it is within this context that the development of urban space takes place in most cities in Burkina Faso, particularly in Koudougou (Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry, 2016). Although planning policy is the foundation of harmonious organisation and development, failures in the acceptability and implementation of urban infrastructures or projects are becoming more and more frequent. As a result, conflicts are emerging that are paralysing the achievement of this policy's objectives. The dynamics of conflict do not exist in themselves but rather emanate from the actions of several players (Bulle & Tarragoni, 2021). On this basis, the recurrence of conflicts in the implementation of subdivision operations in Koudougou is linked to the actions of the actors involved in putting these development operations into practice. So, how do the logics of the actors involved in the production of urban space in

Koudougou contribute to urban informality in the context of the implementation of subdivision operations? To answer this question, the research first describes the influence of the logics of the actors involved in the process of subdivision operations on the urban configuration in Koudougou. Next, it sheds light on the occupation process in the city's various conflict zones. Finally, it shows the determining characteristics of informal settlements formed in the context of subdivision operations in Koudougou.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Actor Logics

In public policy, the actor is fundamentally defined in terms of both his actions and his contribution (Grossman, 2014). To this end, the actor's action inevitably produces concrete repercussions on the system in which it evolves. The actor has intentionality and strategic potential (Doussot & Themines, 2016). At the same time, they maintain relationships with the society and territory in which they live (Sébastien & Paran, 2006). In this social space characterised by relationships, an interdependence exists between the logic of action and the logic of actors (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). In fact, actor logic influences the actions of different actors, as well as strategic decisions. Similarly, the logic of action determines the logic of actors, insofar as the position, reasoning and strategies developed by each actor are a function of the universe or apparatus that subjugates him and within which he carries out his actions. It is in this sense that the analysis of action logics in organisational phenomena fosters understanding of actors' behaviour, by revealing the reasons that drive individuals to act (Bréchet & Schieb-Bienfait, 2011). As a result, an analysis of actor logic simultaneously takes into account the actor and the situation in which he performs his action. Actors perform actions in their environment according to logic that guides their role in society. On the basis of these logics, Mermet (1992) sets out four criteria for understanding and synchronising the actions of different stakeholders in the management of a territory. Firstly, richness concerns the abundance of what attracts the actor's attention. Secondly, the security of the stakeholder's position is analysed in relation to the risk posed to the stakeholder or the environment. Adaptability assesses the potential for change offered by the way the environment is managed. Finally, coherence describes the actor's consistency in relation to his official position within an institution or organisation. Whether in the context of an expressed logic, i.e. one that is verbalised, or an interpreted logic, i.e. one that reflects the real interest driving the actor's action and which he or she does not wish to externalise, these criteria are essential to their understanding (Partoune, 2010). The balance of power between the various actors and the diverse relationships they maintain can also help us to understand the logics of action (Maroy, 1990). Governance and production processes play a crucial role in development mechanisms (Torre, 2018). The way actors act on the social system through their strategies or actions

influences territorial development (Loubet & Serry, 2020). Thus, actor logics are determining factors that influence social evolution by generating transformations in the way organisations operate (Authier, 1993). In a dynamic of power relations, human relationships are naturally undulating and conflictual (Marc & Picard, 2015). Yet collective bargaining is a kind of institutionalisation of power relations in most capitalist countries (Boivin, 1979). For some cities, the power relations at work paralyse the implementation of planning tools (Sory, 2019), thus influencing the urban configuration, resulting in a construction of the city outside the norms or in informality.

Urban Informality

Informality does not derive from the use of the term "formal"; originally, it was an economic notion. It has evolved over the years, becoming increasingly complex, to the point where it is now used by sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and even geographers. Informality is a universal phenomenon, the prerogative of neither developed nor developing countries. It is a transgressive game that is either part of a voluntary dynamic or forced by the texts in force (Bennafla, 2015). In its complexity, by virtue of its vague and polysemous nature, informality designates any practice or activity that escapes or takes place outside the institutional and regulatory framework (Laurence & Florence, 2010). It is thus generally accepted that informality is any manner or action distinct from what is institutional, where personal interactions predominate. It concerns all sectors of activity and crystallises economic, social, political, and spatial relations. Based on political informality, urban informality is often approached from an analysis of arrangements in various urban contexts (Inverses et al., 2016). The perception of informality in West African cities is relativised, varies according to context and differs from one country to another (Gomis et al., 2019). For some authors, informality is seen as a set of practices or activities that take place outside the rules or what is official. It is not simply reduced to an opposition of what is "formal"; on the contrary, the two notions (formal/informal) are tied together in a system of relationships where informality even becomes the continuum of formality (Gomis et al., 2019; Mcfarlane, 2016). These authors see formality and informality as two inseparable notions, evolving in a symbiotic relationship, with no dichotomy between the term's formal/informal. For others, on the other hand, it is conceived as a territorial formation evolving outside legality, notably through construction without official authorisation (Durand-Lasserve, 1986; Robineau, 2014). This perception of urban informality refers to non-regulatory forms of housing, i.e. any land occupation outside the dynamics of formal urban development. In the light of this latter vision, urban informality can therefore be considered, in certain circumstances, as a direct or indirect consequence of the failure of planning policies, leading to the construction of

cities outside established frameworks. Thus, urban informality generally stems from the actions of informal actors and their logic (Berroir et al., 2016). In urban planning, the actions of different actors intertwine or act in isolation to shape urban landscapes. As analysed by Watson (2014), new alliances are forming between political leaders and the emerging urban middle classes, driven by a common desire for land appropriation and revaluation within the context of Africa urban dynamics. These processes, by marginalising and dispossessing poor city dwellers of their land political rights, lead to the failure of urban development visions and projects. This article therefore examines the dynamics of the actors involved in the production of informal neighborhoods, in relation to land subdivision operations in Koudougou.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing on a strategic analysis based on a documentary and factual approach, this research is based on data from the state of the art, direct observation, and surveys. Thus, this article mobilises qualitative and quantitative data with a view to scrutinising the actions of the various actors in the formation of informal settlements in Koudougou in the context of subdivision operations. Secondary data are based on documentary research to gather information on the challenges involved in implementing development policies. It focuses in particular on the actions of local actors in the formation of informal settlements during subdivision operations in Koudougou. The primary data, both qualitative and quantitative, were collected between January and March 2024. Data collection was based on interview guides and a questionnaire. The questions concerned all the social and political players involved in the development of the city of Koudougou. Speaking of social actors, customary chiefs, landowners and ordinary residents were interviewed. With the political players, questions were put to the deconcentrated and decentralised authorities (the municipal authorities). The deconcentrated authorities interviewed were estate agents, land registry, and urban planning officers, land affairs, and housing officers. Demographic sampling was carried out throughout the town of Koudougou using a systematic survey based on probability sampling, applying Yamane's (1967) formula as follows:

$$\boldsymbol{n} = \frac{\mathrm{N}}{1+\mathrm{N}.(\mathrm{e})^2} \qquad [1]$$

$\boldsymbol{n}$ is the sample size

N is the total population size

e is the desired margin of error (precision level)

In order to ensure adequate sample representation for all population elements, data were collected taking into account each stratum of resource persons. Thus, for a population of 160,239 in Koudougou (Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie[1], 2022), with a margin of error

[1] This is the National Institute of Statistics and Demography.

of 6% due to sampling stratification, the required sample size is:

$$\boldsymbol{n} = \frac{160\,239}{1 + 160\,239\text{x}0{,}06^2} \qquad [2]$$

$$\boldsymbol{n} \approx 277\ people$$

In this study, data were collected from 320 people, including 208 indigenous people, 103 non-indigenous people, 4 decentralised authorities, and 5 deconcentrated authorities. All the data, both primary and secondary, were processed and analysed in order to better situate the responsibility of the various players in the failure of subdivision operations in Koudougou. Although the respondents were selected at random, they were mobilised through a stratified sampling process that included all relevant categories. With a margin of error of 6%, these data provide a solid analytical framework for understanding the rationale behind the actions of those involved in the formation of informal settlements in Koudougou. Respondents are designated by pseudonyms in order to respect the principle of anonymity promised to them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the Perception of Subdivision to Protest Participation

If we are particularly interested in how people perceive subdivision operations, it's because they are one of the essential links in the realisation of the city. In this respect, Subra (2012) believes that planning is not just a matter for specialists and rulers, but also for citizens. Thus, if urban planning is the visible expression of political power over the city it governs, this power can only be exercised in its fullness once it has won the participation of the population (Allogho-Nkoghe, 2006). Social actors' perceptions of the subdivision operations in Koudougou overlap. According to Koudougou residents' perception of subdivisions, they are not inherently bad. It improves urban aesthetics, creates a pleasant living environment for people, and creates a city network that is favourable to economic activities, thus contributing to development. In addition, local residents are quick to point out that subdivisions provide state-recognised land ownership, unlike those not subdivided, and facilitate access to social services such as water and electricity. All these advantages linked to the legal city are also the reason why people are increasingly fighting for the right to a subdivided plot. As a result, all those interviewed agreed on the importance of subdivisions for city dwellers. The graph (Figure 1) illustrates the stakes associated with land subdivision as perceived by urban planning stakeholders in Koudougou.

Figure 1 shows that social stakeholders in the city of Koudougou have a favourable perception of land subdivision projects, as they all recognise their importance. Indeed, 100% of actors affirm that urban development operations help create a harmonious living environment. Secondly, 64.10% of these same actors recognise the ability of urban subdivisions to organise economic and administrative activities. Finally, 38.46% and 94.55% of respondents,

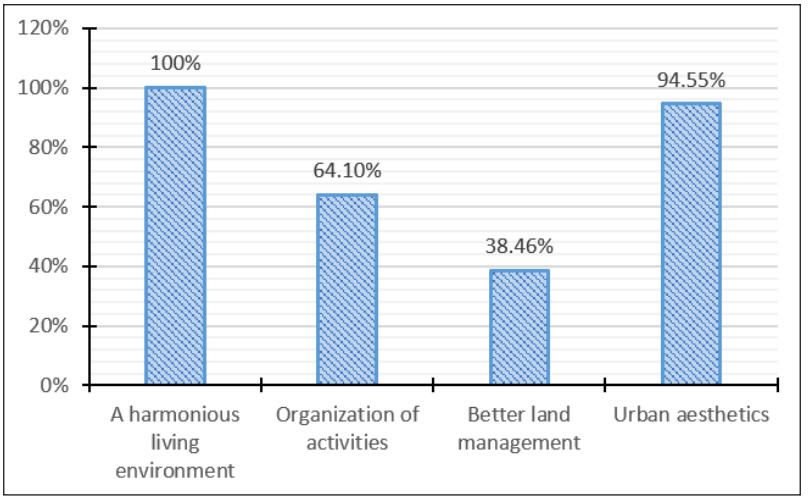

Figure 1. Stakes of subdivision operations according to local actors
Source: Authors' personal work

respectively, highlighted the improved land management and urban aesthetics generated by subdivision operations in the configuration of the urban fabric. This study is not the only one to confirm these results. Inhabitants of the town of Koudougou had already perceived subdivision in a holistic way, as an effective response to the challenges of urban and sustainable development (Hilgers, 2008). For them, urban subdivision embodies a collective interest connected to life in the city.

If the logic of representation influences that of action (Baghdjian, 2014), it is therefore appropriate to first study people's perceptions of subdivision operations before dwelling on the root causes of protest participation. The factors that determine residents' practices are intrinsically linked to the way in which administrative actors practice the politics of the urban factory. The actions of political actors influence those of social actors and lead them to adopt behaviour characterised by protest. The actions of these actors are revealed both in scientific reasoning and in field surveys. Clearly, the allocation of the same plot of land to several people, the allocation of plots to family members, friends and people of one's political persuasion, at the expense of the true landowners or rightful claimants, outrages the local population. This is why they organise themselves into groups to oppose the production of urban space, even though they are counting on the subdivision to bring them into the legal city. Thus, X states:

> Subdivision is supposed to promote urban development, but municipal authorities abuse it to dispossess citizens of their land for personal enrichment. How can such a practice truly promote urban development? No sensible person would oppose their

> own happiness. This is why we are firmly opposed to the allocation of the same plot of land to several people, to the misappropriation of plots, and to any form of corruption linked to the subdivision process. In short, our fight is focused on the mismanagement of local authorities. (Interview with X, Primary Education Inspector, February 2024)

This survey information corroborates Hilgers' (2007) findings concerning the implementation of subdivision operations in Koudougou since 1998. The author describes the situation, highlighting the persistence of nepotism, corruption, and arbitrary evictions during subdivision operations. In addition, he points the finger at the illicit allocation of plots to the detriment of those entitled to them. On this basis, more than 1,800 complaints were recorded, mainly due to the double allocation of plots[2]. Corruption and misappropriation of plots of land during subdivision operations in Koudougou are thus becoming a way of life for political actors. As a result, social actors are mobilising to oppose this action, leading to the emergence of conflicts during subdivision operations. It is in this context that the mechanism for creating conflict zones in the urban fabric of Koudougou is to be found, hence the interdependence of actor dynamics. In reality, despite the interest that social actors gain by promoting subdivision operations, they are opposed to the way in which municipal authorities allocate plots. Instead of serving social actors, the production of plots victimises them by dispossessing them of their land. The inhabitants of the town of Koudougou are not opposed to land subdivision; rather, it is the way of conceiving and implementing the production of urban space that triggers revolts. Although Olson's (1965) research is set in an economic context, the universal nature of his approach also enables us to contextualise local urban planning actors within their social and political universe, in order to explain their behaviour. In his study, the author considers collective action as the expression of predetermined interests. It is within this framework that common interests imply grouping. In the Burkinabe context, the practice of subdivision operations to satisfy the interests of certain groups does not meet the needs of social actors (Sory, 2016). Thus, the way in which municipal authorities allocate plots during land subdivision operations in Koudougou prompts reactions from local residents. This reaction is characterised by protests, also known as protest participation (Hilgers, 2008). Such protests give rise to urban riots, generating spatial dynamics that political actors are unable to control. This was the case with violent protests during the 1998-2004[3] and 2021 subdivision operations in the town of Koudougou. Disputes during development operations are not exclusive to Koudougou. Several studies reveal that subdivision operations in other towns have been blocked by contestations

[2] Complaints recorded by the disputes commission set up in 2013.

[3] For further details, see Hilgers (2008).

due to misappropriation of plots by local authorities (Adegbinni et al., 2022; Tingbé-Azalou, 2015). These studies show that in Benin, precisely in the communes of Comé, Ouidah and Sèmè-Podji, disputes linked to subdivision operations have led to conflicts.

From Protest Participation to Urban Informality

The opinions of social actors on protest participation in the execution of subdivision operations in Koudougou are divided along two different lines. For some, in the face of injustice, violent protests are desirable to ensure that justice prevails. For others, non-violence is the most powerful weapon in all respects for achieving justice and peace. Thus, the following graph explains how social actors perceive the use of violence against the way plots are allocated in Koudougou.

The question of the legitimacy of the use of mob violence during subdivision operations in recent years raises two major responses. According to Figure 2, 89.10% of the population believes, on the one hand, that the use of violence is legitimate insofar as it allows them to express their resentment toward the illegal actions of local authorities in implementing land subdivision projects. On the other hand, 10.90% of actor-inhabitants affirm the illegitimacy of this opposition according to the idea that non-violence is a quiet force for the expression of truth. For them, violence is not the best way to solve problems; if men have been given the right to speak, it's so that they can use polite debate to resolve

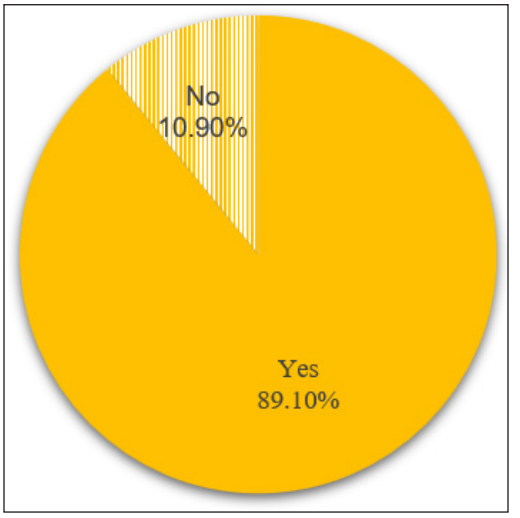

Figure 2. Popular perception of the use of violence
Source: Authors' personal work

differences. These percentages therefore justify the behaviour patterns of most actors in conflict planning and the emergence of urban informality.

Although the city is the place of par excellence where state power is exercised, the urban process is not solely the result of decisions and actions by public authorities (Rivelois, 1986). Thus, the current state of the urban fabric in Koudougou is the result of the actions of several development actors. It is under these conditions that the effective implementation of subdivision operations requires agreement between the different actors, and therefore agreement between the different elements of the system (Rode, 2017). Yet the aforementioned information reveals a mismatch between the logics of actors and the officially legitimised powers they hold, which is indicative of dysfunction. In fact, the logic employed by actor-inhabitants in the process of

producing urban space in Koudougou are the consequence of the practices of political actors (Hilgers, 2008). The collusion of interests, engendered by the way urban planning policy is thought and practiced, hampers the implementation of subdivision operations. As a result, the city was built informally. Y's comments support this assertion when he points out:

> During subdivision operations, poor management provoked indignation among local residents, leading to protests. These objections led to the digging up of bollards by local residents, with the aim of halting further subdivisions. This situation has led to blockages in certain subdivision operations, encouraging the proliferation of informal settlements. This is particularly true of the Kassou subdivisions, the Guy conflict zones, and Sectors 1 and 2. It should be pointed out that our opposition to the subdivision is not based on a total rejection of this process, but rather on a desire to ensure our survival and to denounce the illicit practices of the political actors involved in the development of the city of Koudougou. (Interview with Y, teacher living in Kassou, February 2024)

Surveys are not the only source of these results. Continuing his investigations in Koudougou, Hilgers (2008) justifies the digging up of boundary markers and the violent protests of the population by the multiple injustices of communal power. It is in this sense that land-use conflicts contribute to the creation of territoriality. It creates conditions conducive to individuals coming together to better defend their common living space (Lecourt, 2003). Thus, faced with the abuses of power of administrative actors, who are the decisionmakers, resident actors reshape the urban landscape through protest and conflict. The recurrence of conflicts observed during subdivision operations in Koudougou reveals the inability of political actors to deal with this phenomenon and tends to reinforce the power of landowners in the process of urban design. The balance of power maintained by decision-maker actors, which evolves in favour of landowners, explains the fragility of administrative structures and, at the same time, increases the insecurity of urban dwellers with regard to the appropriation of plots of land. In this context, the interplay of actors creates conflicts that reveal the balance of power in favour of local actors. The direct consequences of this dynamic are, among other things, the blocking and delaying of subdivision operations and the emergence of informal settlements. For this reason, since the period from 1998 to 2004, 19,222 plots covering an area of 2,294 hectares have remained in the project stage (Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, 2012). These are unallocated plots and plots that have not been cleared by the action of conflicts linked to subdivision operations in the town of Koudougou. Figure 3 shows the main conflict zones in the town of Koudougou.

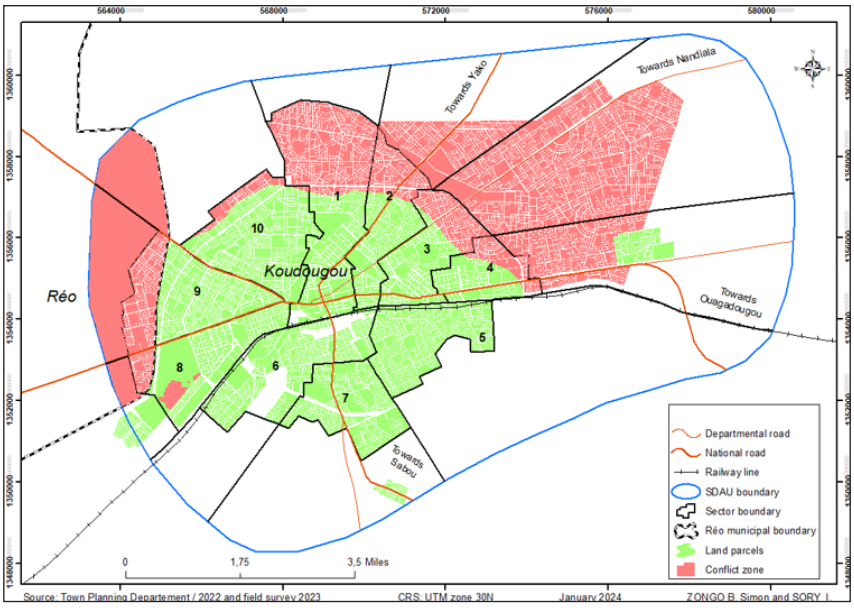

Figure 3. Main areas of conflict in the town of Koudougou

The data show that the dynamics of local actors lead to conflicts during subdivision operations in Koudougou, paralysing the continuation of these operations. This institutional paralysis contributes to the emergence of informal neighborhoods, characterised by urban configurations that diverge from those prescribed by planning instruments, thereby giving rise to a city that is produced through informal processes. In a similar situation, the implementation of development operations in the neighborhoods of the city of Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire), born during the war, was blocked by development conflicts, leaving 26.7% of these neighborhoods in informality around the years 2017 (Koissy et al., 2017). Thus, power relations between urban planning actors often lead to the formation of informal housing.

Anchoring Processes in Conflict Zones and Their Determining Characteristics

An actor is defined primarily by the intentionality of his or her approach (Humain-Lamoure & Laporte, 2017). Thus, the strategies developed by the various actors guide the transformation of urban space. This reality highlights an incongruence in Koudougou between the expected results of the metamorphosis of urban fabric and the facts. In other words, the actions of local development actors in Koudougou are creating a glaring gap between what has been achieved and the results expected by development policies. Faced with this situation, social actors are adopting strategies to occupy conflict zones. Indeed, the parts of the various conflict zones that have been subdivided and not subject to boundary marker removal reveal

a continuation of the balance of power in favour of the landowners. Many landowners take back their parcelled-out land to build or sell to those who need it. The occupation of plots by landowners is often carried out with the help of certain municipal agents. You can see this in Z's words when he declares:

> After the subdivision operations were halted following the removal of the boundary markers, I discovered that some landowners were selling their plots with the complicity of the mayor's office. Since then, I've built the yard I live in today. Right now, I'd rather fight to the death than leave this plot. If I leave my yard, not only will I have no other place to go with my family, but I'm also aware that I'll die without ever having a plot in my life. (Interview with Z, landowner in sector 2, February 2024)

Thus, following the cessation of subdivision operations due to planning conflicts, social actors adopted a strategy of occupying the various conflict zones. Landowners, taking advantage of the weakness of political actors, build on or sell already subdivided plots. In unparcelled areas, they break up and sell them to meet demographic pressure. In addition to this situation, some councillors, knowing that landowners do not always know the location of their plots, take advantage of the unrest to sell them illegally. This statement was echoed by P in the following terms:

> The subdivision problems facing the people of Koudougou are largely due to the actions of the municipal councillors. During the major subdivision operation of 1998, each sector had councillors responsible for taking part in the allotment commission to ensure that the subdivisions ran smoothly. However, due to the obvious deficiencies in their work, the subdivision ended in failure. What's even more serious is the sale of plots by some of our colleagues after the operation stalled, as they had more in-depth knowledge of the plot locations than the actual landowners." (Interview with P, former Koudougou town councilor, February 2024)

In this context, the data show that the logic of the actors provokes conflicts that reveal the balance of power between the different actors. These conflicts paralyse subdivision operations, with consequences that continue to this day. On the one hand, this can be seen in the occupation or sale of plots already produced before the conflicts broke out, and the parcelling out and sale of areas not parcelled out due to the conflicts, by landowners. On the other hand, some local councillors, aware of landowners' ignorance of the location of many plots, are selling them illegally.

Neighborhoods affected by land-use conflicts in the city of Koudougou present several dimensions that denote the complexity of their urban informality. Faced with the unsatisfied need for plots as a result of development conflicts, self-organised practices are emerging to meet demand. In areas parcelised prior to the outbreak of conflict and which have not suffered the

removal of boundary markers, urban forms resemble those of formal neighbourhoods. However, from a legal standpoint, the lack of legal recognition of land rights raises issues of tenure security and the regularisation of occupants, given that they are not lawful for title holders. As for the areas affected by the removal of boundary markers, or those that have not been parcelled out, they are developing characteristics similar to informal settlements, both in legal and morphological terms. In addition to the fact that the inhabitants have no property rights, these areas show signs of unplanned urbanisation. These include the absence of reliable roads, cramped housing conditions, and a lack of basic social services such as water and electricity. These patterns illustrate a glaring discrepancy between reality on the ground and planned development policies. The following figure illustrates this situation in Koudougou, revealing a contrast between the plot plan and the reality of the town, which continues to be built informally.

In Figure 4, urban informality in Koudougou manifests itself mainly through the practices of local actors outside the formal framework, and forms of spontaneous settlement. In areas where the bollards were installed before the outbreak of conflict, they are occupied informally. The areas where the bollards were removed because of the conflicts, or those that were never parcelled out, reflect unplanned urbanisation. The latter is marked by disparate construction, high housing density, and a lack of reliable road infrastructure and basic social services. Several studies have approached urban

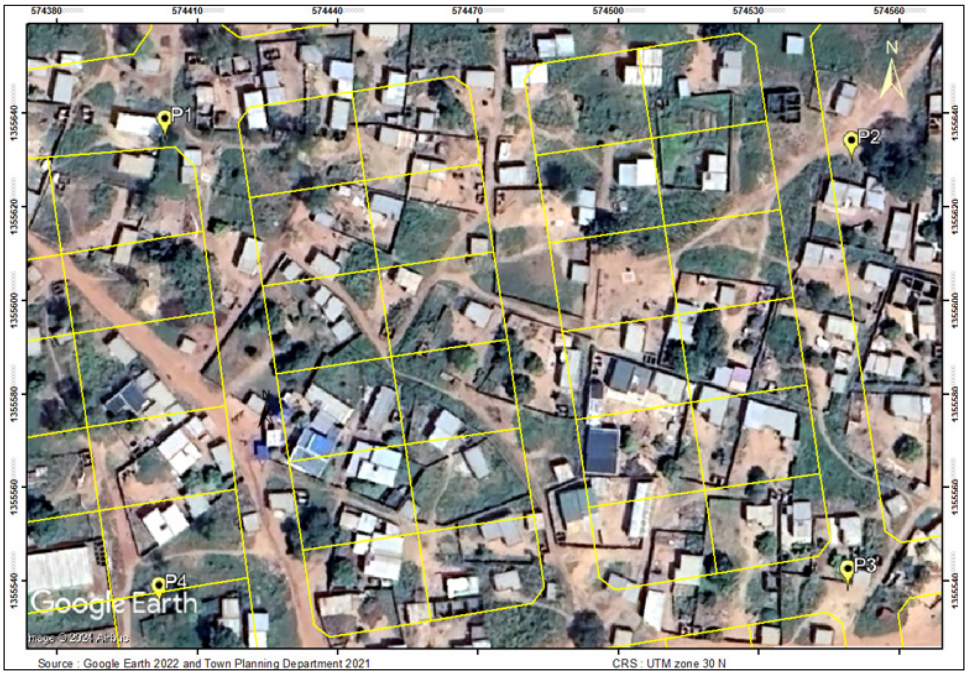

Figure 4. Gap between urban fabric and plot plan

informality on the basis of the morphological characteristics of housing, which develops in an unplanned or unregulated context (Allogho-Nkoghe, 2006; Moussa, 2021). In most cases, these neighborhoods emerge in response to rapid population growth and the powerlessness of the authorities to control it, unlike those in the town of Koudougou, which are mainly the result of planning conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Subdivision operations in Koudougou are frequently disrupted by conflicts, leading to the formation of informal settlements. Residents' dissatisfaction with the allocation of plots by local authorities leads them to oppose subdivision operations, despite their interest in supporting these projects. Indeed, failure to comply with planning policies often prompts residents to organise into groups to defend their interests, in favour of more rational and transparent management. These actions generate conflict, paralysing subdivision operations, and encouraging the formation of informal settlements. This dynamism gives rise to an urban informality in Koudougou, which is revealed both in the practices of local actors and in the configuration of the urban fabric. On the one hand, the informal practices of local actors can be seen in the occupation of plots unaffected by the removal of bollards. In these areas, landowners continue to sell or build informally on plots of land created before the conflicts. Neighborhoods built in this context have the appearance of formal urban fabric, even if the reality of the city shows otherwise. On the other hand, the occupation of areas affected by the removal of boundary markers, or those not parcelled out, displays the visible characteristics of informal settlements. In unparcelised areas, landowners are subdividing the land and selling off the unparcelised areas in response to growing demographic pressure. This has led to the creation of informal settlements with an urban layout different from that envisaged by the subdivision operations. This difference can be seen in the disparate layout of housing and activities, the lack of reliable roads, and the cramped nature of the dwellings. The various conflict zones in the town of Koudougou illustrate several dimensions of urban informality.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

By exploring the actions of actors, this study opens up perspectives for the realisation of subdivision operations in Koudougou and indeed in Burkina Faso. The information provided reveals that development in Burkina Faso is marked by conflict, and this study can contribute to local and national development by improving governance through better coordination and cooperation between actors. In other words, it could transform urban planning practices by making the process more transparent, adaptive, and inclusive to local realities, promoting more balanced and sustainable urban development. In other words, it could transform urban planning practices, making the process more adaptive and inclusive to

local realities, and promoting more balanced and sustainable urban development. This study also provides a basis for future research. It contributes to the literature by providing new data and perspectives on the interactions between actors and urban informality in the context of subdivisions. For other cities or countries facing similar challenges, it serves as a reference for comparative studies.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite all the precautions taken to produce reliable results, it should be noted that this research has its limitations. The rapidly changing context of the town of Koudougou and the complexity of social dynamics restrict the quality of the work. In a context where actor logics evolve according to circumstances and interactions between actors (Bruner, 1990), the rapid evolution of Koudougou's urban dynamics makes the results less relevant over time. In addition, the difficulty of detecting the interpreted logic of actors within the framework of social interactions and human behaviour prevented this dimension from being fully taken into account in the study. As a result, complex social relations that are difficult to grasp in their entirety hamper understanding of the mechanisms underlying urban informality in Koudougou. Given the difficulty of gaining a scientific understanding of human behaviour (Toniolo, 2009), a holistic view of actors and their actions is required. A nuanced approach that takes into account not only explicit intentions, but also the social, cultural, and historical context in which the inhabitants of the city of Koudougou live is thus necessary for future studies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their deep gratitude to all those who generously devoted their time to the completion of this work. They wish to extend special thanks to those who took the time to read and provide constructive comments, thus contributing significantly to improving the quality of this article.

REFERENCES

Adegbinni, A., Chabi, M., Danvidé, B. T., & Avalla, C.-O. (2022). The governance of subdivisions via disputes: Example of the municipality of Sèmè-Podji in Benin. *Territory in Motion: Journal of Geography and Planning, 52*. https://journals.openedition.org/tem/9080

Allogho-Nkoghe, F. (2006). *Urban policy and stakeholder dynamics: Seeking planning alternatives for the informal settlements of Libreville (Gabon)* [Doctoral dissertation, Montpellier 3]. https://www.theses.fr/2006MON30038

Authier, J.-Y. (1993). Chapter IX: Processes, actor logics, and social change. In *The life of a place: A Vieux-Lyon neighborhood through time* (pp. 237-246). Lyon University Press. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pul.9137

Baghdjian, F. (2014). *The logic of action of organized employer actors in Quebec: The case of provincial associations*. https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/10383

Bennafla, K. (2015). Featured concept: Informality. *Geoconfluences*. https://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/informations-scientifiques/a-la-une/notion-a-la-une/notion-a-la-une-informalite

Berroir, S., Bouloc, C., Cattan, N., Fleury, A., Frétigny, J.-B., & Lassaube, U. (2016). The Eiffel Tower in your pocket: Informality and power in the construction of the tourist metropolis. *The Political Space: Online Journal of Political Geography and Geopolitics, 29*. https://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/3876

Boivin, J. (1979). Rules of the game and the balance of power in the Quebec public and parapublic sectors. *Industrial Relations, 34*(1), 3-21.

Bréchet, J.-P., & Schieb-Bienfait, N. (2011). Logic of action and project in collective action: Comparative theoretical reflections. *Finance Control Strategy, 14*(1), 101-129.

Bruner, J. S. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press.

Bulle, S., & Tarragoni, F. (2021). *Sociologie du conflit*. Armand Colin.

Chenal, J. (2009). *Urbanization, urban planning, and city models in West Africa*. EPFL. https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/128805

Coquery, M. (1997). Urban planning and food distribution in Africa. *"Food into Cities" Collection*. FAO.

Costes, L. (2010). Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City" : What political and scientific legacy? *Spaces and Societies, 140*(1), 177-191.

Crozier, M., & Friedberg, E. (1977). *Actors and systems: The constraints of collective action*. Éditions du Seuil.

Domergue, M. (2003). "Structural adjustment policies are the key to growth and prosperity for developing countries." In *A short guide to common economic misconceptions* (pp. 73-81). The Discovery. https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.econo.2003.01.0073

Doussot, S., & Themines, J.-F. (2016). Using the social sciences to conceptualize actors within social science didactics. In J.-F. Themines & S. Doussot (Eds.), *Actors and action: Perspectives on the didactics of history and geography* (pp. 7-31). Caen University Press. https://hal.science/halshs-01741295/

Durand-Lasserve, A. (1986). *The exclusion of the poor in Third World cities*. L'Harmattan.

Gomis, J. S., Sow, D., & Sall, O. (2019). Genesis and expressions of informality in West-African cities. *Journal of Social Sciences*.

Grossman, E. (2014). Actor. In *Dictionary of public policy* (Vol. 4, pp. 31-38). Sciences Po Press. https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.bouss.2014.01.0031

Hilgers, M. (2007). Conflicts surrounding the history of Koudougou (Burkina Faso). *Cahiers d'Études Africaines, 47*(186), 313-344.

Hilgers, M. (2008). Urban policies, contestation, and decentralization: Land subdivision and social representations in Burkina Faso. *Autrepart, 3*, 209-226.

Humain-Lamoure, A.-L., & Laporte, A. (2017). *Introduction à la géographie urbaine*. Armand Colin. https://www.cairn.info/introduction-a-la-geographie-urbaine--9782200602420.htm

National Institute of Statistics and Demography. (2022). *Fifth general population and housing census of Burkina Faso: Summary of final results* (2nd ed.).

Inverses, C., Morelle, M., Jacquot, S., Tadié, J., Bautès, N., Bénit-Gbaffou, C., Maccaglia, F., Rivelois, J., & Sierra, A. (2016). Political informality in the city: Eight researchers and nine cities confronting modes of urban governance. *The Political Space: Online Journal of Political Geography and Geopolitics, 29*. https://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/3806

Koissy, K. Y. S., Joseph, K. K., & Hyacinthe, K. K. (2017). Wartime neighborhoods in Korhogo: Between land disputes and the struggle for integration. *Revue de Géographie de l'Ouest*, 205. https://revuegeographieouaga.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/03_RGO_205_VMP1_val.pdf

Lajugie, J. (1985). Foreword: Decentralization and regional planning. *Directory of Local Authorities, 5*(1), 1-7.

Laurence, F., & Florence, W. (2010). *The paradoxes of the informal economy: Who benefits from the rules?* KARTHALA.

Lecourt, A. (2003). A geographic analysis of community conflicts related to transportation infrastructure: A theoretical and practical analysis based on the case of Brittany. *Les Cahiers Nantais, 60*, 163-166.

Legros, O. (2008). *Perspectives on urban dwellers' participation in public action*. Adels & Éditions Yves Michel. https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00784997/

Loubet, L., & Serry, A. (2020). Stakeholder strategies and territorial development in medium-sized port cities: The case of Le Havre and Klaipeda. *Journal of Regional and Urban Economics, 4*, 635-654. https://doi.org/10.3917/reru.204.0635

Marc, E., & Picard, D. (2015). Conflict and relationship. *Journal of the French Gestalt Society, 1*, 129-142.

Maroy, C. (1990). Actor strategies and logics of action within a vocational training institution. *Sociological Research, 21*(3).

Mcfarlane, C. (2016). Rethinking informality: Politics, crises, and the city. *Relations sociales et politiques, 76*, 44-76. https://doi.org/10.7202/1037065ar

Mermet, L. (1992). *Stratégies pour la gestion de l'environnement: La nature comme jeu de société?* https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5130484&publisher=FZ2990

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. (2012). *Master plan for land use and urban planning for the city of Koudougou: 2030 horizon*.

Moussa, F. (2021). *Restructuring of informal housing, case study: Makhloufi neighborhood, city of Cheria* [Doctoral dissertation]. http://dspace.univ-tebessa.dz:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/6717/1/Restructuration%20de%20l%E2%80%99habitat%20informel%2C.pdf

Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups*. Harvard University Press.

Osmont, A. (1995). *The World Bank and cities: From development to adjustment*. Karthala Editions.

Rode, S. (2017). The design of urban development projects as a collective process. *Espaces et Sociétés, 171*(4), 145-161.

Partoune, C. (2010). *Understanding the logic of the actors*. https://orbi.uliege.be/handle/2268/107922

Ribot, J. C. (1999). Decentralisation, participation and accountability in Sahelian forestry: Legal instruments of political-administrative control. *Africa, 69*(1), 23-65.

Rivelois, J. (1986). *The social dimension of urban planning* [Doctoral dissertation, 3rd cycle, History and Civilisations, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales]. https://pascal-francis.inist.fr/vibad/index.php?action=getRecordDetail&idt=12080987

Robineau, O. (2014). Unplanned neighborhoods: Spaces of the "in-between" in the Burkinabe city. *Cahiers de Géographie du Développement, 7*. https://journals.openedition.org/cdg/478

Sébastien, L., & Paran, F. (2006). The 4-dimensional actor: A social and heritage-based exploration of regional stakeholder dynamics. In *Decision support for regional planning: Methods and tools* (pp. 213-240).

Sory, I. (2016). At the heart of the political issues surrounding land subdivision projects in Ouagadougou. In C. Y. Koffié-Bikpo (Ed.), *Spaces and tensions in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 323-346). European University Press.

Sory, I. (2017). From strategic planning to the right to the city. In G. Fauveaud (Ed.), *Non-Western cities: Perspectives from young researchers* (pp. 105-114). University of Montreal Press.

Sory, I. (2019). Urban planning and stakeholder perspectives: Toward a reconfiguration of center–periphery relationships. *LARDYMES Geography Journal*, 23, 281-291.

Subra, P. (2012). Geopolitics: Singular or plural? The role, stakes, and tools of local geopolitics. *Hérodote, 3*, 45-70.

Tingbé-Azalou, A. (2015). *The proliferation of land subdivision operations in Beninese municipalities: An actor strategy for the quiet misappropriation of land plots?* https://www.revues-ufhb-ci.org/fichiers/FICHIR_ARTICLE_1946.pdf

Toniolo, A.-M. (2009). Behavior: Between perception and action, a concept to be rehabilitated. *L'Année psychologique, 109*(1), 155-193.

Torre, A. (2018). The drivers of territorial development. *Journal of Regional and Urban Economics, 4*, 711-736.

Villeneuve, P., Pelletier, M., & Thériault, M. (2009). The social dynamics of urban neighborhoods: A methodological essay. *Space Populations Societies, 2009*(1), 135-148.

Watson, V. (2014). African urban fantasies: Dreams or nightmares? *Environment and Urbanization, 26*(1), 215-231. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247813513705

Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.