

Chapter 10

Land Tenure and Public Infrastructure: Airport Building in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal



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Abstract Through actors-oriented lenses and using land conflict as an analysis entry point, the paper looks into the various tensions opposing between the state and populations whose livelihoods are directly impacted by airports' building. Several land conflicts are linked to the airport of the city of Bouaké, located in the center of Côte d'Ivoire. Built on a parcel of common law belonging to several village communities, the land rights of this public equipment are today subject to various disputes. Our analysis reveals that the main causes of the land disputes are articulated around the shortcomings of the negotiations for the acquisition of parcels from village communities, coupled with urban expansion of the city of Bouaké. The Blaise Diagne International Airport in Senegal on the other hand is a stake of a massive urban explosion of the capital city Dakar. Based on ethnographical fieldwork data, we analyze the action of the different stakeholders that are struggling with different interests and perspectives for access to land in the area of Keur Moussa. This case study is an appropriate issue of reflection on what is empirically going on in terms of bureaucratic practices used by the state and how local people respond to them.

Keywords Public infrastructure · Cote d'Ivoire · Airport · Land dispute · Senegal · State · Land rights

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10.1 Introduction

All the time they're meeting against us. The word *déguerpi*, we don't understand! It's to eat us wah?! What's it for?!

Mr. Kodjo, Interview Allokoko 20.12.2016

We gave up our lands inherited from our ancestors. It was not at all easy especially with the relocation of the Mbadatt cemetery (the site that currently houses the presidential pavilion). We really value our tradition! Mbadatt's inhabitant, *Le Quotidien*, 13.04.2018

The arm wrestling that often takes place between state administrative authorities and local populations following the implementation of development projects all over the world is not a new phenomenon. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century, the issue of displacement, relocation of populations, or simply of populations affected by various large-scale projects (construction of roads, dams, railways, extractive industries, etc.) has always been a topical issue (Cernea and Guggenheim 1993; Colson 2003; Oliver-Smith 2005; Faure 2008). This paper explores the central question of how several social actors articulate their claims within the seeming blurriness surrounding land tenure and land reforms in public infrastructural projects. Drawing on an actor's-oriented perspective, the paper contributes to the knowledge acquisition on the subject of land conflicts and displacement as well as the relocation of populations within the African continent (Downing 1996; Aronsson 2002; De Wet 2006; Sanogo 2013). The comparison approach that is embedded in this study allows for an analysis of airports' buildings and extension that have different outreaches and functions in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Bouaké's International Airport in Côte d'Ivoire and Blaise Diagne International Airport (AIBD) in Senegal play different roles in their respective countries: while the former is a military-civil airport implemented in the Ivoirian second most populated city, the latter is the first and biggest Senegalese civil airport that has been relocated from the capital Dakar to a nearby small town Diass.

Throughout this paper, we use land conflicts of various kinds as an entry point to describe, understand, and analyze the discourses and practices of the social actors involved in the continuous and consistent shaping of land tenure linked to public infrastructures. Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire represent two former strongholds of former French West Africa. Researching on these two countries thus provides a valid starting point to understand the implementation of various rules and reforms in former French colonies and their consequences on land tenure up to date in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, comparative studies on urban land issues in Africa tend to draw on common variables such as population: For instance, comparing land issues in two cities of different population sizes within the same country or comparing land issues in two cities of similar population sizes in different countries.

We argue that the complexity of land governance in the African continent calls for a multiplicity of analytical approaches, as such; we out to go beyond the classic comparison criteria. Bouaké is the second most populated city in Côte d'Ivoire. Diass is located at the outskirts of Dakar, which is the most populated city in Senegal. At first glance, a comparison between land issues in Abidjan and Bouaké in Côte d'Ivoire, or

between land issues in Dakar and Saint Louis in Senegal would seem more relevant in the understanding of politics of land in these two countries. However, we believe that to reach a holistic understanding of land issues in West Africa, it is important to compare places like Diass and Bouaké, in order to discover unlikely similarities and differences.

The land conflict studied in Côte d'Ivoire revolves around the expansion of the Bouaké airport. The length of the conflict and the consequences of the politico-military crisis that Côte d'Ivoire experienced between 2002 and 2011 are the main reasons for which we chose the city of Bouaké as an experimental site. The duration of the conflict studied over time (since the 1950s) as well as its continuity (the conflict is still ongoing at the time of writing in 2020) makes it an atypical case study. We use a diachronic approach to reflect on the link between land tenure and urban expansion. The influence of the Ivorian politico-military crisis on the conflict between the Ivorian state and the various villages affected by the expansion of the airport also provides us with the opportunity to analyze a local or regional conflict, which at one point was intertwined with a national conflict.

The case study of the Blaise Diagne International Airport in Senegal is relevant because it highlights from a socio-anthropological perspective the impact of the social and spatial reconfiguration on the communities of the riparian region of the airport and vice versa. First of all, the entire region of this ethnography is moving from a rural to an urbanized area since 2007. Diass and Keur Moussa are located in the triangle region between Dakar, Thiès, and Mbour which are three urban centers that are interconnected. The communities of Kessoukhatt, Mbadatt, and Kathialick identify themselves as *Sereer* (one of the largest ethnic groups in Senegal) having a strong tie with land for housing, agriculture, and religious worship. This emic perception was illustrated with the above-stated citation of an inhabitant of Mbadatt. The village of Mbadatt was relocated *manu militari* (Latin expression: using a military hand/forces of arms) for the construction of the international airport. Parts of Kathialick and Kessoukhatt's inhabitants and chiefs have refused the relocation because, in their opinion, the compensation was not commensurate. These actors have created the association for the defense of the rights of Kathialick, Mbadatt, and Kessoukhatt to interact with the other protagonists that are state institutions.

The paper is articulated around three main parts. Firstly, we delve into the theories and methodologies used to frame our analysis. Secondly, we introduce the two airports and the causes of the conflicts that sprung in their respective building sites, either because of their building and/or relocation. Thirdly, we analyze the discourses and practices of the different protagonists involved in the conflicts in Bouaké and Diass.

10.2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Access to and use of urban land represents a multidimensional source of social, political, juridical, and economic tension as several actors are interested in and affected by it. Each actor or group has his or her perceptions of which form to use to regulate the use of the stake. As ethnographers, we assume that land tenure and governance are not a mere legal or geographical affair. Especially, various grassroots people who appear to be weak and vulnerable vis-à-vis states bureaucrats and servants who participate as activist associations in the regulation of land tenure. This happens in everyday life in terms of contestations, confrontations, discussions, protests on the street, in the media, in the parliament, in municipalities, or during the associations' weekly assemblies.

Against this backdrop, it is important to highlight with Nugent (2016) that land governance implies that land is a public good that ought to be subjected to regulation from above. The problem with such implications is that the state does not always own the land. Oftentimes, land is vested in lineages or chieftaincies—or is at least accessed through them. Moreover, it is not uncommon for land rights to overlap, most notably in areas where farmers and agriculturlealists co-exist (Nugent 2016, 86). In the same context especially in urban settings, the concepts of *heterarchy* (Klute and Embalo 2011), *juridicité* (Le Roy 2011), *common* (Hardin 1968; Ostrom 1990; Le Roy 2015; Escobar 2015), and *transitional and transactional* (Doumbia 2018a) shall help us describe the multiplicity of norms and regulations in relation to urban land governance and infrastructural reconfiguration of urban spaces through the Airport of Bouaké (Côte d'Ivoire) and the AIBD located in Diass (Senegal).

Other scholars such as Boone (2018) assert that land tenure varies across subnational jurisdictions (rather than as invariant across space) in ways that can be grasped in terms of a conceptual distinction between *neocustomary* and *statist* forms (rather than as infinitely diverse). Differences between the two have implications for the character of political authority in the rural areas, the nature of political identities and community structure, and the nature of property and land claims (Boone 2018). Building on this statement, we do not maintain the dichotomy between the “neocustomary” and the “statist” but rather seek to describe, with empirical evidences, the phenomenon of urban land governance (Förster et al. 2018; Doumbia 2018b; Sanogo 2019).

More interestingly, besides the concept of urban land governance, the concept of “eviction” is common to the two case studies. The ethnography explores how urban redevelopment actions concretely implemented and carried out by the State, through the governorate and the local states authorities, lead to imbroglio and evictions or even land disputes. “Eviction” is commonly addressed by the actors with the French word *déguerpissement*.

By analogy with Scott (1985) except that the context of our study addresses the urban area, this work is part of a descriptive analysis of everyday forms of symbolic resistance and how these forms articulate with everyday actions of material resistance. Users who are expropriated and evicted from land are not only suffering, they are acting by exploiting the loopholes of the “Leviathan” state (Spittler 1983). In “Weapons of the weak”, which focuses on a rural society, Scott identifies two interrelated forms of resistance:

If, behind the facade of behavioral conformity imposed by elites, we find innumerable, anonymous acts of resistance, so also do we find, behind the facade of symbolic and ritual compliance, innumerable acts of ideological resistance (Scott 1985, 304).

Déguerpissement is a loaded and essentially ambivalent term at the center of controversy between state authorities and urban land users, both in Bouaké and in Dakar, Thiès, or Mbour. The term is now commonly used in French-speaking countries to refer to the procedure of expropriating usufructuaries against their will, by demolishing their houses because the land status is often disputed (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2006; Doumbia 2018a). In English-speaking Africa, a plurality of terms expresses *déguerpissement*: on the one hand, *forced* removal, eviction, relocation, resettlement (Spire and Blot 2014, 130) and, on the other hand, *displacement* in one of our studies on the city of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia (Doumbia 2013). These terms reflect a plural history of forced urban displacement within political structures with shifting conceptions of inequality.

Spire and Blot 2014 differentiate eviction from expropriation. In our study, the actors speak of forced eviction. This is an illegal category that is often put forward when the state or municipalities carry out the operations. Thus the discourse of eviction embodies, at the same time, the unhealthy status of the neighborhood in question, which is not in line with the image that the urban authorities wish to promote. The authorities’ justification for eviction is based on standardized principles that are disseminated and gradually internalized in public policy.

“Social engineering” refers to the phenomenon of urban planning that regulates the legibility and simplification of society’s life. Scott shows through empirical examples such as “Compulsory villagization in Tanzania” and also the construction of the Brazilian capital Brasilia, how utopian planning schemes orchestrated by state institutions fail (Scott 1998).

According to him, social engineering is a measure of development and planning that is based on four elements in its application. The first requires an administrative order of nature and society. The second requires a hyper-modernist ideology which means that actors should believe in science and industrialization. The third element refers to an authoritarian state that is indispensable for social engineering. This state is the element that would ensure the normative and political application of the high-modernist ideology. Finally, the fourth pillar is a submissive and subjugated civil society without the possibility of deviating from the development plans. The ethnographic fields described in this paper show an arena in which the State tries to make society and nature comprehensible and conceivable, through measures of simplification and standardization. Scott further notes that “State simplifications

such as maps, censuses, cadastral lists, and standard units of measurement represent techniques for grasping a large and complex reality” (Scott 1998, 77).

The ethnography on the case studies of Bouaké and Dakar were conducted between 2016 and 2019 in Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal. To protect the interviewees’ identities, names have been changed throughout the text, except for public figures whose identity could not be hidden. Aïdas Sanogo conducted fieldwork in Bouaké and Lamine Doumbia in Diass/Keur Moussa and Dakar. We both used a variety of research methods for our respective data collections.

In Bouaké, the data presented were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and participation sessions in various meetings conducted during fieldwork periods spread between November 2016 and December 2019. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in solo, pairs, or groups (with colleagues from the Alassane Ouattara University) and took place in the city of Bouaké and the village of Allokrokro (Côte d’Ivoire). Interviews were repeated with the same interviewees several times, in order to reach the necessary level of saturation that precedes the triangulation of information collected from various sources (Bernard 2006). Field trips to Allokrokro made it possible to locate sites, familiarize ourselves with the research site, and make specific observations on the living environment of the inhabitants of the researched area (Guest et al. 2006). We also took part in a meeting organized within the premises of the Bouaké Town Hall, which brought together most of the key players involved in the disputes related to the expansion of the airport: the airport authorities, Town Hall officials, representatives of the villages located on the north-western outskirts of the city, officials from the Cadaster and Land Conservation services, officials from the Ministry of Construction and Town Planning, as well as officials from the Bouaké prefecture. Our participation in this meeting, which was intended to be a framework for open-hearted exchanges, gave us the opportunity to better understand the nature of the relations existing between the various protagonists. It also allowed us to better apprehend the power games (Förster 2011) that exist and that are used between the state authorities and the representatives of the villages directly affected by the expansion of the airport.

In Diass and Keur Moussa, the data were collected from May to October of 2018. The case study approach was adopted to obtain further in-depth information and observation on the interactions of the protagonists in the different fields. We used the double ethnography method, which consists of conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a group that is composed of autochthonous and allochthonous researchers (Klute and Borszik 2007). In this particular case, a doctoral student in History at the Cheikh Anta Diop University, speaking fluently Sereer, Wolof, and French, born and raised in Diass and Keur Moussa, where the transformation is taking place, is challenged by the fact that he struggled to have, on the one hand, the scientific distance to the studied community in the context of belonging (Diawara 1985). However, he still used the advantages of his perfect knowledge of the field, the people, the language, and the values. On the other hand, Lamine Doumbia, the anthropologist of Malian origin, had to read and learn everything (language, history, cultural values, and landmarks) about the new field of research and its societies. The double ethnography aims at doing a joint ethnography of autochthonous and allochthonous researchers’ perspectives

(Klute and Borszik 2007). The interpretations and analysis of the social realities observed in the field are thus double-checked and analytically discussed.

10.3 Historical Roots of the Conflicts

In this section, we adopt a diachronic approach to look into the gradual evolution of the case studies.

10.3.1 *Bouaké International Airport: The Apple of Discord*

Bouaké's airport was created in the 1950s during the colonial period (Sirven 1972; Atta 1978). Several villages were affected by the creation of this airport, resulting in the relocation of entire villages or parts of villages. The village of Allokokro was one of these villages. Interviews and conversations with Allokokro inhabitants revealed that their village was displaced twice because of public infrastructures. Before the airport construction, the village was first relocated during the railway building in the early twentieth century. Then, the implementation of the airport in the 1950s also impacted the village's new location. In the 1970s, the Ivorian state offered a new site to Allokokro inhabitants, to protect them from the inconvenience and dangers of living close to an airport and its runway. Visits were made by state officers to appreciate the value of houses in Allokokro and various amounts of money were given to the villagers as compensations, depending on the value of their houses. The lowest amount was 218 000 francs and the highest 2 405 000 francs (Akrou, *Fraternité Matin*, April 27, 1983). The agreement between the Ivorian state and Allokokro inhabitants was that they would move to the newly designated site once they receive their compensation. In the 1980s, the Ivorian state noticed that many Allokokro inhabitants did not move to the newly designated site and demanded that those who benefitted from the compensations move. To which the villagers replied that the compensation given was meant for the value of their houses, not the land on which they stood. They argued that the Ivorian government ought to build new houses on the new site, because the money given in the 1970s was not enough to move and build new houses (Akrou, *Fraternité Matin*, April 27, 1983).

In the 1990s, a politico-military crisis burst out in Côte d'Ivoire. Several academic articles and books have been published on the causes of the rebellion that cut the country in two parts from 2002 to 2011. Its consequences in terms of generational conflict and identity issues within the Ivorian society in its whole have also been addressed (LeBlanc 1998; Chauveau 2000; Dozon 2000; Akindès 2004; Banegas 2007; Arnaut 2008a, 2008b; Gadou 2009; Förster 2010; McGovern 2011; Freund 2012; Bjarnesen 2013). The "post-crisis" effects in urban settings have been covered in a few Ivorian cities, namely Man, Korhogo, and Abidjan (Förster 2010, 2011,

2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013; Fofana 2011; Koné 2011; Yebouet 2011; Heitz-Topka 2014; and Akindès 2017).

Nevertheless, the impact of the rebellion period on the city of Bouaké and more particularly its impact on land have not been much documented thus far. What is now referred to as “the Ivorian conflict” or “the war” is analyzed differently by Akindès (2004), Bouquet (2005), Marshall-Fratani (2006), Gadou (2009), Förster (2010), McGovern (2011), Hellweg (2012), and Förster (2014). When the conflict actually started is in itself already a matter of political articulation. From the country’s first president Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1905–1993) to the current one, Alassane Dramane Ouattara (born 1942), several socio-economic and political factors have to be taken into consideration. The single-party approach of most of Houphouët-Boigny’s years in power, which reprimanded the independence requests from the Western part of Côte d’Ivoire triggered some resentment among a portion of the newly independent nation.

Furthermore, the Ivorian thriving economy primarily based on the production of cocoa and coffee exposed the country’s economy to the international cash crops’ price fluctuations. In the 1980s, a drop in the prices of raw commodities strongly affected the Ivorian economy. However, as stressed by Kipré and Tirefort (1992), up to 1920, coffee and cocoa did not always represent the biggest portion of the exportations of present-day Côte d’Ivoire. The production considerably grew about a decade later in the 1930s, thanks to the French colonizers’ pressure to produce coffee and cocoa. Since then, the prices of cash crops at the international level have regularly had an impact on the Ivorian exportations of cocoa and coffee. For instance, prior to the 1980s, raw commodities’ prices drop between 1930 and 1933, which affected the present-day Ivorian territory that was part of French West Africa (Kipré and Tirefort 1992, 310).

Another element pointed out as one of the causes that brought about the military rebellion in Côte d’Ivoire in the early 2000s is the concept of “Ivoirité” created in the 1990s and its consecutive social and identity crisis (Akindès 2003). Over the decades, the attraction of labor coming from neighboring countries (mainly from current Burkina Faso) to sustain the agricultural sector translated into a social and political equation when the country faced economic hardship. All these factors have manifested into a politico-military crisis (Akindès 2004), which in turn led to the bisection of the country in 2002, with Bouaké chosen as the headquarters of the armed forces (FAFN¹) and the civilian forces (FN²) of the rebellion.

For Allokoko inhabitants, the decade-long open conflict brings back a specific memory linked to an airplane crash. Indeed, Guillaume Soro, one of the rebellion’s head leaders, escaped an attack in June 2007. While landing at the airport of Bouaké, his plane was the target of rockets and machine guns. He was the Ivorian Prime Minister at the time of the attack and though he was not killed, four people died and ten others injured. Allokoko’s proximity to the airport translated into a double-side

¹ FAFN stands for *Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles*.

² FN stands for *Forces Nouvelles*.

burn for the village inhabitants. On the one hand, they received some stray bullets in their houses and were scared, and on the other hand, the (young) men in the village were accused of complicity in the attack and were jailed by the police. The plane crash thus consolidated the trust issue that was already present between Allokro inhabitants and the Ivorian state officers/authorities.

In the mid-2010s, after the end of the post-electoral violence that rocked Côte d'Ivoire, the Bouaké airport authorities expressed their will to extend the airport. In 2016, during a meeting at the Town Hall, that grouped the airport and state authorities together with various villages' leaders, the issue of displacement and relocation was once again brought back to the table. The different parties involved in the issue expressed their viewpoints: the central location of Bouaké was evoked by state authorities to explain that the airport extension was a strategic and military imperative. After profusely thanking the audience for their presence, the airport commander compared the population displacement to similar situations that happened in different parts of the country:

The airport is a tool for the economic development of the State of Côte d'Ivoire. The State of Côte d'Ivoire is represented by the prefect, go and see him. Myself, my village has been swallowed up and I know what it costs. I didn't take someone's land; it's the one who took it who compensates you! I'm not at fault, I'm not guilty.

Airport Commander, Meeting Bouaké, 06.12.2016

His emphasis on the necessary sacrifices needed to develop the airport for the nation's benefit was seconded by state officers' representatives attending the meeting: The Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Economy. The villages representatives, on the other hand, were more interested in the displacement and relocation conditionality, as expressed by Mr. Kofi's demands for clarification about the exact airport boundaries:

We all know the boundaries of the airport area. What we don't know are the extensions. From 800 ha, the airport goes to 3000 ha! It's very surprising, where are we going? Before we get out of here, you have to tell us what's going on. I want to know what's going on! I'm no longer interested in debates (Mr. Kofi, "son of Konankankro", Meeting Bouaké, 06.12.2016).

Following the meeting at the Town Hall, we met again with a couple of dwellers in Allokro. This was our third trip to the area and we crossed the runway to access the village with more ease and confidence compared to the previous visits. Indeed, during our second visit, we were stopped and asked by the police to patiently wait before crossing the runway because of air traffic. Waiting for an airplane to land or take off before leaving or going to their houses has become as normal to Allokro dwellers as waiting for the green light at a traffic light. The dwellers we interacted with told us that they were used to the planes and did not consider them as an inconvenience in their daily lives. They thus did not consider their current location as being unsafe to them. When asked about the possibility to relocate to the area designated by the state, Mr. Kouakou expressed his will to be given another house built by the state or at the very least, to be compensated for the plot of land he currently lives on:

It's true that the village has already been compensated, we don't deny that. But our land, that's what we claim. Usually it's the state that builds, but they gave us the money to build. Who doesn't want money?! [...] We've had several meetings, but it leads nowhere, because in their heads, we've already been compensated, they are the ones who are nice by leaving us here. When it's like that, how can we get along?

Mr. Yao, Interview Bouaké, 16.12.2016

As expressed in the above citation, Allokoko dwellers' reading of the dispute centers around the authority's refusal to recognize that compensations for houses' ownership should be separated from compensations for land ownership. They then decided to focus their actions and claims on convincing the other parties involved in the arm wrestling that ownership for residential areas is not limited to built materials, but rather extended to the ground on which investments have been made. The conflict's crystallization around land ownership can be found in other actors involved in claiming their rights, as we demonstrate in the next case study in Senegal.

10.3.2 *Keur Moussa—Eviction and the Actors*

The airport is in the municipality of Diass, why are we in Keur Moussa the most affected?

The two municipalities are neighbors. But administratively the airport is in Diass whereas geographically the municipality of Keur Moussa is affected.

Senegal is a West African country that makes no exception to the problem of land tenure. Land is one of those stakes that are the center of struggles for citizenship. Due to the extensive and massive urbanization, the demographic growth, the infrastructural development in the triangle region between Dakar, Mbour, and Thiès, which has led to the construction of the new international airport (Aéroport International Blaise Diagne—AIBD), the grassroots people of the councils (rural municipalities) of Diass and Keur Moussa had received an eviction order (*un ordre de déguerpissement*) from the government in collaboration with the *Autorité de l'Aéroport International Blaise Diagne*. The eviction order is based on several bureaucratic justifications such as articles 43 and 67 of the constitution of Senegal. The first article states the validity of the president's decisions for the government's attention and the second article states that the parliament's legislations that are promulgated by the president of the republic and the constitutional council are valid. Subsequently, the convention of the international civil aviation of the Chicago convention of international civil aviation of 1944, the law n° 64–46 of the national estate of 1964 (la loi sur le domaine national), the law n° 76–67 of 1976 about the expropriation for public utility reasons and other operations related to land tenure modifications, and not the least two decrees have been issued for the construction of the AIBD.

From the beginning of the construction to the launching, a lot of households living in the rural municipality of Keur Moussa have been forcibly evicted and expropriated. The project had planned resettlement and accordingly relocation houses for the displaced households. The intriguing question is: Why does it come to strikes and contestations from the side of the villages of Kathialick, Mbadatt, and Kessokhate? These three villages are in the municipality of Keur Moussa and had to leave from the planned safety area of the AIBD. The residents of Mbadatt were forcibly evicted. The residents report that the process was conducted *manu militari* to the new houses of resettlement. At Mbadatt's cemetery, the presidential lounge of the AIBD is built. The village of Kessokhate was also cleared off in 2017 but most of the residents refused to resettle in the project's resettlement houses. They preferred to move into their agricultural land and rebuild their houses. Interestingly, for every Friday prayer, they still use the mosque, the only facility of the village that was not demolished.

As stated already in the introduction, this research is not about the airports in Dakar and Bouaké per se, but it goes beyond using the social processes of implementing airport infrastructures to better understand the resilience of riparian communities and especially the land disputes that land-use planning have triggered. The study of the impact of the Blaise Diagne International Airport in Senegal and the Airport of Bouaké on the riparian communities will make it possible to empirically explore the social interactions of the actors in the process of urban integration and socio-cultural transformation.³

10.3.3 The Authority of the Blaise Diagne International Airport

The first annual report (2017) of the authority of AIBD reveals that the project of the second airport was already mentioned in the five-year plan of economic and social development of Senegal (1974–1978). With the political structure change in the year 2000, the state planned to offer the country new and modern infrastructures and transportation networks. In order to materialize the vision of the former president Abdoulaye Wade, the project of Blaise Diagne International Airport began. The programs of technical, economical, and legal feasibility studies began in 2001 with the APIX (Agence pour la promotion des investissements au Sénégal). It is important to note that the project of the new airport started as a pilot project with the APIX before the setting up of the AIBD. SA already mentioned above in the introduction. In the same year 2001, the choice of the Diass commune had been validated in a presidential council. Diass has been selected among around ten (10) other sites in the perimeter of 60 km identified, evaluated, and compared with each other by experts of *Agence pour la sécurité de la Navigation aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar*

³ For reasons of anonymity, the names of interviewees and informants have been changed throughout the text. Where necessary, however, the function of the interviewee/informant is mentioned.

(ASECNA). In February 2005 the government implemented with the decree n°2005–138 the development charge of the airport infrastructure (RDIA—Redevance de développement des infrastructures aéroportuaires) which consisted in collecting taxes of flight tickets from each passenger flying from all airports and airdromes of Senegal. In 2006, the company of the project AIBD.SA was created with the task to ensure the funding, construction, exploitation, and development of the new airport. It was meant to be a project that was linked to the state of Senegal through a convention of cooperation with world partners.

The foundation stone of the AIBD was laid on April 4, 2007, which is the symbolic independence day of the republic. The timeframe between 2007 and 2010 was dedicated to the feasibility studies.

In 2011, the convention about long-term funding of the project had been signed during an official ceremony led by the Prime Minister. This was seen by the company of AIBD as an important juncture in the evolution of the project because it allowed the construction of the AIBD in better financial conditions. In an effort to silence some critics, but surely not all, around the project the presidential airplane “La Pointe de Sangomar” landed in 2012 at the Blaise Diagne International Airport.

In June 2013, a meeting in Tunis, Tunisia, took place within three days with sponsors, Saudi Bin Ladin (SBG), the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportations, and the General Directorate of the Blaise Diagne International Airport. Why did it take place in Tunis? The meeting aimed at finalizing the negotiations with the lenders and the Saudi Bin Laden Group.

On October 14, 2013, the villages around Diass started protesting. The first affected persons’ families decided freely to move into the resettlement site which was built by the Senegalese state to resettle them in decent conditions (AIBD.SA, 2017). The operation of moving the households was conducted by the “Groupe Opérationnel de Thiès (GOT)” and the environmental and social direction of AIBD.SA.

According to AIBD.SA the persons affected by the project had refused to leave their original villages that are located in the extending airport area. Since Mbadatt was located in the middle of the airport site, the company of the AIBD was always confronted by the residents’ resistance. Subsequently, the government of Thiès region decided on March 12, 2014, to organize a forced eviction (déguerpissement) with security forces. From AIBD.SA’s point of view the operation went without any violence.

However, the displaced residents reported in their interview on the field that it was violence-loaded. In 2014, the construction had reached the evolution rate of 80% (AIBD.SA, 2017) and the annual rate was by 26% which is slightly better than the rate of 2007. After several confrontations and interactions between the government, the Company of AIBD and the “*collectif pour la défense des intérêts des villages de la commune de Keur Moussa*”, an agreement was signed by the AIBD and the said structure.

In addition to the authority of AIBD and the association of defense of the village residents’ interest, this interesting agreement includes other actors and groups of actors such as the commission of urbanization, habitat and of equipment, as well as the national parliament and the civil forum. The negotiations were led by the governor

of the region of Thiès, Amadou Sy. It lasted for two days, from May 9, 2015. The agreement provides for the revalorization of agricultural spaces, the provision of agricultural land to allow the affected persons to carry on their agricultural activities, and the immediate liberation of the airport site for the construction.

10.4 Arm Wrestling: The Visible and Invisible Parts of the Icebergs

In this section, we analyze the various actions undertaken by the social actors involved in the land disputes around AIBD and Bouaké international airport.

10.4.1 Bouaké: Allokrokro and the Ivorian State

Allokrokro dwellers and the Ivorian state represent the two main social actors involved in Bouaké airport land dispute. It is important to highlight that these two types are not hermetically closed and mutually exclusive. For instance, a dweller from Allokrokro could have a strong relationship (either as a friend, family member, or have professional links) with an officer from the airport or a Town Hall officer. We, however, made the conscious typology choice to group them into two different groups because of the commonalities of the arguments brought forward by the various social actors.

Firstly, most Allokrokro dwellers we interacted with acknowledged that they received some money in the past, but attributed it to their houses rather than their land. In the paper's introductory citation, "déguerpi", which can be translated as "evicted", often used by state authorities over the decades, was mocked by Mr. Kodjo, an inhabitant of Allokrokro during an interview. Mr. Kodjo thus expressed his feelings on the issue of relocation and resettlement in a sarcastic manner, when he claimed not to understand the meaning of the word *déguerpis*, given that he has been dealing with this word for almost 40 years. The strategy observed by Mr. Kodjo translates into an acute awareness of the state and airport authorities' presence, coupled with a strong will to avoid them for as long as possible. This is reflected in both the words and actions of Allokrokro dwellers. Indeed, they engage in a distant observation phase with their opponents, aware of their opponents' strength over them, but doing their best to live their lives as best they can, either by pretending to ignore the existence of the airport or by gathering as much knowledge as possible on the legislations to support their claims with legal arguments.

On the other hand, the emphasis on the state as an entity that is both singular and anonymous, as spelt out in the words of the Commander of Bouaké airport during the meeting at the Town Hall, was regularly reflected in the speeches and practices of the state officers involved in the conflict under consideration. Our investigation in

the land surveyor commission in Bouaké shows that Bouaké airport's title deed was created in 1967, for the then Ministry of Public Buildings, Transport, and Tourism. The infrastructure is thus officially considered as public good belonging to the Ivorian state, through one of its ministries. By excluding himself as an individual from the problem, and by shifting the blame, so to speak, onto the state as an autonomous and supra-powerful structure imposing itself on all, the Airport Commander thus comes closer to a Weberian conceptualization of the state (Weber 1971; Spittler 1983; Bierschenck and Olivier de Sardan 2014).

In concrete terms, this stance translates into a rejection of direct responsibility on the part of state officers, giving their counterparts (in this case, the villages surrounding the airport) the impression that they are fighting against an invisible, unreachable creature. The smoke and mirror attribute surrounding the state figure is also present and visible in the dispute opposing dwellers and the state in Diass airport implementation. The areas impacted by the airport however went beyond the paradox of the state figure being both invisible and very much present, by gathering to strengthen their claims.

10.4.2 Keur Moussa: The Region and the Grassroots Actors

The Thiès region and more precisely Diass and Keur Moussa were predominantly inhabited by the Sereer of North West. Their history is marked by their resistance to the influence of the Wolof of Kajoor and Bawol of the Confederation of Djoloff, and their rejection of reports of political domination attempts at Islamization and resistance to French colonial penetration, as well as the transatlantic slave trade. Thus, these populations retreated into a living area difficult to access because of its rugged terrain consisting of a high plateau and a deep valley. As a result, this position favored the maintenance of their low hierarchical and matrilineal social organization. Their language is characterized by a variety of dialects that sometimes lead to misunderstandings between subgroups (Ousmane Diouf 2014). Although the Sereer of the North-West was historically (fourteenth century) of the non-native peoples to the new territory which they currently occupy, they could establish themselves as “autochthones” (Geschiere 2011) and they are very attached to their terroir (Ciss 2000). The concepts of autochthones and allochthones refer to variable use of people's identity according to their mobility in time and space. The area, in particular, undergoes a transitional change from rural to urban which comes along with the whole governmental restructuring project “Le Sénégal emergent” of President Macky Sall.

It is important to take into account this socio-cultural and historical context to better understand the conflict dynamics around the location of the new airport. Its construction resulted in the displacement of three villages in the rural community of Keur Moussa, namely the villages of Kessoukhatt, Kathialick, and Mbadatt. The populations of these three villages live on agriculture and livestock, which further strengthens their attachment to the land. In addition, they have places of worship in their land where members visit and practice their religion regularly. Thus, they perceive their dispossession as injustice and some have set up organizations for the collective fight for the interests of villages bordering the Blaise Diagne International Airport.

On April 13, 2014, the Association of the inhabitants of these riparian villages sent an open letter to the Senegalese president, Macky Sall. In this letter, Abdoulaye Diouf, general secretary of the association for the defense of the interests of the villages of the rural community of Keur Moussa bordering the AIBD, asserted that the local residents were partly expropriated of their land “without legal foundation”, especially the inhabitants of the village of Mbadatt who were forcibly displaced in March 2014. According to Abdoulaye Diouf, the village of Mbadatt “is stricken from the map of Senegal”, “without respect for the fundamental rights of the human person” and resulting in “psychological trauma” in the elderly (Ciss 2000). In an interview, Abdoulaye Diouf reminded us that his father, customary chief of Kathialick, was taken into custody during the eviction.

His village is currently in a state where some of the inhabitants have agreed to go to the state-managed resettlement site and the other party has decided to stay in the village because, they argue, the airport that is advanced as the reason for their relocation does not exist. Thus, the letter of the association denounces:

It has been announced everywhere that the site of the airport is in the rural community of Diass while it is the inhabitants of the rural community of Keur Moussa that we are who are worried. Moreover some concessions of the village of Diass Louboug are in the perimeters of the airport and yet no damage was caused to these populations. Also, is it logical that if need be that the three villages are covered by Decree No. 2002-435 of April 29, 2002 which provides in Article 2 a total compensation of 15,258,700 francs [CFA] for the all the occupants of the airport grounds? This demonstrates to the satisfaction that the area concerned has been exceeded (Dieng 2017).

Indeed, the secretary-general of the association appropriates the decree of 2002 signed by President Abdoulaye Wade to argue and claim that the state is in favor of their staying on the site although the compensation for eviction was decreed. A few days after the opening of the airport, the communities continued to protest against having lost their sites inherited from their ancestors with rites and cults at the airport. An inhabitant of Mbadatt exclaims in the Senegalese newspaper *Le Quotidien*:

We gave up our lands inherited from our ancestors. It was not at all easy especially with the relocation of the Mbadatt cemetery (the site that currently houses the presidential pavilion). We really value our tradition!

What inspires this ethnography is that the Blaise Diagne International Airport is a factor of transformation to several dimensions namely socio-spatial dimensions, political, economic, which at the same time generates a social reconfiguration (Dar El Handasah 2010), where residents of the riparian villages at the airport either forcibly removed or voluntarily ceded the site for public purposes, bearing in mind the compensation decree and the potential benefits of the modern airport? As the evicted persons' association in the district of Keur Moussa uses the term "manu militari" we can observe a huge tension in the field. Their strong tie to the earth makes us believe in a process of force led by neoliberal logic and imposed by technocrats. However, the fortunes of those who profit from speculation also remind us that land is not only carrying cultural values but is also being transformed into the land to be commodified (Le Roy 2011, Klute and Fernandes 2011). The airport not only represents an important stake of social transformation but also an arena in which we find not only the technocrats of the Senegalese State but also the rural communities which play on various forms of resilience.

However, it must be mentioned that the change in the status of the land, through the deconcentration of urban infrastructures, namely industry and housing, generates a field of enormous speculations. Knowing that, nowadays, the value of the land rises proportionally to huge amounts of money, to which Sereer actors show double resilience.

By analyzing the different interventions of the representatives of the riparian villages at the airport and having been in the field for exploration, we can induce how a decision of territorial redevelopment with a view to urbanization and the construction of modern infrastructures can lead to feelings of victimization, and also the emergence of a new form of urban citizenship through the shaping of social civic movements in democratic claiming processes (Ndiouga 2013; Moyo et al. 2015). This can be explained by the fact that inhabitants commit themselves to participate actively in socio-political decision-making processes. On the one hand, the technocratic/bureaucratic organization of the urban planning and territorial development scheme, instituted by decrees and laws, pushes the actors of the "common"/grassroots, on the other hand, to reorganize themselves in association for the defense of the interests of the villages in the rural community of Keur Moussa bordering the AIBD.

10.5 Concluding Remarks

Land issues vary in different African countries according to their historical specificities, including their diverse patterns of colonization, ecological and demographic transformations, their development trajectories, and democratization processes (Moyo et al. 2015; 1). This paper focused on the implementation of urban infrastructures such as the airport in Bouaké (Allokokro) and Diass (Thiès), and how these structures affected riparian villages in terms of evictions and relocations. "Forced removal" is commonly used in the South African literature to mean that the process

may not always involve physical threat or force, but sometimes coercion or other tactics against which the evictees are not in a position to challenge are employed (Platzky et al. 1983; Baldwin 1975). Varied forms of colonial and post-colonial land laws and regulations, land expropriation, as well as the failure to achieve national integration particularly commensuration of expropriated citizens, shape land governance in a context of limited agrarian transformation and jobless urbanization pattern (Moyo et al. 2015; Doumbia 2018b). The fields of research presented in these ethnographies of land tenure in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal showed similar concerns. The control of land use and access does contribute to the definition of territoriality and sovereignty, as well as belonging (Lentz 2013; Geschiere 2011) and citizenship (Moyo et al. 2015). Dwellers affected by the disputes engage the state on legal terms over land ownership and occupancy, sometimes fully aware that dispute might spread over decades. Land is considered a social and cultural marker within urban realm, transecting all social arenas. These situations explain how it results in arm wrestling between multiple social actors.

These ethnographies have shown that land governance in West Africa is deemed to be refurbished and decolonized in the sense of “juridicité” which according to Le Roy (2006) means the horizon of an intercultural and multidisciplinary approach. Such approaches would bring together concepts, practices, and resources that can be mobilized by the actors involved in particular contexts, indeed, but participating, each in their networks of belonging, in issues that know few borders. The construction and extension of the airport facilities as megaprojects in Diass and Keur Moussa (Senegal) and Bouaké (Côte d'Ivoire) represent vivid illustrations of how such practices, networks, and resources inevitably reconfigure peri-urban spaces and their inhabitants' living spaces. Indeed, the continuous tensions, stretched over years, that exist between state authorities and various inhabitants of areas affected by the public infrastructures' implementation, further strengthens the conceptualization of land governance as a multidimensional equation faced by several former colonies all over the world in general and in francophone West Africa in particular.

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