

Security Uncertainty and Reorganization of Urban Spaces in the City of Ouagadougou

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ABSTRACT

The security crisis that Burkina Faso is experiencing, although mainly occurring in rural areas, is influencing the behavior of citizens in terms of urban infrastructure development. In fact, public area in the city of Ouagadougou is constantly being redesigned to take into account the uncertainty of a terrorist attack. Military and paramilitary spaces are equipped with security devices² forcing road users to bypass them to access services. What explains the choice of barriers requiring the disorganization of urban space? The objective of this research is to understand the determinants of the choice of the layout of barriers in lieu of the adoption of innovative means of surveillance and to identify the process of establishing these barriers. The research method is qualitative and is operationalized through in-depth interviews with a variety of people, including municipal services, security services, and users of services adjacent to the security services. The results show a lack of coordination between the municipal services in charge of urban planning and the security services that adopt road closures. A low use of digital surveillance equipment and a weak capacity to react in case of danger explain the choice of the use of protective barriers and barbed wire.

Keywords: uncertainty, security, redevelopment, urban spaces, Ouagadougou

INTRODUCTION

The sub-Saharan African countries of, like the rest of the continent characterized by a traditional fragile security situation, are plagued to an endogenous production insecurity that undermines their integrity as independent states [1]. African cities are not spared from incursions by armed groups that create violence. In the search for better strategies to fight efficiently against the phenomenon of insecurity in cities, many prevention methods have been developed and widely analyzed. The causes of insecurity have to be found in the disorder of social practices through the affirmation of human responsibility in the appearance of dangers

and plagues [2]. For this reason, prevention is better than cure. That is why, in the prevention of insecurity it is necessary to mobilize the defense and security forces in the detection of suspicious movements, control towers and security patrols in criminogenic areas in the city [3]. The same applies to the creation of surveillance services to strengthen routine controls and the development of control techniques that rely mainly on video surveillance [4]. The securing of urban space is the cement of its animation. For the appropriation of this space by city dwellers, security is therefore a sine qua non condition [5]

In a study carried out in the context of urban insecurity and intervention policies in Italy, the concept of prevention is defined as "the set of actions aimed at eliminating or reducing the frequency of behaviors considered, in various ways, as criminal by using means other than those provided by the penal system." [6, p. 466]. According to that study, these different actions cannot be effectively coordinated in the absence of community policing. This police force can have a positive influence on the perception of the population regarding urban security. And even if it does not succeed in eliminating the deep causes of insecurity, it will still constitute a reassuring neighborhood and a visible means of taking into consideration the problems of the city dwellers [6]. In the same way, community policing allows to reduce the problems of insecurity and crime, and facilitates a quick intervention when the population expresses the need thanks to the means of mobility and communication that have been granted to them such as motorcycles, bicycles, Motorola radios [7].

To allow the police to properly carry out their missions, the contribution of the population is important. In view of the persistence of the difficulties recorded in the fight against this scourge, it is necessary to look back and to act with a forward-looking and anticipatory vision for a real community participation [8]. In the same vein, the police would like to see a better involvement of the population, a strengthening of the relationship between the police and the population for an effective action in the fight against insecurity and to meet the expectations of the population on security [9]. Accordingly, the neighborhood chiefs have been asked to identify bandits, to locate them and to ensure that foreigners living in the neighborhood are subject to community rules.

The city of Ouagadougou, like other cities in sub-Saharan Africa, is experiencing insecurity. The need to have their own dwelling pushes city dwellers to settle in the peripheral areas, causing the city to spread out. This sprawl does not go hand in hand with the concept of a sustainable city [10]. This is why several military camps are concentrated in the city center. The current development of the city of Ouagadougou dates from 1999. In the revision of the Development Master Plan (SDA) of "Greater Ouaga", it was question of sending away the barracks from the city of Ouagadougou. It is planned, a pole of security and defense where the camps will be relocated at Koubri, Loumbila, Komki-Ipala, Pabré and Saaba [10].

With the growing phenomenon of insecurity in Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou has been the target of two terrorist attacks. Its first terrorist attack was recorded on January 15, 2016 against the Cappuccino café-restaurant, the Taxi brousse and Splendid Hotel, all located on Avenue Kwamé-N'krumah. This horrific terrorist attack was claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). On Friday, March 2, 2018, Ouagadougou had just experienced a second round of terrorist attacks targeting the French embassy and the headquarters of the Burkinabe army.

Urban insecurity led to the birth of the "night-time economy" concept in the 1990s in order to breathe new life into the night-time of British cities, which was dying out because of insecurity. Indeed, the extent of insecurity was leading city dwellers to desert the city entertainment at night: "it takes specific forms in connection with the dominant collective representations associated with urban night time as a time for leisure and celebration. [5, p. 1]

Considering these terrorist attacks, the defense and security forces have reorganized the areas located near the camps, police stations and the army headquarters. There are barbed wire fences and barriers of different kinds. The security barriers are used to control access and to guarantee the security of the premises. Located at the entrances of parking lots, companies, communities, campsites, camps ..., they are simple to install and maintain. Different types of security barriers are available: access control barriers, construction site barriers, parking barriers, expandable barriers... City barriers are used to protect and delimit spaces. They are very important for an optimal urban design. However, they create worries for residents and other traffic users. As a proof, on the night of Saturday, February 20th, 2021, around 11:15 p.m., a white expatriate attempted to break through the barriers of Air Force Base 511 near the Ouagadougou International Airport. The guard (military) opened fire on the vehicle. The individual wounded at the stomach was reportedly evacuated to Yalgado hospital for treatment. Also, on June 21st, 2022, around 8:00 p.m., according to information provided by the military staff, a motorist attempted to break through a barrier installed not far from the base. Elements of the air base fired warning shots to deter the driver of the vehicle. Two civilians lost their lives. These two examples raise the issue of the occupation of urban space in the context of insecurity. This raises the question of how to erect security barriers in the city of Ouagadougou. Do these barriers really secure people and property? This article aims to answer these questions by emphasizing the importance of barriers in securing people and property in the city, but above all by analyzing the appropriateness of these barriers in the context of insecurity in Burkina Faso.

METHODOLOGY

This socio-anthropological research mainly uses interviews as a data collection technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of socio-professional groups in the city of Ouagadougou. These included the Defense and Security Forces, traffic users and/or residents of camps and police stations, and city hall officials. The different themes discussed were related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, their perceptions of the erection of security barriers in order to curb the security crisis and the prospects for securing people and property in the city. The need to define the population in this research for the constitution of the sample led us to use the random sampling technique for traffic users. For the Defense and Security Forces, we used the snowball sampling technique. For the last category, we used indirect modes of access, which consisted of: "through third parties, whether institutional or personal" [12, p. 57]. We contacted them through their colleagues or collaborators in the departments, the secretaries, the office agents. The use of these different sampling techniques is all the more legitimate since the subject of security barriers and therefore insecurity is very sensitive in the Defense and Security Forces. Each element of the Defense and Security Forces interviewed was responsible for leading us to the other, and so on. We met with the road users in the vicinity of the camps and police stations and negotiated the interview. In order to diversify the sources of information, the principle of triangulation of informants was favored in order to take into account several socio-professional categories. The

principle of saturation was favored as a sign of the end of the surveys. "The principle of saturation is obviously more than a signal of the end: it is a methodological guarantee of primary importance, complementary to triangulation." [13, p. 88]. Thus, ten (10) elements of the Defense and Security Forces, twenty (20) traffic users and five (05) city hall agents participated in the survey. The data collected in the field was recorded on a Dictaphone and transcribed, then processed and analyzed according to a thematic scheme. The objective of thematic analysis is to process textual data and oral discourse in order to identify their meaning. It "consists in transversally cutting the whole corpus. The unit of division is the theme which represents a fragment of discourse. It undoes, as it were, the singularity of the discourse and transversally cuts out what, from one interview to another, refers to the same theme. It seeks a thematic coherence between interviews.

This methodological orientation allowed us to achieve the following results.

RESULTS

In front of the security crisis that has shaken Burkina Faso since then, several solutions have been proposed to curb it. However, the phenomenon of insecurity, even if it is a rural phenomenon, also occurs in the city and requires an analysis in order to counteract or even annihilate it. From the data collected in the field, the participants analyzed the security situation in the country, invoked security barriers as preventive measures to fight against insecurity while not hiding the influence of barriers in urban planning and proposed perspectives for a judicious use of measures that secure people and goods in the city of Ouagadougou.

The Security Situation in Burkina Faso

Since 2015, Burkina Faso has been experiencing an unprecedented security crisis that has never occurred in its contemporary history. Analyzing the current security situation allows us to know what urgent measures need to be taken in order to ward off any attack. Through the field survey conducted among users of the urban public space, the Defense and Security Forces and the town hall, a varied collection of speeches was provided to analyze the security situation in the country. In this regard, some interviewees asserted that "the security situation as becoming increasingly unhealthy. [12, pp. 94-95][12, pp. 94-95]. In the same vein, a 33-year-old resident of Karpala, a district in Ouagadougou, who holds a bachelor's degree, stated: "The situation is very worrying with the repeated attacks. The situation in the country is frightening: when you go out in the morning, pray to God to come back safe and sound. The Defense and Security Forces sound the same trumpet to justify the security situation in the country. The following speeches analyze the security situation in these terms:

"The security situation in our country got deteriorated dramatically due to the almost daily attacks by armed terrorist groups against the positions of the Defense and Security Forces, against the civilian population, and against the symbols of the State. This situation, which is all the more alarming because the Defense and Security Forces are struggling to contain it, has led our country into a double security and humanitarian crisis due to a large number of internally displaced persons" (FDS, 35 years old, Ouagadougou).

The entire population would be vulnerable and is a potential target for the enemy. The attacks are not only directed against elements of the defense and security forces. In their strategy to weaken the state, the terrorists do not spare the civilian population, even though they are non-

combatants and unarmed. At the same time, this vulnerability of the population poses the problem of the status of the state, which is incapable of defending its citizens, and at the same time the effectiveness of popular disarmament and humanitarian response capacity.

Terrorist actions have had many material and human consequences in Burkina Faso. In this sense, an element of the Defense and Security Forces described the situation in these terms:

The security situation is very critical due to the multiple terrorist attacks Burkina Faso has faced since 2015. The consequences of these attacks are the numerous losses of human life, the growing number of internally displaced persons, and the loss of control of the territory (FDS, 34 years old, head of department, for 3 years).

These assertions reflect the deteriorating security situation in the country. Since the beginning of the year 2022, it has gone from bad to worse. confronted with this meteoric rise in insecurity in the city of Ouagadougou, preventive measures are being taken. They concern security barriers. Empirical observation allows us to note that barriers are erected around military camps, gendarmerie brigades, police stations and town halls for the occasion. What types of barriers are erected? Why these types of barriers? Do these barriers really provide security?

Security Barriers, Preventive Measures to Fight Against Insecurity?

Among the preventive measures against insecurity are the security barriers. What types of barriers are used? To this question, a 39-year-old police commissioner answers: "Depending on the situation, we use three types of barriers. These are permanent fixed barriers, temporary fixed barriers and temporary mobile barriers. But as far as the issue of insecurity is concerned, we use permanent fixed barriers. Addressing the issue of form, another said, "We usually use concrete markers and wire mesh filled with sand or barrels" (FDS, 35, Ouagadougou).

On the importance of barriers, some interviewees believe that security barriers are very important because they protect against possible terrorist attacks, as we have seen on several occasions in the city of Ouagadougou. In this regard, he justifies his position: "They (the barriers) are very useful in that they allow us to isolate sensitive sites, even if they constitute an obstacle to the freedom of movement. (FDS, 25 years old, Ouagadougou). Another respondent added: "In my opinion, security barriers help to protect sensitive sites against possible external aggression, particularly terrorist attacks. (FDS, 31 years old, Ouagadougou). A third insists: "It is normal and even very beneficial; the only problem is that these barriers often do not exist or are light, which does not prevent the enemy from approaching to open fire. (Traffic user, 40 years old, Master).

While some interviewees were in favor of security barriers, others were more nuanced, even though they recognized the importance of these barriers in protecting people and property. Barriers are Unnecessary congestion since the evil forces do not need to be inside the target to attack it. Putting concrete markers or sandbags in front of the barracks is quite necessary since they will serve as a protective base in case of a situation. (SDF, 30 years old, Ouagadougou).

It is not so much the congestion of the roadways with barriers that is decried but the adaptation or effectiveness of these in the event of attacks that is emphasized by the interviewee.

Unlike the latter, who do not systematically revoke the importance of barriers, a certain category of traffic users is not in favor of the erection of barriers regardless of the reasons. In this regard, they claim: "It's not fair. They are supposed to protect everyone and not just themselves" (Traffic user, 39 years old, Master). Another interviewee finds that the barriers are a means of informing potential terrorists of the presence of a camp, a police station or a brigade in the area. To this end, he said: "For me, it's a good thing. It only attracts people's attention and shows that it is a service of the FDS" (traffic user, 40 years old, Master).

These different interventions indicate that the population is not unanimous in its assessment of the use of security barriers in the city of Ouagadougou. While some believe that protection measures should take into account the entire city, others focus on the "visibility" of security and defense infrastructures, emphasizing that these barriers are indicative. If the positions are not clear-cut regarding the use of barriers, what about their influence on urban planning?

The Influence of Safety Barriers in Urban Design

The barriers affect the habits of city dwellers and force them to bypass them. This prolongs the distances to be covered and increases traffic jams on certain arteries of the city. This is why many users recognize the importance of the barriers and suggest that they be alternated to avoid inconvenience. A 35-year-old FDS addresses the problem in these terms: the barriers are "useful and imperative on the one hand for safety reasons, but abusive on the other hand in the sense that they could be put up at specified times (especially at night and in specific situations) and taken down momentarily during the day. In the same dynamics a user appreciates:

This is beneficial, but it is necessary to relocate them because this new situation has had repercussions on the daily life of the population, preventing good urban traffic and, in a way, endangering the lives of city dwellers, given that the main target of the terrorists is the FDS. (Traffic user, 36 years old).

In the remainder of the analysis, the interviewees discuss the difficulties caused by barriers to urban mobility. The following testimonies from the FDS attest it: "The barriers often create bypasses and prevent the flow of traffic. Their position at a certain level hinders the activity of certain residents" (FDS, 30 years old). Another in the same vein qualified: "They disrupt traffic a little, but they are necessary for the safety of the services as well as for road users" (FDS, 25 years old).

If the defense and security forces themselves recognize the influence of barriers in the habits of the urban population, traffic users are not left out. To this end, they mention here and there the traffic accidents caused by the presence of barriers: "They often create panic and cause road accidents, and they are often the cause of huge traffic jams" (traffic user, 40 years old). "They create traffic jams; they confuse some people who do not know the roads well. They even cause accidents" (traffic user, 30 years old). Another participant wondered about medical evacuations and other interventions and emphasized: "They often complicate the interventions of the fire department, the defense and security forces and emergency medical evacuations" (user, 35 years old).

From what has just been said, it is noted that the erection of security barriers in urban areas creates inconvenience for the population. However, as some of the FDS point out, "To make the

city safe, the FDS themselves must be safe. Therefore, given the volatile security situation, the erection of barriers is certainly a nuisance for the population, but it is tolerable for security reasons. However, what steps do the FDS take before erecting security barriers?

For the measures to be taken before the erection of the safety barriers, several answers were provided to us by the FDS. "We must use visible barriers (colored lights) and indicate the existence of the barrier in a forward position with detour signs. In addition, men should be placed to direct road users" (Police Commissioner, 39 years old). Another police commissioner, 36 years old supports:

The security barriers constituting the first security perimeter, there are up to three of them; the first one must be at least five meters away from the second for the protection of sensitive sites. For large events, the distance must be much more. Also, the neighborhood must be informed in order to participate in the securing of the site or the event by providing information on suspicious persons or unusual behavior.

The erection follows a process with regard to the contribution of the police commissioners. Indeed, it is necessary to proceed to the sensitization of the neighborhood and/or to post men near these barriers in order to orient them. However, it happens that the population is not involved in this initiative. In relation to this, one FDS emphasized: "Sometimes we erect these barriers without taking the population into account, but they must comply because security imperatives oblige us to do so" (DSF, 38 years old). Another FDS in response to the question maintains:

Absolutely! The defense and security forces, whose *raison d'être* is the protection of people and their property in their daily activities, necessarily take into account the general population. However, if security imperatives are necessary, they have no choice but to prioritize the safety of the citizens and the personnel of the defense and security forces by erecting these barriers; it is being understood that they must be safe in order to ensure the safety of these same citizens. (FDS, head of department, 34 years old)

All in all, the FDS have different views on the arrangements to be made for the erection of barriers. For some, it is necessary to collect the contribution and agreement of the population. Others, on the other hand, evoke security imperatives and present the population with a *fait accompli*. In the case of traffic users, this can only be done formally: "First of all, we need to raise awareness among the population so that they know the role of the barriers and the consequences of trying to break them" (user, 33 years old, resident of Karpala). Also, "It is necessary to proceed with the sensitization of the populations and to erect signs at 1000 m, 500 m, 250 m, 100 m, 50 m...." (User, 37 years old, resident of Tampouy). Another suggests: "They should be placed in the right places and made visible at a reasonable distance" (User, 40 years old, Ouagadougou). In any case, security barriers are "dissuasive and secure measures. The presence of barriers in certain places prevents anyone from approaching closely" (FDS, 31 years old). Given the importance of barriers in securing people and property in the city, it is imperative to use barriers that are less obtrusive but that detect the presence of a threat from a distance. Which security perspectives can be used for this purpose?

Perspectives on the Use of Safety Barriers

The barriers generally used in Ouagadougou in front of police stations, camps and town halls, according to the defense and security forces, are concrete beacons and fences filled with sand or barrels, iron barriers, parapets, barbed wire, etc. These barriers are likely to clutter up the urban space. This is why the use of new security technologies is analyzed by the participants in this exercise. Some suggest the advent of these technologies but they must be reinforced. In order to better secure people and property in the city of Ouagadougou, open collaboration between the FDS and the population, and intra-FDS and inter-FDS collaboration are crucial to the eviction of the terrorist hydra, and thus of insecurity outside our borders.

This is why the defense and security forces are proposing a variety of strategies, including

- Awareness of the need to cooperate with law enforcement agencies;
- increasing the number of surveillance cameras in every corner of the city;
- the clearance of a reasonable distance for the installations of the structures and socioeconomic establishments of the barracks and the public way;
- the association of surveillance videos to the barriers not only in the big cities, the so-called sensitive sites, the companies, the places of trade, etc.;
- the development of patrols by the defense and security forces in the city.
- The reinforcement of the technical and human surveillance and the security network in the city of Ouaga which is very weak to date;
- the improvement of the working conditions of the internal security forces, precisely in their rolling stock;
- lighting of dark and isolated areas;
- Community participation in the co-production of security (community policing, community initiative) to address the security problem.

From these suggestions, one can see the need for frank collaboration between the population and the defense and security forces, the presence of surveillance cameras and videos, patrol services, and the improvement of the working conditions of the defense and security forces.

What do the traffic users propose? The users have the same views. In this regard, they express the wish to "reinforce patrols, information and establish trust between the FDS and the population in order to have a frank collaboration between them" (inhabitant of Tampouy, 36 years old). It is also necessary that "the FDS collaborate closely with the townspeople. Also, the use of new technologies in the areas, such as surveillance cameras and laser beams, can, in my opinion, contribute greatly to solving the problem" (Tanghin resident, age 27). In addition, it is necessary to "relocate the military camps to the extremities of the city and strengthen access control to the city" (resident of Pissy, 35 years old). "If they are to keep their current positions, they must reinforce the barricades, keep watch and above all collaborate with the population" (resident of Dassasgo, 41 years old).

The contribution of traffic users in the proposals to fight against the phenomenon of insecurity in the city is not opposed to those of the FDS. However, the presence of the camps in the cities attracts the attention of the traffic users who propose their relocation to the peripheral areas.

DISCUSSION

The erection of security barriers in the city of Ouagadougou in front of the services of the defense forces influences the habits of the local population and users of these places. This is why, before any operation to install barriers, it is wise to raise awareness among the population in order to obtain their opinion. Research on urban planning due to the security crisis is still scarce, but this result could address the problem of the specialization of security forces. Also, sensitization of the population has the advantage of obtaining their support for security efforts. These urban redevelopments are the source of various disruptions to the flow of urban traffic and generate accidents. As evidence, an expatriate forced the barrier of the Air Force Base on February 21, 2021 and soldiers on duty opened fire by aiming at the tires of his car and unfortunately, a bullet hit him in the lower abdomen [14]. A year later, on June 21, 2022, two civilians lost their lives when their vehicle was shot at in the same place. These were warning shots fired at motorists trying to break through a military barrier towards the air base. Both of these situations make it clear that immediate steps must be taken to regulate security barriers in the city of Ouagadougou. Nameplates or speed bumps should be constructed for this purpose, as suggested by our respondents.

At the same time, the efficient use of public resources used for space planning and which from one moment to another is taken in hostage by security delineators.

In addition, there is an urgent need to address the city of Ouagadougou insofar as the location solutions such as google maps used for the location of a path are not always clearly informed. From the point of view of securing people and property in the city of Ouagadougou, the proposal to mobilize defense and security forces for regular patrols in the city [3] can help to reduce insecurity. To achieve this, logistic means are needed for the defense and security forces to carry out their regalian mission of securing the territory for the best. [7]. Moreover, the strengthening of community policing and the open collaboration between the defense and security forces and the population can produce convincing results [9]. Moreover, the relocation of the camps to the outskirts of the city offers the opportunity to better control the entrances and exits of the city. The acquisition of new surveillance technologies such as videos and laser beams should be explored for better results in the fight against insecurity in the city.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to determine the perception of security barriers that constrain urban mobility in Ouagadougou. The analysis revealed that the erection of security barriers around camps and other defense and security forces services is not without its problems for users who are forced to travel long distances to obtain certain urban amenities. Although the defense and security forces cannot be granted a monopoly on the occupation of space, the fact remains that security measures such as barriers are decided within the defense and security forces, and the population or users are silent about these security arrangements and rearrangements. However, the motive seems to prevail over the indisposition of urban mobility. To this end, the participants in this survey are not unanimous in their rejection of these restrictive measures. The internalization of the role of the defense and security services as a repressive body legitimizes the redevelopment actions that they impose on the city, sometimes without taking into account the civil services of urbanization.

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