
Mobilisations against land grabs on the outskirts of Dakar: local configurations and demands for socio-spatial justice

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Abstract

On the outskirts of the city of Dakar, public and private development and housing projects are fuelling unprecedented community pushback against the land dispossession they produce. Studying three nearby but contrasting cases, this article examines the factors behind the conflicts and the conditions under which such mobilisations occur, through a detailed analysis of the territorial configurations within which the conflicts form. The members of the protest groups point to issues of distributive social justice (loss of livelihoods; lack of access to future housing), intergenerational justice (future of landless young people), and procedural justice (opposition to the ways in which the state intervenes to deny them land rights). They seek to media coverage for the conflict in order to obtain political support and the shelving of the projects, or at least acceptable compensation. However, these movements have not—or not yet—gone beyond the local scale to fuel wider national demand for legal recognition of the land rights of all citizens.

Keywords: periurban, land dispossession, collective mobilisation, spatial justice, media coverage

Résumé

Aux périphéries de la métropole dakaraise, les projets publics et privés d'aménagement et de lotissements suscitent des mobilisations collectives inédites contre les dépossessions foncières qu'ils induisent. Étudiant trois cas voisins mais contrastés, cet article interroge les déterminants des conflits et les conditions des mobilisations à partir d'une analyse fine des configurations territoriales au sein desquelles ces conflits se cristallisent. Les membres des collectifs étudiés mettent en avant différents enjeux de justice sociale : distributive (perte de moyens d'existence ; absence d'accès aux futurs logements), intergénérationnelle (devenir des jeunes sans terre) et procédurale (contestation de modes d'intervention de l'État qui ignore leurs droits fonciers). Ils cherchent à médiatiser le conflit pour obtenir un arbitrage politique et un abandon des projets ou, au moins, des indemnisations acceptables. Pour autant, ces mobilisations n'ont pas – encore ? – dépassé les oppositions locales pour revendiquer collectivement une reconnaissance légale des droits fonciers de tous les citoyens.

Mots-clés : périurbain, dépossession foncière, mobilisation collective, justice sociospatiale, médiatisation



Figure 1: March by Dougar residents, June 2021

Source: Philippe Lavigne Delville

In Africa, demographic pressure and the dynamics of contemporary capitalism are making land an increasingly significant issue. In rural areas, governments have

favoured large-scale international land acquisitions, boosted by the 2007 food and the 2008 financial crises (Evers et al., 2013), while urban elites have pursued their strategies of land accumulation (Hilhorst and Nelen, 2012). In urban and periurban areas, the financialisation of housing has boosted land values and land speculation (Bertrand and Bon, 2022). Leaving the problem of access to the city for the poor to be dealt with through informal solutions, public policy has focused on new town projects (Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018) and on supporting urban development for the wealthy classes and diasporas (Biehler et al., 2015).

In Senegal, these dynamics have operated within a particular political and institutional framework, inherited from the decision made at the time of independence, in 1964, to restrict the development of private property, in line with the African socialism promoted at the time by President Léopold Sédar Senghor: only the state can register land, in its own name and subject to conditions of public utility. In the 2000s, however, the state supported a number of “major land grabs” in rural areas, which led to protests (Touré et al., 2013). Since the 2010s, land conflicts have been concentrated at the fringes of urban expansion, around thirty kilometres from the capital Dakar, which are emerging as the new flashpoints of land disputes (Auyero, 2005). The conflicts develop because of local residents and farmers refused being dispossessed of their land as a result of state-sponsored planning initiatives or private real estate development projects.

This article, the first outcome of ongoing research,¹ explores the conditions under which these new mobilisations emerge and seeks to elucidate the issues at stake in terms of socio-spatial justice (Gervais-Lambony and Dufaux, 2009; Soja, 2009). After a brief description of the background, we present three emblematic cases. Each of them has been investigated through qualitative research, since 2012 or 2019 depending on the site. Between 20 and 40 interviews on each site were conducted by one or other of the authors with people affected, leaders of the protest groups, and informants, along with observations of demonstrations or press conferences and analysis of press articles and online video. For each, we describe the history of the mobilisation, the repertoires and diversity of the protest actions, the support received by the collectives concerned and the demands made (Fillieule et al., 2010), situating them in the specific territorial and socio-political configuration in which they have unfolded (Pailloux and Ripoll, 2019). Territory is undoubtedly central to the genesis of conflicts of use (Torre, 2011) and to the strategies and repertoires of collective action (Ripoll, 2008). By centring the study on territory and the struggles waged over it, and comparing cases that are nearby—just a few kilometres apart—but different, we can examine the interactions

1. Although we began this research independently, we are now pursuing it in a coordinated fashion as part of the ANR Metroland project (ANR- 22-CE55-0003-01) from which this article stems.

between the social and the spatial, and highlight the importance of the different micro-configurations through which the contemporary city is constructed.

We then analyse the distributive and procedural issues involved in these mobilisations for the various groups of actors concerned, and how the justice issues are perceived by the victims of dispossession. To this end, we employ the analytical grid developed by Coline Perrin and Brigitte Nougarèdes (2020) in a collective study of periurban spatial justice issues in the Mediterranean to account for the issues involved in preserving periurban agricultural land. Here we put this analytical grid to work in a different context.

Housing estates, speculation and land dispossession on the periphery of Dakar: the breeding ground for struggles

The conflictual nature of land transactions and dispossessions is part of the urban history of Dakar, where land is a fundamental resource. Tensions between the State and the Lebou families and authorities—the historic occupants of the peninsula—were central to the history of the capital (Diop, 1995). However, the issues at stake and the ways in which these tensions have arisen have varied from one era to the next. The colonial powers sought to control the land they needed for urban and port expansion, and to regulate land sales to Europeans. At independence, with the National Domain Act (NDA) of 1964 (Caverivière and Debène, 1988), the socialist government sought to restrict the growth of private ownership and to abolish customary rights by incorporating unregistered land (95% of the territory) into the national domain where all transactions are officially prohibited, thereby supposedly protecting the land resource.

In practice, the NDA enables the State to minimise its costs for the use of land in its development projects: since they legally possess only rights of use, occupiers can only obtain compensation—at very low rates—for any investment they have made. But the NDA did not eradicate the “bourgeois dream of private landownership” (Debène, 1986) or land speculation: from the 1950s, civil servants bought up land on the periphery of towns and established orchards and chicken farms. Although illegal, these sales continued. Urban expansion occurred through a combination of state subdivisions, the organised or autonomous resettlement of “evictees”—occupants of informal settlements expelled during urban development operations—and the purchase of land from customary owners. The creation and expansion of the town of Pikine (Vernière, 1973) is an example of the state’s intentions being hijacked by local arrangements, with “informal” neighbourhoods growing faster than the “formal” town.

After the advent of the liberal era, from 2000 onwards, the private estate supply expanded at the same time as the state relaunched planning ambitions in the form of large-scale projects. Top-down agribusiness projects generated conflict. In urban areas, the many transport infrastructure projects led to forced population displacements and demands for compensation, sometimes coupled with disputes over resettlement arrangements.

Various programmes, financed in partnership between the public and private sectors, have aimed to increase the supply of housing around Dakar. The state registers in its name the necessary pieces of land, its occupants and beneficiaries are evicted, and the land then sold or leased to developers. Instead of meeting the needs of the majority of citizens, the state becomes a “facilitator of capital accumulation” (Alvarez de Andres et al., 2015). The race to build housing estates has gathered pace, and irregular housing estates are proliferating, driven by a variety of “conflicting territorial alliances” that bring together residents and developers with local elected representatives (List, 2014).

Struggles against dispossession on the outskirts of Dakar: three case studies

The three case studies are characterised by different spatial configurations and varying combinations of state and private projects. The first is located on the northern front of Dakar’s urbanisation, in the heart of the Niayes, an area of intensive market gardening, in the commune of Bambylor. The other two are located in the municipality of Diamniadio, though not necessarily linked to the new city project underway there.

Bambylor: fighting for recognition of occupancy of land expropriated by the state

Created by the state at in the early 20th century, then acquired by General Bertin at the time of independence, the 1975/R land title covers 2,500 hectares on the land of seven villages (in the case of three of them, the dwellings are also included within the perimeter of the land title). Only around a hundred hectares were farmed by the general’s company, which went bankrupt in the 1970s. Most of the land concerned was then taken over by smallholders and city dwellers whether by inheritance, purchase or the NDA (allocation of a right of use). In 2010, there were 1,042 plots of intensive arboriculture, market gardening or livestock farming, occupying 2,062 hectares (Cissé, 2016).

The dispute broke out in mid-1990 when General Bertin’s heirs wanted to take possession of their land and demanded that the occupants be evicted. With their

homes and livelihoods under threat, the latter appealed to the state. To resolve the problem, President Wade decided in 2006 to expropriate the heirs. The Decree No. 2006-103 of 3 February 2006 stated “the maintenance of the villages located within the purview of land title 1975/R, as well as their outbuildings and the space necessary for their survival and expansion, to be in the public interest”. However, the incorporation of the land into the state’s private domain did not mean that it would be given back in its entirety to the families living there. The state opted to allocate only 178 hectares for the future expansion of these villages, using the remainder to encourage urbanisation while granting opportunity for enrichment to people close to the government. It divided up the land title and sold off large areas to its allies (452 ha in 2012) at the official price, which was well below the market price. They in turn sold the plots on to public and private developers at market prices, thereby realising huge capital gains (Inspection générale d’État, 2014). In the end, 25% of the total surface area of the title was sold to real estate companies, with the remainder made up of housing and orchards under threat of eviction (figure 2).

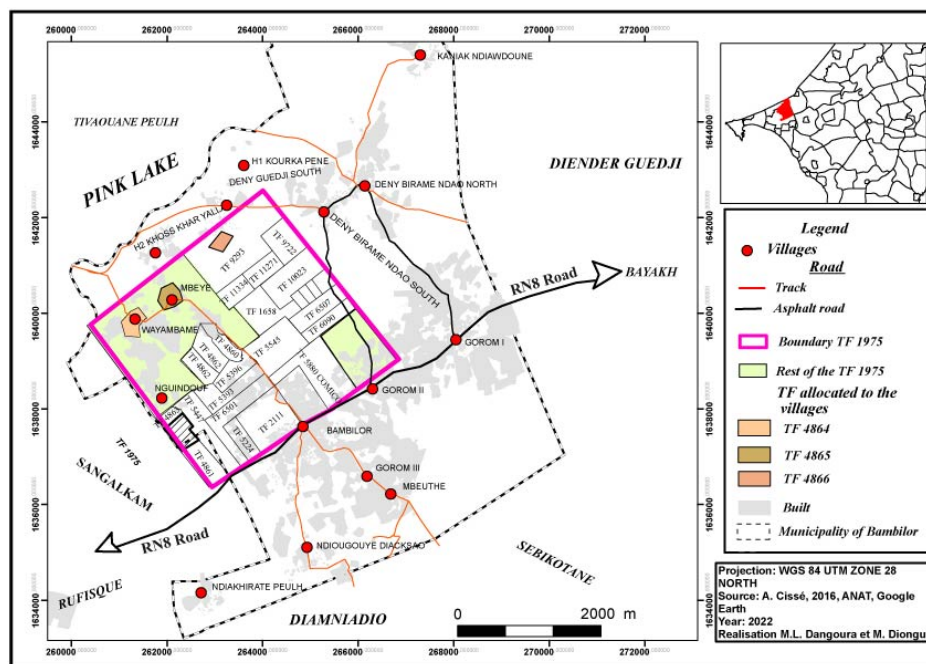


Figure 2: The footprint of the 1975/R land title (TF) and its divisions
 Produced by: Momar Diongue and Modou Laye Dangoura

Armed with their land title, some developers demanded that the occupants vacate the portion of land allocated to them for real estate developments. In April 2011, the police destroyed the orchards and homes on the 100-hectare site acquired by the Coopérative militaire de construction (COMICO) to build a programme

of 1,000 houses. This violent takeover of the site exacerbated the fear that all the orchard owners on the land in question would be evicted.

Formed in 2010, the *And samma sa moomel* collective (Together for the preservation of our property) fought on two fronts: resisting the plundering of the orchards, and seeking compensation for those evicted. Its members were notables and farmers from the villages and the city dwellers who owned the orchards: civil servants, pensioners, shopkeepers, religious authorities, etc. The collective organised two large-scale marches, alerted the media (press conferences, newspaper articles, interviews and television broadcasts) and met the country's leading religious leaders and customary authorities to enlist their support. It entered the political arena and asked the 2012 presidential candidates to take a stand on the issue.

Against this electoral backdrop, President Wade promised to compensate the people evicted from the COMICO site. The collective rejected this proposal, arguing that the promised financial package (1 billion CFA francs, or €1.5 million) fell short of the investment ploughed into the orchards. However, some of the collective's members preferred to negotiate compensation, which was allocated in the absence of any objective criteria, since there was no prior assessment of the occupations and investments. One influential figure obtained ownership of part of his farm (18 hectares out of 30) in exchange for relinquishing the rest. This division weakened the collective. Unable to put a stop to the projects already underway, in 2013 it concentrated on preserving the remaining agricultural areas and set up a farming cooperative. The negotiations begun that year led, in 2015, not to the securing of the orchards, but to an agreement on the payment of compensation by two other companies, based on an assessment of the sums invested in the orchards.

Today, the focus of conflict is the village expansion areas, where some orchard owners, anticipating eviction, divided the land into housing plots and sold them off, in collusion with the local councils.

Deni Malick Gueye: fighting for survival in the face of the Diamniadio urban development project

Located 35 km from Dakar, Diamniadio began to develop in the 1950s, thanks to its strategic position as a trade hub (Diongue and Sakho, 2014). Diamniadio became a municipality in 2002, in anticipation of government investment in the area, and became home to a number of presidential projects, including the University of the African Future, launched by President Wade in 2004 but never completed, and the "Une famille, un toit" (one family, one roof) affordable housing programme. From 2012

onwards, Diamniadio became a hotspot of state projects, with the new city (Diop and Timera, 2018) representing a symbol of the state’s renewed involvement in urban planning (Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer, 2018).

The new city, known as the “Diamniadio Urban Hub”, covers some 2,000 hectares. A product of top-down planning based on a “clean slate” approach (see figure 3, where only the south-eastern tip of the Hub retains the existing fabric), its aim is to concentrate facilities (administrative infrastructures, sports facilities, residential areas and industrial zones) of international stature, and eventually to become home to 350,000 people.² In practice, it is being built gradually, with successive projects funded by public-private partnerships.

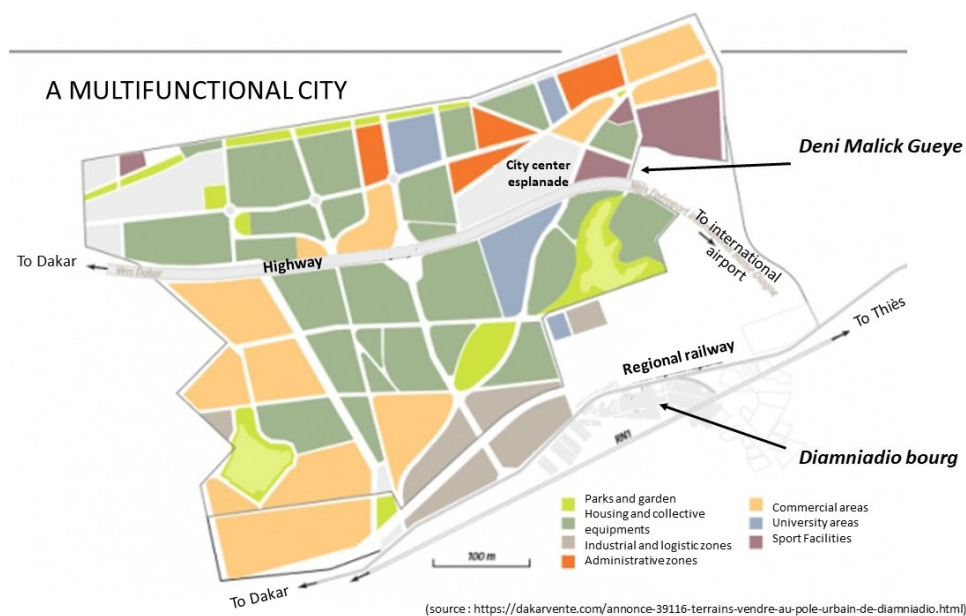


Figure 3: The Diamniadio urban development plan, a clean slate approach to urban planning
 Source: <https://dakarvente.com/annonce-39116-terrains-vendre-au-pole-urbain-de-diamniadio.html>; village names added by the authors

A state registered entity, the Hub is located on land that had been appropriated and used (rain-fed agriculture, irrigated market gardening, orchards, chicken coops, etc.) by various villages, as well as land parcelled out by the municipality and on private estates. The establishment of the Hub drew opposition from the inhabitants of Deni Malick Gueye, who had already lost territory in the 1970s through the introduction of agro-industry, then since the 2000s as a result of successive state projects, with the result that most of their land falls within the footprint of the Hub (figure 4). Farming is

2. *Le Quotidien*, “Nouveau Pôle urbain à la lisière de la capitale”, 31/12/2018.

now only possible where building work has not yet started, and the housing estate negotiated with the municipality to enable the village to expand has been blocked.

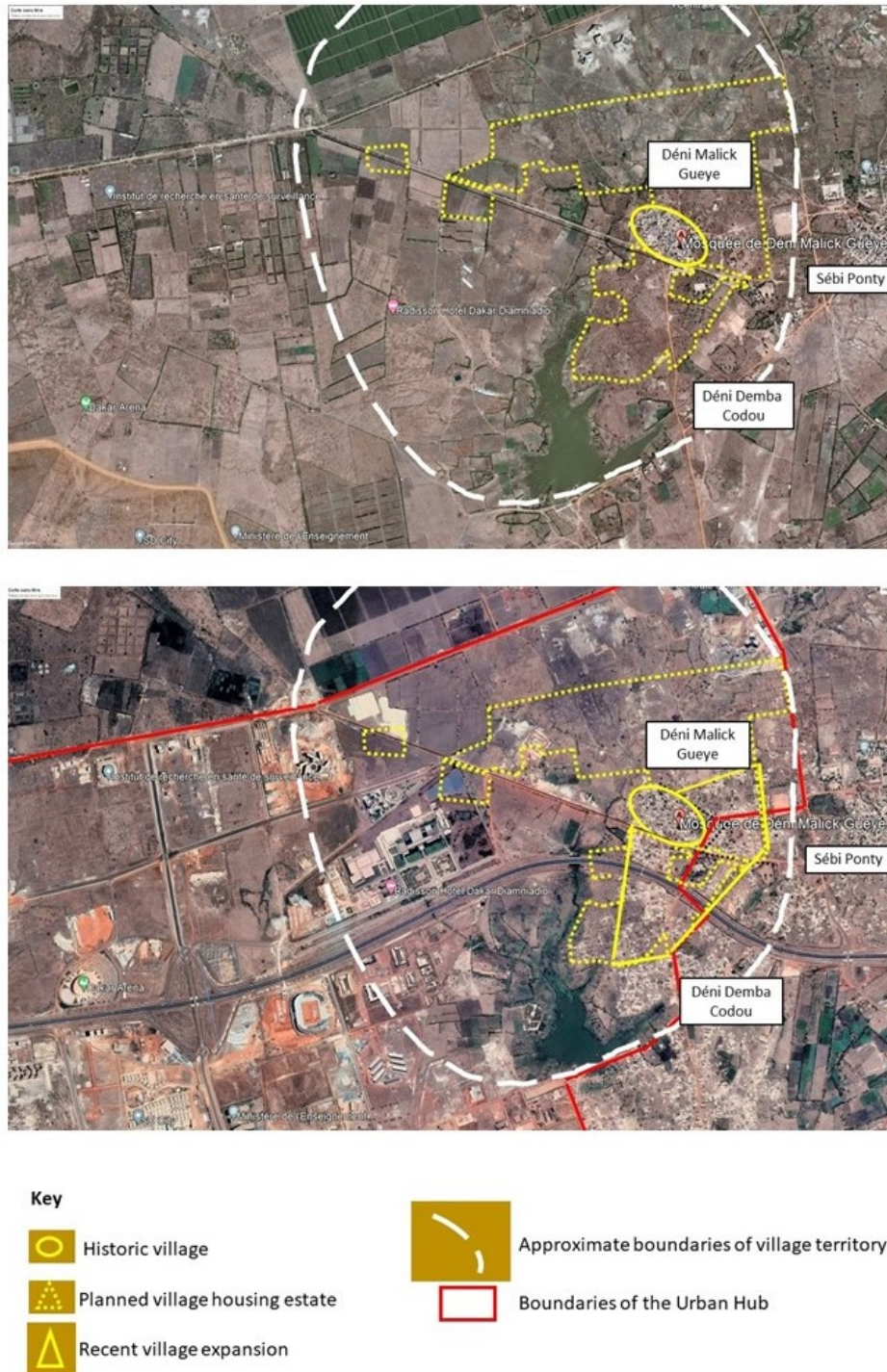


Figure 4: The changing face of Deny Malick Gueye (2010-2022)
 Source: images © Google Earth, 2022; additions by the authors

Following the initial destruction of orchards in 2016, the village committee organised opposition with the village chief and young scholars in an attempt to preserve the village's land. In addition to demonstrations and press conferences, the fight was structured along two main axes. First, aware that it did not have the means to block a major government project, the committee fought to ensure that compensation would reflect the market value of the land, rather than taking into account only the money invested. Since the statutory compensation took no account of the land values, it fell far short of reflecting the real loss. Secondly, it opposed the projects (hotels, etc.) that private interests were trying to establish on the boundaries of the Hub, close to the village, threatening the latter's prospects for future expansion. Here, the rejection took a radical form. On several occasions, site occupations halted construction work and prompted investors to pull out.

At the same time, the residents pursued strategies to extend the village to the south and east (areas less threatened by the Hub), building houses on some of the plots and selling the others, banking on the belief that the density of the dwellings would make it impossible to evict the occupants and demolish the buildings, or at least would attract more substantial compensation.

The collective's actions forced the state body managing the urban hubs to clarify the boundaries of the Hub, which it had previously refused to do in order to maintain its freedom to expand. This demarcation strengthened the collective's resolve to save the surrounding land. While infrastructure sprang up on the Hub site, completely reshaping the area in the space of ten years (figure 4), the collective nevertheless succeeded—at least until now—in blocking projects close to the village.

Dougar: fighting to halt a massive housing development project and retain control over urban development

Located south-east of the town of Diamniadio, Dougar comprises nine Sereer and Peul hamlets. The city's expansion encroached on its territory, along the two national highways, with housing estates, industrial estates and training centres. As at Deny Malick Gueye and Bambylor, some of the land had already been sold for orchards or industry (figure 5).

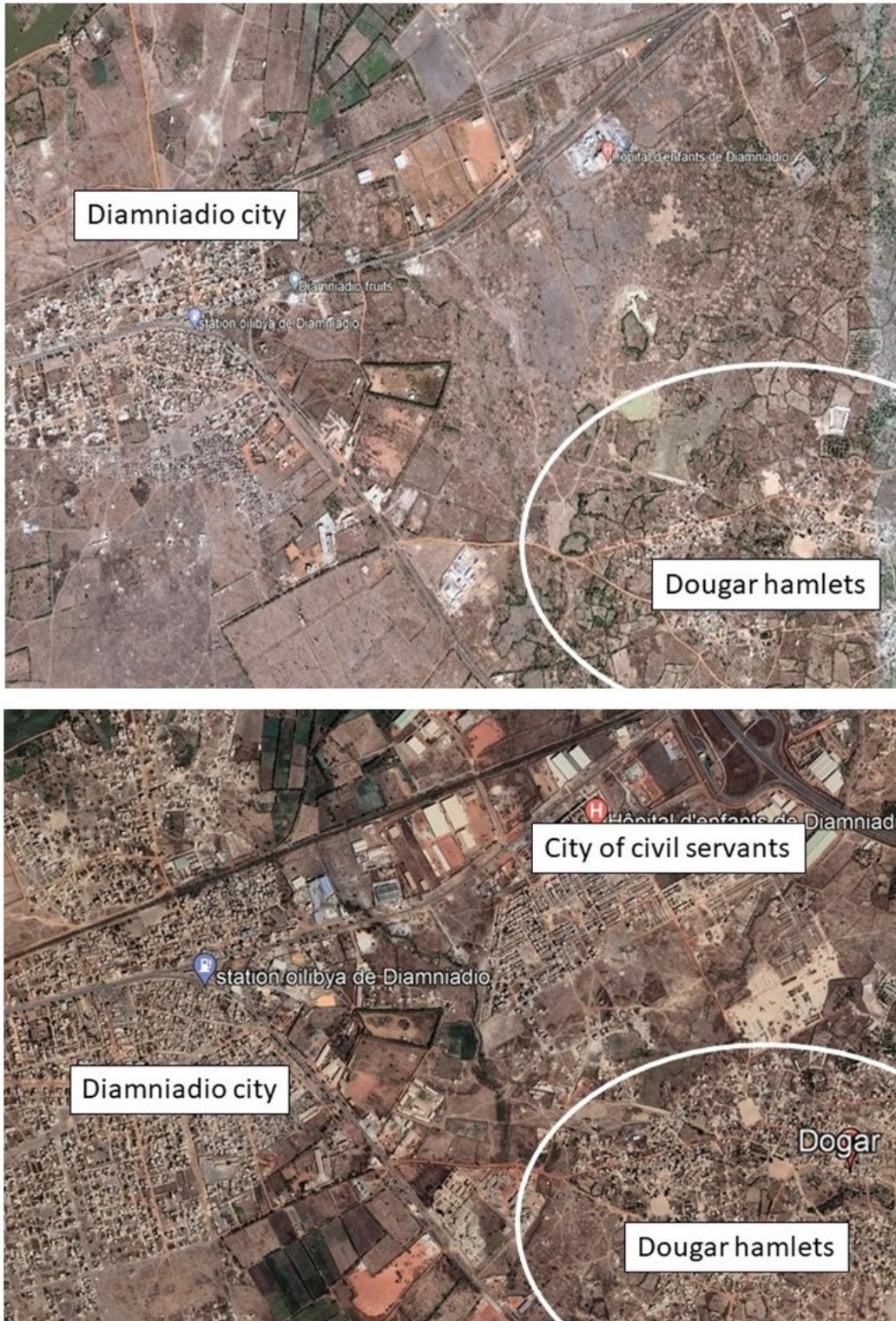


Figure 5: Dougar in 2011 and 2022

Source: images © Google Earth, 2022; additions by the authors

A number of disputes sprang up between residents and the state and developers. The most striking concerns the Senegalese-Moroccan company Peacock Investments, which was commissioned by the government to build a housing estate for civil servants as part of an affordable housing programme. Begun in 2010, the City of civil servants is set to accommodate 2,850 homes, beginning with a first phase of 1200 villas. While this project was opposed from the outset by the landowners whose land was allocated to Peacock Investments, it was the launch of the second phase in 2019 that triggered open conflict: Peacock Investments' demarcation of the claimed area in August 2019 showed that the land title encroached on the village (figure 6) and that houses and a cemetery were under threat.³ This conflict came to a head in April 2021 with violent clashes between young people and the police.

The village association commissioned a real estate firm to help them clarify how their land had been allocated to Peacock Investments and to shape their claims. They discovered procedural flaws in the way the land was awarded to the company. The 80-hectare site planned for the City of civil servants had initially been located on the western outskirts of Diamniadio. As this site had already been used by the state, the land services then registered another plot and leased it to Peacock Investments. According to the village development association (discussion, deliberation and action framework for the development of Dougar), this transfer from one site to another was effected illegally. In addition, the demolition of houses by the the police department in charge of land use control took place at the request of the company, apparently without the court order normally required.

3. Seneplus, "Dougar Peulh ready to counter Peacock Investments by all means", 4 August 2029 (<https://www.seneplus.com/seneplus-tv/dougar-peulh-pret-contrer-peacock-par-tous-les-moyens>, accessed 18/04/2024).

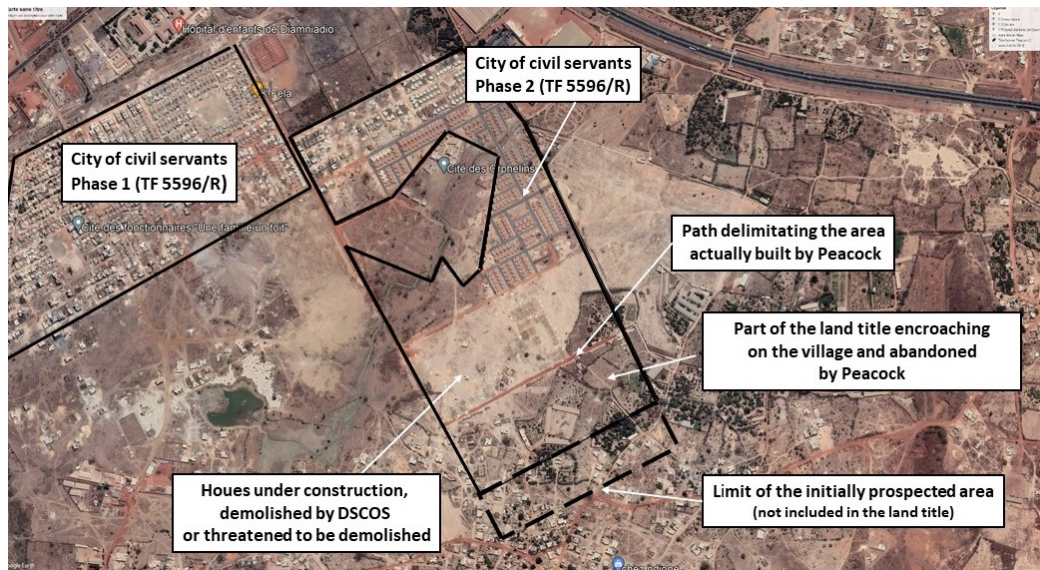


Figure 6: Dougar vs Peacock Investments, situation at the beginning of June 2021
Source: images © Google Earth, 2022; additions by the authors

The first phase of the project caused a great deal of resentment, but only agricultural land was at stake. Negotiations concluded with a promise of compensation, for a derisory amount, which was refused. The second tranche, on the other hand, in which homes were threatened, met with fierce opposition. The collective—which also includes people who have bought land on the site, whether they live there or not—called for the construction work to be stopped and tried, in vain, to oppose it. The police began protecting the site in 2020. The collective organised several press conferences and administrative approaches to local and national authorities. In April 2021, the continuing construction work provoked a violent reaction from young people, who attacked the policemen who were protecting the worksite. As a result, 34 people were violently arrested in their homes early the next morning, and 18 were taken into police custody. This violence shocked and radicalised the residents. The collective obtained the support of two Senegalese activist organisations, *Y en a marre* and *FRAPP France dégage*,⁴ and held a large-scale march on 6 June 2021. Speeches were made in front of the town hall, in the presence of leaders of these two movements. The demonstration took place on the eve of a court ruling on a summary application by the collective for construction work to be suspended. Its aims was to prove the population’s determination.

4. *Y en a marre* (Fed Up) grew out of the *Set Setal* youth movement to clean up the city and promote a new form of citizenship. It strongly opposed President Wade’s desire to remain in power in 2012 (Dimé, 2022). The *Front pour une révolution anti-impérialiste populaire et panafricaine* (FRAPP; Front for a People’s Anti-Imperialist and Pan-African Revolution) is part of a political challenge to power and international economic dependence.

Peacock Investments appears to have relinquished the part of the land title that encroaches on the village and is marking out a track at the boundary of the part where it intends to build, while at the same time starting to build houses upstream of this boundary, in order to make this state of affairs irreversible (figure 6). On the other side of this track, houses continue to be built on plots sold by the villagers. In both cases, building is a way to ensure that the spatial appropriation becomes a *fait accompli*.

As in Deni Malick Gueye, residents were unable to oppose projects on the fringes of their territory. It was when dispossession came closer to the village, threatening future expansion of the built-up area and, moreover, threatening houses that had already been built, that the opposition turned into open conflict. Its aim was not so much to defend farmland and rural economic activities as to retain control over the land and the urbanisation process. The villagers are aware that urban expansion is inevitable, and some of the land occupied by Peacock Investments had already been divided up into construction plots by its owners, with the intention of housing their children on it or selling it to finance their transition away from agriculture. What this conflict reflects above all is the competition between the state-backed urban development projects of private developers, which rely on the eviction of customary landowners, and the plans of the villagers, who assert their ownership of their land and their right to divide it up and sell it.

Using the law as a method of dispossession

In the three cases studied, the source of the conflict lies in the registration–long-standing in Bambylor, recent elsewhere–of national domain land that has been appropriated, occupied and used by the population. By law, the state can register national domain land on its own behalf for public interest purposes. Previous owners have either “informal” rights based on custom, or legally recognised rights granted by the local council. The legal documents they hold do not protect them from registration, and at best they can only claim compensation for any investment they have made.

In practice there is very little legal transparency about these dispossessions, and the state’s practices for appropriating and transferring land at times seriously infringe procedures: the public utility criterion is not met, or else public utility is claimed in the absence of the necessary checks; land titles are granted without precise boundaries and without land demarcation; transfers of land are granted to companies close to the government without proper procedures. The legal documents justifying the takeover of land are difficult to access, making the process opaque. The collectives try to penetrate this procedural fog and use personal relationships or contacts in positions

of power to obtain the legal documents, government orders and plans that will enable them to understand the situation.

Given the weakness of their legal position—a land title cannot be challenged once it has been established—the collectives condemn the dispossessions and call for political arbitration in their favour. They seek to publicise the conflict through social media, the local media and, where possible, international media outlets, and to show their determination (the phrase “we will fight to the death” is employed in various speeches). The written press and television give visibility to their activities. They use social media to air their grievances and their analysis of the case, on their own terms, in Wolof, reaching a large audience across the country. The aim of this media coverage is to publicise the dispute and to force the authorities to deal with it or engage in mediation. While public power is frequently mobilised on behalf of private actors, and while repression can be heavy, as in Dougar, the state generally tries to avoid violence. The media coverage increases the political cost of forcing the issue, prompting the state to back off or seek negotiated solutions that are more favourable to local residents.

The territorialisation of land mobilisations

These three cases confirm that protest campaigns in periurban areas are not opposed to urbanisation as such, but to land dispossession linked to the use of land law by the state and by private interests. Land property has largely been reshaped by an active land market, sometimes over several decades, and sales by customary holders are not at risk. The legal status of urban buyers, who have been granted allocations by the municipality, is also fragile relative to the land titles granted by the state. Equally victims, they sometimes take part in protest mobilisations.

Although located on the outskirts of Dakar, just a few kilometres apart, these three conflicts are characterised by different histories and different issues. By spatialising and territorialising them, it becomes possible to understand which stakeholders are affected, and why certain projects generate more resistance than others. Periurban conflicts crystallise at the interface between a variety of territorial and institutional configurations. The areas concerned may be rainfed farmland, orchards, intensive market gardening plots, inhabited areas or housing plots that have not yet been built on. The same project may give rise to different forms of opposition. If the land concerned is agricultural, local stakeholders may accept dispossession provided that the compensation is deemed reasonable. Conversely, if it is land in the process of urbanisation close to the village, the opposition is more radical.

The parties involved also vary: while the state is always present through land registration, the conflicts may pit the collectives directly against the state (Deni Malick Gueye), against big international developers (Dougar), or against housing cooperatives and national developers (Bambylor). As argued by Meth et al. (2021), the projects that trigger these struggles can be based on private speculation backed by the state (Bambylor), on state-supported primary development (Deny Malick Gueye), and on speculation under the guise of a state “social” housing project (Dougar).

Knowing that the legal battle was lost in advance, the Bambylor collective drew on political, religious and civil society networks in order finally to negotiate compensation. Deni Malick Gueye’s collective was unable to attract external support capable of standing up to the state. The Dougar collective—unlike the others—was able to file a number of court procedures, because it managed to gain the support of a real estate professional with legal expertise, but also because its adversary was a private organisation, whose state-granted lease was granted on the basis of biases that could be challenged.

The precise configuration of the conflict thus lies at the intersection of two histories – one of customary and local administrative land tenure, the other of private state intervention and land registration.

A public denunciation of combined socio-spatial injustices

Through the object of their struggles and demands, these mobilisations reveal different facets of the issues of spatial justice linked to the contemporary urban expansion of the city of Dakar. Perrin and Nougaredes (2020) identify a set of justice criteria relating both to distributive justice (the distribution of costs and benefits, opportunities and risks between different social groups) and to procedural justice (which concerns the fairness and transparency of decision-making processes) (table 1). It also presents a typology of perceptions of injustice and their public expression (table 2).

Table 1: Socio-spatial justice criteria

Following Amartya Sen, the authors define capability as “the capacity to transform resources into valuable activities (or ‘functionings’)” (Perrin and Nougarèdes, 2020, p. 123).

Type of justice	Criteria
Distributive justice	Intergenerational equity Access to resources (land, land value, houses) for distinct types of stakeholders Capabilities Spatial (re)distribution of resources
Procedural justice	Participation Recognition of difference/inclusiveness Stakeholders’ perceptions of (in)justice

Source: Perrin and Nougarèdes, 2020, p. 124.

Table 2: The four levels of perception of justice issues

Level 1: Invisible justice issues	Potential justice issues identified by the researchers but not expressed by stakeholders
Level 2: Personal feelings of injustice	Feelings of oppression expressed by stakeholders (privately in interviews)
Level 3: Public expression of justice issues	Public debates or conflicts in which justice issues or feelings of injustice are mentioned and discussed
Level 4: Calls for justice as drivers for change	Change in policy or innovative initiative driven by public expression of social justice issues

Source: based on Perrin and Nougarèdes, 2020, p. 124.

From the perspective of distributive justice, the mobilisations are attempts to oppose dispossessions carried out by the state and developers, in which the victims are landowners, villagers or buyers, and also house owners when their homes are threatened with destruction. The loss of agricultural production capacity or housing plots, and the fact that compensation can only be claimed for investments made—which is much less than the real value of the land—is an undeniable source of impoverishment and incapacity to adapt to a change of situation. The compensation arrangements for

national domain land holders are a source of social injustice compared to land title holders.

These losses of land, for which there is little or no compensation, are all the more unjust in that they are not mitigated, as in the case of village housing estates, by the allocation of building plots within the estate, offering prospects of access to housing for family members or for sale. In the three cases studied, the housing estates linked to these projects, even those described as “social” or affordable, are in fact intended for middle or upper class buyers, and are unaffordable for village residents. Spatial segregation is thus enforced between areas that are being urbanised from below and those that are being urbanised from above, creating distributive injustices among the new residents.

Less explicitly, these dispossessions also lead to intergenerational injustices, in the sense that the loss of land assets negatively affects young people’s long-term life chances and jeopardises their ability to build a future for themselves in the village, especially as the land concerned had been used for intensive, lucrative market gardening.

But in the end, it is the issue of procedural justice that elicits the most radical opposition, from the dual angle of a demand for recognition and participation in state projects. In our case studies, village landowners are contesting their exclusion from the projects and rejecting dispossessions that deprive them of income from urban development, which is captured by private interests. They are shocked by the violence they have suffered at the hands of the police, who have been deployed to serve private interests. Moreover, even where they cannot oppose the projects that threaten them, the collectives demand that their voices be heard. For them, no-one, not even the state, has the right to deprive them of their land. It is for them to decide whether they are willing—albeit under severe pressure—to give up their land, which they may do if they find the balance between collective gains and individual losses to be acceptable. In addition to this need for recognition and participation, there are also the demands for appropriate compensation.

By refusing to accept dispossession, the collectives studied are thus asserting a “public expression of justice issues”, and correspond to level 3 of the perceptions of injustice in the grid (table 2).

Conclusion

These periurban mobilisations against land dispossession are indicative of the evolution of land conflicts in Senegal. These conflicts are linked to the implementation of strategies for capitalist accumulation by elites and commercial interests in the urban peripheries, particularly through major projects: the opposition no longer concerns the clearance of so-called informal neighbourhoods that have become part of the city, or the demand for access to services in peripheral areas, issues that have hitherto been documented in work on urban land conflicts (Bertrand, 2015). They are now the outcome of an acceleration in the race for rural land on the urban periphery (Bertrand and Bon, 2022), in contexts where multiple urbanisation processes are underway, driven by the state, by private companies and by local residents (Meth et al., 2021). These local residents are part of the urbanisation process (Sreule et al., 2020) and the loss of their land prevents them benefiting from the revenues generated by urbanisation.

Rather than the binaries between legality and legitimacy, state law and customary law, formal and informal, to which land conflicts in Africa are often reduced, what is at stake in these periurban conflicts is the opposition between the legitimacy of hybrid local land practices, based on a "law of practice" (Hesseling and Le Roy, 1990, p. 11) and partly based on state mechanisms (and therefore partly "formal"), and state "practical norms" (Olivier de Sardan, 2015) in the sphere of land tenure, which are often far removed from the letter of the law (and are therefore partly "informal"). Exacerbated by a high level of informalisation and by the deinstitutionalisation of land administration linked to the accumulation strategies promoted by President Abdoulaye Wade (Diop, 2013, p. 31-33) since the early 2000s, these bureaucratic practices use both the registration law, which was historically designed to serve the state rather than society, and the NDA, which was intended to limit private ownership, in order to promote the private appropriation of land by bureaucratic elites and their allies.

Dakar's urban development policy is based on the inequality of access to the law that is fostered by the land legislation. Investors have legitimate access to a title to land or a lease under a state title. Occupants of the national domain, holders of agricultural or residential plots, holders of customary rights or those assigned land by the municipality under the NDA have legally recognised rights, but their status is secondary. Unprecedented in West Africa, in that it marked a break with the colonial legacy and created a specific legal status alongside registration, the NDA did not eradicate legal dualism. It in fact maintains an unjust social divide that extends the

division established by colonisation between citizens and subjects, and which is exacerbated by practices that abusively exploit the law.

Although conceived in other contexts, the criteria proposed by the analytical grid elaborated by Perrin and Nougariès have proved to be applicable, in terms both of distributive or procedural justice and of the expression of injustice. Despite the participation of leaders of national social movements in the Dougar march, there has been no sign—yet?—of the development of alliances around claims that extend beyond the local sphere, or appeals to justice to demand changes in policy and governance, based on the public expression of social justice issues (level 4 of the grid). Local forms of mobilisation against dispossession remain—for the time being—largely disconnected from the political disputes and struggles for citizenship being waged by social movements at the national level. By looking more closely at the criteria for justice used in the discourse of the various groups of actors involved in the collectives studied, our ongoing research will explore the conditions required for the public expressions of injustice to become political calls for greater justice.

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