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Overcoming Disruptions of Human Adjustment Processes to Ecological Shifts in Revolutionary Burkina Faso 1983-1987: The Inter-Relationship Between Externally Imposed Migration, Coordination of NGO Activities, and the Process of Ecological Renewal Through Land Reform

Robert William Penner
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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OVERCOMING DISRUPTIONS OF HUMAN ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES TO
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OF NGO ACTIVITIES, AND THE PROCESS OF ECOLOGICAL RENEWAL THROUGH
LAND REFORM

by

Robert Penner

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ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING DISRUPTIONS OF HUMAN ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES TO ECOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN REVOLUTIONARY BURKINA FASO 1983-1987: EXAMINING THE INTER-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTERNALLY IMPOSED MIGRATION, COORDINATION OF NGO ACTIVITIES, AND THE PROCESS OF ECOLOGICAL RENEWAL THROUGH LAND REFORM

by

Robert Penner

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2019
Under the Supervision of Professor Marcus Filippello

This paper will explore the Burkinabé revolution and the governmental structure which formed out of it, as an ideological entity with some governing capabilities but not simply a political body as it did not possess the capacities at any time to fully govern the country in terms of the implementation of intended social and economic programs. However, these programs were extremely widespread encompassed swaths of rural society in ways that it had not since the Mossi Empire became centralized and rose to regional prominence in the 18th century. The ideological identity of the revolution in Burkina Faso was not a complete reflection of the man who became president of the CNR, Captain Thomas Sankara. It would be dishonest to make such an assertion because popular mass mobilizations do not occur because of the efforts of a single person, or even a clique. Such outpourings as were seen in Burkina Faso in the 1980s were contributed to by a combination of various elements that reverberated through space and time, and linked Burkina Faso and all its people, intimately to the web of anti-colonial, anti-imperial movements taking place in this era. However, the development of such popular mobility was based on the specific historical circumstances of spatially derived geographies, which must be

strategically analyzed in order to be understood. This paper is premised on deriving an understanding of the revolution in Burkina Faso itself as well as how contemporary literature has sought to derive the same types of understandings previously.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPD	Bureau of Project Development
CA	Christian Aid
CMRPN	Comité Militaire de Redressement pour le Progress National
CDR	Comites pour la Défense de la Révolution
CNR	Council National de la Révolution
CSP	Conseil du Salut du Peuple
CSV	Comité de Sante Villageoise
FEME	La Fédération des églises et missions évangéliques
FESTAC	Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture
GV	Groupement Villageois
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OFNACER	Office national des céréales
ORD	Organisation Régionale de Développement
PSP	Primary Service Provider
SSP	Les Soins de Santé Primaire
UDV	Union Démocratique Voltaïque
UNAIS	United Nations Association for International Service
URB	Burkinabé Women's Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Introduction

In 2014, for the second time in the young nation's history, Burkina Faso experienced a revolution in which the popular masses, comprised of urban workers and rural agriculturalists occupied public spaces in cities and towns across the country to demand fundamental political change. This mass movement, with no single leader in the political or military elite, grew out of widespread dissatisfaction with the regime of longtime president and virtual dictator, Blaise Compaoré and, after months of struggle, succeeded in ousting him. The people of Burkina Faso, the Burkinabé, have been known as such since 1984, when the name of the country was officially changed from Upper Volta by the political entity which arose out of the first revolution. A clear link between these two revolutionary processes is recognized by Ernest Harsch, who has written the most recent and complete history of Burkina Faso to date.¹ Harsch's book, while mainly focusing on the political situation surrounding the construction and collapse of the Compaoré regime, makes this crucial connection between the two revolutions in terms of the transfer of particular types of collective mobility and group mentalities, which come bursting forth under the correct conditions, before settling down and negotiating itself within a formal political setting.²

The Burkinabé were culturally impacted by this first revolution, becoming a vehemently participatory and militant population, which was able to mobilize around the existence of certain widespread popular mobility, derived from the material inequalities and shortcomings within their society. These popular mobilities, as I will refer to them, which were present in 2014 to bring down the Compaoré regime, were first interpreted and mobilized during the first

¹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (London: Zed, 2017)1-2, 50, 204

² Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 129-138.

revolution, which lasted for nearly 5 years from August, 1983 to October, 1987. It is this period of revolutionary activity that this paper will focus on and make arguments in relation to.

The first Burkinabé revolution of August 4, 1983 was, and remains to this day, the most celebrated political accomplishment in the country's history, as a genuinely popular leadership, with a cohesive and well-articulated rhetoric which claimed that, from then on, the working masses rather than the political elites, would invent their own future from the ground up. The revolutionary government, called the Council Nationale de la Révolution (CNR), was made up of civilian and military elements, including several left-wing political parties, an array of labor unions and select members of the bureaucratic elite, mostly technical experts who had worked on project implementation during the presidency of Sangoulé Lamizana from 1966-1980. The CNR, immediately set to work, thoroughly planning, elucidating and implementing large scale reform projects which were ultimately intended to bring prosperity to the people of Burkina Faso on their own terms. It attempted to do this through a process of institutional decentralization, creating a "new machinery of power" as Sankara put it, by creating Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) to act as the local implementers of revolutionary policy as well as interpreters of what kinds of policies were necessary to assure the survival and prosperity of the community which they represented. These CDRs became the primary extensions of and communicators with the new government, conveying popular mobilities and the political interpretations of them in a multi-directional manner.

This paper will explore the Burkinabé revolution and the governmental structure which formed out of it, as an ideological entity with some governing capabilities but not simply a state structure, as it did not possess the capacities at any time to fully implement most of its intended social and economic programs. However, these programs were extremely widespread, encompassing swaths of rural society in a ways that a government had not since the Mossi

Empire became centralized and rose to regional prominence in the 18th century. I want to stress that the ideological identity of the revolution in Burkina Faso was not a complete reflection of the articulate and energetic man who became president of the CNR and the face of the revolution, Captain Thomas Sankara. It would be dishonest to make such an assertion because expressions of revolutionary mobility do not occur because of the efforts of a single person, or even a clique. Such outpourings as were seen in Burkina Faso in the 1980s were contributed to by a combination of various elements that reverberated through space and time, and linked Burkina Faso and all its people, intimately to the web of anti-colonial, anti-imperial movements taking place in this era. However, the development of popular mobility was based on the specific historical circumstances of spatially derived geographies, which must be strategically analyzed in order to be understood. This paper is premised on deriving an understanding of the revolution in Burkina Faso itself as well as how contemporary literature has sought to derive the same types of understandings previously.

Geographies have multiple histories based on the constant adjustment and re-adjustment of spatial elements among populations, as currents of economic and political change influence socio-cultural shifts, causing the directions, velocities and attempted systemizations to act as part of an infinite sequence of changing spatial relationships that have constantly fluctuating scopes and affinal associations. Spatiality, the human exercise of moving in between and among spaces, the changing velocities and directions and the multitudes of formative interactions taking place between actors within these vectors, is the essence of what structures the past and the future of humanity. In utilizing space as a historical concept, I draw on the philosopher Michel de Certeau, who argued that such spatial practices as described above secretly determine the conditions of social life. The spatial process can tell us who we are, where we have come from and why, and where we are going, though not in a deterministic way. Every revolution, mass movement,

uprising and social shift has been, and will continue to be, the culmination of certain interactions taking place throughout space and time and coming together to influence specific events, which are identifiable historically. Thus, de Certeau's concepts of spatial relationships, which I elaborate upon in the Appendix, will take on great importance as I attempt to explain why the 1983 revolution occurred and why it sought the specific structural reforms that it did.

This study will attempt to synthesize many different veins of human and environmental interaction, causing very specific mass expressions and mobilization pertaining to the actions, views and lives of the Burkinabé. This is a history which will take into account several spatial vectors of direction, which may seem to be only distantly related. On the surface, it may seem that the reports and letters of a revolutionary government health agent in the rural Kindi locality of Burkina Faso in 1984, would have little to do with the system of circular migration between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, on which construction had begun by the French colonizers around 1900. There is more to it than just the fact that these two things happened in the same area, around the same impermanent, geographical borders. These, and many other subtle interactions are more intimately connected than is generally perceived at a glance. The circumstances under which the first Burkinabé revolution took place, were deeply rooted in Africa's colonial past, which reverberated through space and time, influencing how the popular masses, and by extension the revolutionaries, perceived the role the state would play in fulfilling their needs and exacting social change.

I will make several arguments about the revolutionary period in Burkina Faso, recognizing first and foremost that it was strategically identifiable period where multitudes of strands of human mobility and political emotion were able to be expressed through certain mediums which had previously not been available. First, through establishing a historiographical backdrop to this examination, I will argue that one should not approach the Burkinabé revolution

in a moralizing manner, taking a stance that its policies and mere existence were good or bad. This approach undermines academic research and distorts historical circumstances by idealizing actors and ideological agendas or, alternatively, denouncing such actors or ideologies as necessarily wrong or evil. Jumping off from this point, I will argue that an in-depth analysis of the Burkinabé revolution of 1983 will be important in terms of understanding how the first revolutionary period can be broadly informed by the colonial and pre-colonial past.

In the first chapter I will show how this migratory system, which was imposed by the French colonial regime at the turn of the 19th century, affected revolutionary ideology and policies starting in 1983. I will also argue that the revolutionary ideology of the CNR was based in Marxism-Leninism, dependency theory and a correspondingly deep distrust of outside, specifically capitalistic, forces which were perceived to be neocolonial in nature. To this end, chapter two will demonstrate how the perception and organization of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating inside Burkina Faso and the multinational donors groups that supported them, were altered by the new and radical ideological inclinations of the revolutionaries. I base this examination on a series of reports and letters exchanged between these actors as they navigated a drastically different political situation and worked under conditions of potential ecological disaster. While viewing the functioning of these relationships at the national and international level provides a necessary prospective, there is almost always a gap between the rhetoric of NGOs and governmental authorities, and how situations play out in specific localities. Chapter three will take a closer look at how these relationships played out on the grassroots, focusing on the collaboration between volunteers from the United Nations Association for International Service (UNAIS) and the various representatives of the revolutionary government in the locality of Kindi.

I also aim to integrate concepts related to the importance of human relationships to their environment in the formation of a complete historical analysis of Burkina Faso. Few historical studies of the country to this point have integrated academic literature from disciplines such as earth rainfall climatology, geospatial sustainable land management, women and gender studies and macroeconomics. I will draw on such sources in chapter four as well as the land reform decrees put forth by the CNR in 1984 and 1985 as part of the process of altering social relationships, increasing food output to attain self-sufficiency and mandating an environmentally sustainable approach to rural development. I will use the content of these sources to argue that not only should historians regularize the use of multidisciplinary academic research, expanding beyond the humanities to gain a greater understanding of how scientific and mathematical literature can be utilized tertiarily to construct a more complete historical narrative. In relation to the content of this type presented in this chapter, I will also argue that people's relationship to their environment in Burkina Faso, specifically in terms of land and water, is essential to identifying how the CNR derived its interpretation of material conditions among the rural masses and attempted to create corresponding policy to improve these conditions.

The overarching argument of this paper is that the Burkinabé revolution of 1983 should be studied as a mass popular uprising defined by the overwhelming mobility of Burkinabé from a multitude of backgrounds. This popular mobility not only fueled the overthrow of the Council du Salut du Peuple (CSP) military government but brought about the ascendance of a unique entity quite unlike anything that has been seen before or since. The broad based collection of civilian and military actors that came to form the CNR felt they had been endowed with a mandate to commence a process of broad social, political and economic reforms, in order to address the many sources of popular dissatisfaction and increasingly difficult circumstances under which many struggled to survive. The CNR believed that these situations and attitudes had

to be studied carefully in order for the correct policies to be formulated, to eventually achieve satisfactory conditions for the population as a whole. Below I will analyze the historical origins of the revolution in tandem with how the revolutionaries interpreted the historical legacies of colonialism and the material realities which it left behind, and translating these interpretations into policy.

Historiography: Connecting with Contemporary Literature

In analyzing the history of modern Africa, scholars often seek to establish sequential boundaries and timelines around which to structure their analysis. In *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Frederick Cooper takes an approach which rejects the assumption that formal independence, which mostly took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, represents the most crucial juncture in establishing a sequential boundary in analyzing African history in the 20th century. Rather, Cooper places the 1940s, the years in which the colonial apparatus shifted from the extractive, preservationist colonial state to a more intrusive, developmentalist project, claiming that the technical and political knowledge possessed by the colonizers could be applied to Africa in a way that would create economic and political development along European lines.³ Cooper uses this dialectic to put forward the concept of the “Gatekeeper State,” one which has its origins in the colonial developmentalist project but which was continued by African leaders at the time of formal independence.

The concept of the “Gatekeeper State” is premised upon the idea that Africa leaders who came to prominence either through pan-African nationalist movements, or via participation in a colonial bureaucracy of educated Africans, utilized the idea of national development within the nation state as a mechanism to hold power. This allowed them to control the manner in which

³ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15-16, 196.

development was sought and who had access to power, utilizing a complex network of patron-client relationships.⁴ Once in power, the gatekeepers want to stay there and will sacrifice developmentalist ambitions to maintain their patronage networks. The author cites, “the winner-take-all nature of competition for control of the state...and the elimination of strong organizations capable of defending an open political system and a fair judiciary,” which have limited the degree to which actual economic development has occurred and why instability, in the form of pseudo-ethnic violence, military coups and failed states, have been so prevalent.⁵ Cooper is clear in stating that the development of the Gatekeeper State is part of historical process for which European imperialists are mainly to blame and which they have the obligation to try to correct through the use of non-invasive, non-exploitative project interventions and forms of assistance.⁶

The Gatekeeper state is hardly a homogeneous entity which arrived whole and complete by the design of Europeans. As Timothy Mitchell shows in *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, the creation of such concepts as developmentalist colonialism and European style modernization, were built up gradually around the idea that, “this ability to rearrange the natural and social environment became a means to demonstrate the strength of the modern state as a techno-economic power.”⁷ Mitchell is immediately concerned with defining terms such as “social,” “cultural,” and “economy” in order to better understand and operationalize them for arguments related to the various actions, human and non-human, that have affected life in what is now the nation state of Egypt. Mitchell primarily argues that the economy is not merely a

⁴ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 5-6, 159, 194.

⁵ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 194.

⁶ Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 92, 116-117, 199-200. Cooper also addresses the issue of international monetary institutions, directing criticism at the IMF and World bank, which arguably have less to do with helping the continent rebuild its basic economic structures than collecting accumulated interest off debt for a profit. However, the author rejects the Dependency school of thought, which argues that countries must distance themselves from the potential of neo-imperialist exploitation and world markets while asserting that capitalism must be part of Africa’s future plans for development and the spread of prosperity.

⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 22.

modern social construction, as some have argued through the application of certain structures, statistical measures, and enclosing foundational formations, to the already existing social aspects of material exchange.⁸

Mitchell clearly recognizes the environment as having agency, rather than a static or linear function that is acted upon through the exercise of human agency, using an examination of how the environment rearranged rural society in Egypt reaction, through the medium of malarial mosquitos, to the construction of the Aswan Dam.⁹ The intertwinement of human and environmental agency is key to this argument, that connections between acts of human agency, “a war, an epidemic, and a famine, depended upon connections between rivers, dams, fertilizers, food webs...several different links and interactions. They were not just separate historical events affecting one another at the social level...they shape one another yet their heterogeneity offers resistance to explanation.”¹⁰ Mitchell argues that social scientific examinations and explanations are limiting in the sense that they ascribe “actor” status to humans only.

Demonstrably, human plans and projects often go awry beyond the scope of human perception and the ability of modern science to predict and respond. The environment does, “not just interact with the activities of human agents. They shape a variety of social processes, sometimes according to human plans but just as often not...”¹¹ (Mitchell 30) Essentially, Mitchell wants to examine how the exchanges and tensions between human and natural agency resolve themselves in modern institutions such as the nation state and economy, not so much as the dualistic idea of human expertise versus nature but as the intertwinement of tensions based on specific projects and interactions which produced national politics and the political economy of

⁸ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 6-7.

⁹ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 21, 29.

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 27.

¹¹ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 30.

technical expertise.¹² Mitchell shows that the subtleties of the environment, specifically an environment with which Europeans were so unfamiliar, were lost in the attempt to cram theorized concepts of universalisms, “principles true in every country,” into extremely distinct and sensitive social and ecological situations.¹³ This occurred across colonial spaces and often crossed national borders as technical experts implemented their regime, based on the idealized technical superiority of European civilization.

Moving into the 20th century with this frame of analytical reference, Mitchell makes what I find to be an extremely convincing and riveting argument about the intersection of international technical experts and finance groups (in the form of USAID, the World Bank, and IMF), the national economy of Egypt and its relation to the world economic structure, and the environmental realities under which its people operate.¹⁴ Mitchell shows very clearly that the intentional misinterpretation of the environmental realities of Egypt’s ability to produce its own food, created intended and unintended, and sometimes contradictory, results for technocrats and their agenda. The study shows that the idea of Egypt being unable produce enough food for self-sufficiency is false and that the “growing disparity in income between rich and poor enabled the better off to divert the country’s resources from the production of staples to the production of luxury items.”¹⁵ Under the premise of supporting “free market” programs, technical experts from the US refused land reform that could have fixed the problem of food production because their interest was to create a dependency out of the Egyptian nation state by manufacturing a food crisis, claiming it could be solved through technical expertise, and using it as an economic outlet

¹² Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 31, 36, 38.

¹³ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 52-53, 55.

¹⁴ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 211-213.

¹⁵ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 215-217.

The Egyptian government also “supported by...large American loans...encouraged this diversion by subsidizing the import of staples for consumers, heavily taxing the production of staples by farmers, and subsidizing the production of meat...”

for the crisis of food staple overproduction and the constant demand for growth within the US national economy.¹⁶

The expeditions of technical experts into attempts to fix a national economy within the borders of a nation state, control it through debt and subsidies, and to create an economic situation of growth and efficiency through the application of universalized mechanisms, demonstrably leads to disaster, unintended consequences and further faulty interpretations of situations that have spiraled out of control. Environments, populations and the power structures that come with them do not simply bend to and adopt universalist application of idealistic mechanisms of the nation state, national economy, private property, or the Anglo-American concept of the market. Rather, they absorb them and become irreconcilably intertwined within the tensions of human and environmental interactions.

Environmentalism and the environmental history of Africa is an aspect that will feature prominently in this analysis, particularly in terms of the policies of the revolutionary government of Burkina Faso and their relation to African concepts of European imperialism and the necessity of agricultural self-sufficiency. The text by James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990*, which argues that the western capitalist, Malthusian idea of the African environment being degraded and overpopulated by Africans, due to their ignorance or shortsightedness, is based in imperialist narratives rather than scientific observation of actual environmental change.¹⁷ The narrative put forth by the western media and other observers, scholars and Eurocentric historians, that the irresponsible management of agriculture and natural resources by individual Africans and their governments, is premised upon concepts related to deforestation, soil degradation and population growth. In other words, such

¹⁶ Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 220-226.

¹⁷ James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing, 1999), 3, 5, 57.

arguments maintain that humans affect their static environment and in the case of Africa, have caused its linear degradation over time.¹⁸

The primary argument presented by McCann, which I will expand on in the specific context of agriculture and environmentalism in revolutionary Burkina Faso, is that the environment is not static, but rather an ever shifting actor that, while certainly acted upon by human inhabitants, strongly influences human behavior and the historical development of human society.¹⁹ Further, McCann uses historical analysis of human activity related to the environment in the Sahel to show that Africans, who have lived in areas of thousands of years, are intimately in tune with their environment and agricultural practices and that such practices generally have positive effects.²⁰ Finally, McCann swiftly points to larger environmental problems than those affected by individual African farmers or even their national governments, such as shifts in the Inter-Convergence Tropical Zone, declines in rainfall in the upper Sahel, and the interests that European agencies have in perpetuating a narrative that undermines African sovereignty.²¹

Due to the significance of desertification in Burkina Faso its poverty in the post-colonial period, the narratives offered by McCann are of special interest to my study on revolutionary agricultural and environmental policy. Burkina Faso gets a brief mention as a case presented in the PBS series *Nova* which featured a documentary titled, “The Desert Doesn’t Bloom Here Anymore” which McCann claims is a highly ideologically oriented film, blaming Africans for environmental misfortune which is cyclical and affected by broader patterns, rather than solely the product of bad land management practices.²² Thomas Sankara recognized that the environment was affecting the trajectory of the nation and its citizens, in addition to humans

¹⁸ McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 19, 30, 47.

¹⁹ McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 57-58.

²⁰ McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 62, 69, 71.

²¹ McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 55-57, 75.

²² McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, 55-56.

acting upon the environment, and employed a similar narrative to McCann, that NGOs, aid organizations and European governments had a neo-colonial agenda in presenting the problems of the Sahel as distinctly problems with Africans as agriculturalists and land managers.

Dianna Davis in her text *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*, also explores the ways in which Europeans ideologically projected onto the Algerian environment and native population. Davis argues that the French considered themselves the foremost technical experts, endowed with the knowledge to recreate an idealized version of a past Algeria, the vast agricultural colony of the Roman empire. This idealization never was nor could be brought to fruition.²³ The idea that destructive and lazy natives not only failed to maintain, but actively degraded the agricultural spectacle of Algeria, through deforestation and bad soil practices, emboldened the French to take up the project of reproducing this condition, using a ‘declensionist’ narrative to fuel a solid base of environmental history, to justify colonial incursion into Algerian spaces.²⁴

Davis goes on to show that it was really the French who would end up degrading the soil and the land, through their misinterpretation of an environment and misuse of supposed technical expertise, which was intertwined with self-interested economic goals and a racist, imperialist world view that dismissed traditional practices. Applications of European expertise as part of a romanticization of Algeria as the “breadbasket of Rome” which could be brought back to its former abundance, both affected the environment and allowed the environment to affect the French, and by association, the Algerian population. The failures of French agricultural projects in Algeria, faulty interpretations of environmental history and the continued, and even exacerbated, disenfranchisement of Algerians, on whom the French continually blamed problems

²³ Dianna Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens OH, Ohio University Press, 2007), 2, 5-6.

²⁴ Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome*, 4, 10, 12, 168.

with the implementation of their technical expertise, lead to the conditions under which French colonialism would fail. The intertwining of the environment with local and national conceptions of the economy, allowed it to take a role as an agent, putting the imperialist technical experts in a conceptually flawed position, due to their inability to adjust and accurately read and depict most environments.²⁵

While the multi-direction interactions of humans and their environment have been translated into several rich histories, as demonstrated above, this historiography would be amiss without acknowledging changes within patterns of social interaction as a generative consequence of variations and shifts occurring spatially, as outside actors and concepts penetrate normative interactions with the environment and other humans. In this vein of thought, I will approach several texts which demonstrate how human interactions were altered by changes applied to the environment through exhibitions of technical expertise, on the part of Africans and outsiders. This will also lead into the analysis of several other texts in which the environment takes a back seat to interpersonal interactions generated by the application of the European nation state to existing African spatial and geographical relationships. The African state as a semi-independent structure thus gains considerable agency, as well as being saddled with considerable difficulties, to navigate this semi-independence by conducting diplomacy with international institutions, parallel regional state structures and groups of internal actors, vying for recognition and influence.

In their examination *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965 – 2007*, Isaacman and Isaacman use a multi-directional historical analysis, demonstrating how the agency of international actors, peasant groups and the environment, interacted to establish conditions for the construction of a major

²⁵ Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome*, 171, 173-175.

dam and set a series of reactions in motion. These interactions and reactions have caused a shifting ideological orientation toward the dam by multiple groups, with the authors specifically emphasizing the views of disenfranchised populations impacted by the dam's construction.²⁶ The ideology of "high modernism" as it was applied to the development of colonial Mozambique, was abstract enough for the Portuguese colonial regime and international donors to find ways to justify Cahora Bassa's completion and maintain that it would primarily benefit the Africans who lived around the dam.²⁷ The inherently unequal power relationship, the author argues, drove not only the construction of the dam itself but the shifting narratives around it, effectively alienating local populations in their interactions with the environment.

The overwhelming voice of western technical experts and academics drove the pro-dam argument and shaped the narrative as to why it was beneficial for local populations, who didn't want the river to be subverted because, as they rightly predicted, it would have a severely negative affect on their livelihood. Local populations viewed the river as a source of life, one that was sometimes unstable and harmful, and thus treating it with greater respect and caution. The colonial authorities and 'high modernists,' in contrast, saw nature as something to be conquered and augmented to fit human designs.²⁸ This stance assumes nature to be static and neglects the degree of agency that it possesses, because humans are not able to predict fully the affects that the forceful subversion of its natural flows will have.²⁹

²⁶ Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965 – 2007* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013), 1.

²⁷ Isaacman and Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development*, 7.

The Portuguese and the west in general, dismissed African peasants and failed to properly examine their relationships with their environment before dismantling it completely. The author makes an especially powerful statement in saying, "environmental policies can never be divorced from relations of power. This is especially true when what is at stake is control over water..."

²⁸ Isaacman and Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development*, 57.

²⁹ Isaacman and Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement and the Delusion of Development*, 26.

As we saw in Mitchell, the damming of waterways and massive irrigation projects created circumstances under which dangerous fluctuations took place, resulting in millions of deaths due to the new found mobility of mosquitos. Isaacman describes a similar process as the Cahora Bassa created conditions that were unfamiliar to local residents, resulting in a great degree of uncertainty over where one was safe to reside and instability injected into regional food security

Many parallel concepts are prominent in Stephan Miescher's article, *Building the City of the Future: Visions and Experiences of Modernity in Ghana's Akosombo Township*. In a series of decisions similar to those made by Portuguese colonial authorities, Miescher explores the extent to which the independent Ghanaian state under Kwame Nkrumah would go to justify their damming of the Volta River, which they knowingly went about despite warnings of ecological danger, massive displacement of citizens and alienation of local populations from their environment and the government.³⁰ The setting up of a modern settlement to correspond with the dam, the Akosombo Township embodied western modernizationist idealism as to how African social organization could be improved, installing a classed based, hierarchical structure within the town.³¹ It was difficult to maintain the anti-imperialist rhetoric surrounding the project, as it involved transnational loans, technical assistance, and benefit of foreign workers and technical experts over that of locals. The contradictions and ultimate failure of the project demonstrated that idealism cannot overcome the realities of environmental and socio-economic conditions, which both colonial and nationalist plans for development fall victim to.³²

Dams are not the only infrastructural modernization project that can affect environment and corresponding social and economic formations. Jamie Monson in *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*, exams the construction and results of the railroad connecting Zambia to Dar es Salaam and establishing a greater degree of mobility between two major anti-Apartheid countries.³³ While this railway became a symbol and resource for anti-Apartheid development in Tanzania in relation to the regional and even transnational power structures, spatial arrangements around the railway were also altered. In

³⁰ Stephan Miescher, *Building the City of the Future: Visions and Experiences of Modernity in Ghana's Akosombo Township* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 373-376.

³¹ Miescher, *Building the City of the Future*, 372.

³² Miescher, *Building the City of the Future*, 389-390.

³³ Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 2, 22.

much the same way as the dam, though with fewer damaging ecological effects, the local economy and social organization experienced spatial fluctuations based on the new possibilities and challenges the railway imposed. Utilizing considerable agency, locals created their own economic activities and ways to manage their resources strategically so that they could benefit from the railway, while also recognizing and expressing their dissent to changes in policies and patterns when it affected their socio-economic activities.³⁴

The interactions that also took place between the Tanzanian state and the western world, specifically after the 1985 liberalization of the economy, introduced a broader array of agents, acting for their own reasons and on their own ideological premises. This created friction between the state, which planned to recede and cut services along the railway, as part of IMF imposed austerity programs, threatening the agency of locals who had invested much time and energy into adopting the railway and transforming their setting to reap some of its benefits and account for its failures and damages. In this context, those who interacted with the railway, “crafted multi-spatial livelihoods, moving not only between rural and urban landscapes but also among diverse rural livelihood contexts.”³⁵ Modernization projects like the Freedom Railway were contested and negotiated. They invoked feelings of oppression and opportunity and created new interactions which involved local settings and the reverberations of world politics.

As indicated above through Miescher, Ghana was a particularly unique case of the application of modernizationist principles in the context of the immediate post-independence era. The presidency of Kwame Nkrumah and rule of the Convention People’s Party (CPP) was a time of great optimism, tension and contradiction. Ghana was the first colonized space to gain formally recognized independence and Nkrumah, as a well-known and widely beloved statesman, sought to embark on a project of nation building, through the restructuring of the

³⁴ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 5-7.

³⁵ Monson, *Africa’s Freedom Railway*, 10.

national economy and societal framework. In his book, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, Jeffrey Ahlman does not portray the CPP government as a linear project, brought into being through the ideas and actions of a single actor. It is not simply a state fully controlled by Nkrumah, but rather a complex body full of individuals working within the structural bounds of a nation state which was not fully established and in a setting where the neo-colonial and often hostile international world environment, required governmental actors to form new identities and position themselves in such a way that autonomy and success, personal or national, can be achieved.

Ahlman seeks to look into the multitude of decisions, minute alterations and individual acts of agency that went into the creation of, “multiple ‘Nkrumahisms’...”³⁶ While seeking to look extensively into the Convention People’s Party’s (CPP) decolonization and Africanization project, requiring participation and commitment on a mass scale, the author also examines how those outside of the CPP fold navigated everyday life, such as how ethnic minorities, like the Ashanti, sought autonomy based on a specific tribal identification.³⁷ A primary focus of the CPP was the construction of a mentality of autonomy, based on a Pan-African identity and positioning as an independent nation of able and willing Africans, united in the project of building the nation, structurally and in terms of identity.³⁸ While this was a stirring and inspiring stance, at the time of independence Ghana, “did not have the economic and technical resources necessary to independently pursue the government’s grandiose development agenda.”³⁹ Thus, this idealized situation of complete autonomy was somewhat superficial.

³⁶ Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2017), 21.

³⁷ Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 16, 22.

³⁸ Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 29, 57, 60.

³⁹ Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 61.

Institutional problems and the inability of “hard work” and extra commitment by the laboring masses to solve them, forced the government to continually alter its positioning toward foreign actors in a manner that allowed it to stay financially solvent while simultaneously maintaining its fiercely anti-colonial rhetoric.⁴⁰ The fraught economic situation during the later period of CPP governance coincided with the instability of its position in relation to neo-colonial states and institutions.⁴¹ Ghana, as one of the first new nation states in Africa, was the first to come to terms with this shift and to re-position itself in such a way that it could survive and show its citizens that the “scientific basis” of Nkrumahism could withstand increased pressure from outside.⁴² Individuals had to navigate state structures and apply meaning to them in ways that are familiar, ultimately augmenting these structures. Simultaneously, the individuals comprising the CPP had to navigate the volatile post-colonial international environment and the many complicated effects that it had on the Nkrumahist project.

Another important lens through which to examine the positioning and agency of individuals within the ruling apparatus of the post-colonial African nation-state is Andrew Apter’s book, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, in which the author analyzes resource management and the ability of a state to ideologically construct itself on the basis of capital accumulation. The dual focus of this book is the rapidly expanding oil economy of Nigeria in the 1970s coincidence with the hosting of FESTAC, a Pan-African cultural festival. Convened at great expense, FESTAC was supposed to operate as a demonstration of African cultural revivalism, a mechanism for overcoming colonialism and the retention of genuine African culture. The argument being put forward by the Nigerian state,

⁴⁰ Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 88, 95, 157.

⁴¹ Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 154-155.

The power differential was altered as the United States, Great Britain, France and increasingly, the Soviet Union, saw, through the lens of the Congo crisis, that sweeping action in the affairs of African states may be able to produce desired results more quickly than formal negotiation through proper diplomatic channels.

⁴² Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 124-125.

through the medium of FESTAC was that, “the emergence of a distinctive black and African modernity from the collective wellsprings of traditional culture, a culture that it would recuperate and reinforce as the foundation of industrial development...this culture was explicitly pre-colonial, manifesting an original power and authenticity that had been undermined and degraded by imperial domination.”⁴³

Contrary to the ideology of African authenticity under which FESTAC was convened, Apter argues that, “in a fundamental sense, the customary culture which FESTACT resurrected was always already mediated by the colonial encounter, and in some degree was produced by it.”⁴⁴ Essentially FESTAC can be partially viewed as a reaction to colonialism, generated by the inflow of international capital to Nigeria and the push, “to build an efficient and productive industrial economy” and a parallel all-embracing African culture, premised upon the “transposition of money into blood; or more precisely, the general equivalent of the money into the invariant substance of the nation form.”⁴⁵ Once again the concept of a post-colonial nation state is at issue, as well as its intertwinement with imported colonial concepts of the nation state. Apter’s book is less about citizen’s navigation and interpretation of the state in terms of traditional and local social formations and beliefs, as it is about the state itself constructing an identity during the dizzying period of the oil boom. This rings true in the statement of military head of state Yakubu Gowon that, “Money is not Nigeria’s problem, but how to spend it.” Apter thus argues the military government in Nigeria attempted to use the massive influx of oil revenues as a mechanism to nationalize colonial culture into indigenous idioms of national tradition, being revalued as authentically Nigeria and projected back into a precolonial past.⁴⁶

⁴³ Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

⁴⁴ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, 9.

⁴⁵ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, 8.

⁴⁶ Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, 15-16.

It is clear from the above accounts that interactions occurring within the post-colonial African state structure and between the state and the environment, can act as an incredibly informative basis for historical interpretation. However, the state bureaucracy and administrative activities and actions that go along with it, often exist mostly in an urban context, leading many studies to focus on these at the expense of rural histories or examinations of the overlap and intertwinement of the urban and rural in African nation states. When it comes to navigating the post-colonial African nation state, there are different manners of navigation, some of which are consolidated expressions of agency, rather than a more abstract social or economic encounter and adaption. Many studies demonstrate that, in response to encounters with newly endowed African nation states, constructed on Europeanized interpretations of politics, economics and social organization, Africans will use derivations of traditional practices as means to cope with and interpret change on a local, and even regional level.

In *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimensions of an African Civil War*, Stephen Ellis argues that in Liberia, events and circumstances, “are the manifestation of hidden forces, and never the result of coincidence or simple bungling...these are philosophical traditions in which the deeper truths about the destiny of individuals and the course of events are considered to be ambiguous, ruled by forces which have their origin in the invisible world of God and spiritual beings.”⁴⁷ The deep political changes of 1980, in which a military coup d’état toppled the long standing and extremely exclusive one party state, created an environment in which such changes were interpreted through the lens of spiritual intervention on behalf of the plotters. Since there was not an ingrained sense of belonging to the ruling New Whig Party, which was extremely secretive, patronizing and reserved participation to elites, political knowledge was limited. The ambiguity of how and why certain political and

⁴⁷ Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimensions of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 13.

governmental events occurred, necessitated that everyday citizens explain them in terms that were familiar but far from simplistic. The outbreak of civil war had the same effect. The crumbling of the state structure and the ambiguity pertaining to who was fighting who and what was being fought over, necessitated that spiritual explanations be created.⁴⁸

Projection of more localized belief systems onto the state is prominent at a theme in *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the occult in Postcolonial Africa*, by Peter Geschiere, who argues that the creation and opening of new political spaces in Cameroon result in them being imbued with perceptions of witchcraft and the involvement of occult forces by citizens and the elite alike.⁴⁹ Geschiere also states that modern notions of the European nation state, translated into the creation of state structures in Africa, abound with rumors, practices and understandings of power related to the occult.⁵⁰ Power is a key notion and the author states that, contrary to how many have interpreted it, the occult is not wholly a mechanism utilized by a disenfranchised lower class to level the playing field in terms of power and politics, but rather is a multidirectional as all levels of politics and power relationships, from the village to the national scene, are subject to actors seeking accumulation or action against perceived inequalities.⁵¹

Similarly, Liisa Malkki demonstrates in *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, the manner in which refugees conceive

⁴⁸ Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*, 9-10, 23.

The trajectory of spiritual explanations was multi-directional as politicians, warlords, and other national actors each had the power and knowledge to construct their own meaning in a spiritual context and many believed in their occult powers and god given missions. Leaders of the various factions, like Prince Johnson, Charles Taylor and Samuel Doe himself, believed that Doe had magical powers that protected him and made him very powerful, causing Johnson to praise God after being endowed with the strength to kill Doe, which he did in front of TV cameras outside the presidential palace, and allowing him to develop a narrative that would increase his prestige.

⁴⁹ Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 7.

⁵⁰ Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, 3.

⁵¹ Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, 16, 41, 81.

Through the study of the Maka people, we can see that the confusing and ever-changing conditions of colonialism, gradual decolonization, independence and post-independence political developments necessitated interaction with the state in many different ways. The belief in the *djambe* and the powers that came with its possession was an explanatory force that people could invest interpretations and belief into as a way to stabilize power relations between an exclusive and secretive state and a large mass of subsistence agriculturalists

of the nation state from which they have been displaced and how the spatial circumstances of their exile influence these conceptions.⁵² The concept of Mythico History, introduced by the author demonstrates how a community of refugees can develop a specific and consistent account of the history of their people, the circumstances under which change occurred, and how these changes manifested in their exile and current political identity.⁵³ The feudal and caste-like social system of dual ethnic and class stratification is the underpinning of Hutu refugee's developed political and spatial identities. The narrative that the Tutsi ethnic group, being a powerful minority that is responsible for the enslavement and marginalization of the Hutu majority, guides historical projection by the refugees onto the historical process in Burundi for the last several hundred years. However, it is a collective mentality that also aids the refugees in their understanding of their relation to the rest of the world, particularly their hosts in Tanzania.⁵⁴ Malkki argues that spatial existence and condition can affect this mentality, propagating itself very differently among refugees living not in a camp but in a Tanzanian town, becoming naturalized citizens.

Many problems of early statehood are derived from lack of cohesiveness between African social institutions and the European style state management system, forced upon Africans simultaneously through neo-colonial policies and an African elite intent on bridging that gap in their own way and often to their own benefit. Dorothy Hodgson's *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Postcolonial Politics in a Neoliberal World* focuses on the concept of indigenous nations that exist within the nation state. The idea of being a separate, "indigenous" group within Africa has been hotly contested in the second half of the 20th century, between groups like the Maasai in Tanzania that are seeking the benefits of self-rule, "positioning themselves for and

⁵² Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.

⁵³ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 6, 12.

⁵⁴ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 42, 74-77.

against certain ideas, issues, institutions and identities.”⁵⁵ Hodgson explores the reasoning of groups such as the Maasai in positioning themselves in certain ways against the state as a means to possible benefits that are unavailable through state sanctioned mechanisms.⁵⁶

The employment of the “scientific capitalism” in the shaping of African states in the era of post-Soviet, neo-liberal dominance, has changed how the ‘gatekeepers’ of African nation states interact with disaffected groups. The opening of political space and the restrictions put on the economic power of nation states has opened up a path for NGOs, many of which are funded from abroad by various institutions and interest groups, to become actors in the political realm on behalf of a diverse array of issues.⁵⁷ This has fundamentally altered the manner in which individuals interact with the nation state and has undermined the nation building projects that African states began upon independence. Certainly in Tanzania, the grand designs of Julius Nyrere have been undermined by the incursion of these institutions prior to and after the end of the *ujamaa* Socialist project, which sought to establish a Tanzanian national identity and eliminate the perceived inauthentic element of “Tribalism”.⁵⁸

However, contrary to expectations, neo-liberal reforms and the opening of political space, has, “for most pastoralists and hunter-gatherers in Africa....accelerated the alienation of their lands and resources for more ‘productive enterprises; carved up their communal territories into bounded, privatized enclaves intensified socioeconomic inequalities of access to education, healthcare and other social services; and amplified state campaigns to forcefully restructure their lives and livelihoods through settlement, assimilation, livestock development projects and more.”⁵⁹ Much of this comes down to interpretations of the role of colonialism and the direction

⁵⁵ Dorothy Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous: Postcolonial Politics in a Neoliberal World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 9.

⁵⁶ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 16, 22,

⁵⁷ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 10-11.

⁵⁸ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 25-28.

⁵⁹ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 38.

of successor states in maintaining or altering the roles of the nation state.⁶⁰ The Maasai saw the Nyrere government as a more invasive version of the British colonial regime, which sought to undermine their traditional livelihood and force conformity with the *Ujamaa* model, which the Maasai interpreted as having to accept lower standards of living.⁶¹ On the part of African governments in general, there is a, “fear of ethnonationalism, endorsing the existence of indigenous ‘peoples’ in their borders would therefore be tantamount to supporting their right to secede from their existing states and form new states.”⁶² There are many ways that Africans go about interacting with the state and changes within the state structure and neo-colonial attitude, which also prompts changes within organizations and individuals in how they seek self-determination, access to traditional lands and practices, and most of all, economic security and individual prosperity.⁶³

In the final pages of this historiography, I will highlight three texts that focus on a crucial theoretical conjecture which I will utilize in my analysis of Burkina Faso. These texts, in their essence, dissuade historical interpretations of post-colonial African development that emphasize what was “wrong” with or abjectly good or bad about, a particular development scheme, state structure or ideology. These interpretations are severely limiting in academic scope by assuming that such projects were doomed to fail from the beginning, and that success or failure are easily definable terms that can be applied generally in the course of historical analysis.

⁶⁰ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 47.

⁶¹ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 66.

⁶² Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 55.

⁶³ Hodgson, *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, 61-62.

Exemplifying the agency that exists among ethnic groups Hodgson states “are neither pawns nor dupes, but human beings struggling to create and take advantage of available political spaces to forward their political and economic agendas. Their capacity for political action has been shaped not only by the legacies of colonial policies and practices but also, more recently, by the formidable alliance of capital with African states in the pursuit of privatization, productivity and profit through the implementation of neoliberal political, economic, and social policies.”

Priya Lal in her text states in her criticism of previous historical works on the *Ujamaa* project in Tanzania that, “from the vantage point of the present, it is tempting to reduce the *Ujamaa* experiment to a quixotic scheme and mere historical curiosity, at best, or to dismiss it as one of many examples of state authoritarianism confirming the generalized dysfunction of postcolonial African politics, at worst.”⁶⁴ Lal warns strongly and persuasively against such critical approaches, claiming that they are often misleading and methodologically flawed. Straker makes a similar argument pertaining to revolutionary post-colonial Guinea, lamenting that historical story lines of the national experience were tragically simple, featuring the interpretation that president Sekou Touré had simply fooled Guineans and the rest of the world with flashy rhetoric and was simply a power hungry dictator.⁶⁵

The illuminating point that emerges from these criticisms is that these authors intend to take a more complex route, generating narratives less informed by the outcomes of post-Cold War liberalization and more informed by the individual and collective experiences, good and bad, of the people living in Africa and participating in ambitious projects of nation building. It is not possible to chalk such projects up as total successes or complete failures. Rather, historical analysis must address the effect of shared experiences under certain social and political conditions, on the development of individuals and their communities. Only through such an interpretive lens can the effects of certain nation building policies, like *Ujamaa* in Tanzania and the revolutionary project in Guinea, receive adequate historical treatment. A crucial component of entering into a more complex and variable analysis of post-colonial African state

⁶⁴ Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3.

beyond analyzing what went wrong with *ujamaa*, Lal argues that, “these contradictions amount to more than ideological inconsistency and material chaos rooted in Tanzanian pathologies. On the contrary, they represent the dialectical friction at the heart of processes of state formation, socialism, and national development across postcolonial contexts - what we might call the tensions of national development.”

⁶⁵ Jay Straker, *Youth Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 2-3.

development, is identification of the contradictions inherent in these types of development projects and ideological formations. Post-colonial African states proved unable to fully detach themselves from their colonial past, which seeped into their ideological structures and state machinery.

Lal sites the importance of identifying and utilizing contradictions to emphasize the non-linear historical development of Tanzania during *Ujamaa* stating, “the historical terrain of *ujamaa* is full of unexpected twists and turns, of tensions and contradictions that make it as difficult as it is rewarding to traverse. I highlight these ambiguities and inconsistencies, even while identifying coherent historical patterns and axes of causation, so as to present the history of *ujamaa* in its full complexity.”⁶⁶ Straker also observes contradictions in the implementation of educational reforms and the demystification campaign in the heavily forested region of Guinea, observing that, while the rhetoric of Touré and the revolutionary government argued that, “rural youths possessed a deep intuitive understanding of the moral legitimacy of militantly anticolonial ideologies and policies, having never been seduced by the illusory attractions of the colonial capital and the metropolitan biases purveyed in French schools.”⁶⁷ Projecting this romantic moral legitimacy onto the youth of the rural population did not match educational policies which ended up resulting in a more stratified population and, “seemed to reiterate and reinstate some of the worst legacies of the colonial bifurcated state, decisively detaching and elevating the routine experiences and life chances of young urban elites over and above the rural masses.”⁶⁸

These examples demonstrate that, while we must look at the ways citizens and communities navigated the post-colonial state, we must also recognize that post-independence leaders like Sekou Touré and Julius Nyerere were operating in uncharted territory. Their nation

⁶⁶ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 6.

⁶⁷ Straker, *Youth Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*, 43.

⁶⁸ Straker, *Youth Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*, 72-74.

building projects were ambitious and attempted to take African's beyond what the colonial state could have ever offered. In this process, they often resorted to known structural commodities, the kinds of implementation, repression and violence that had been utilized by the colonial state. Navigating local pressures and resistance as well as national ambitions and international impositions, was extremely difficult and resulted in many of the situations and transformations that lead to simplistic interpretations of the socialist policies of Tanzania and Guinea as undeniable failures. Lal sums this up in brief stating, "The process of combating colonialism and neo-colonialism often resorted to the same colonial policy tropes that had been put in place decades before and had remained prominent in political life and the development of state ideology."⁶⁹

Straker and Lal's texts intersect with Emily Callaci's *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* as she approaches the urban growth of Dar es Salaam and Tanzanian nation building project *Ujamaa*, through the lens of literary history. While Straker points to youth as a key component in the development plans in Guinea during the Touré era, so too does Callaci emphasize the portrayals, desires and frustrations of youths and their relation to the Tanzanian state and their idealized role in the *Ujamaa* project. Callaci details the clashing of TANU's villagization policy of *tijiji* and the inclinations of rapid urbanization held by rural Tanzanian youth. The author focuses on discourse surrounding literature, media and other written material, produced by and independent of the state, material that is improvised but not spontaneous or random and demonstrates the positioning of those navigating the urban landscape of Dar es Salaam and the ideological landscape of *Ujamaa*, offering a valuable reflection of these interactions.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*,

⁷⁰ Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 11.

Callaci is able to mobilize the contradictory elements that appeared in the social orientation of the *ujamaa* period, in which the government did its best to enforce villagization and portray Dar es Salaam as a repugnant place in which to establish oneself, to demonstrate the various forces acting upon post-colonial Tanzania. The mobility of rural youths was a technical problem that Nyerere and TANU officials thought they could solve.⁷¹ In reality it was the result of the intertwined systems and ideologies of an African socialist state, embarking upon a structured and ambitious development program, and the legacies of colonialism combined with modern imperialism. While programs like *Ujamaa* were certainly not pre-ordained to failure, the specific local and international conditions acting upon them created situations in which people did not act the way planners predicted they would. Cultural resistance or at least non-participation in *Ujamaa* by the exact actors who were supposed to fuel its realization, is an encapsulated theme in the implementation of African socialist programs; the contradictions of a nation state emerging from colonialism and pursuing autonomy and self-reliance are based in the tension between the idealisms of state planners, impulses of mobile citizens, and the forces of international imperialism, working for its own diverse and varying interests.

With only limited references back to this historiography, I hope to utilize many of its themes in the below analysis of the historical nature of such interactions in Burkina Faso, and specifically during its revolutionary period in the 1980s. Importantly, the Burkinabé found themselves in much the same situation as their continental counterparts, but under extremely specific socio-economic and geos-spatial circumstances. The outside forces acting on the Burkinabé and their environment did so for specific reasons and generated specific outcomes and reactions. This historiography exemplifies some of the analytical methods and theoretical approaches I hope to take as I attempt to demonstrate where the popular mobilities that fueled the

⁷¹ Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life*, 109-110, 112.

Burkinabé revolution came from, and how they were part of a larger historical process, played out on the national, international and grassroots levels.

However, my approach will be both different from the sources reviewed above and the existing literature on Burkina Faso. I will examine how the environment has informed human interactions in a way which authors like Mitchell, McCann and Davis touched upon, but in a much more specific period and geo-spatial context. I will also refrain from making any kind of moralizing argument about the Burkinabé revolution, as other authors have, drawing on Straker, Lal and Ahlman to this end. This text will synthesize many bodies of literature on Burkina Faso in hopes of creating a more comprehensive narrative about how the multi-directional interactions between humans and the environment was played out in the context of a mass outpouring of popular mobility which sparked and sustained the Burkinabé revolution for almost 5 years. The below chapters will bring all of the aforementioned arguments and assertions of this paper to the forefront, drawing on academic literature and archival materials related to Burkinabé history and the specificities of the revolutionary period.

Chapter 1:

Movement and Spatial Relationships Among Burkinabé

Though the Mossi are by far the largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso, residing mainly in the central and northern regions of the country, there are several others operating in and navigating similar spaces and conditions as their majority neighbors. The Bobo are the second largest group, residing in the South Western corner of the country, while the third largest, the

cattle herding, semi-nomadic Fulani, are spread throughout the country. Other smaller groups include the Mande, Lobi, Senoufo, and Gurunsi. Though these latter groups are culturally and socially differentiated from the major ethnic groups of Burkina Faso, my focus in this chapter will remain primarily with the Mossi, Bobo and Fulani, chiefly because they are representative of distinct geographic associations and socio-cultural structures and patterns.

The Mossi have a long and rich imperial history as a major, though not dominant, empire in West Africa, made of up smaller regional kingdoms ruled by local autocratic lineages. The original Mossi expanded out of the kingdom of Gambaga, present day Ghana, through a blend of military conquest and strategic assimilation of smaller ethnic groups in present day Burkina Faso. These smaller groups preferred to become subjects of the Mossi kingdoms, and thus Mossi themselves, rather than resisting and being forced into slavery or exile.⁷² As the Mossi became established in present day Burkina and the various kings spread out to claim their own land, Ouagadougou and its leader, the Mogho Naba, became the most powerful and central piece of Mossi hegemony. However, Pierre Englebert argues that, “Ouagadougou should not be regarded as the capital of an alleged Mossi ‘empire,’ as there was considerable autonomy, and even infighting among the different kingdoms and principalities.”⁷³ As the cohesiveness and economic stature of the Mossi imperial structure waned by the middle of the 19th century, an opening was created for Imperialist conquest from Europeans.

The French conquered present-day Burkina Faso during the “scramble” for Africa in the mid-1890s. The Bobo were the first to be conquered through a mix of military and diplomatic methods utilized by the French and, while the Mossi Kingdoms, though once strong and cohesive, held out for several more years, they suffered from infighting and rivalries, resulting in the defection of several prominent kingdoms to the French invaders. Other kings that did not join

⁷² Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 10-11.

⁷³ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 14.

become clear cut allies gave in to the French without resistance, isolating Ouagadougou and bringing about its submission in 1896.⁷⁴ Despite the completion of the conquest, Skinner asserts that due to the lack of resources and coercive infrastructure on the part of the French, they were unable to implement a modified political system, forcing them to grant autonomy to and work through the various Mossi kings, primarily the new Mogho Naba in Ouagadougou, where the French had established their administrative base.⁷⁵

The Emergence of Circular Migration

For a little while, things went on as they had in terms of social organization and economic concentration as, “the traditional economy of the Mossi supported a population...as dense as 77 persons per square mile at the turn of the century. And while this economy was apparently quite adequate for Mossi society, it did not provide the kinds of commodities which the Europeans desired.”⁷⁶ From their newly conquered territories, the French desired money-making export commodities and as most examinations of Burkina Faso point out, the only plausible export from a land with poor agricultural potential and few precious metals, was that of human labor. Figure 1 demonstrates the high-density areas of the population the French hoped to access and exploit.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 18-20; Elliot Skinner, “Labour Migration and its Relationship to Socio-Cultural Change in Mossi Society,” *African Journal of the International African Institute* 30, no. 4 (1960): 377.

⁷⁵ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 377-378.

⁷⁶ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 378.

⁷⁷ Savonnet, G. 1968, *Carte Provisoire des Densites de Population*, Atlas de la Haute Volta. American Geographical Science Library, file on Burkina Faso.

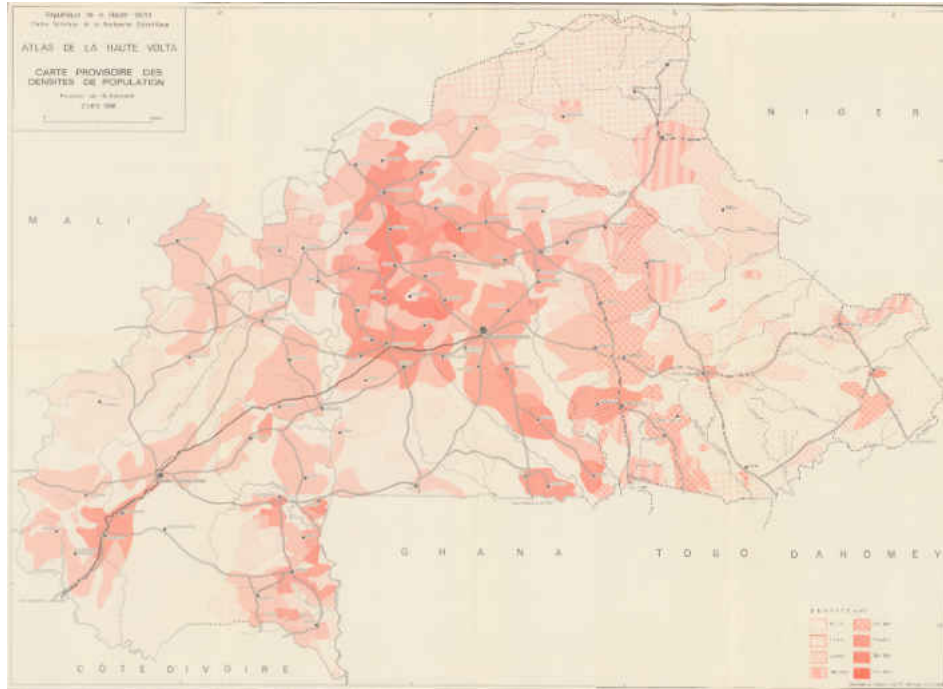


Figure 1: A population density map of Burkina Faso from 1963. This demonstrates that Mossi territory was much more populous than Bobo territory to the south-west. This created conditions under which colonial authorities viewed expansion of transportation networks to Ouagadougou as beneficial for the development of Cote d'Ivoire. The RAN railway project is shown as the dark line expanding from Cote d'Ivoire to Ouagadougou, an expansion that was completed in 1954.

Eventually, the Mossi, Bobo, Fulani, and others were forced into a mold of European style economic participation, in which all citizens became tax payers and money could only be earned through wage labor or trading. Further, since there was low economic potential for the production of export commodities in Burkina Faso, these potential laborers had to migrate to areas with greater productive potential in order to earn enough hard currency to bring back for the payment of taxes and support of the material necessities of existing under colonialism.⁷⁸ These early head taxes and manipulations of currency circulation intended to siphon young men to work on plantations in Cote d'Ivoire, a colonial space with great economic potential in terms of the production of cocoa, coffee, palm oil and tropical fruits. Over the first two decades of colonial imposition, many did travel from Burkina Faso to Cote d'Ivoire, specifically from the

⁷⁸ Skinner, "Labor Migration," 62-63.

Bobo region due to geographical proximity and the extension of the RAN railway project to Ferkessedougou in 1926.⁷⁹ The Mossi however, found it much more advantageous to migrate to the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) to work for British colonial currency which could then be exchanged for Francs to be used for taxes.⁸⁰

Initially the occupying forces administered Burkina Faso as a military territory (1896-1904) and then as part of a larger “Haut Senegal-Niger” administrative territory (1904-1919) which was ruled by civilian administrators.⁸¹ During this period, French administrators experienced difficulties in introducing normalized routines to the vast, densely populated area and thus had great difficulty in siphoning labor to Cote d’Ivoire. The French had to work mainly through the Mogho Naba’s network of royal notables in order to conscript laborers for public works projects and plantations in other territories, but even this was not as successful as the French had hoped, yielding only a few thousand laborers rather than the tens of thousands that were hoped for.⁸² Though the French considered this undertaking mildly successful and believed that working through the Mogho Naba was key to future larger scale labor recruitment, they had actually only served to, “distort the attributes of the chiefs for their own purposes,” who had, “lost all police and judicial powers...and lost much of his sacred attributed and religious functions during the colonial period.”⁸³

The Mossi, Bobo and Fulani all demonstrated flexibility to navigate within the wage labor system, undermining French hopes for use of Mossi labor for development purposes in their colonies, taking their labor instead to the Gold Coast while simultaneously maintaining

⁷⁹ Denis Cordell, Joel Gregory, Victor Piche, *Hoe and Wage: A Social History of a Circular Migration System in West Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 70; Mahir Saul, “Land Custom in Bare: Agnatic Corporation and Rural Capitalism in Western Burkina,” in *Land in African Agrarian Systems*, eds. Thomas Bassett and Donald Crummey (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 76.

⁸⁰ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 57-58; Skinner, “Labor Migration,” 62-63; Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 379.

⁸¹ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 57-58.

⁸² Elliot Skinner, *The Changing Status of the ‘Emperor of the Mossi’ Under Colonial Rule and Since Independence* (Ife Nigeria: University of Ife Institute of African Studies, 1968), 5.

⁸³ Skinner, *The Changing Status of the ‘Emperor of the Mossi’*, 5-6.

many of their traditional economic, social and political patterns. However, the Mossi were not able to avoid becoming the primary ethnic group participating in this French scheme or being forced to react to it by migrating to Ghana instead of Cote d'Ivoire. According to Skinner, "by the beginning of World War I the Mossi people had gradually developed a pattern of seasonal migration which enabled them to obtain money for taxes, fitted into their traditional economy, and compensated for some of the economic benefits they had formerly derived from trade."⁸⁴ The definite establishment of this spatial system and its normalization in everyday life, marks the degree to which colonial imposition effected long term development of human social interactions with the environment.

While some "free" wage labor did occur, this early period also heralded the French policy of forced labor in Burkina Faso, as village provided a certain number of young males for day labor activities, primarily infrastructural, that would help the French, "improve communication and enable the administration to assert more effective military and political control over the Burkinabé societies."⁸⁵ The policy of forced labor also extended to the military in the form of forced conscription as the French developed a standing colonial army and, after the beginning of the Great War in Europe, one that could be deployed internationally. The French targeted the Mossi for these types of conscription because they were loath to extract labor from the coastal colonies, which were part of their greater designs for economic extraction.⁸⁶

Demands for Burkinabé labor power came from all corners and led the colonial administrators of the colony to resist conscription demands from Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal as they hoped to preserve the integrity of their own development projects.⁸⁷ Intra-colonial conflict and resistance, along with the world economic downturn of the 1930s and the

⁸⁴ Skinner, "Labor Migration," 63.

⁸⁵ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 63.

⁸⁶ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 67.

⁸⁷ Englebort, *Burkina Faso*, 23-25.

onset of famine in 1931, created an untenable situation for the French administrators of “Upper Volta”, leading to its dissolution and attachment to Cote d’Ivoire in 1932.⁸⁸ In this period the need for military conscription decreased in favor of contract labor for the development of colonial spaces that colonial authorities considered to be economically solvent, as “most of these Burkinabé contract laborers migrated to Cote d’Ivoire where they worked for French forestry companies and plantations enterprises.”⁸⁹ Further, many continued to labor on the RAN railroad project, which struck north from Bouake in Cote d’Ivoire and reached Bobo-Dioulasso by 1934, with the intent to push onward to Ouagadougou, leading to the railway to be formally named, “Chemin de fer Mossi,” referring to those who built it and would eventually make up most of its passengers.⁹⁰ Figure 2 shows the expansion of Cote d’Ivoire through the assimilation of Upper Volta as well as the expansion of the “Chemin de fer Mossi” toward Bobo-Dialasso in 1937.⁹¹

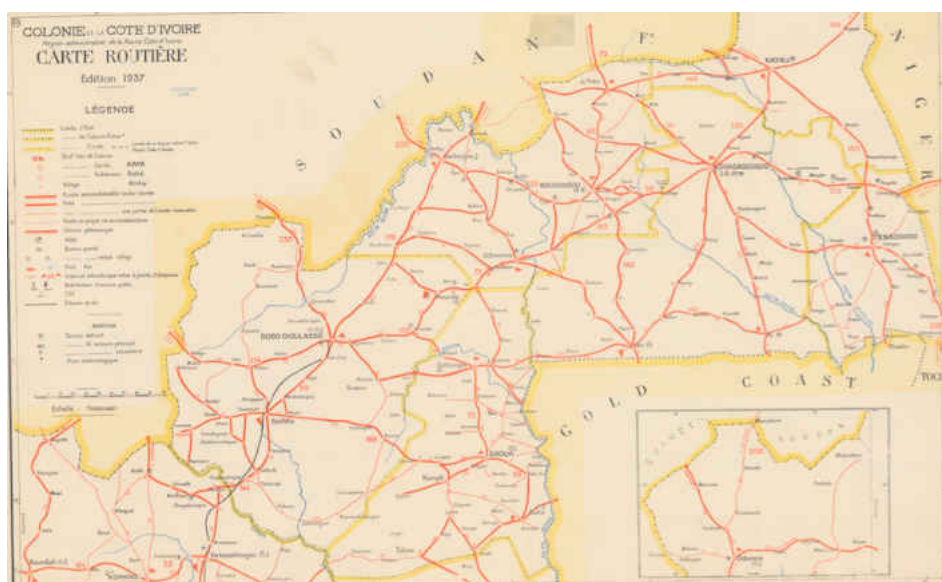


Figure 2: Burkina Faso as an Extension of Ivorian Colonial Space. The RAN railway project is the black line coming from the south, off the map, and reaching almost to Bobo-Dioulasso. Later, this railway would be expanded into the heart of Mossi territory in 1954, further connecting the perceived labor reservoir of Burkina Faso to Cote d’Ivoire.

⁸⁸ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 59.

⁸⁹ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 71.

⁹⁰ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 70.

⁹¹ Service Geographique de l’A.O.F. a Dakar. 1937. *Carte Routiere, Colonie de la Cote d’Ivoire: Region Administrative de la Haute Cote d’Ivoire*, American Geographical Society Library, Ivory Coast file.

The desired effect of the suppression of Upper Volta and assimilation of Mossi country by Cote d'Ivoire initially appeared to have been achieved. As Cordell et. al. demonstrates through the medium of the National Migration Survey of Upper Volta, 1974-1975, "whereas in 1900-1931, 17 percent of Mossi migration consisted of moves to Cote d'Ivoire, the figure rose to 25 percent in 1932-1946. Among non-Mossi the percentage nearly doubled—from 17 to 31 percent!"⁹² However, the total number of migrants between Mossi territory and Cote d'Ivoire dropped in the same period as departures and returns declined by 8 percent.⁹³ The study conducted by Cordell, Gregory and Piche is the most thorough and complete work published on circular migration from Burkina Faso and represents a remarkable synthesis of economic, social and environmental histories. The authors draw on concepts of spatiality and movement, conceptualizing how the Mossi and other Burkinabé came to form and participate in a system of "circular migration" and how it represents, "the articulation of two different spheres—one based on domestic social and economic relations and the other based on capitalist relations."⁹⁴

Though the authors show that labor migration was an extremely prevalent activity within the pre-colonial economy of the Mossi and Fulani specifically, most of this migration occurred internally and uni-directionally. These patterns included Mossi women moving one way to live and work with their husband's patriclan, whole Mossi families moving to new territory, breaking off from the patriclan to form a new social family group, and Fulani moving from place to place depending on political relationships and shifting weather patterns. The wage and the necessity of wage labor through migration became the primary spatial differentiation introduced during the colonial period.⁹⁵ Forced labor extracted a large number of men from subsistence-based localities, putting stress on food production and the ability of communities to produce surpluses

⁹² Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 94.

⁹³ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 94.

⁹⁴ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 2-3; de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 94-95.

⁹⁵ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 10, 13, 18, 23-26, 31.

as well as cotton and handcrafts. The gendered division of labor and changing dynamic of work and movement among men and increased responsibility for women, is imperative to understanding how the introduction of the wage effected Mossi social and economic structures in an enduring manner. The gendered division of labor has become crucial to the system of circular migration in maintaining subsistence at home during times of large scale out-migration.

However, because movement takes place between two separated but not exclusively operating spheres of economic and social activity, decision making processes on whether to stay in the domestic sphere of subsistence agriculture or to move into the sphere of wage labor, when to go and for how long, must be navigated. These decisions are made dually based on rational decision making and survival strategies, derived by the individual as part of a household and larger social structure, so that “decisions to stay, to leave, or indeed to return are intimately related to the nature of the household economy and the domestic power structure. However, both are constrained by historical and structural forces at the local, regional and global levels.”⁹⁶ This is an extremely important point in connecting labor migration from Burkina Faso to the expression of popular mobility which occurred during the revolution of 1983. Labor migration and alternating spatial interactions depend on a multitude of relationships, from the level of household and family in Burkina Faso, to the role of regional colonial administrators and post-independence policy makers, as well as French metropolitan desires for development, and finally the role of the world economy and large-scale international actors.

Even the most carefully laid plans are undermined and reinterpreted by the actors involved, within the context of different spatial layers and intersections.⁹⁷ Thus, it comes as no surprise that the suppression of the colony of Upper Volta, in an attempt to facilitate the migration of larger numbers of Burkinabé to Cote d’Ivoire, did not ultimately have the intended

⁹⁶ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 15, 17-18.

⁹⁷ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 42.

effect, as the vast majority of migratory laborers continued to navigate the spatial constructions of French colonialism and Ivorian administrative rule.⁹⁸ Only in 1937 was coercive contract labor system abolished with the lifting of the world economic depression, though forms of forced labor and military conscription were continued on a smaller scale. The French were beginning to realize that forced labor would not be the primary mechanism for getting the Mossi and other Burkinabé, to alter their migration patterns, traveling to Cote d'Ivoire rather than the Gold Coast.⁹⁹

Additionally, colonial authorities found administering the enlarged Ivorian colony, which had doubled in size and tripled in population with the addition of most of Upper Volta, extremely difficult. The colonial budget was not large enough, forced labor not productive enough and infrastructure not extensive enough to keep the colony under tight enough control to exact extensive economic reorganization. The second World War exacerbated this as most of West Africa fell under the Vichy regime, creating major shortfalls in terms of budgetary and organizational capacity and causing the modernization project for Cote d'Ivoire to stagnate. The post-war reorganization of French colonial space precipitated an end to forced labor and conscription, the liberalization of colonial politics bringing more Africans into places of administrative authority and the reinvigoration of developmentalist ideology. While the 1900-1946 period, “underscores the beginnings of the articulation of Burkinabé societies and economies with those of the developing capitalist sphere along the West African coast and elsewhere,” the full realization of the dichotomy between capitalist and subsistence economies and attempts to normalize certain movements between them, had yet to be realized for the Burkinabé.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 39, 73, 99-101, 117-118.

⁹⁹ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 380.

¹⁰⁰ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 58.

To Stay or Go: Familial Intersection with the World Economy

The abolition of forced labor, which took place fully in Burkina Faso by 1947, mainly effected the majority Mossi, who's participation in the cycle of circular labor migration between Burkina and Cote d'Ivoire increased as the latter's economy developed rapidly after 1950.¹⁰¹ According to Samir Amin, the cessation of forced labor in French territory effected the Ivorian economy as "the abolition of forced labour suddenly released enormous forces for the rapid development of agriculture based on indigenous plantations. At the same time the cutting of the Vridi canal and the creation in 1950 of a deep-water port in Abidjan, the completion of the Abidjan-Ouagadougou railway made possible the rapid economic development of a colony which had until then been neglected."¹⁰² As Cote d'Ivoire developed in the context of post-war liberalization, so did Burkina Faso, demonstrating the intricate and multi-directional relationship occurring throughout spaces with shared historical trajectories. It also emphasizes the points of departure between the capitalist economy and the subsistence economy. The wage economy did not widely exist within Burkina Faso and men who participated in the circular migration system experienced two contrasting economic existences.¹⁰³

Amin posits that the western consumption of primary commodities produced the rapid, if unstable, growth of the Ivorian economy, as unprocessed, raw goods, arrived to be processed in western metropolises.¹⁰⁴ This, in turn, created a need for labor based on market forces, causing labor migration to Cote d'Ivoire to become more advantageous for Burkinabé, than to Ghana, which was entering a late colonial political and economic crisis.¹⁰⁵ The number of Mossi residing in Cote d'Ivoire rose to 100,000 in 1950 and 950,000 in 1965, with over a million overall

¹⁰¹ Samir Amin, *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 53-54.

¹⁰² Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 50.

¹⁰³ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 117.

¹⁰⁴ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 55, 59, 64-66.

¹⁰⁵ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 47-48, 52.

Burkinabé participating in the system of circular migration.¹⁰⁶ The creation of a legitimate connection between Cote d'Ivoire and the world economy through the liberalization of colonial space in the post war period altered the system on which Burkinabé laborers navigated between the systematic 'places,' creating a new *space* through which to perpetuate individual and societal survival.

Despite Amin's overarching assertion that the European domination of Ivorian development drove the creation of conditions under which larger numbers of Mossi migrated to Cote d'Ivoire, the decision to stay in Burkina Faso as a subsistence farmer or migrate to take up wage labor, was extremely complex and multi-directional in terms of its relationship to spatial systems of movement and navigation. The Mossi social and political structure is a tightly knit and patriarchal hierarchy in which old men control marriages, a social procedure which adds the wife as a productive laborer, to a nuclear or extended familial household, the composition of which determines the distribution of land.¹⁰⁷ These elder men control people, rather than land, which is distributed based on familial social prominence.¹⁰⁸ Savonnet-Guyot puts it best in describing the multi-faceted decision making, stating, "When they young Mossi farmer emigrates to Cote d'Ivoire...it is not necessarily out of obedience to the law of capitalist profit. It might be simply an escape from the logic of...the customary practice that governs the exchange of women in favor of groups from which he is excluded."¹⁰⁹

Hammond describes the relationship between a Mossi husband and wife in the Yatenga region as primarily economic and reproductive, a result of the exchange of goods and labor between two kin groups.¹¹⁰ Since marriage is controlled by the extended familial unit called *Yiri*,

¹⁰⁶ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 52.

¹⁰⁷ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 24; Peter Hammond, *Yatenga: Technology in the Culture of a West African Kingdom* (London: Collier-Macmillian Limited, 1966), 117-118; Skinner, "Labour Migration," 388-389.

¹⁰⁸ Skinner, "Labor Migration," 62, 76.

¹⁰⁹ Savonnet-Guyot from Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Hammond, *Yatenga*, 122-123.

and could rarely be decided by the two individuals involved, the order in which wives are allocated significantly effects which Mossi migrate and which do not.¹¹¹ Thus, individual and familial circumstances are taken into account, as smaller and less influential households called *Zaka*, have a harder time reaching subsistence levels through staple crop farming at home and often feel compelled to send their young men abroad to earn cash that can later be used to buy additional food as grain stores become depleted.¹¹² Other ethnic groups such as the Fulani and Bobo have less restrictive socio-political structures in place which have allowed them to adjust and retain more dry season workers.

Cordell et. al. suggests that, “distinctions between the Mossi migrants and their neighbors grew out of differences among their societies, leading to a broader hypothesis, namely, that “differences in the social characteristics of Burkinabé migrants offer indications of how the Mossi and other Burkinabé societies attempted to assert control over a system imposed on them by the colonial state.”¹¹³ Perspectives from Kate Hampshire and Mahir Saul corroborate this in terms of the Fulani and Bobo respectively. Hampshire argues that the Fulani only began participating in circular migration due to climactic conditions, mainly the loss of productive agro-pastoral land through drought, after the end of colonialism.¹¹⁴ The Fulani resisted such pressures to participate in the French inaugurated wage economy because of the versatility of their economic activities and household structure. Though climactic conditions became more difficult, Fulani mobility and diverse economic activities allowed them to generate physical capital by caring for Mossi animals and participating subsistence agriculture.¹¹⁵ Some Fulani

¹¹¹ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 111, 123; Hammond, *Yatenga*, 118-119.

¹¹² Hammond, *Yatenga*, 120-121.

¹¹³ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Kate Hampshire, “Flexibility in Domestic Organization and Seasonal Migration Among the Fulani of Northern Burkina Faso,” *Africa* 76, no. 3 (2006): 403-405.

¹¹⁵ Hampshire, “Flexibility in Domestic Organization,” 408.

still participate in circular migration but offset the losses in production related to out-migration through the strategic division of households and thus, “herds, fields and granaries...”¹¹⁶

Saul constructs a similar demonstration in examining the ethnic Bobo of the Bare region who’s lower population density worked favorably with the French legal process of land title immatriculation, which limited the extent to which colonial administrators were able to affect traditional land policy.¹¹⁷ Unlike the Mossi, where there are inequities in the distribution of land rights based on patrilineal favoritism and familial composition, the Bobo have a system which assures easy access to farmland through the formal process of land borrowing, “virtue of their association with an autochthonous agnate group that provides the basis for them.”¹¹⁸ The flexibility of this process and ability to produce cash crops and engage in monetized trade, stems from low population density, broad tracts of fertile land and collective limiting of land access to non-Bobo settlers.¹¹⁹ There are many reasons why the Mossi became the primary participant in the system of circular migration, and while the participation of other ethnic groups in this process has been significant, there are specific conditions related to geography and socio-economic structures which have made the Mossi susceptible to the imposed process of capitalistic wage labor through circular migration.

The young men participating in circular migration continued to be perceived in a negative manner by familial elders and receive lower priority for marriage and thus land acquisition, perpetuating the need for movement in a cyclical manner and facilitating participation in the foreign wage economy.¹²⁰ The necessity of circular migration is socially disruptive “when young

¹¹⁶ Hampshire, “Flexibility in Domestic Organization,” 412, 420.

¹¹⁷ Saul, “Land Custom in Bare,” 76, 78.

¹¹⁸ Saul, “Land Custom in Bare,” 91.

¹¹⁹ Saul, “Land Custom in Bare,” 78, 87, 96.

¹²⁰ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 388-389; Colin Thor West, “Household Extension and Fragmentation: Investigating the Socio-Environmental Dynamics of Mossi Domestic Transitions,” *Human Ecology* 38, no. 1 (2010): 366.

men of a lineage are absent during the dry season—a time when they customarily helped their elder’s marriage partners build huts, clear fields, and celebrate funerals, they cannot fulfil obligations of their lineage to other lineages, and their elders find it difficult to establish or to perpetuate those relationships which used to bring wives.”¹²¹ The social and political systems of the Mossi has been modified through exposure to European impositions, creating not only space and movement, but tension between the old system of social organization and the forces of capitalism which modified it from an external position.¹²²

Overall, the system of circular migration has arisen out of the opportunity for movement between two economies within a spatial system. Why some Burkinabé migrate some years and why others stay home other years is explained through the lenses of world economic situations and local decision making since “migration is a collective household economic strategy, which designates some members for migrant labor and others to stay home to work the fields and take care of the family...It is clear that individual perceptions and opinions are expressed with the whole family in mind.”¹²³ The influx of foreign capital into Cote d’Ivoire to sustain the production and export of the primary commodities, ended up putting a system in place which sustained the economies of Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire, but on very different terms. As figure 3 demonstrates, foreign interest in maintaining these productive capabilities was extremely important on a global economic scale as the massive export of cocoa and coffee was sold to the major capitalist powers on favorable terms.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 389.

¹²² Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 393.

¹²³ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 164.

¹²⁴ Arnaud, J. C., and Pierre Vennetier. 1979. *Atlas de Côte d’Ivoire*. Université d’Abidjan: Ministère du Plan de Côte d’Ivoire: Institut de Géographie tropicale. American Geographical Science Library.

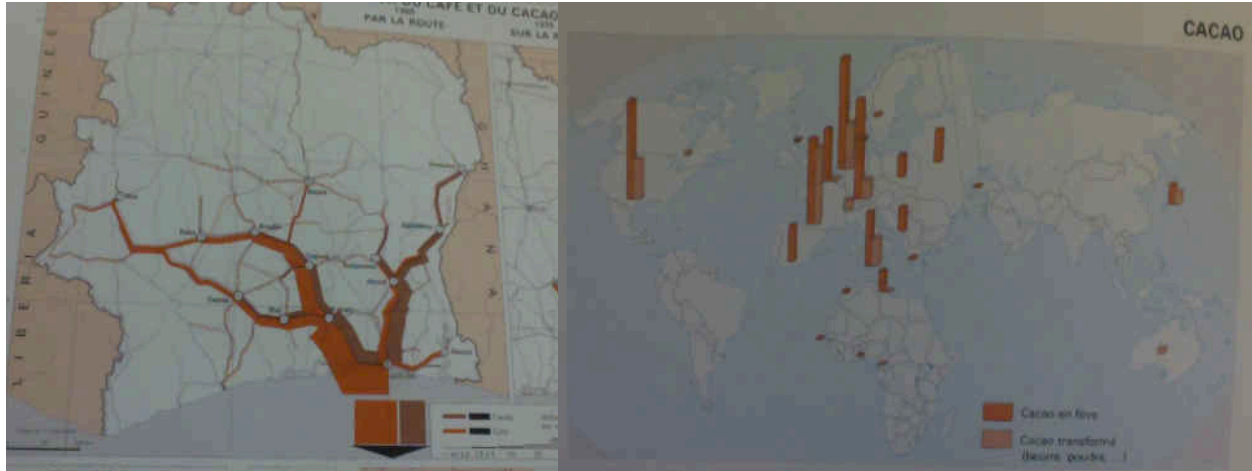


Figure 3: Ivorian Commodity Exports. These maps respectively demonstrate the movement of coffee (orange) and cocoa (brown) out of Cote d'Ivoire via the port of Abidjan and the export levels to the outside world. The vast majority of cocoa is exported to France while Ivorian coffee is widely consumed at high levels. The overall indication of this figure is that the Ivorian economy is highly dependent on the export of these commodities to Europe and the United States and serves as the primary connection to the world economy.

Circular Migration, Underdevelopment and Revolutionary Policy

The literature on circular migration between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire eclipses the establishment of historical setting, in other words the 'why' of migration and the 'how' in relation to the development of the system and changing forms of spatial navigation within it. The next section focuses on this extension of an historical examination in the form of a debate as to whether labor migration is good or bad, of who benefits from its processes, and what alternatives are both for the individuals migrating and the Ivorian national economy. I will not frame my argument in terms of the totalizing themes of 'good' and 'bad' as I realize there are a multitude of positive and negative outcomes that are potentially attributable to circular migration.

However, as the literature is often framed in such a way, I will examine this dichotomy as a historical concept. This discussion will vault me into the argument made by Thomas Sankara and the revolutionary government of Burkina Faso, that labor migration was bad for the country and its people. I will demonstrate how the ideas Sankara brought to Burkina Faso and began to apply

there, served as a disruption to the cycle of circular labor, the Ivorian economy and the world market.

This section will offer an explanation as to how circular labor migration effected Burkina Faso, demonstrating that this imposed spatial process shaped it in the post-independence ear and contributed to the emergence of a revolutionary state. This examination will demonstrate why the tensions of circular migration contributed to the popular mobilization that comprised the Burkinabé revolution, and further how it took on the rhetoric and policies that it did. I will then look to Cote d'Ivoire and how its interactions with western powers and the international market fueled the policies that lead to conflict with the CNR in an attempt to maintain an unstable system of economic interaction. My hope is to show that the historical material processes of the tension between states in the 1980s is part of a larger spatial interaction that goes back to the colonial incursion of the late 19th century but can also be located throughout the historical process of Burkina Faso and the Burkinabé people.

The literature is not conclusive on the effects of such movements and spatial relationships and has inspired some debate on whether this process is beneficial to the development of Burkina Faso and its people. Some scholars argue that, while the French inaugurated of this process with invasive and inhumane violence, its emergence was an inevitability based on regional population growth and climatic conditions, generally having a positive effect upon the Burkina Faso. Other scholars argue that the process of circular migration has contributed to the underdevelopment of the Burkinabé state and creates food insecurity, but that the process is not reversible and thus must be adjusted into a system that can contribute to Burkinabé development. Finally, there are those that argue that circular migration was a system imposed from the outside to the benefit of capitalist, imperialist power structures, and thus, that it must be reversed. I will argue that this final train of thought, which was introduced by Sankara in the late 1970s and adopted by the

Burkinabé revolutionary government in 1983, was based on popular mobilization that overarchingly rejected the legacy of colonialism and demanded large scale programs for the development of the country and to increase the security and prosperity of the population.

Samir Amin and Gregory Finnegan, clash over representations of circular labor migration among the Mossi. Amin is clear in his assertion that circular migration was a foreign imposition that has had a resoundingly negative effect on the development and integrity of the Burkinabé state and its ability to provide stability for its citizens.¹²⁵ While Amin's focus is the national economy, Finnegan frames his argument around, "choices and institutions made by individuals and communities responding to economic and political pressures upon them," criticizing Amin for ignoring individual agency and arguing that, "population movement is not only not antithetical to stable social structures, but that it may further the adaptation of social structures by meeting needs or alleviating pressures which cannot be met or alleviated with resources in the home location."¹²⁶ Finnegan's argument assumes that subsistence production, which successfully took place in Burkina Faso for hundreds of years, became permanently unobtainable and that the land could no longer support contemporary population pressures as it had previously.¹²⁷ However, Amin demonstrates on a national level that food production is highly contingent on the availability of wet and dry season labor and that outlets for the accumulation of excess capital to supplement domestic production are unavailable because of a lack of non-agricultural rural labor availability.¹²⁸

These arguments establish the scale but are not representative of the entire spectrum of historical perspectives on this subject. Most academic contributors take more variable

¹²⁵ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 140-141.

¹²⁶ Gregory Finnegan, "Employment Opportunity and Migration Among the Mossi of Upper Volta," *Research in Economic Anthropology* 3 (1980): 295.

¹²⁷ Finnegan, "Employment Opportunity and Migration," 299.

¹²⁸ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 141-145, 196-199.

approaches to assessing the effects of circular migration on Burkinabé socio-economic relationships. Cordell et. al. state that, “the reasons people migrate vary from one flow to another and from one historical period to another; therefore, any analysis of mobility must be sensitive to both of these variables. It is...important to look at causality on both the microlevel and the macrolevel.”¹²⁹ This lens seems to accept portions of Finnegan’s focus on the individual but their examination transcends the single village approach, replacing it with an evaluation of the effects of the system on many places, at many different times. The social and political discontinuity of colonialism spilled over into the post-colonial era and disrupted the prospects for the development of a solvent nation state. In a way, this imposed system undermined Burkina Faso before it was ever perceived to have the potential for national independence.¹³⁰

There is an abundance of evidence indicating that French colonial policy, which tapped Cote d’Ivoire for capitalist development and Burkina Faso to be both provisional to and dependent on the success of this development, creating a situation under which even the political authorities of the newly independent state could do little to alter flows of migration or even force adherence to the new national regulatory statutes on the movement of people.¹³¹ Rural subsistence economies deteriorated noticeably, which Finnegan chalks up to the natural shift toward development through wage labor, and the importation of food because of difficult environmental conditions. Infrastructure projects were further aimed at accelerating urban industrialization, almost exclusively in Ouagadougou and to the detriment of agriculture. Figure 4 shows the plans for *Programme Special d’Entretien Ameliorant de Routes en Taire*, a major road improvement project started in 1974 by the Lamizana government which not only allowed for urban growth and greater participation in the industrial sector and money economy, but also

¹²⁹ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 40.

¹³⁰ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 154-155.

¹³¹ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 155, 172-173, 176.

facilitated transportation opportunities for men participating in circular migration via RAN, which had been expanded to Ouagadougou in 1954.¹³²

In his study on rural development associations in Burkina Faso, Lars Engberg-Pederson argues that, “Apart from the increasing population density and misuse of natural resources, the strong incidence of different forms of migration is often suggested as a primary cause of environmental problems. Seasonal migration to Cote d’Ivoire...as much as 60 percent of the male populations between twenty and thirty-five years of age left...[after] the dry season has begun... the time when conservation measures can be undertaken.”¹³³ The author does recognize the agency of the environment, denouncing the naïve point of view that local systems do not work and that people who have been on land for generations lack sufficient agricultural competency. Rather, the author points to international impositions of particular systems as affecting the manner in which local populations interact with the environment, limiting their ability to react to fluctuations and shifts as they previously had done.¹³⁴

¹³² Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 37, 162, 171.

¹³³ Lars Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development: Politics, Projects and Environment in Burkina Faso* (London: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 74-75.

¹³⁴ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 75; *Programme Special D'Entretien Ameliorant de Routes en Terre*, 1974. Haute-Volta. Ouagadougou. American Geographical Sciences Library, Burkina Faso file.

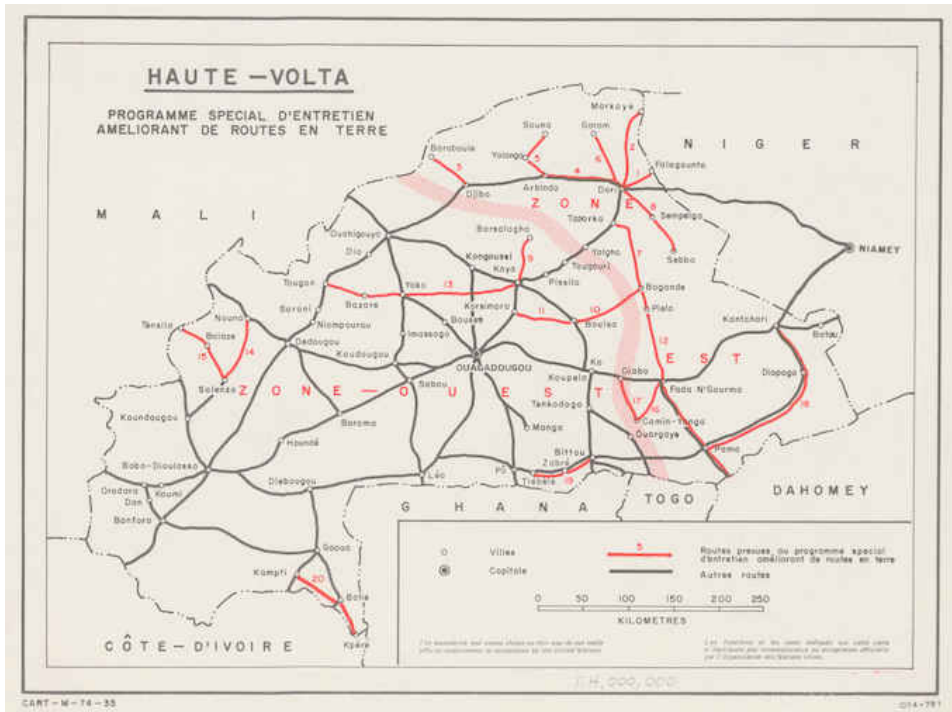


Figure 4: The official plan for the highway and road renewal project that was planned and brought mostly to completion under the rule of military leader Sangoule Lamizana. It facilitated population movement to Ouagadougou as part of a push to expand the urban industrial economy. While it did have some positive effect on this, it also facilitated participation in the circular migration system as more young men from the Mossi plateau were able to reach Ouagadougou and RAN, allowing for their transport to cocoa and coffee plantations in Cote d'Ivoire.

Sharon Sticher draws on Skinner and Hammond in lamenting that the African response to the introduction of wage labor was an impermanent transition in relation to cohesive social adjustment across demographics. The French, out of necessity and convenience, did not attempt to alter Mossi, Bobo or Fulani social and familial institutions significantly, leaving traditional chiefs in power and manipulating them to satisfy colonial designs for labor conscription and policy implementation. This left a landholding male elite in control but labor migration clashed with elder's understandings of their power and attempts to enforce what they saw as acceptable expressions of agency among youth.¹³⁵ While Skinner thinks about this in terms of elder's control over the allocation of wives, Sticher examines the effects more broadly, observing that

¹³⁵ Sharon Sticher, *Migrant Laborers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 18, 39-41, 46.

powerful elders simultaneously draw material benefit from and resent the circular migration system; that is, they adapt to it in ways that benefit their short term survival but attempt to invoke their perceived authority to undermine the independence of the young men within this system.¹³⁶ It also indicates the increased tension between traditional authorities and the younger generation of rural Burkinabé men and women who felt increasingly alienated from the land and social structures, leading these types of expressions to be brought to the fore during the revolution, which found the base of its support in populations of young rural people.

Colin West goes further, positing that the tension between rural elders and youth participants in relation to the wage economy tend “toward an overall demographic transition toward nuclear forms of domestic organization,” rather than those based on patrilineal extended families cooperating economically as a cohesive agnatic kin group.¹³⁷ West is quick to state that he does not anticipate the disappearance of extended family groups as, “households have their own ecology and adapt to externally forces as they interact on a local scale.” Sometimes this leads to fragmentation of a family group, but in other places and times, contingent on circumstances, it results in the consolidation of extended family structures.¹³⁸ Academic arguments such as this have become predominant, analyzing the effects of labor migration on multiple scales and contingent on a multitude of space-time relationships, to better represent the historical realities of how individual and collective actions, were effected by interactions with outside forces and reactions to such forces from multiple socio-political sectors.

However, some contemporary literature on Burkina Faso has forgone historical analysis of these complex processes of spatial navigation through circular migration. In his political history of Burkina Faso, Pierre Englebert only mentions process of circular migration over two

¹³⁶ Skinner, “Labour Migration,” 393; Sticher, *Migrant Laborers*, 62-65.

¹³⁷ West, “Household Extension and Fragmentation,” 363, 367.

¹³⁸ West, “Household Extension and Fragmentation,” 366, 371, 375.

pages, presenting an interpretation lacking depth and ignoring important scientific studies that directly contradict his conclusions.¹³⁹ Though it draws from a similar vein as Finnegan, the author does not take a decisive stand on the issue of out migration, stating, “Although it drains local labor and human resources, migration has many beneficial effects on Burkina’s economy. First, it provides employment to people who would otherwise be unemployed...it relieves the population pressure in the Mossi plateau...and...it allows for a substantial level of remittances from abroad which have consistently represented a significant contribution to the balance of payments and thus to national income.”¹⁴⁰ Confusingly, little else is said throughout the rest of the text, leading to a severe deficiency in historical examination of the effects of circular migration on economic, social and political formations.

Englebert fails to draw on an important field study conducted by Rosalind David a year earlier, *Changing Places: Women, Resource Management and Migration in the Sahel*. David recognizes the two main views in contemporary literature, including the variation later favored by Englebert, that male-outmigration reduces pressure on land resources and has the potential to contribute to the economic development of rural settings.¹⁴¹ The study is set up to identify how the participation of young men in the circular migration system effects women and societal gender roles (one case study taking place in a series of Mossi villages) because, “women’s resource management can be understood only in the context of that of men.”¹⁴² The hypothetical foundations of this study contradict Englebert, questioning the framing of out-migration as a net positive, arguing that, 1) out-migration leads to labor shortages which impede women’s traditional soil conservation activities and management of resources, redirecting most of their

¹³⁹ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 111-112.

¹⁴⁰ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 112.

¹⁴¹ Rosalind David, *Changing Places? Women, Resource Management and Migration in the Sahel* (London: Global Environmental Change Program at the University of Sussex, 1995), 5.

¹⁴² David, *Changing Places*, 7.

energy to the bare necessities of agricultural production, 2) that remittances are irregular and deficient, forcing women to participate in aspects of the wage economy as well as in regular subsistence activities, 3) that remittances, when regular can facilitate agricultural expansion through the purchase of cattle, equipment and fertilizer or the procurement of hired labor, and 4) that generally, male out-migration, “increases problems of household subsistence and, after a time, families give up trying to survive in marginal areas and join the rural exodus.”¹⁴³

One of the primary conclusions drawn from the research was that, “the absence of able-bodied men is keenly felt. Here most agricultural activities are carried out by hand and men’s absence lead to a labour gap. As a result, women in Passore say that they are working longer and harder in the compound’s communal fields.” Women have less time to work in their personal plots which traditionally supplement food stores during the dry season and fewer opportunities to participate in natural resource improvement or renewal projects.¹⁴⁴ Another significant conclusion states, “where land is under pressure, there is no significant evidence of a freeing-up of land due to male out-migration. When men leave from Passore, their land is normally taken over and worked by other members of the compound or village. Very little extra land is left fallow as a result of migration.”¹⁴⁵ The study demonstrates the deleterious effects of male out-migration and its contribution to familial displacement, failures to participate in land renewal activities that have proven effective in restoring and improving depleted land, and that the perceived positive effects, freeing up of land and the influx of remittances are non-existent and inconsistent respectively as, “investment in agricultural production is said to be the last thing on [returnee’s] minds.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ David, *Changing Places*, 6.

¹⁴⁴ David, *Changing Places*, 12-13.

¹⁴⁵ David, *Changing Places*, 17.

¹⁴⁶ David, *Changing Places*, 17-20, 67, 76.

Englebert and David also reach different conclusions about policies formulated by the CDR, which intended to improve subsistence production through the scaling back of circular migration and introduction of domestic agricultural techniques that could potentially revive and improve upon processes of subsistence production. Englebert bases his analysis and critique almost exclusively on an interpretation of the revolutionary government's ideological inclinations and the personal character of Thomas Sankara, stating, "the driving ideological force behind the revolution was Sankara's sense of 'Robin Hoodism,' of social justice, redistribution, and sharing. Yet Sankara's ideological and conceptual acumen was inadequate, and his indoctrination by fellow revolutionaries led him to misread his country's condition."¹⁴⁷ The author determines that the CNR was not able to competently interpret the objective conditions of its country, because it attempted to define people dualistically, as those that were enemies to the people based on their class position, and those that were the people. Englebert saw the CNR as treating Burkina Faso in an idealizing Marxist mold rather than assessing the actual material conditions of everyday life.

Sankara's political orientation speech, which Englebert draws on in constructing his criticism, offers a much more intricate analysis of how these definitions are operationalized materially as Sankara defines such "enemies" as operating on multiple planes, inside and outside the country, connecting the internal corruption of bureaucrats and corporate leaders to forces of imperialism who pay them to operate in the interest of such imperialists, and often contrary to the interests of Burkina Faso.¹⁴⁸ Sankara was less speaking about an entire class stratum, and more about how affiliations are important when interpreting who is working for Burkina Faso and who is working against it.¹⁴⁹ Sankara very clearly explains in the same speech that Englebert

¹⁴⁷ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 57.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Sankara, "Building a new society, rid of social injustice and imperialist domination: Political Orientation Speech," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, ed. Michael Prairie (New York, Pathfinder Press, 2007), 52, 86-87.

¹⁴⁹ Sankara, "Who are the enemies of the people?" from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 56-57.

structures his criticisms around, that the Burkinabé revolution was not like any other that had occurred specifically because conditions did not match those necessitated in Marxist theory. Many of Sankara's proposals and the policies put into motion by the CNR should be viewed as idealistic misinterpretations as Englebert would have it. Rather, the CNR saw itself as the political body charged with interpreting the will of the people, with the recognition that such interpretations would not always be accurate and that policies would need to be adjusted during the revolutionary process.

The structural critique by Englebert also falls wide of the mark, claiming that the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) were structures that were simultaneously autonomous actors on a local level and "deprived of political autonomy," a contradictory statement that demonstrates the lack of understanding of their complex and highly variable role in the development of a new Burkinabé political society. Instead of speaking of the CDRs as institutions which operated and were perceived differently across the country, Englebert lumps them together stating that, "the CDRs' oppression was...twofold: It was the expression of near totalitarian control by the CNR over every sector of society and it was the fruit of some of its members' excesses. The use of the CDRs as instruments of repression, control, and mobilization made them deeply unpopular."¹⁵⁰ The author does not account for the variability of CDR operations and public opinion across cases and further assumes that all were undemocratic institutions that were merely the unquestioning functionaries of the revolutionary government.

The revolutionary government of Burkina Faso possessed unique characteristics precisely because of its diffuseness and the distribution of power across the country to the CDRs. The particular political role and orientation of the CDRs provided them with the autonomy to assess local material conditions on a democratic basis and implement policy coming from

¹⁵⁰ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 59.

Ouagadougou in a way that was manageable and realistic. Sankara states in his 1983 political orientation speech, “for the revolution to be a genuinely popular revolution, it must proceed to destroy the neocolonial state machinery and organize new machinery capable of guaranteeing popular sovereignty...Therein lies the need for and the role of the CDRs as the base of operations for the popular masses...the people acquire not only the right to have a say on the problems of their future, but also to participate in making and carrying out decisions on their future.”¹⁵¹ One might say that Sankara utilized this rhetoric to engage popularly with the masses, without actually following through on assuring that the CDRs were democratic institutions. Other literature, however, strongly disagrees with this conclusion, portraying the CDRs as mostly democratic and almost always composed of the disenfranchised elements of society, providing a balancing force to powerful political actors and traditional autocracies.

Englebert and Sankara are in agreement, however, in relation to the undemocratic nature of at least some CDRs, which were prone to corrupt and violent activities, a problem which Sankara struggled with throughout his tenure as President and spoke publicly about at the First National Conference of CDRs on April 4th 1986. At this conference of 1310 delegates, Sankara sought to criticize the CDRs “profoundly and thoroughly” for opportunism and fraud, stating, “Political power is used in this way for ulterior motives. There are bad elements. They must be removed. These neofeudal elements in our ranks must be rooted out, combated, and defeated. They set themselves up as veritable despots in the local districts, in the villages, and in the provinces. They are also very dangerous. Their method of functioning is anarchistic, reigning and holding sway like warlords...”¹⁵² This recognition of the shortcomings of the CDR and democratic acceptance of new policies to ensure accountability displays Englebert’s utilization

¹⁵¹ Sankara, “Building a new society, rid of social injustice and imperialist domination: Political Orientation Speech,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 92-93, 95.

¹⁵² Sankara, “The CDR’s job is to raise consciousness, act, produce: At First National Conference of CDRs, April 4, 1986,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 281-282.

of a false equivalency, in order to paint the revolution as a façade of revolutionary democracy and a total failure. These are the types of moralizing arguments that undermine academic history and create misconceptions about unique forms of African government.

Englebert does not analyze any of the policies of the revolutionary government that could be considered successes because this would undermine his wholly negative portrayal of the revolution and make his positive portrayal of anti-revolutionary liberalization under Blaise Compaoré, a questionable endeavor. The only place where he briefly recognizes that the government, “did attempt a great deal [of reform]” was on the formal revolutionary policy of the Emancipation of Women in which the, “self-proclaimed revolutionary regime made the improvement of their [women’s] lot one of its battle cries.”¹⁵³ Despite this seeming recognition of a single positive aspect of the revolutionary government, Englebert is able to spin it negatively, offering the critique that, “There is a gap...between laws and reality, and the legal reformism of the CNR fell short of closing it. Having what is considered the most advanced family law in the Sahel has been of little use in changing the condition of women in rural areas.”¹⁵⁴ Englebert fails to recognize the degree of difficulty and time required of a government, even a ‘totalitarian’ one as is erroneously claimed, to exact social changes through a formal legal process. Sankara and the CNR publicly recognized that changes would not be immediate or easy but that establishing and formalizing the rights of women legally, rather than through force and coercion, was the only way to bring about appropriate societal adjustments based on the historical material conditions of Burkinabé development.¹⁵⁵

The selective and partial analysis of the Burkinabé revolution by Englebert demonstrates a clear bias on the part of the author and the intention to portray the revolution as a failure. This

¹⁵³ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 140.

¹⁵⁴ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 140-141.

¹⁵⁵ Sankara, “The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women: On International Women’s Day, March 8, 1987,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 338-339.

will become more clear as I delve into the analysis of David, Engeberg-Pederson and to a lesser degree Saul and Cordell et. al. The intention of this history is not to argue for the success or failure of the revolution but to transcend these clearly limiting projections on to the historical experience of the Burkinabé people. Rather, this text will attempt to illustrate that the Burkinabé revolution was the product of a larger process which is intertwined with multiple historical material realities across time and space, which have diversely influenced the navigation of space of the Burkinabé people and the leaders of the revolutionary movement. Attempts to use history to prove successes or failures is an outdated and specifically ahistorical exercise, which undermines contemporary processes of historical analysis and allows ideology to imbue and prevail over the veracious expression of multifarious inquiry.

Upon its establishment the CNR clearly expressed its intention to develop a nationally cohesive social, political and economic structure which could serve as the basis for improved conditions of the masses of insecure and historically disenfranchised Burkinabé. Sankara and his fellow revolutionaries believed that the authentic introduction of such a process was only possible if Burkina Faso was able to materially separate itself from the powers that had controlled its past development. The CNR operationalized this founding principal through the new legal provisions and policies related to developing the agricultural and industrial sectors as it sought to separate itself from a past of colonial and neo-colonial imposition which permanently altered social and economic processes all the way down to the local level. In his political orientation speech, Sankara determined that oppression of the Burkinabé people was part of a historical material process which could be regarded as persisting no matter what type of power structure predominated,

with the support and blessing of imperialism, [Burkinabé] nationals set about organizing the systematic plunder of our country. With the crumbs of this plunder that fell to them, they were transformed...into a genuinely parasitic bourgeoisie...no longer hesitated at employing the most dishonest means, engaging in massive

corruption, embezzlement of public funds and properties...and practicing favoritism and nepotism...for all the material and financial wealth they've been able to accumulate on the backs of working people.¹⁵⁶

Sankara posits that colonialism was simply replaced with neocolonialism upon formal independence in 1960 and that little changed in terms of how outside forces acted upon Burkina Faso and its people. This is corroborated by Cordell et. al. in their examination of the National Migration Survey of Burkina Faso in 1960-1973 in which the Burkinabé national economy came to be almost totally controlled by Europeans, determining that wages would be lower and development would only take place on the terms of foreigners. Attempts by President Sangoule Lamizana to establish a rural development program bureaucracy, the Office of Regional Development (ORD) were disappointing largely because the basis of the program was private investment and said investors were mostly Europeans who were looking to accumulate quick capital through the production of cash crops like cotton and ground nuts. This exemplifies that the post-colonial governments, though expressing some desire to increase rural production, were undermined by outside interests which sought, as in colonial times, to exploit the labor force and meager resources of the country.¹⁵⁷

The accumulation of debt during the first post-independence government of Maurice Yamaego, through lavish spending on public sector salaries, started the country off on poor footing, leading to imposed austerity under successor regimes and scarcely any prospects for economic viability as a participant in the world market.¹⁵⁸ Sankara, an avid reader of Samir Amin, drew on this analysis in stating, “The debt is another form of neocolonialism, one in which the colonialists have transformed themselves into technical assistants...they are the ones

¹⁵⁶ Sankara, “Building a new society, rid of social injustice and imperialist domination: Political Orientation Speech,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 141-142.

¹⁵⁸ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 198.

who advise us on sources of financing, as underwriters of loans, as if there were men whose loans are enough to create development in other people's countries."¹⁵⁹ While rejecting imposed poverty and contingent austerity, Sankara welcomed the self-imposition of such programs in order to achieve self-sufficiency, rural development and socio-economic infrastructure internally, without outside actors who the CNR considered to have neocolonial intentions.¹⁶⁰ The CNR derived these policies from the ideological affiliations formed by Sankara during his travels through France, Morocco and Madagascar and his apprenticeship under Marxist historian Adama Touré.¹⁶¹

The mobility of ideology and Sankara's learned ability to apply it to his perception of the material conditions of Burkina Faso shows that outside forces, both neocolonialist and revolutionary communist, were at work in Burkina Faso and were reacting to the specific historical development of the country. A major aspect of this development was the plight of rural subsistence producers, and Sankara's policies aimed to directly address this demographic as it comprised an insecure majority. Sankara spoke expansively about becoming more environmentally efficient and adapting to changing weather patterns and climatic conditions. His awareness that the Burkinabé are not to blame for the decrease in land quality, failure of crops and drought, and recognition that that the nation must be put to work in addressing the issues, so that life may go on, as it had before in Burkina Faso.¹⁶² Thus a fusion of modern resources and traditional techniques would have to be employed as, "African societies are living through an abrupt rupture with their own culture, and we've adapting very badly to our new situation. Completely new economic approaches are required. Our populations are growing as well as our

¹⁵⁹ Sankara, "A united front against the debt: At Organization of African Unity conference, Addis Ababa July 29, 1987," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 375.

¹⁶⁰ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 22-23.

¹⁶¹ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 56.

¹⁶² Sankara, "Dare to invent the future: Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 213-217.

needs. In addition, our natural universe, and the spontaneous development of it to which we're accustomed...exists less and less."¹⁶³

In order to exact these kinds of changes, a large amount of public labor would be required and thus the revolutionary government would have to stem the flow of young men into the migrant labor system, instead mobilizing them to work on major development and conservation projects during the dry season and increase food staple production during the wet season.¹⁶⁴ The first policy implemented after the revolution was the elimination of the head tax, the cornerstone of the French system of circular migration.¹⁶⁵ Sankara's recognition of this clearly demonstrates a transcendent understanding of the origins of circular migration and the connection of the system to outside forces. David speaks specifically to the policies of the revolutionary government as it, "attempted to check labour movements in and out of their country. Having previously been perceived as a benefit for communities – a way to invest and to introduce new technologies and ideas – emigration came to be seen as a drain on them. Policies were devised to stem the flow of people leaving rural areas. These entailed investing in infrastructure and agriculture...both official and popular perception of migration is still negative today."¹⁶⁶

In order to provide immediate relief to families living in parts of the Mossi plateau that had not been able to produce at subsistence levels for several years, and thus has to rely almost exclusively on circular migration, Sankara promoted rural-rural internal migration of families to what was seen as unsettled, underpopulated areas with more fertile soil, primarily in Bobo territory in the south-west.¹⁶⁷ Though familial outmigration from Mossi to Bobo territory had

¹⁶³ Sankara, "Dare to invent the future: Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 213.

¹⁶⁴ Sankara, "Dare to invent the future: Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 227.

¹⁶⁵ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 80.

¹⁶⁶ David, *Changing Places*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁷ Sankara, "Dare to invent the future: Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 209, 258-259; Saul, "Land Custom in Bare," 81.

been significant since the 1940s, the involvement of national political forces only came in to play during the revolutionary period. Sankara's government attempted to undermine traditional authority over land ownership and allocation among the Bobo in order to establish rural democracy through the CDRs and create conditions under which men would abstain from participating in circular migration.¹⁶⁸ Specifically in the Bare region, as Saul delineates, "Sankara took a position against lineage control of land. Ordinance no. 50 of August 4, 1984, abolished customary rights to rural land and declared that it would be allocated by...CDRs."¹⁶⁹ Issues of land management and control in relation to agriculture and environmentalism during the revolution will be explored in greater detail in chapter four.

If men chose to stay rather than go, then, assumedly, food production would rise above subsistence levels, women would have more time for natural resource improvement activities, and men's dry season labor could be tapped by the revolutionary government for domestic development projects.¹⁷⁰ The revolutionary government recognized the importance of cash incomes to rural communities because survival strategies in periods of environmental uncertainty and insecurity depended upon cash reserves as an outlet for the purchase of extra food.¹⁷¹ Resource improvement projects make positive inroads but do not provide an immediate fix to production shortfalls of food staples. While pursuing long term policies with the intention of gradually restoring soil condition and combatting desertification, the revolutionary government also raised producer prices for domestic food staples to artificial levels in hopes of increasing production and providing cash flows that would replace those earned through labor migration.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 182; Saul, "Land Custom in Bare," 87.

¹⁶⁹ Saul, "Land Custom in Bare," 87.

¹⁷⁰ David, *Changing Places*, 14-15.

¹⁷¹ David, *Changing Places*, 19.

¹⁷² David, *Changing Places*, 63; Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 22.

Finally, the policy of women's liberation can be viewed as one intended to combat feudal concepts of land ownership as well as to cope with the continued pressures of male out-migration in rural areas. The revolutionary government knew that participation in the system of circular migration would not stop all at once and that material conditions needed to be improved right away through dramatic changes to social structures. The 1984 and 1985 land reform decrees gave the state status as the sole proprietor of land, granted equal tenancy rights to women in an attempt to overcome their lack of decision making power in the absence of their husband or head of their extended household.¹⁷³ Traditionally, as men left to participate in circular migration, women did not move into decision making roles in agriculture and natural resource management. Instead lack of available labor obliged them to work harder on familial plots and neglect their personal plots, handicrafts and resource improvement projects, under the supervision of a gerontocratic lineage elder.¹⁷⁴

For the revolutionary government, the subordination of women intersected with an overarching sense of economic exploitation where, "both the woman and the male worker are condemned to silence by their exploitation. Under the current system, the worker's wife is also condemned to silence by her worker-husband...in addition to the class exploitation common to both of them, women must confront a particular set of relations that exist between them and men, relations of conflict and violence that use physical differences as their pretext."¹⁷⁵ Sankara links these intersecting exploitations to women's lack of control over agricultural processes in the absence of men even,

as they are on the fronts of our war against disease, hunger, poverty, and degeneracy, feel the pressure of changes over which they have no control. For every single one of the...males who emigrate, a woman takes on an additional load...she is the keystone of the family, carrying both family and society on her shoulders...In

¹⁷³ David, *Changing Places*, 68.

¹⁷⁴ David, *Changing Places*, 17.

¹⁷⁵ Sankara, "The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women: On International Women's Day, March 8, 1987," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 344.

return, she is paid with oppressive, pro-birth ideology, food...restrictions, overwork, malnutrition, dangerous pregnancies, depersonalization, and innumerable other evil...¹⁷⁶

While Englebert makes a realistic case that these proclamations and legal alterations did not have a vast and immediate effect on the role of women in Burkinabé society, it is clear that the motivation behind the empowerment of women had to do with compensating for the deleterious effects of male outmigration, providing women with the legal rights and motivation to take resource management and agricultural improvement projects into their own hands.¹⁷⁷ This was extremely important in the historical moment because the region was currently experiencing protracted drought and famine conditions, making consistent attention to resource management projects crucial for the production of food staples at subsistence levels.¹⁷⁸

Overall, government figures do indicate that more men stayed home to work in the subsistence economy during the revolutionary period and food production did increase as more land was put under cultivation and pragmatic conservation techniques were applied.¹⁷⁹ The government even attempted to stimulate the mining industry through the construction of a railroad. The “Battle for the Rail” was intended to be a long term project with deep implications for the country’s development and self-sufficiency project.¹⁸⁰ The tapping of bauxite and manganese reserves was seen to have the potential to generate revenue as an export commodity and lead to small scale industrialization and the creation of jobs that could draw men out of the circular migration system and into the domestic mining industry. The proposal for the new railway can be seen in figure 5 as the dotted line snaking north-east from Ouagadougou to

¹⁷⁶Sankara, “The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women: On International Women’s Day, March 8, 1987,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 352-353.

¹⁷⁷ David, *Changing Places*, 61-62; Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 140-141.

¹⁷⁸ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 73-74.

¹⁷⁹ David, *Changing Places*, 64; Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 75.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Sankara, “Eight million Burkinabé, eight million revolutionaries: On fourth anniversary of Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1987,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 280, 409.

Gorom Gorom; a continuation of the RAN that served as an infrastructural facilitator for circular migration, would now aid Burkina Faso's development instead.¹⁸¹



Figure 5: Revolutionary Mapping of Burkina Faso. An administrative map created by the Institut Geographique du Burkina (IGB) from 1984 showing the “Battle for the Rail” project in its early stages. This map was made in Burkina Faso by Burkinabé cartographers and even includes the official revolutionary slogan of the country: “La patrie ou la mort nous

The revolution in Burkina Faso was the culmination of a lengthy historical process that began in the 1890s as the French moved in to the region, colonized it and developed a plan for its human inhabitants to aid in their extractive economic policies by traveling to Cote d’Ivoire to produce coffee and cocoa. Though dissatisfaction among certain sectors of the population was present as this system developed, the various Burkinabé ethnic groups found ways to spatially operate within it and survive in a manner that more or less was consistent with social tradition. The Mossi, in particular, demonstrated flexibility within the system but could not escape from it

¹⁸¹ Burkina Faso: *Carte Administrative*, 1984. Ordonnance N 84-055/CNR/PRES du 15 Aout 1984 ed. Ouagadougou: Institut Geographique du Burkina. American Geographical Sciences Library, Burkina Faso file.

like the Fulani and Bobo. Over time, the ability of the Mossi to act tactically within the system was diminished by the strategic developments of the world economy and the Ivorian government in controlling how much migrant laborers could make under certain economic conditions.

These strategic confines created the conditions for reaction, under which Thomas Sankara was able to apply his acquired ideological tenants to address the historical material situation of Burkina Faso 90 years after the inception of circular migration.¹⁸² While the revolutionary government was rife with inconsistencies and shortcomings in its short tenure, it must be recognized for what it was and why it existed, rather than judged as a success or failure. Its formation and the specificities of its policies and overall dialectic, were partially a response to the imposed system of circular migration and its persistence, because of continued influence over African economies by external forces. These forces were both domestic and international and set in motion a system that could not be easily displaced because contemporary prospects for *development* and continued subsistence depended on them.

This sort of dependency is decried by Amin as he advocates for the separation of African countries from European systems in a tactical manner and the creation of systems that work solely their favor. Amin's critique was taken seriously by Sankara who tasked the revolution with a serious and thorough interpretation of material conditions in Burkina Faso and the implementation of policies that could help it realize independence and sustainable development. Sankara was a spatial actor who attempted to work tactically within larger world systems, on behalf of Burkinabé who were also spatial actors, but with limited tactical maneuverability. This lack of maneuverability on the part of Burkinabé migrant laborers played out detrimentally to their families and their homeland's ability to reproduce itself. In attempting to adjust the balance of power and afford Burkina Faso a position of greater agency in the region and world, Thomas

¹⁸² Cordell et. al. *Hoe and Wage*, 60.

Sankara was killed and the revolution destroyed. This was done at the behest of a strategic system which would not benefit from the empowerment of Burkina Faso and its laborers, a system composed of actors that themselves had to work tactically within an even larger system of the global economy. However, by viewing the historical process in this manner, one can clearly make the connection between the expressions of popular mobility during the revolutionary period and the desire of the Burkinabé people to discontinue participation in circular migration, and stay in Burkina Faso to construct their country and their lives in an autonomous manner.

Chapter 2

National Coordination of International Donors and Domestic NGOs

The Burkinabé revolution of 1983 came under immediate and enduring scrutiny throughout its existence, primarily because its policies and rhetoric represented a stark contrast to that of its predecessors and most of its neighbors. In all reality, Burkina Faso was not a state in 1983 which was considered a prime candidate for Marxist revolution, yet all the same a Marxist revolution took place there, consolidated itself among large proportion of the population and achieving some success in terms of demonstrating that its programs and mobilization techniques could be effective. As we have already seen, the revolutionary government went about trying to dismantle the circular migration system, which had become a normalized labor practice in colonial times and which a larger proportion of the population were tied to. Larger numbers of Burkinabé stayed home during the revolutionary era, which was at least partially a product of land reform, resource improvement projects and increased producer prices for staple crops. In this chapter, I aim to examine the resource improvement, famine relief and primary health care programs introduced or supported by the revolutionary government, but also involved foreign

and private assistance from international donors, volunteers and domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Part of the rhetorical appeal of the revolutionary government, and its charismatic leader Thomas Sankara, was the hardline anti-imperialist and anti-dependency stance, laid out most clearly in Sankara's Political Orientation Speech from October, 1983. The success of the revolution, Sankara states, represents "the culmination and logical outcome of the [Burkinabé] people's struggles against neo-colonial domination and exploitation, against the subjugation of our country, and for the independence, freedom, dignity, and progress of our people."¹⁸³ In accordance with the precepts of dependency theory and the revolutionary theories of Fanon and Cabral, Sankara is convinced that, "for this revolution to be a genuinely popular revolution, it must proceed to destroy the neocolonial state machinery and organize new machinery capable of guaranteeing popular sovereignty...to transfer power from the hands of the Voltaic bourgeoisie allied with imperialism to the hands of the alliance of popular classes that constitute the people."¹⁸⁴

Exactly one year after his political orientation speech called for the destruction of neocolonial elements in Burkina Faso, Sankara spoke at the United Nations, tying ideas of sovereignty and neocolonial interventionism with the concept of "humanitarian aid". Humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso came in the form of expensive food imports, and a vast, unorganized network of European project volunteers, internationally funded NGOs, and multinational aid groups, some of which provided useful services while others operated purely to benefit donors. Sankara recognized the necessity of outside funding stating, "we encourage aid that aids us in doing away with aid. But in general, welfare and aid policies have only ended up

¹⁸³ Thomas Sankara, "Building a new society, rid of social injustice and imperialist domination: Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1983," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 78.

¹⁸⁴ Sankara, "Political Orientation Speech," 93.

disorganizing us, subjugating us, and robbing us of a sense of responsibility for our own economic, political, and cultural affairs.”¹⁸⁵

This rhetorical stance against many of the prevailing forms of aid which was available to African states at this time, was never fully carried out in practice during the revolutionary period, a reality which is portrayed as contradictory by Speirs, who states, “sectoral investment programmes were intended to mobilize indigenous labour and local resources, it is significant, and paradoxical, that 80 per cent of the finance was derived from external sources...agricultural development schemes in Burkina Faso...remain dependent on the availability of project and programme aid channeled through numerous bilateral and multilateral agencies.”¹⁸⁶ I argue that this is an oversimplified, dualistic framing and that minimizes the intricacies of disengaging from complex networks of finance, specifically for a state like Burkina Faso, which has been exposed to a series of protracted and intersecting forms of oppression and exploitation. To imply that a contradiction is present unless the presence of a variable is completely erased, especially in the context of fundamental economic reformation and decoupling from financial support networks, is an absurdity.

As is demonstrated by Hans Holmen and Charles Mann in their respective books, the presence of aid networks and internationally financed projects in Africa is an issue with strong ties to the colonial legacy of the *civilizing policy* and *assimilationism*, since most French African states were granted formal independence with the understanding that they would continue to function as dependent sectors of the European metropole. The presence of aid groups and NGOs, while often staffed by well-intentioned volunteers and making definite contributions to the sustenance of life, also set back positive forms of *development* from a dependency theory

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Sankara, “Freedom must be conquered: At United Nations General Assembly October 4, 1984,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 160.

¹⁸⁶ Mike Speirs, “Agrarian Change and the Revolution in Burkina Faso,” *African Affairs* 90, no. 2 (1991): 101.

perspective, as they provide services, funding and materials but, often do not contribute to the education and assistance of the population in a way that are sustainable and will eliminate the need for outside aid.¹⁸⁷ The innate intertwinement of the Burkinabé state with external forms of aid with connections to the former system of colonial domination would necessitate, Sankara argued, the gradual reform of the system, rather than a clean break and total withdrawal. Mann demonstrates that clean breaks rarely took place and that where they did, such as during the early socialist periods in post-independence Mali and Guinea, disastrous consequences came to pass.¹⁸⁸ Having closely observed and studied the Malian and Guinean revolutions, the members of the CNR considered anything other than a gradual but steady disengagement, to be contrary to the goals of the revolution and the survival of the people.

The CNR intended to rework how material and labor based aid and from multinationals and NGOs was managed and organized, with the state taking an expanded role in organizational processes and becoming more particular about the kinds of aid allowed to enter. Despite the fact that most projects remained externally funded, as Speirs demonstrates, Burkina Faso stopped accepting loans from France, the US and other western states and even refused conditional aid from the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹ Rather than categorically accepting all foreign assistance in any form and allowing aid groups and NGOs free reign to implement programs in the countryside with minimal to no oversight, the revolutionary government expanded its authority over such groups activities. Additionally, the rejuvenated office for aid group coordination, collected massive quantities of data detailing the personnel and operating capacities of every aid group and NGO in the country, where their funding was coming from and what they had accomplished so far. This

¹⁸⁷ Hans Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise: NGOs and the Aid Industry in Africa* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2010), 35-36.

¹⁸⁸ Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 77-86.

¹⁸⁹ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 72-73, 115.

data was put to use as groups were assigned specific project responsibilities, always in coordination with national projects, and geographic areas of operation where conflicts of interest and incongruous work could be kept to a minimum.

Revolutionary Interactions and Collaboration with FEME and CA

This section will draw on primary resources from a collection of Christian Aid (CA) materials located in the School of Oriental and African Studies library archive, which detail the network of communications between three distinct categories of organizations. The first is the Burkinabé Revolutionary government (CNR) and its functionaries, which include local elected Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs or sometimes referred to as Groupements Villageoise or GVs), the national grain trade and distribution office (OFNACER) and the office for the coordination of NGOs (SPONG). Secondly, there were domestic NGOs, the main actor of which was La Fédération des églises et missions évangéliques (FEME) which operated its famine relief program through its bureau for project development (BPD). The BPD was headed by Pasteur Samuel Yameogo, who was involved as an organizer and intermediary for communications taking place between the CNR and the third category, international donors. Since this is an archive of materials specifically from CA, they are the primary international donor group represented, but since many of these organizations communicated with each other, several others besides CA take a leading role, including multiple agencies from the United Nations, USAID, Cathwell and the European Economic Community.

The interconnectedness of these groups was expressed via the exchange of dozens of reports, official studies, and correspondences ranging from intercontinental to inter-office. The complex relationships that had formed between these categorical sectors in the years prior to the revolution, when multiple military juntas and three different iterations of republican governance

had held power, were fundamentally disrupted when the CNR took power and began the process of altering power relationships in an effort to exert greater governmental control over NGOs and international donors. This necessitated a re-evaluation on the part of NGOs and donor organizations as to whether they would continue to work in Burkina Faso, given the stricter guidelines for the provision of services and newly centralized role which a Burkinabé government was taking for the first time, and in what capacity they planned continue their programs and provide new services to communities.

Based on a review of these primary source documents, I contend that international donor groups, due to concerns of not having access to the aid market in Burkina Faso, sought to adapt to the new constraints placed on their activities by the CNR, in order to maintain their presence in the country and participate in the popular national development project which was taking place. Contrastingly, domestic NGOs like FEME had a more difficult time adapting their programs and often continued to assert their autonomy through programs like the 1984 and 1985 famine relief efforts and resource improvement projects like “Le Sahel Refflueria”. The expressions of autonomy expressed by FEME often intended to circumvent the CNR’s reforms so that it could continue to acquire funding and materials from international sources with little to no oversight, as it had done under previous regimes. While FEME was compelled by the cooperation of international donors with the CNR’s new regulations on incoming aid, it also criticized the CNR and its functionary organizations, and often created project proposals in a way that would give the government a reduced role in planning and implementation processes, while more than once vocally advocating for the exclusion of the CDRs and OFNACER.

It is the intention of this section to highlight the how communication networks such as those present in Burkina Faso during this period, can demonstrate the manner in which a national government can reclaim its sovereignty from the potentially imperializing impact of outside

forces, through the restructuring of aid acceptance and deployment. The CNR intended to drastically cut back on the amount of outside money, food aid and volunteers coming in to Burkina Faso and to establish full control over the coordination of those which were still allowed in. Once again, concepts of achieving self-sufficiency through the elimination of *dependency* are prevalent in the CNRs rhetoric and policies, which placed an emphasis on revolutionary mobilization and greater organization of all sectors for participation in national development. The CNR was adamant that such development would not come from outside sources, but from the popular mobilities of the Burkinabé people, while also recognizing that the country lacked money, resources and the proper technological knowledge to pursue development at a rate acceptable to revolutionary authorities and the population as a whole. Thus, the CNR recognized that outside aid was necessary, but only willingly accepted it in certain forms and under certain conditions to assure that the country's sovereignty from imperialist forces remained intact.

FEME functioned as a major force for disaster relief and the acquisition of international funding in the 1970s and 80s. Ideologically it based itself around concepts of philanthropic Christianity being able to serve communities in a more efficient and compassionate manner than the government. The BPD specifically conducted local projects and relied on outside sources for AID, mainly CA, which primarily acted as an accumulator and disbursing of funds. It lobbied development banks, financial institutions and multinational corporations to donate funds which it could then pass to its own projects or subsidiaries, like FEME. Sarah Hughes was one of the primary correspondents for CA, communicating with FEME in Burkina Faso about outlets for funding, FEME's plans and needs, and the budgeting for individual projects and national plans. Much of the dialog over funding is done through Hughes, who then reaches out to a variety of institutions. Pastor Samuel Yameogo was the primary contact for FEME, as head of the BPD,

coordinating many of their projects, writing their newsletter and appears to have been working on a documentary about FEME's work in Burkina Faso.¹⁹⁰

In 1982, CA released a document detailing their "Village Development Program" for Burkina Faso which justified general amounts of funding and set out clear guide lines for what kind of projects it wanted to coordinate with and what kinds of infrastructure it planned to fund. The report was written by Sie Mamadou Ouattara and gives a good sense of what CA hoped to accomplish through its programs. It appears that for this program in 1982, 4.277 million CFA Francs were allocated and the principal projects were an educational site in Kore, a vaccination park in Samandeni, and the reconstruction of the village store in Tengouagao, as well as budgeting for miscellaneous supplies and salaries.¹⁹¹ One of the main problems of the program was the lack of basic means of transportation and reliable infrastructure so that materials and personnel could be transported to the remote areas of the country. During the French colonial period, most of the infrastructure was created to shuttle people from the dense Mossi Plateau to Ouagadougou and then out of the country. The successor regimes did little to improve the lot of rural peasants and did not spend heavily on maintaining and improving rural infrastructure. Even in 1982, little had been accomplished in terms of rural development that could improve the efforts of NGOs to conduct extensive rural development projects. CA's volunteers in Burkina Faso also possessed only one truck for the whole program which was operational, but barely,

¹⁹⁰ Another CA staff member besides Hughes who played a main role in the coordination necessary for the funding of projects in Burkina Faso was Sally Meachim, specifically in terms of budgeting and planning for the allocation of funds to specific projects being conducted by FEME. While it appears that Hughes mainly checked in on projects and inquired about what kinds of funding would be required in order to then reach out to donors, Sally worked with the specifics, to make an example of FEME's famine relief program, how much grain needed to be bought, where it would come from, where it needed to go, what the costs would be for transportation and distribution, and how to coordinate with government run OFNACER in terms of public pricing.

¹⁹¹ Projet de Developpement Villageois Financement Christian Aid by Sie Mamadou Ouattara, 1982, CA/C5/01/024, Box A/331A, 5th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 2.

making navigating the infrastructural shortcomings of the country even more limiting to their capacity as an aid group.¹⁹²

In addition to local infrastructure projects, such as the major ones above and other minor projects such as repairing school rooms and adding on to communally used storage buildings, the report by Ouattara also refers to funding reforestation projects, designating a smaller amount to research the level of plantings by villagers in the previous year and explore the possible enthusiasm for continued scaling up of tree planting by the villagers. However, CA's primary involvement in Burkina Faso was for famine relief projects, which sought to provide emergency food aid via its partner FEME, providing funding and logistical support from abroad.

Environmental reporter Charles Kelly notes that infrastructure and the availability of trucks, stores and the poor quality of roads, all contributed to problems of food provision, which could have possibly been offset by greater attention to the repair of water infrastructure in the hardest hit areas. Kelly criticizes the approach of the CNR as well as outside donor groups, stating that neither have done enough in their respective realms of responsibility since,

“most drought assistance, as food, seems to be provided with the idea that feeding someone will keep them alive and if people remain alive then the disaster threat has been met. This approach to drought and related food shortages is simplistic. Drought assistance should look beyond the relatively simple problems of food logistics and also provide assistance which addresses water and health problems and permits the victim to assume a greater role in overcoming the effects of the disaster.”¹⁹³

This criticism resonates well with the report by Ouattara which mainly serves to detail the difficulties experienced by CA expatriate volunteers and may demonstrate why external aid groups tended to limit the number of expatriate volunteers they placed in Burkina Faso, preferring to work through internal NGOs like FEME instead.

¹⁹² *Projet de Developpement Villageois Financement Christian Aid*, Ouattara, 4, 6.

¹⁹³ Charles Kelly, “The Situation in Burkina Faso,” *The International Journal of Disaster Studies and Practice* 11, no. 1 (1987): 6-10)

Ouattara concludes that operations did not go as well as expected since the beginning of direct CA project development in Burkina Faso since 1979, in terms of reaching previously projected goals for infrastructure development. The main coming from the report is to suspend the village infrastructure program after that year because villagers have no time to participate due to the tenuous agricultural situation and since the organizational apparatus of CA in the villages was expensive and inefficient. Without popular participation or interest in the projects, direct project interventions by European aid groups lost any semblance of legitimacy. Ouattara states that the most desirable outcome would be to finish the work on current projects before a full scale program re-evaluated took place. The inefficiencies of the program, the fact that inflation of the CFA Franc was stretching the budget too thinly, the lack of suitable transportation for picking up the necessary supplies and distributing them to multiple sites, and the failure to meet resident's expectations, were all mentioned as reasons project to discontinue and reconceptualize CA's involvement in Burkina Faso as a whole.¹⁹⁴

This may be when CA began to fund FEME or at least channel more of its funding to FEME because it had a larger capacity to communicate with villagers and mobilize them to work on development projects that they wanted to have done, rather than those sought by foreign agencies. We can see in an excerpt of a CA travel report from February 1984, that a miscommunication resulted in FEME not directly approaching CA for assistance with its 1984 famine relief program, but had more or less assumed its participation This indicates that by 1984 FEME and CA operated with a degree of familiarity, the report maintaining that such a miscommunication, "seems to have been an oversight."¹⁹⁵ This excerpt is brought up in a report preparing for CA's participation in the 1985 famine relief program, after the stated success of the

¹⁹⁴ *Projet de Developpement Villageois Financement Christian Aid, Ouattara, 9-10.*

¹⁹⁵ *FEME Projects Office Famine Relief Travel Report by Sarah Hughes, February 1984, CA/CA4/01/154, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 2.*

1984 model in which the Burkinabé churches responded to the emergency situation and had raised 112 million CFA and acquired 10,000 tons of food.¹⁹⁶ It appears that between 1982 and 1984, CA and FEME became partners in Burkina Faso, though it is quite possible that these groups operated together previously, as FEME was formed in the 1970s, but that CA scaled back its presence in Burkina Faso after the less than optimal results in 1982 and the revolution in 1983.

The 1985 FEME famine relief program, aimed to produce the same success while shoring up some of the organizational shortcomings which became apparent in 1984, particularly concerning coordination between CA, FEME and the CNR. In October of 1985 we see a letter between Yameogo and Hughes, demonstrating a more extensive exchange of information, which addressed smaller amounts of funding to specific localities and even the individual amounts of grain FEME hoped to distribute to each person, 400 grams per person, per day.¹⁹⁷ By 1985, a greater degree of communication and cooperation had been established between the domestic NGOs and international donors, making each of their roles and expectations more clear. The CNR had also become more involved in helping with not only the physical provision of food and resource distribution to areas struck by famine, but also in the facilitation of communication between aid groups and assistance with the acquisition of food internationally, working to make sure it could be brought into Burkina Faso efficiently and on terms acceptable to the CNR.

A meeting of contributor groups for FEME's famine relief program took place in September of 1985 and shows that the CNR was taking seriously these efforts and taking steps to become involved but not take over the program, leaving FEME with many serious responsibilities. In terms of the acquisition of food and its transport, the report acknowledges, “

¹⁹⁶ Travel Report, Hughes, 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ Correspondence from Samuel Yameogo to Sarah Hughes, October 17th 1985, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom.

The Secretary-General of the Permanent Secretariat for the Control of the Effects of Drought described the operation as very good and congratulated the donors.”¹⁹⁸ Despite this praise there are definite examples of incongruities, as FEME often refers to governmental authorities as spectators rather than participants, while it is clear that the CNR and CDRs see themselves as crucial to the famine relief programs taking place in Burkina Faso. The rhetorical exchanges between FEME and the CNR were almost always polite and complementary, but this does not mean that the groups attitudes toward each other lacked tension. While it is unclear from these archival materials how the CNR viewed FEME, there exists a definite attitude of discontent expressed by FEME toward the various bodies of revolutionary authority.

For the 1984 famine relief campaign, the distribution of cereal was coordinated and managed by the local Protestant Assemblies and CDRs. A FEME publication, “Le Sahel Reffluraria” drew the conclusions that the CDRs designed processes distribution in a mischievous way so that its members can benefit disproportionately.¹⁹⁹ Official documents presented in this same magazine from the BPD commended the CDRs, specifically in their famine relief work in tandem with local Protestant congregations part of FEME, as organizations which took grain distribution and the construction of food banks seriously so as to feed the population and fight against the harmful speculation of traders and merchants who sought to buy the grain at low prices in the abundant season and then sell it back to the same growers at the end of the dry season at higher prices.²⁰⁰ The tone taken by these official, rather than informal, materials has to

¹⁹⁸ Reunion du Groupe Des Donateurs Dans le Cadre de Secours d’Urgence au Burkina Rapport de Reunion, September 19th 1985, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom. Translated from French: “Le Secrétaire General du Secrétariat Permanent de Lutte contre les Effets de la Sècheresse a qualifié l’opération de très bonne et a tenu à féliciter les donateurs.”

¹⁹⁹ Editorial in Le Sahel Reffluraria, A. Djibo, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 8-12.

²⁰⁰ Presentation du Systeme de Distribution in Le Sahel Reffluraria, BPD, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 13-15.

do with the pressure applied to FEME by the CA at this time to take a more positive stance toward the CNR.

Official materials were still were able to criticize the CDRs but had to do so by highlighting the inadequate transportation infrastructure and the unavailability of enough trucks for transportation, delaying orders of grain from other parts of the country. Another problem was that some of those who received food aid, picked it up for free and sold it right away for a profit, indicating that the local CDRs did not do their due diligence in determining who needed aid and who didn't. While this may point indirectly to the evolution of local patronage systems, this only was reported as happening irregularly and it was determined that everybody who needed grain received it from the system of distribution designed and put place by the CDRs.²⁰¹ (647) The presentation of varying types of criticism of governmental entities by FEME shows the existence of a tension between what FEME authorities actually thought about the government's role in the famine relief program, and the rhetoric they were compelled to present by nervous donors who wanted to maintain their presence in the country.

As early as the 1984 famine relief program planning document, FEME expressed the need for the "Mobilization of beneficiary populations (dynamic and organized grouping)" preferring to work with pre-revolutionary formations called Groupements Villageois (GVs), rather than the relatively new CDRs as the GV's were often composed of the more powerful local elements, including traders and traditional chiefs.²⁰² The GV's had the ability to independently work with FEME projects, which was cautiously encouraged by the CNR as a short term measure to shore up the provision of community needs until the CDRs could establish themselves. However, the CNR believed that the CDRs needed to displace the GV's in order to

²⁰¹ Presentation du Systeme de Distribution in Le Sahel Reffluraria, BPD, 15.

²⁰² Ordre du Jour Annote pour la reunion de concertation d'aide d'urgence 1984, Le Bureau des Projets. Translated from French: "la mobilisation des populations bénéficiaires (groupement dynamique et organise)."

learn from working with groups like FEME. While FEME was usually interested in working with whichever group was best organized in a local community, it was sometimes suspicious of the CDRs, and attempted to sideline them based on claims about the disorganization present or that the CDRs overlapped with the GVs, making differentiation between the groups a non-issue.

Looking to the future of their programs, FEME recognized that analysts were finding the 1985 harvest to be more successful and the coming rainy season to be potentially longer and more consistent. This being said, FEME finds that there is a need to, “consider a restructuring of food aid operations. Donors believe that Burkina Faso has suffered from long years of drought and famine, a good season should be used to increase the number of storage centers.”²⁰³ Instead of merely continuing to act as the network for the acquisition of distribution of food aid and supplementary funds, FEME informed its international supporters that there would be a need for the improvement of storage infrastructure and environmental renewal projects. With the return of the rains and lightening of famine conditions in most parts of the country, the goal would become how to avoid such situations in the future. This was a policy goal of both the CNR and FEME, as the former hoped the country could achieve permanent levels of self-sufficiency through land reform and popular environmentalism, while the latter sought to acquire funding for the construction of grain storage units and the establishment of producer cooperatives. FEME did not want its funding stream to dry up or be funneled to the CNR after the cessation of famine conditions and had to offer itself as a versatile organization with long term plans.

²⁰³ Reunion du Groupe Des Donateurs Dans le Cadre de Secours d’Urgence au Burkina Rapport de Reunion, September 19th 1985, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom. Translated from French: “Envisager un restructuration des opérations d’aides alimentaire. Les donateurs pensent que le Burkina ayant souffert de longues années de sécheresse et de famine, une bonne saison devrait être mise à profit pour multiplier les centres de stockage.”

The focus was on the establishment of cooperatives and storage units that would keep consumption prices more consistent and help grain last longer to eliminate the need to as much grain from outside the village. Samuel Yameogo's expressed specific concern over the role of regional traders and grain speculators that would essentially work together in rural localities to buy up grain at low prices at the end of the harvest, store it themselves in more advanced facilities, and then sell it back to the farmers at a higher price as famine began to set in during the dry season. Yameogo expresses this concern to Hughes in June of 1985 in a letter which lays out the seriousness of the situation in terms of the role of such traders in making the famine conditions more serious, as well as their role in create grain shortages among the poor. The letter introduces a method which would implemented in a top down manner by the BPD, acquiring grain at unequal exchange values based on regional shortages in order to keep a surplus of millet in storage until the next planting season so that multiple varieties of seeds can be saved.²⁰⁴ However, the need for organizations proctored by the villagers themselves is expressed as necessary in order to maintain projects in a way that panders to international donor's ideas of rural democratization and the separate desires of the CNR for the establishment of a direct democratic system premised on popular mobilization. The expressed desire of FEME to maintain its position as an important developmental actor necessitated navigation between the the requirements for the continuing to receive aid and the continued desire for operational autonomy.

To this end FEME put almost 39 million CFA into the establishment of cereal banks for their 1985 small projects program through the BPD, which channeled a certain amount of foreign

²⁰⁴ Correspondence from Samuel Yameogo to Sarah Hughes, June 10th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom.

funding for resource improvement, rather than immediate relief, projects.²⁰⁵ The creation of extensive trimestral reports about the various sources of funding and how it would be put to use became a requirement as CA wanted to make sure the resources it sent were being put to use properly. In terms of cereal banks, the FEME's BPD allocated almost half of their small project funding for these purposes, while the rest went to improved cultivation training and water conservation projects.²⁰⁶ CA was the third largest contributor to these specific programs, allocating 10 million CFA, while contributing much more to the primary project of acquiring and distributing grain from international sources and redistributing grain from the southern part of the country, which had not been as hard hit. In the long term, FEME saw their infrastructure projects as more important and hoped to solicit a greater amount of funding from CA in order to expand the scope and quality of this work.²⁰⁷

However, a letter between Hughes and Yameogo cuts straight to the heart of many of the problems that were experienced in creating a network between external donors, internal NGOs and the CNR. Hughes and CA were obviously committed to the famine relief projects being put on by FEME but were critical of the communication aspects in terms of demonstrating clear coordination with the government. To this end, Hughes stated, "The famine in the Sahel is still of great concern to us and I was interested in reading the reports on your Famine '85 program. What is missing, in my opinion, is an element of analysis of your experiences until today. I do not mean evaluation, but simple commentary on program results especially at the level of local and government relations."²⁰⁸ This was an immediate indicator that FEME saw itself and its

²⁰⁵ Fonds de Disposition, FEME, 1984 et 1985, June 10th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-2.

²⁰⁶ Fonds de Disposition, FEME, 3.

²⁰⁷ Fonds de Disposition, FEME, 3.

²⁰⁸ Correspondence Sarah Hughes to Samuel Yameogo, May 23rd 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom. Translated from French: "La famine au Sahel nous préoccupe beaucoup toujours et j'étais intéressé de lire les rapports concernant votre programme Famine '85. Ce qui en manque, à mon

programs as separate from the CNR, which is logical, but also that it possibly observed the CNR as getting in the way or attempting to usurp its programs. The subtleties of the relationships between the three categories of actors can be observed in the reports and letters exchanged, demonstrating that there was increasing tension as the new government began to take a more active role in the organization of social and economic life throughout the whole country.

The primary reason behind Hughes' insistence on a greater emphasis on coordination with the government was because CA essentially had made the concession to work with organizations like FEME on the basis that such domestic NGOs would work within the parameters and programs established by the CNR. The CNR was cutting down on the aid organizations in the country and would certainly expel those groups that refused to make adjustment to their programs in a way that would fit the government's interpretation of material conditions. The CNR also wanted to have decision making power over what kind of aid came into the country, so as not to fall into the perceived imperialist trap, and for which it re-oriented the organization SPONG for the coordination of NGOs in Burkina Faso. In an interview with J.P. Rapp, Sankara outlines the intention of this in that, "we don't intend to stop them [NGOs] from existing or functioning normally. They need a certain flexibility given the nature of their funding and their particular work methods. But we should make sure they all learn from the experiences of those who came before them. We must also indicate the areas where they can be most effective and useful, as well as how to go about their work."²⁰⁹ In other words, Burkina Faso would no longer be accepting all offers of material and monetary aid, instead reserving the right to pick and choose what money and what organizations came to the country, where they worked and what kinds of projects they took on.

avis, est un élément d'analyse de vos expériences jusqu'au jour d'aujourd'hui. Je ne veux pas dire l'évaluation, mais un commentaire simple sur les résultats du programme surtout au niveau des relations locales et gouvernementales."

²⁰⁹ Thomas Sankara, "Dare to invent the future: Interview with Jean-Philippe Rapp, 1985," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 208-209.

Such principles appear also to have been the case in terms of the aid that domestic NGOs such as FEME could accept. Whether this was an institutionalized rule or a norm that had developed in terms of relationships between the CNR and domestic NGOs, has yet to become clear, but FEME reported that it felt obligated to do so, “World Vision had proposed 5,000 tons to be distributed free of charge in the presence of a US citizen to the BPD and determining a number of the poorest who will be fed for a certain period. In view of the difficult conditions of this aid, the reluctance of the authorities towards free assistance and the disruption of the BPD system approach, we have had to refuse this aid.”²¹⁰ Free aid from sources and with conditions that were unknown or deemed unacceptable, would have to be rejected by domestic NGOs if they hoped to maintain membership within SPONG and a mandate to continue their work. Further, simple food, which was perceived to create dependence, rather than material that would be beneficial for government self-sufficiency programs, would be rejected unequivocally.

Despite Hughes’ concern about the lack of communication between the CNR and FEME, communication and coordination obviously took place between them, which ultimately helped the rural population survive to the famine of 1983-1985. As head of FEME, Yameogo was tasked with communicating with specific officials, such as the Comrade Minister of Family Planning and National Solidarity and the President of the National Commission to Counter the Effects of Drought.²¹¹ Such conversations were not shallow, but rather detailed discussions and exchange of information about the amount of food being shipped, where, which projects were currently being pursued, what their status was, where the funding was coming from and how

²¹⁰ Reunion du Groupe Des Donateurs Dans le Cadre de Secours d’Urgence au Burkina, BPD, 5. Translated from French: “World Vision on avait proposé 5000 tonnes à distribuer gratuitement sous la présence d’un citoyen américain au BPD et en déterminant un certain nombre des plus pauvres qui seront nourris pendant une certaine période. Vu les conditions difficiles de cette aide, la réticence des autorités vis à vis de l’aide gratuite et la perturbation de l’approche du système du BPD, nous avons été obliges de refuser cette aide.”

²¹¹ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to the Minister of Family Planning and National Solidarity, April 15th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom.

much. All of this information can be found in FEME-BPDs April 15th report to the aforementioned authorities, indicating not only a clear line of communication but also a full disclosure of information, an outcome desired by the CNR.²¹²

Navigating the tensions of External Aid Reformatting

Collaboration on the grassroots is also shown to take place as, “the villages and the names of the beneficiaries are determined with the help of the High Commissioners and the CDRs and our representatives.”²¹³ However, there were underlying tensions pertaining to the CNRs insistence that most NGO projects and funding be put toward infrastructure, technical training and resource improvement projects, rather than food acquisition and distribution from abroad. Samuel Yameogo was subtly critical of what he saw as the CNR’s unrealistic expectations, restating FEME’s purpose, “we intervene mainly in the development on the demand of the villagers, and with their participation in human investment after some studies which assisted us in avoiding deceiving their hope in a project which would not be technically viable. However because of the repeated drought we have been forced to intervene punctually in food aid.”²¹⁴ This is an indication that FEME felt somewhat subdued by these new policies in terms of providing for the expressed needs of the villagers, which was sometimes the immediate influx of food to avoid starvation or forced migration. While FEME was committed to assisting in the development of long term facilities that would assist villagers in future situations of drought, the main focus of their energy and funding was the immediate provision of food.

²¹² Reconstitution de Semence au Sahel: Achat Local, FEME BPD April 15th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, Annexes 1-4.

²¹³ Reconstitution de Semence au Sahel: Achat Local, FEME BPD, Annexe 1. Translated from French: “les villages et les noms des bénéficiaires sont déterminés grâce à l’aide des Hauts Commissaires et des CDR et de nos représentants.”

²¹⁴ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to the Comrade High Commissioner of the Yatenga Province, March 28th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-2

An important conclusion to the report communicated from FEME to government officials on April 15th of 1985 states, “it is our policy to do nothing that is contrary to the goals and plans of the authorities, or duplicate other agencies. That is why we are seeking the help of your provincial authorities to determine which regions should benefit from this free aid. However, if this assistance is somewhat at odds with the plans established for your region or if it duplicates other aids, it may be offered to other provinces.”²¹⁵ Through this statement, we can find an indication that FEME was willing to work, at least rhetorically, under the complete authority of the CNR and coordinate its activities and allocations of resources with the government authorities on the local, regional and national level, with the understanding that the government will accept the “free aid” being offered by CA and other donors. Such “free aid” most likely came in a form that the CNR opposed on ideological grounds but which it allowed to be distributed out of necessity for continuing the provision of relief as famine conditions began to subside in many areas with the more favorable 1985 rainfalls and positive outlooks for the next year. All sides appear to have made concessions in order to develop a mutual understanding where a high level of cooperation and coordination could take place.

There were many other groups like CA that provided funding to FEME, mostly with the understanding that such funds would go toward immediate famine relief. Records show that Yameogo coordinated and corresponded with Didier Marx, who was the Secretary of African Affairs for the German group Brot Für die Welt (BFDW). In January of 1985, Yameogo expressed desires to shift allocations of aid away from food and to development projects, a prospect which appears to be outrageous to Yameogo. As he expressed to Sarah Hughes at CA and to various governmental authorities, the drought conditions continued perceived inaccurately by outside aid groups, expressing disdain for, “The great theories of development and self-

²¹⁵ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to the Comrade High Commissioner of the Yatenga Province, 2-3.

promotion; the pretexts of the emergency rescue and perpetual assistance dangers are applicable from a distance. When one lives the situation on the spot, one is irresistibly pushed to save the sinister ones of the hell of present life before the application of any theories.”²¹⁶ Thus there was a fight over what the policies of the CNR meant, how they should be applied and if they could be circumvented by groups under circumstances of perceived emergency. The leaders of NGOs such as CA, USAID, BFDW, UNICEF and others were well aware of the CNR’s policies since, “there is coordination between government departments, bilateral aid and NGOs,” and knew the standards that would have to be met in order to participate in the Burkina Faso aid economy.²¹⁷

Due to the opening of lines of communication and establishment of relationships between the CNR and international NGOs, and a corresponding adjustment of power relationships, the CNR set the terms of NGO participation rather than vice-versa. Yameogo expressed skepticism about the CNR setting limits on FEME’s operations to avoid overlaps between NGO and government programs, writing to Marx, “we understand your concern that the BPD does not turn into B.A.U.N. National Emergency Assistance Office. But how can one speak of development to men, to women, to children who are not certain to reach the next hours, if no hand is given to save them?”²¹⁸ Directing criticisms at external donors adherence to the CNR’s demands, Yameogo expresses dissatisfaction with the new aid arrangements taking place under the

²¹⁶ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to Ditier Marx, January 30th 1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 2. Translated from French: “Les grandes théories du développement et de l'autopromotion; les prétextes des dangers de secours d'urgence et de la perpétuelle assistance sont applicables à distance. Quand on vit la situation sur place, on est irrésistiblement poussé à sauver les sinistres de l'enfer de la vie présente avant l'application de toute theories.”

²¹⁷ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to Ditier Marx, 2. Translated from French: “Il y a une coordination entre les services du gouvernement, les aides bilatérales et les ONG.”

²¹⁸ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to Ditier Marx, January 30th 1985 2. Translated from French: “nous comprenons bien ton souci que le BPD ne se transforme pas en B.A.U.N. Bureau d'aide d'urgence nationale. Mais comment peut-on parler de développement à des hommes, à des femmes, à des enfants qui ne sont pas certains d'atteindre les prochaines heures, si aucune main ne se tend pour les sauver?”

revolution and, despite sustained communication and participation between FEME and the CNR, he argues that some are left wanting in the name of the fulfillment of theoretical policies.

A more formal letter dated only one day later in January of 1985 again from Yameogo (on behalf of several SPONG member NGOs) to Marx, lists foreign aid groups and governments purchasing or sending food directly to FEME for the 1985 famine relief program. Since CA was not sending food, but money and materials for development purposes instead, they are not included in this report. The two biggest contributors at this point were USAID and Cathwel who were contributing 28,000 and 20,221 tons respectively, followed by FEME and Caritas, each with 10,000 tons each, and then several foreign governments, including France, Italy, Ghana and Togo, sending anywhere from 11,000 to 435 tons. The total donated came out to over 95,000 tons, which was not enough to cover the national deficit predicted by FEME of 163,000 tons.²¹⁹ However, the worry about a possible deficit despite these sizable contributions and the capital available to purchase more food arose as,

“the estimate of 163,000 T according to the report of the government representative did not take into account the nationals of neighboring countries who must immigrate to our country and the food requirements would be 250,000 T if we take into account those of Mali, from Niger and other countries that massively transit Burkina Faso that we are not allowed to repress humanely, in addition to herd survival.”²²⁰

The perception that the CNR was not assessing material conditions of the country correctly was not limited to academic arguments, but as is demonstrated above, was also expressed by domestic NGOs. It is my argument these types of criticisms leveled by FEME demonstrated both a genuine

²¹⁹ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to Ditier Marx, January 31st 1985, 1-4.

²²⁰ Correspondence Samuel Yameogo to Ditier Marx, January 31st 1985, 5. Translated from French: L'estimât de 163,000 T selon le rapport du représentant du gouvernement n'a pas tenu compte des ressortissants des pays voisins qui doivent immigrer dans notre pays et les besoins alimentaires seraient de 250,000 T si l'on doit tenir compte de ceux du Mali, du Niger et d'autres pays qui transitent massivement dans le Burkina Faso qu'il nous est pas permis humanitairement de refouler, en plus de la survie de cheptel.”

concern over the amount of food aid purchased and the strategic expression of incompetence on the part of the CNR in order to maintain their relevance in the eyes of foreign donors.

Despite the positive evolution of government-NGO relationships that took place during the revolutionary period, there was also underlying tension at multiples levels of administrative relationships because the design was such that many groups, from the grassroots up to international donors, were required to have an active role in the aid distribution and project implementation process, on the set terms of the CNR. Differences in ideology and methods certainly existed and contributed to such tensions but it was ultimately clear from the perspective of FEME that there existed, “some difficulties noted by the lack of coordination, the quality of the cereal, hence the need for control, the grouping of distribution agencies, and the local supply.”²²¹ This type of practical assessment, though possibly being simply a rhetorical commitment to work closer with the CNR, nonetheless established a minimum recognition on the part of FEME that their programs ultimate effectiveness depended partially on improved coordination with revolutionary authorities.

The degree of intertwinement of FEME with the international aid community also gains clarity from the February 1985 “Proces Verbal” for the BPD, as the organization attempts to carve out a clear role for itself in the new system vaunting that, “The formula in use at FEME has been appreciated so much that the European Community wants to go through it to reach the masses in need”²²² By early 1985, FEME was producing a formal report of their internal discussions on a monthly basis, allowing us to see the subtle and strategic adjustments made in rhetoric, positioning and bargaining FEME engaged in with the CNR as it began to pursue the

²²¹ Process Verbal de la Reunion de Comite de Gestion du Bureau des Projets de la FEME, February 28th1985, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 3rd Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3. Translated from French: “quelques difficultés constatées par le manque de coordination, la qualité du céréale, d'où la nécessité du contrôle, le groupement des agences de distribution, et l'approvisionnement local.”

²²² Process Verbal de la Reunion de Comite de Gestion du Bureau des Projets de la FEME, February 28th1985, 3-4.

implementation of its aid adjustment and coordination policies via SPONG. The CNR was unable and unwilling to enforce their proposed changes to the aid regime in a totalizing, top-down manner, rather having to negotiate the implementation and make concessions in order to bring domestic aid groups, and thus foreign donors, on board.

Employing flexible rhetoric during this process of navigating revised aid policy, FEME attempted to lay the negative aspects of aid and the methods employed to mitigate them, side by side. The report first laments, “Since a sharing principle has been installed: 20% of the collections remain in the emergency relief. 80% for development. The distribution of aid takes into account priorities and needs. There are dangers, the help can create in the recipients the mentality of dependents.”²²³ FEME brings up the ever-looming prospects of aid creating dependence in order to highlight government plans to work through FEME to better coordinate NGO activities. In order to keep prospects for the types of aid that create dependence to a minimum, “The sharing of responsibility is also a characteristic of aid for the Government to coordinate, churches and NGOs in turn for support. For this information must be reliable. The example was taken of pastors of local churches who can be good informants.”²²⁴ Since government sanctioned CDRs were not functioning fully everywhere, and the CNR was loathe to collaborate with the traditional chiefs, it found it convenient, though tenuous, to work with domestic NGOs like FEME on the short-term basis of mutual interest in not letting the population starve. FEME too benefited from this arrangement and were able to place themselves squarely as both a critic and a necessary collaborator with the CNR.

²²³ Process Verbal de la Reunion de Comite de Gestion du Burea des Projets de la FEME, February 28th 1985, 4. Translated from French: “Depuis un principe de partage s'est installé: 20% des collectes restent au secours d'urgence. 80% pour le développement. La répartition de l'aide tient compte des priorités et des nécessites. Des dangers existent, l'aide pouvant créer chez les bénéficiaires la mentalité d'assistés.”

²²⁴ Process Verbal de la Reunion de Comite de Gestion du Burea des Projets de la FEME, February 28th, 5. Translated from French: “Le partage de responsabilité est aussi un caractère dans l'aide. Au Gouvernement de coordonner, les Églises et les ONG soutiennent à leur tour. Pour cela les informations devront être de source fiable. L'exemple a été pris sur les pasteurs des Églises locales qui peuvent être de bons informateurs.”

It may have been that, while communication was extensive and relationships generally sharing the strategic benefits of cooperation, between domestic NGOs like FEME and the CNR, this was not expressed in a clear enough manner to assure Sarah Hughes that FEME was working within the parameters of the government. The worry about expulsion of CA functionaries from Burkina Faso and the potential for flat refusal of further aid, was essentially a worry over maintaining CA's structural integrity. As Holmen points out, if organizations like CA cannot secure enough projects and demonstrate to their donors that they are contributing to various forms of development, their funding will dry up, resulting in job loss and scaling back of projects that have already been started.²²⁵ Mann goes further with this point in relation to the benefits aid organizations accrue through participation in the aid economy arguing that, "disaster was opportunity, if not foreign capital, as some argued, for a new political form that was neither state nor empire...another future beckoned from the space between distant states and displaced populations. Foreign voluntary agencies...NGOs, began to fill that gap as they adopted an ever greater role in delivering relief."²²⁶ While it is not my intention to generalize about the intentions of aid workers and NGOs, there is inarguably an industry that has developed and become profitable for many westerners.

The essence of the CNR's policies for the re-organization and greater coordination of aid groups in Burkina Faso was driven by a suspicion of the intentions of foreign powers in bringing money, materials and expatriates to the country. The CNR posed the question, 'are you here to help us on our terms, or are you here on behalf of the imperialists to perpetuate dependence and get your paycheck?' Sankara stated that aid would only be accepted under certain terms, and would be subject to government oversight, in order to keep a close eye on who is in the country and what kind of work they are participating in. While SPONG did form in 1975 and regulations

²²⁵ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 19.

²²⁶ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 171-172.

relating to NGO activities did exist, very little institutional effort was put into fulfilling them. During the lengthy rule of Sangoule Lamizana Harsch argues, “many policies did not significantly affect the bulk of [Burkina Faso’s] people, who still lived in isolated villages beyond the reach of most state institutions. There, traditional chiefs remained the most immediate force in people’s day-to-day lives.”²²⁷ For example, during the famine years of 1972 and 1973, the government was virtually absent in the country and relied exclusively on NGOs and foreign assistance to plan, coordinate and facilitate relief efforts, through food distribution and water resource improvement.²²⁸

With famine conditions subsiding in 1985 and 1986, FEME commenced a process of considering project proposals from local actors, mostly pastors of affiliated churches or village groups, that would help with famine prevention. Though it was already addressing these concerns with the construction of food banks, establishment of grain cooperatives and planning of water conservation projects, there was a feeling, possibly induced by the CNR or by external aid groups, that some semblance of democratization was necessary. What democratization means in terms of aid utilization and development projects is contested in the literature, making it difficult to determine the degree to which FEME realistically intended to open its processes to the kind of popular democracy that was the underpinning of the revolution’s rural support. This opening of the field for proposals from individual villages (or at least by the local church committee or GV) seemed to overwhelm the BPD as 80 new projects were proposed ,

While the Projects Office welcomes the interest of the churches in the presentation of the projects, it deplors the fact that almost all of these projects are not well presented, with incomplete information, insufficient awareness of the beneficiaries. As a result, the FEME structure needs to be reviewed to give grassroots groups adequate awareness. But in order not to penalize the farmer, the Committee decides

²²⁷ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 27.

²²⁸ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 30, 34.

to accept all the projects and to send the heads of sectors to the villages for the sensitization and the drafting of these projects.²²⁹

Whether this was a commitment to all the projects proposed or a commitment to providing the villagers with an outline of what it would take in terms of labor and materials for the projects to be completed as envisioned, it is debatable as to if this was legitimate democratization of aid, a step toward it, or a step around it. This opening seemed to be a response to questions about the capacity of FEME to set up projects that fulfilled popular needs and could be implemented practically.

A review of the archival materials strongly indicates that FEME intended to make major adjustments within the context of the revolution. FEME viewed the revolution as a challenge to its operations within the status quo but also believed that it could negotiate a position for itself within the new state structure. The difference between the initial proposals for the 1984 and 1985 famine relief programs, presented to CA, underscored this view. The 1984 program proposed to set up independent distribution councils which would include a member of, but not be overseen by the CDRs, which were to be the primary authority for such programs based on the program designs of the CNR. Point number five of 1984 plan, sent to CA in March of that year was also clearly intended to express a level of frustration with the government as it proposed that, “This committee will call upon the OFNACER of Ouagadougou to have the Quantities it has defined delivered up to the amount granted to its region. To do this, several villages will get together to have at least 30 or 35 tons per order.”²³⁰ In the margins of the document, next to this point, a

²²⁹ Process Verbal de la Reunion de Comite de Gestion, March 27th, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 3rd Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3. Translated from French: “Si le Bureau des projets se félicite de l'intérêt des églises dans la présentation des projets, il déplore le fait que la quasi-totalité de ces projets soient mal présentes, avec des informations incomplètes, une sensibilisation insuffisante des bénéficiaires. En conséquence la structure de la FEME est à revoir pour donner aux groupements de base la sensibilisation adéquate. Mais pour ne pas pénaliser le paysan, le Comité décide d'accepter tous les projets et d'envoyer les chefs de secteurs dans les villages pour la sensibilisation et la rédaction de ces projets.”

²³⁰ Raport Famine 1984 by Samuel Yameogo, June 12th 1984, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library

comment states, “is this realistic?” This was most likely written by Sarah Hughes or Sally Meachim and denotes that proposals to acquire grain through the application of pressure and the overloading of the OFNACER bureau in Ouagadougou with requests from across the country, was not viewed as realistic or acceptable.

The proposal to go straight to OFNACER headquarters in Ouagadougou, bypassing the regional offices in a bureaucratically militant way, took a back seat to the desires of CA and other donor groups to work with the CNR by 1985, rather than not being allowed to work in Burkina Faso at all. The possibility that financing would be withheld or minimal contributed to a softening of FEME’s rhetoric, which we can see via an internal document from January, 1985 as both groups were preparing for another season of drought. In an inter-office correspondence between Sally Meachim and Martin Bax, Meachim states, “The programme is basically one of FEME buying cereals, either commercially imported from Ghana or bought from government stocks...”²³¹ Though it is reasonable to believe that FEME did intend to buy surplus grain from OFNACER in 1984 as well, the remark about demanding grain from government the Ouagadougou office, came off as controversial and may have indicated that FEME intended to test the waters to see how CA would react to the intention to approach the CNR in this way. With this rhetoric absent in 1985, CA allocated 60,000 pounds sterling for the immediate purchase of grains by FEME, with the stipulation made clear that FEME’s church organizations would work with local CDRs in the distribution process.²³²

Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3. Translated from French: Ce comité seisira l'OFNACER de Ouagadougou pour se faire livrer les quantites qu'il aura definie jusqu'a concurrence de la quantite accorde a sa region. Pour se faire plusieurs villages se mettront ensembles pour avoir au moins 30 ou 35 t par commande.”

²³¹ Christian Aid Inter-Office Correspondance, Sally Meachim to Martin Bax, January 17th 1985, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom.

²³² Christian Aid Inter-Office Correspondance, Sally Meachim to Martin Bax, January 17th 1985.

Pressure also appeared to come from the United Nations Development Program in Burkina Faso (PNUD-BF), which released a detailed report of its own propositions for how aid groups should function in relation to famine relief. Contrary to FEME's proposal that it take the lead in the villages where it had a presence, PNUD-BF states unequivocally that, "The [Burkinabé] Government is the first responsible for the actions to be taken. As a result, the Voltaic authorities play the central role in the coordination. UNDP, at the request of the Government, offers only technical consultation assistance."²³³ Vested with the legitimacy of the UN, PNUD-BF is able to state clearly that the government will be the primary coordinator of the famine relief program and that it will decide the roles of and amount of assistance accepted by NGOs, international donors and multi-lateral actors. The recognition by PNUD-BF of the CNR's intention to limit the amount of aid accepted and volunteers in the country, clearly indicates that it respects the long term aim of achieving self-sufficiency, and expects other groups to do so as well.²³⁴

In contrast to the FEME proposal that the CDRs, which were vested with local level governmental authority, would work with FEME pastors and distribution committees in a consultative role, PNUD-BF proposes that specific structures be established through which NGOs and donor groups will be able to play such a role, while the government lead. Another letter to Samuel Yameogo from Clive Robinson, the European Community Head of International Affairs, most certainly in response to a request for funding, states that, "The EEC has had difficulties previously concerning the authorization of emergency aid for the purchase of food

²³³ Ordre du Jour Annote pour la reunion de concertation d'aide d'urgence 1984, Le Bureau des Projets, Burkina Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 3rd Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 3.

²³⁴ Ordre du Jour Annote pour la reunion de concertation d'aide d'urgence 1984, Le Bureau des Projets. Translated from French: "Le Gouvernement Voltaïque est le premier responsable pour les actions à prendre. Par conséquence, les autorités voltaïques jouent le rôle central dans la coordination. Le PNUD, à la demande du Gouvernement, n'offre qu'une aide technique de concertation."

from public stocks; thus I suggest that your requests be to the local delegate and the use of outside funds be based on your acquisition from private providers,” indicating that aid groups preferred not to circumvent the rules established by the CNR and that FEME must communicate with its local delegate, most likely a SPONG or OFNACER official, in order to receive aid directly from the CEE or from the CEE via a different group.²³⁵

Formalizing Revolutionary Power Over NGOs and Aid Groups

This chapter has demonstrated that the CNR radically altered the way it interacted with and managed the work of NGOs in the country, relying on groups with international funding and connections, like FEME, to act as stopgaps instead of long term contributors. Temporary measures like this tied the CNR to groups like FEME in the short term, as it attempted to consolidate itself and design effective programs which would permeate through the country. In 1985, the CNR’s Minister of Finances, Daniel Kougouraogo Ouedraogo, compiled a report on the activities of FEME’s BPD and expressed the many continuities between the goals of the CNR and the BPD. Countering the effects of the protracted drought of the mid-1980s and making sure that enough food could reach everybody was a key goal, expressed by the CNR and BPD in tandem. While tension certainly existed, both the CNR and FEME were navigating new situations, the former of wielding power for the first time in a coalition setting and attempting to harness the popular mobilization of the revolution, while the latter had to, for the first time, work with a government which was serious about participation in rural projects and which intended to eventually displace groups like FEME.

²³⁵ Correspondence between Clive Robinson and Samuel Yameogo, January 23rd 1985, Faso 09A - FEME Development Projects - project file - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 3rd Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom. Translated from French: La CEE a eu des difficultés auparavant en, oui concerne l'autorisation de l'aide d'urgence pour l'achat d'alimentation de stocks publics; puis-je donc suggérer que vos demandes au délégué pour l'utilisation des fonds soient basées sur votre usage de fournisseurs privés.

Further congruities reported by Ouedraogo between the CNR and FEME are outline in the “Le Sahel Refleurira” publication of the latter, including fighting against grain speculation and hoarding by wealthy traders and empowering growers by setting up grain cooperatives, store rooms and transportation networks, worked to the advantage of poorer staple crop producers from the peasantry.²³⁶ Providing well drilling services and pumps at lower prices also kept wells from going dry, and kept people in their villages rather than walking miles to the next well. Finally, the construction of small dams (barrages) was a key program that the CNR and BPD collaborated upon. These dams were not so much intended as to divert constant water ways, as to trap water during the rainy season along regularized, but not constantly wet, riverbeds. During the dry season, these riverbeds were completely dry but during the rain, it was crucial to create a reservoir in which to store the run-off. “In general, the control of water makes it possible to take a step towards the food self-sufficiency, one of the objectives of the Government.”²³⁷

CA also took a leading role in improving relationships and encouraging coordination between FEME and the CNR as well. With projects in 158 villages, CA employed a strategy of integrated development, formatting aid in a way that encouraged the BPD to coordinate with those of the government and other NGOs working locally. In line with the rhetoric of the CNR, the CA report states that it was critical to underscore collaboration with the CDRs and other village level organizations to make sure that projects were undertaken that would be perceived to benefit the village in the short and long term. CA was excited to be funding a wide range of local projects, as well as a national famine relief program, via FEME and outlined very clearly that FEME must work within the operational guidelines of the revolutionary government. Included

²³⁶ Le Sahel Refleurira no. 1 Trimesterial, Avril-Mai-Juin 1985, Revue du Bureau de Projets Pour le Developpement, Burkina Faso 12 110(012)020 FEME Famine Programme - project file - 1983-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 7-11. Translated from French: “D’une manière générale la maitrise de l’eau permet de faire un pas vers l’autosuffisance alimentaire, un des objectifs du Gouvernement.”

²³⁷ Le Sahel Refleurira no. 1 Trimesterial, Avril-Mai-Juin 1985, 5.

also was a copy of “Le Sahel Refleurira”, with an editorial section by Yameogo on the mission of FEME and Christian implications of its relief efforts. This editorial outlines a ‘now-and-then’ type comparative structure between the beginning of famine relief efforts by FEME in 1972 and 1973, when it was working with the Lamizana government, and in the present day, working through the famine with the CNR, emphasizing that the partnerships that have been formed since the prior famine have created many new operational improvements and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of famine relief programs.²³⁸

Another article in this pamphlet by Issaka Luc Kourouma asserts that those international experts who say that the re-greening of the Sahel is impossible are liars, that they don’t know about the realities on the ground and that the work of the BPD will make the Sahel bloom again. “The bible says that anything is possible” says Kourouma, “A Sahelian miracle will occur by the graces of god, just as it did in Israel.” However, Kourouma also addresses the material realities of the situation, the work of the people, the NGOs and the political authorities, “That’s why they should not be discouraged to surrender to their fate. That is why political authorities and NGOs must first rely on the people to drive out famine and drought.”²³⁹ The author also maintains that the people in the villages of the Sahel are not ignorant misusers of soil and other natural resources, as is the rhetoric presented by western technical experts. The people, given the right funding and materials, can cope with and even correct the degradation of the environment that is taking place because of lack of rain and the movement of the desert on a year to year basis. It condemns the politicians who have paid lip service to Sahelian development and the work of the people but who keep prosperity from returning by sucking the land and people dry.

²³⁸ Le Sahel Refleurira no. 1 Trimesterial, Avril-Mai-Juin 1985, Editorial by Samuel Yameogo, 3-6.

²³⁹ Le Sahel Refleurira no. 1 Trimesterial, Avril-Mai-Juin 1985, Le Sahel Refleurira Quelle Realite!, by Issaka Luc Kourouma, 7-9.

Another article written by B. Batian in “Le Sahel Refleurira”, details the rainfall in the various parts of the Sahelian region of Burkina Faso in May of 1985, detailing the unfavorable nature of below average rainfalls, comparing it to the previous serious drought of 1973. The article notes that this drought seriously compromised the state’s plans for agricultural development, particularly in the center and north of the country, forcing areas that received more rain in the South East to contribute to the welfare of their northern neighbors. In spite of the alarming situation, the article states, it is permissible to hope for good outcomes to this famine because of it is not new to the region and the preparations made by FEME and the government will be enough to get the people and the country through to a point where the sky will darken and the rain will begin to fall like a monsoon to renew the land and the people.²⁴⁰

The CNR was not looking to take money from the IMF or World Bank and did not want large groups of expatriates working in the country. FEME and CA, for their part, wanted to spread Christianity and pull in private money to fund their humanitarian work. Particular to FEME, the pastors had a duty to attend to the well-being of their congregations and people around them. In situations where the CDRs were well organized on the village level, they were mandated to help staff FEME projects such as the construction of food banks, the digging of wells, construction of dams and bunds for water accumulation, and the construction of other public infrastructure, such as roads, health clinics, store houses and cooperative stores.²⁴¹

In this way, the CNR-FEME relationship functioned in a mutually beneficial manner because the CNR could tap in to international money and supplies without having to bend to the will of state based donors and international financial institutions that favored imposed austerity

²⁴⁰ La Pluviometrie du Mois de Mai au Burkina, by B. Batian Le Sahel Refleurira no. 1 Trimesterial, Avril-Mai-Juin 1985, 18-19.

²⁴¹ Escription d’un Plan Triennal Pour le Consolidation des Projets du BPD, FEME Bureau des Projets, December 12th 1984, Burkina Faso 07 (110/007/060) FEME Administrative Budget Project - general information - 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 1st Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-4.

and exposure to the international market. FEME could also show successful project cooperation and integration to donors and build their base and bureaucracy, all the while demonstrating that the Christian minority in Burkina Faso was committed to the well-being of the people. In 1984, FEME allocated 71 Million CFAF and spent 63 Million CFAF on their integrated development projects in cooperation with the CNR. While a generally modest amount, the projects immediately improved the standard of living in hundreds of rural villages and assisted the CNR in advancing some of their projects, such as the goal of providing every citizen with accessible, free primary health care, through the construction of clinics, pharmacies and maternity wards.²⁴²

The archival material detailing the interactions between the three sectors of aid management in Burkina Faso is extremely dense and complicated, and needs to be put under further analysis in order to gain a full understanding of how these aid networks functioned, and where specific discontinuities existed. Further, these documents should be cross referenced with official CNR documents, if they exist, on how it intended to function in relation to international donors and domestic NGOs like FEME, as it transitioned into taking a larger role in the country's administration. Was the tension also felt by the CNR and local CDRs toward FEME and its oppositional rhetoric and actions? More research needs to be conducted but we may be able to find some indicators from the SPONG "Rapport d'Activités" from 1984.

This formal booklet immediately recognized that, "Private Non-Profit Organizations as part of the development plans, may be necessary and valuable complements to the Government's action. Many NGOs are committed to working for the development of our country because they believe in fraternity between men, they intend to lead a humanitarian action and act in a humanitarian action and act for the sole purpose of rendering service especially to the

²⁴² Description d'un Plan Triennal Pour le Consolidation des Projets du BPD, FEME Bureau des Projets, 5-7.

underprivileged populations.”²⁴³ At this juncture of the revolution, it could be argued that the presence of international aid groups and existence of domestic NGOs proved necessary and often extremely helpful, but that such groups are not always solely interested in humanitarian provision, intimating that foreign donors could potentially have ulterior, neo-colonialist intentions. The purpose of SPONG, which can be directly linked to the aforementioned CNR policy of a complete reorganization of how aid is perceived and the manner in which NGOs which have external funding operate, is laid out in the following statement:

To coordinate the activities of Burkina NGOs to avoid energy dispersions and duplication. Inform, whenever required, the Burkinabé Government and the Donor Organizations of the activities of its members both in terms of the aid received and the implementation of the projects financed. Inform all members once a year by a written report on the activities carried out by the various NGO members. Promote consultation between private non-profit organizations and government agencies. SPONG is also a place of exchange of experiences, reflection and self-training of members.²⁴⁴

In order for domestic NGOs and foreign aid groups to operate in Burkina Faso, they had to apply for membership with SPONG and adhere to specific membership criteria which, if violated, jeopardized the NGO’s ability to operate in the country and the aid outlets for foreign donors, something they were not willing to give up. Since this booklet was in the possession of CA, this donor group knew that it had to make sure its subsidiaries like FEME, observed the rules and retained membership with SPONG. Though this was unlikely as Samuel Yameogo was the secretary general of the Executive Committee of SPONG members, and FEME played a major

²⁴³ SPONG: Secretariat Permanent des Organisations Non Gouvernementales Rapport d’Activites 1984, Bancaire no. 9053 60-128-01/84 Bicia du Burkina, Ouagadougou. Burkina Faso, Project FARA Cereales, Box CA5/A/331A, 5th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-2.

²⁴⁴ SPONG: Secretariat Permanent des Organisations Non Gouvernementales Rapport d’Activites 1984, 2-3. Translated from French: Coordonner les activités des ONG du Burkina afin d’éviter des dispersions d’énergie et le double emploi. Informer, toutes les fois qu’il est requis, le Gouvernement Burkinabé et les Organismes Donateurs des activités de ses membres tant sur le plan des aides reçues que sur celui de la réalisation des projets financés. Informer tous les membres une fois par an par un rapport écrit sur les activités effectuées par les diverses ONG membres. Favoriser la concertation entre les Organisations Privées à but non lucratif et les Organismes Gouvernementaux. Le SPONG est également un lieu d’échange d’expériences, de réflexion et d’auto-formation des membres.”

role in making famine relief a success, there was still an external push to make sure FEME limited its criticisms of the CNR and worked within the guidelines, which included, “The harmonization of achievements with the Government's development plan and priorities, without distinction of ideology, religion, political option, social class etc.”²⁴⁵

While observing these interactions on a national and international level of communication and coordination between three sectors with diffuse, yet often complementary, intentions, is important to form a broad understanding of how the provision of aid and technical assistance worked in Burkina Faso during the first 3 years of the revolution, it is also crucial to observe these workings on the grassroots level. The next section will detail the disfunction, miscommunication and mismanagement which international aid groups were prone to, prior to and during the revolutionary period. In the village district of Kindi, UNAIS established a mission shortly before the revolution and gained permission from SPONG in 1984 to utilize its funds, materials and volunteers as part of the CNR's policy of providing national primary health care for all. Through these more geographically and socially focused correspondences, we can observe the many struggles which took place as European volunteers interacted with Burkinabé rural agriculturalists and tried to navigate extremely new, and often non-complementary, layers of interwoven policy coming from their international partners and local, regional and national governmental initiatives. While the rhetoric of Sankara and intentions of SPONG to reorganize how aid worked in Burkina Faso were clearly laid out and can be seen working in some capacity on the national level, the lack of cohesion on the grassroots becomes extremely obvious and continues to support the argument that cutting the ties of *dependency* is an extremely intrepid and necessarily gradual process.

²⁴⁵ SPONG: Secretariat Permanent des Organisations Non Gouvernementales Rapport d'Activites 1984, 5, 7.

Chapter 3:

Observing the Grassroots in the Kindi Area

In the previous chapter I outlined the three main sectors of aid related actors working in and around Burkina Faso on a national and international level. This section will highlight the importance of delving deeper into the examination of aid distribution, to focus on how such interactions took place in localized programs. Many of the national projects which required coordination between the CNR, domestic NGOs and international donors, were implemented in a variety of ways and with locally specific conditions in mind by functionary groups. These actor groups included pastors and church groups who were part of FEME, Revolutionary Defense Committees (CDRs) and non-governmental GVs which often were not democratic or endowed with governmental authority, other regional and local officials who had specific administrative functions, and the representatives of international donor groups, which included expatriate volunteers. While groups at the national and international level made policy decisions and negotiated the structuring of such policies, the local functionary groups were tasked with the actual implementation process, in which they would have to navigate local disputes and material conditions in order to successfully provide services to satisfy higher authorities and local constituents.

Cooperation was a key function of these local level functionaries as they often wielded great autonomy, imbued their work with individual desires, but also subjected to the pressure of popular demand. The CNR began the process of implementing a multitude of reforms, which it intended to yield immediately discernable results in terms of improving life in the country, and hoped to draw on the popular mobility from which the revolution drew its mandate. There was also a recognition that such mobilization would not be enough and that technical assistance and improved coordination would be necessary, creating situations on the local level where multiple

groups from different sectors, with different functions and from different ethnic groups, would have to work together if anything were to be achieved. One example of this was the implementation of national primary health care project (SSP), through which all citizens would have access to a physician, a pharmacy and a midwife at free or subsidized rates.

Observing the implementation of the SSP on a local scale through these documents demonstrates that, in opposition to Engelbert's assertion that the CNR misinterpreted the conditions in Burkina Faso as it developed project implementation systems, the revolutionaries actually possessed many clear qualifications to assess conditions and make decisions about the trajectory of national development.²⁴⁶ This becomes clear as international donor organizations and their informants in domestic NGOs produce serious misinterpretations of material conditions and base their project designs and volunteer placement on this faulty information. However, since the CNR was the first Burkinabé government to take a serious role in rural administration, it too encountered many difficulties and demonstrated many shortcomings in its ambitious plans for national development. Due to the newness of the revolutionary project and the reorganization of SPONG at the time when the Kindi project reports were written, it is difficult to tell how the program evolved past late 1985, but even in the analysis of this single village, we can observe that the CNR intended to cultivate greater material understanding of rural life and develop effective forms of cooperation.

We can view these attributes of cooperation, disorganization and misinterpretation of conditions, through the Kindi Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Project in cooperation with CA and UNAIS. One of the primary actors in the Kindi program was Jean

²⁴⁶ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé the Christian Aid Secretariat, September 28th 1985, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-5. Translated from French: "Le CNR a uniformise les méthodes sur toute l'étendue du territoire. Nous sommes dans les bonnes voies selon nos prévisions."

Julien Somé, a state medical officer appointed by the CNR to staff the clinic in Kindi to implement the national primary care health program (SSP). In 1985 he writes a letter to CA in which he laments the slow progress of the SSP in Kindi, highlighting the lack of resources available in the region when the project started in 1978, and the manner in which things have improved since the revolution as well as continued difficulties. In an attempt to address the endemic shortcomings in the SSP highlighted by Somé, “the CNR has standardized methods throughout the territory. We are on the right track according to our forecasts,” with the appointment of individuals like Somé to local posts to oversee the implementation of the program and coordinate with existing groups and institutions.²⁴⁷ Somé is clearly on board with the revolutionary methods and desires of CNR’s program but does also not abstain from criticism of the program because,

in a general way we are ahead at the level of the Province and even national. Regarding the keys to the success of PSPs: The environmental study and awareness. The short sensitization time foreseen by the CNR is insufficient, but with its extent and means, it will give a boost to the work already done and the trust of the people. the government is currently looking for financial means for the vast program with NGOs and diplomatic representations. So we can be discreet that CA is not left behind and was right in granting the funding.²⁴⁸

Based on this explanation, Somé asks for additional funding for the program in Kindi, predicating the request on the fact that the project in Kindi has moved ahead of schedule and that in order to progress further, external agencies need to become involved to assist the government,

²⁴⁷ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé the Christian Aid Secretariat, September 28th 1985, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th Deposit, Christian Aid Archive, SOAS University Library Archives, London, United Kingdom, 1-5. Translated from French: “Le CNR a uniformise les méthodes sur toute l'étendue du territoire. Nous sommes dans les bonnes voies selon nos prévisions.”

²⁴⁸ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé the Christian Aid Secretariat, September 28th 1985, 3-4. Translated from French : “d'une façon générale nous sommes en avance au niveau de la Province et même national. En ce qui concerne les clés du succès des PSP c'est-à-dire: L'étude du milieu et la sensibilisation. Le court temps de sensibilisation prévu par le CNR est insuffisant mais comptenu de son étendu et des moyens cela donnera un souffle au travail déjà fait et de la confiance aux populations. le gouvernement est actuellement à la recherché des moyens financiers pour le vaste programme auprès des ONG et représentations diplomatiques. Alors on peut discret que CA n'est pas en reste et avait vu juste en accordant le financement.”

due to its lack of funding and insistence that certain standards be attained in the villages by the state health officials.

Somé was instrumental in reaching out to UNAIS for further support, indicating that the CNR encouraged and assisted their local professional functionaries in seeking international assistance. After a study was carried out by a local affiliate with contacts in the UNAIS project development office, three volunteers were sent to Kindi in 1983, one before and another after the revolution in August. Jean Julien Somé had already been in place as the “state nurse” since 1980 but was encouraged by the reorganization of the SSP under the revolutionary leadership, leading to high expectations for what could be achieved with the help of volunteers and with additional funding from the CNR and CA. UNAIS sent their volunteers on the basis of a report written by Paul Zoundi, but later found out that the research conducted by this person was inconsistent with the material realities on the ground in Kindi and tended to idealize the levels of progress and support attained externally and from the government.²⁴⁹ UNAIS had already trained and planned to send their volunteers (or already sent them) before the revolution took place. The rhetoric from the CNR left UNAIS encouraged that the volunteers could stay and projects should proceed as originally planned, a dialogue laid out in a confidential report by UNAIS Secretary Bernard Taylor from June 1984, giving extensive details on the political situation and how this relates to the Kindi project and ongoing UNAIS participation in the country.²⁵⁰

Debating UNAIS Involvement in Burkina Faso: A Tale of Two Reports

In the early period of the revolution, international funding from France, Cote d’Ivoire and the US seemed to be holding firm, but due to the rhetorical stances of the CNR, tensions soon

²⁴⁹ Report on the Field Visit to Upper Volta-June 1-15 1984, Confidential to UNAIS, by Bernard Taylor, June 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, 3-5.

²⁵⁰ Report on the Field Visit to Upper Volta-June 1-15 1984, Confidential to UNAIS, by Bernard Taylor, June 1984, 1-3, 9-10.

developed over a counter-coup attempted on May 28th which the CNR believed had received backing from these parties. Historically, we see that France and the US withdrew most of their aid by the end of 1984 and open diplomatic hostilities began to take place between the revolutionary government of Burkina Faso and the solidly capitalist government of Cote d'Ivoire. Taylor continues, "At the local level, the revolution continues to bring changes, perhaps the most important ones being the new appointments of civil servants to key administrative positions and the growth of village Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) that are challenging the traditional power structures at the village level."²⁵¹ Aside from this positive remark on rural development of the CDRs, a less than bright picture is painted on the national level, focusing on the potential splintering of the CNR as the primary civilian body of the government, LIPAD which contended with the military for power in the government, leading to tension and the removal of a LIPAD member from a ministerial post. Most of the concerns raised are centered in Ouagadougou, specifically around the day to day operations of the CNR in its early phase of consolidation. The sectarian split within the government, the execution of some right wing soldiers that had attempted to stage the May 28th coup and the burning down of a local tabloid headquarters which had opposed the revolution, demonstrating the lack of discipline among the soldiers of the CNR.²⁵²

Taylor also expressed praise for the CNR in terms of its decision to introduce greater regulation and coordination of NGOs in Burkina Faso through the SPONG secretariat, which would collect information on NGOs materials, capacities and funding in order to assign them to appropriate regions and tasks on which to work. This is the basis of my argument going forward, that in the place of requesting money from international financial institutions and in relation to

²⁵¹ Report on the Field Visit to Upper Volta-June 1-15 1984, Confidential to UNAIS, by Bernard Taylor, June 1984, 2.

²⁵² Report on the Field Visit to Upper Volta-June 1-15 1984, Confidential to UNAIS, by Bernard Taylor, June 1984, 4.

the diminishing funding from France, the US and Cote d'Ivoire, the CNR sought to organize NGOs and their rural civilian population in the most efficient and effective manner possible in order to implement its sweeping social policy changes, infrastructure projects and agricultural and environmental reforms. Taylor states, "I was very encouraged by the genuine interest he [Administrator of SPONG] took in our work and the support he offered. Other NGOs have experienced the same. It is my impression that whilst this Office, if it does its work seriously, will eventually begin to coordinate NGO activities the level of control and intervention involved will not adversely affect any future IS programme."²⁵³ In these meetings SPONG also placed high emphasis on water projects, such as the construction of bunds and small dams to assure that future droughts would not as seriously affect the ability of the rural population to feed itself, demonstrating that the government had a consolidated vision for rural development and had programs they intended to develop nationally, rather than deferring to NGOs.

While the report commences with an overview of the CNR, the main body of text focuses on the failures of UNAIS involvement in the Kindi project, which resulted from both lack of understanding of material realities in Kindi and the turbulence of the revolution. While the report has an overall positive view of the revolutionary reforms taking place, despite the political challenges taking place in Ouagadougou, the ill preparedness of the UNAIS volunteers to assist with implementation of the new primary health care program showed. The volunteers lacked fluency in French or Mooré, and did not have contact with a UNAIS field officer in Burkina Faso, having to communicate with one working in Mali hundreds of miles away. The case of the Kindi project was navigated on multiple levels and dispersed spaces, from the village health clinic in Kindi where the volunteers operated, to an office complex at Whitehall Court in London, where the program was designed, debated and eventually discontinued. The disconnect

²⁵³ Report on the Field Visit to Upper Volta-June 1-15 1984, Confidential to UNAIS, by Bernard Taylor, June 1984, 4-5.

that can be observed through these documents is striking and indicates that international donor and aid organizations also lacked the knowledge to design and implement programs in Africa, from offices in Europe. Though this is merely a single, localized recounting of the dysfunction of such organizations, it would not be an irrational notion that this happened elsewhere, resulting in the frustration of policy implementation processes, as it did in Kindi.

Contrastingly, another report by UNAIS West Africa Committee member Henrietta Moore, paints a different picture than the report by Bernard Taylor. While Taylor is confident that the situation in Burkina Faso is cohesive with further UNAIS participation in the Kindi project and beyond, Moore recommends that UNAIS phase out its projects in Burkina Faso by 1986. Moore puts more effort into defining the role that UNAIS should have in “third-world” countries, rejecting the idea that UNAIS should develop its programs in conjunction with the everchanging plans of emerging state structures. Moore is firm in her belief that UNAIS should participate in an advisory capacity to existing NGO and national projects, rather than on the village level, where UNAIS volunteers would be used as the primary planners and workers.²⁵⁴ To this point, Moore states, “In the case of village based projects, volunteers are required to work for and through village level groups; some of these groups do, of course, have stronger links with the government services, and perhaps other NGOs.”²⁵⁵ Though it isn’t entirely clear from this statement, Moore is asserting that these village based projects are unusual for UNAIS to participate in and that more research needs to be done on the needs of the locality, the potential for cooperation with local and national governmental and NGO units. Moore’s report doubts that UNAIS has the capacity at that time to effectively place volunteers in village level projects, pointing to its failed placements at Kindi as an example.

²⁵⁴ The Upper Volta Programme: An Evaluation by Henrietta L. Moore, March 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, 3, 5.

²⁵⁵ The Upper Volta Programme: An Evaluation by Henrietta L. Moore, March 1984, 6.

Failed volunteer placements are what both Moore and the CNR wanted to cut down on. Both expressed significant interest in the efficient utilization of meager resources and wanted as few expatriate volunteers to achieve as much as possible and train local officials, residents and workers at the same time so that the country can work toward self-sufficiency. Moore is especially critical of UNAIS reliance on the reporting of Paul Zoundi, which turned out to be extremely flawed from an academic perspective and did not highlight the main needs of the Kindi project effectively.²⁵⁶ Moore outlines the degree and extent of the preparations needed, study of the expertise volunteers would need, establishment of field offices and lines of communication, allocation of funding and materials, and larger assessment of the conditions of the region, country and political situation to assure the stability of the project and safety of the volunteers, regardless of the size of the project or number of volunteers placed.

Based on the outcomes of the project and initial research documents, Moore concludes that, “Under the present structure of the Field Office (FO), it is not possible to run a programme of village based projects: the work demands and the range of skills required are too much for one person.”²⁵⁷ Considering that at the beginning of UNAIS placement of volunteers, there was no FO in Burkina Faso, the political situation was unstable, the needs of Kindi were different than reported by a non-UNAIS researcher, the communication infrastructure was limited and the volunteers did not have the expertise required to be able to assist appropriately in the project, Moore seems to have had a point. While it may seem that it was unlucky coincidence that UNAIS tried to place project volunteers in the middle of a revolution, it attests to organization’s lack of familiarity with local political situations, probably a result of a lack of a FO present in Burkina Faso for many months. Had UNAIS been present in Ouagadougou for the months

²⁵⁶ The Upper Volta Programme: An Evaluation by Henrietta L. Moore, March 1984, 7.

²⁵⁷ The Upper Volta Programme: An Evaluation by Henrietta L. Moore, March 1984, 13.

leading up to the revolution, it would have been much easier to perceive that such a climactic event was in the works.

The recognition on Moore's part that the CNR wanted to limit the number of foreign workers in the country, and to have those foreign workers coordinated in an effective manner, shows that information about politics and policy was available to those seeking it. Aid saturation was a real problem in Burkina Faso at the time of the revolution, with too many volunteers on the ground working on projects with conflicting scopes and contradictory goals. Moore and Taylor agreed that a large-scale reorganization of NGO cooperation systems by the government was long overdue and while the prerogative of the CNR to limit the number of expatriates working in Burkina Faso limited the ability of UNAIS to establish programs and send volunteers, Moore and Taylor concluded that it would be better to place volunteers in situations coordinated by local and national authorities rather than in a situation where coordination would be constrained. However, while Taylor wanted the project to be reorganized and continue with the re-placement of volunteers and creation of more UNAIS positions in Burkina Faso, Moore advocates for a wholesale withdrawal from Burkina Faso and revisualization of UNAIS' work in the country to be geared toward funding and providing project formatting assistance from abroad or through local organizations, rather than starting mission stations and placing volunteers.

Through Moore's argument we can extrapolate that she believed UNAIS needed to take up a role similar to that of CA, which was also involved in funding the Kindi Project and demonstrably had a much closer relationship with the government than UNAIS did. The communication between the CNR and top CA officials is quite well documented in these archives as the Kindi file shows that Sally Meachim received direct letters from CNR health officials. An extensive report about the nationwide structure of the SSP and vaccination commando projects were shared with Meachim along with a request for funding. This report

indicated the degree to which the CNR intended to conduct these projects as flexibly as possible in terms of implementation from village to village,

With the founding of the CNR, there are the CDRs which also constitute a public awareness and mobilization framework. We know that GVs are stable and have experience when they work properly. They include a number of peasants whose activities are a bit limited. Women organize themselves separately. For the management of a project at the village level, it is indisputable that a body responsible for SSP is needed, but the initiative will be left to each village to choose its type of management body. This body may be the village group, the CDR or a CSV. This is the result of many discussions in the villages concerned. Indeed, the same farmers find themselves in these different organizations.”²⁵⁸ (784)

The CNR was aware of its limitations, but did not use this as an excuse to not approach large scale reform projects. Instead it worked with the most motivated and well-organized village groups throughout the country in an effort to provide primary health care facilities and vaccinate children. Lacking large scale funding and international skepticism over the viability of such projects in a country like Burkina Faso, the CNR found success by relying on a well-coordinated and organized network of smaller aid groups and public mobilization via the CDRs. The combination of non-conditional international funding and public motivation to take part in such projects, lead to many successes in both the vaccination and SSP campaigns. Such demonstrations seem to have proved to Moore by 1984 that the mobilization capacities of the CNR could work correctly if directly invested in rather than supplied with expatriate volunteers.

Flexibility of programs to fit to local material conditions was an important objective of the CNR because it encouraged both local enthusiasm and international investment. The report to

²⁵⁸ Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 2. Translated from French: “Avec l'avènement du conseil CNR il y a les CDR qui constituent aussi un cadre de sensibilisation et d'animation. Nous savons que les GV sont stables et ont de l'expérience quand ils fonctionnent correctement. Ils regroupent un certain nombre de paysans dont les activités sont un peu limitées. Les femmes s'organisent a part. Pour la gestion un projet au niveau villageois, il est indiscutable qu'il faut un organe responsable des SSP néanmoins l'initiative sera laissée a chaque village de choisir son type d'organe de gestion. Cet Organe peut être le groupement villageois, les CDR ou un CSV. C'est ce qui ressort de nombreuses discussions dans les villages concernes. En effet, les mêmes paysans se retrouvent dans ces différents organisations.”

CA details that “the existence of these organizations [CDR, GV, CSV], although of different design, contribute to the same objectives, namely the development of the village. If the methods differ at the level of the supervisors ours is of course slow given the sensitization but ensures durable if not final results.”²⁵⁹ The local organizations and populations described the specific problems and needs of their community, and were ‘sensitized’ or informed of the options available to them to fix these problems. The options presented were limited to those within the parameters of the CNR programs and the expertise NGO and governmental agencies could provide. Though the CNR committed to and sometimes demonstrated that their methods for development were flexible, most aid groups wanted to take the process of allocating funds and materials slowly so that longer periods could be devoted to ‘sensibilisation’ in Burkina Faso and external recruiting and training of volunteers.

The CNR felt differently about the amount of time required to set up projects as it embarked on programs to rapidly transformed the county without major sources of outside funding, creating the need for smaller amounts from sources that offered aid unconditionally. After becoming the third new government to take power in as many years, the CNR stood on tenuous ground and hoped that the ramping up of popular development projects with small influxes of financial and material aid, would stabilize the political situation. Correspondence from the CNR to CA emphasized the need for immediately material assistance, despite having lamented that “we agree that it is necessary to focus for the beginning in the villages where the sensitization arrived at the point: choice of the agents of ASC and their formation in Kindi. But the beginning for us being first of all the study of the environment then the sensitization, it is

²⁵⁹ Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 2. Translated from French: “l'existence de ces organisations quoique de conception différente concourent aux mêmes objectifs a savoir le développement du village. Se les méthodes diffèrent au niveau des encadreurs la nôtre est bien sur lente compte-tenu de la sensibilisation mais assure des résultats durables sinon définitifs.”

possible not to wait to finish with all these villages.”²⁶⁰ The more radical ideological stance taken by the CNR, which became particularly militant after the counter-coup attempt in May 1984, did not drive away CA, which instead deepened its ties to the government, expediting the allocation of aid process.

Dependency literature often expresses the importance that aid agencies offering development assistance work closely with national governments to implement certain programs at the local level, but equally so that the government be allowed to examine the conditions of people and landscapes and determine their interpretation of these conditions, independently of outside decisionmakers. This was not the case before 1983 as the governments operated almost exclusively in the population centers and deferred to traditional chiefs to deliver taxes and votes in the rural and less infrastructurally accessible areas. The gap that the CNR intended to bridge, between themselves and rural communities, was massive, but its leaders quickly became aware of the vast diversity of needs and requests from village to village. The CNR health official who wrote to Sally Meachim advocated the Dependency perspective, asking that the request for funding not have to wait until all villages have been evaluated and local organizations trained because,

there will never be an end as such but may be end of stages. the proposed dates are only forecasts. We are aware that for several reasons, these dates will not be applied to the letter. The proof is that we did not start the training. But we could not foresee all the villages under penalty of disadvantaging some, not knowing the rhythm and the reaction to the sensitization when they will see the concretization in the villages chosen for the formation of the ASC. So, we are pleased to see that we all look in the same direction. It is not possible practically to have to do to all villages foil for the same stage, as it is not possible also to give deadlines and dates that would cause constraints or acceleration in decision-making, while the pace of change in each village must be monitored and reactions to the sensibilisation process.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 3-4. Translated from French: “nous sommes d'accord qu'il faut se concentrer pour le début dans les villages ou la sensibilisation est arrivée a point: choix des agents de ASC et leur formation a Kindi. Mais le début pour nous étant d'abord l'étude du milieu puis la sensibilisation, il est possible de ne pas attendre de finir avec tous ces villages.”

²⁶¹ Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 2-3.

Village level Health agents (ASC) like Julien Somé, who were recruited, trained and relocated to a village that had been screened and pre-selected for immediate participation in the SSP program contributed to the communication network in a major way. While there were some general guidelines concerning what the ideal agent would look like, the most important aspect emphasized were their ability to dynamically mobilize the village. The village level organization would also have the responsibility in mobilizing to assist the ASC as well as the local CDR or GV should begin to create some simple health infrastructure or allocate land or buildings to use as the clinic and popular pharmacy, or a CSV must be formed to assist in the preparation for and direct implementation of the SSP.²⁶² Julien Somé appears to have been tasked with conducting communications with CA as well, in order to demonstrate local competencies and give projects a greater air of legitimacy. A letter from Some to Meachim on March 18th 1985 emphasized that funding is needed to stock the new Popular Pharmacies, which will provide free medicine to the very poor and that learned volunteers are needed to organize these pharmacies and train the health agents in the basic literacy of pharmaceuticals. A two pronged approach to communications with CA should be recognized as higher up CNR officials set the terms of aid and requested specific amounts, while local actors like Some demonstrated need, without directly asking for funds.

In his letter to Meachim, Somé does not specifically request funds from CA but rather alludes to the fact that money, resources and technical help is necessary for the program to

Translated from French: "Il n'y aura jamais de fin en tant que tel mais peut être de fin d'étapes. les dates proposées ne sont que des prévisions. Nous sommes conscients que pour plusieurs raisons, ces dates ne seront pas appliquées à la lettre. La preuve est là que nous n'avons pas démarré la formation. Mais nous ne pouvions pas ne pas prévoir tous les villages sous peine de pénaliser certains, ne sachant pas le rythme et la réaction à la sensibilisation quand ils verront la concrétisation dans les villages choisis pour la formation des ASC. Ainsi nous nous réjouissons de constater que nous regardons tous dans le même sens. Il n'est pas en effet possible pratiquement d'avoir à faire à tous les villages à la fois pour la même étape, comme il n'est pas possible aussi de donner des délais et des dates qui entraîneraient des contraintes ou l'accélération dans les prises de décisions, alors qu'il faut suivre le rythme d'évolution de chaque village et tenir compte des réactions à la sensibilisation."

²⁶² Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 3.

succeed. Costs are specifically laid out and the pieces that are missing mentioned. The CNR, in its drive to reduce the influence and prevalence of western volunteers in the country's rural institutions, while also requiring the presence of such groups to fulfill short term project goals, sought to deduce the degree to which such organizations were willing to contribute to the specific projects laid out. Groups that had their own projects in mind and were not willing to be part of the SPONG network, would be excluded, while those that wished to contribute in the manner designated by the CNR, were coordinated with. Somé's concluding remarks also reference CA's mission statement necessitating local agreement with projects, seeking to re-emphasize that locals in Kindi are willing participants that have already welcomed an ASC to the village and have some infrastructure prepared to make the project a success.²⁶³

As demonstrated in the first section, CA was one of the international donor groups willing to work within the parameters laid out by the CNR for project participation and was reassured by the active interest and participation by UNAIS. Based on the report from Some to Sally Meachim, a letter from Meachim to Sarah Hughes verbally commends the process laid out by the CNR and its implementation as "sensible."²⁶⁴ While some doubt is expressed about the quickness with which a popular pharmacy will be set up by the CNR, it is believed that a strong foundation has been established in Kindi for funding from CA and volunteers from UNAIS to be supplied in 1985, despite the short comings of the 1983-1984 program in which UNAIS sent volunteers who were not properly prepared and did not have a popular mandate in the village. These indications from 1985 are that a better program was worked out, somewhere between what Moore and Taylor wanted to see happen. The project was not discontinued as Moore advocated, but many of her criticisms were turned into policy which sought to improve research techniques,

²⁶³ Correspondence from Ministre de la Sante Publique to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 4.

²⁶⁴ Christian Aid Interoffice Correspondence signed by Sally Meachim, attached to Correspondence from Angelo Simonazzi UNAIS Ouagadougou to Sarah Hughes, June 8th 1985, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 2nd deposit.

create more consistent networks of communication and send envoys in advance to make sure sites are properly prepared for volunteers.

In terms of the original UNAIS volunteers, around which these many reports revolve, they were trained and sent to Burkina Faso in the weeks before the revolution of August 1983 and, by all accounts, had a turbulent transition into the evolving circumstances under the new government. Besides not being properly prepared while still in the UK, the previous government, a military junta called CSP-II, was engulfed in turmoil and did not have the organizational capacities to provide the necessary information to aid agencies, requesting and receiving volunteers in a haphazard manner. Particularly pertaining to Kindi, this reallocation of aid and support in 1985 came after Julien Somé underwent more training at CESAO, a special training center for rural development agents in Bobo Dioulasso, sponsored by UNAIS and recommended by UNAIS agents Paul and Linda Jenkins, who are credited with identifying Kindi in 1980 as a site with great potential to become a model for future rural health implementation projects, based on the mobilization capacities of the community GV and the overall cohesive feeling that improved health care would benefit their community.²⁶⁵

The renewal of interest in Kindi by CA and UNAIS occurred after a comprehensive reassessment project that took place within UNAIS and was a result of having to reformat its aid allocation process since CNR programs were drastically different than those negotiated under previous governments. The withdraw of UNAIS volunteers in 1984 resulted from the original project being constructed by agents outside of Burkina Faso, because no coordination or direction was offered by the military governments from 1980-1983. While the investigation of Henriette Moore in 1984 recommended the dissolution of all UNAIS projects in Burkina Faso,

²⁶⁵ Proposal for Kindi Project, Burkina Faso, West Africa, by Paul and Linda Jenkins, Representatives of UNAIS, undated, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit.

offering aid saturation, lack of funding and insufficient experience in the country as the reasoning, a later memo by UNAIS project staff questions these findings and cites the questionable conditions under which the volunteers were oriented and the sporadic political changes taking place at the time, ushering in the necessity of a new orientation, rather than a complete cessation of activities.²⁶⁶ The conflicting report by Bernard Taylor, which has already been mentioned, is also referred to and guides the recommendations of the UNAIS staff in September, 1984 in terms of reorienting UNAIS's role in Burkina Faso rather than withdrawing it.

I argue that aid groups were moved to reorient themselves toward the CNR, which insisted that it be involved and informed about all the projects taking place, funding being allocated, and expertise of the various volunteer expatriates in the country. By late 1984 and early 1985, groups like UNAIS and CA were recommitted to working with the CNR and within its unique parameters. This required additional research and reassessment of how projects were put into place overall. This is made clear via the way in which CA and UNAIS board members assessed the reports of Hanneke Brouwer and the two UNAIS nurses who traveled to Burkina Faso and began to establish themselves in Kindi immediately after the revolution. I will dissect the report by Brouwer, who arrived in Kindi before the revolution, to highlight the disassociation between the UNAIS orientation program in London and the realities of the Kindi project, and the incompatibility of UNAIS involvement in Kindi with the new CNR programs.

²⁶⁶ Memo: Reassessment of the BF Programme, from Paul and Linda Jenkins to UNAIS staff PG, GM, BT, MW, JC, BG and Sarah Hughes, September 11th 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 1-3.

The Difficulties of European Volunteers in Kindi

During her initial survey of the Kindi area and villages, Brouwer interacts with GVs that had been untouched by the revolution to that point. Brouwer arrived to assist with implementing dry season vegetable growing projects, which local agents of the previous government had assured UNAIS would be possible in the Kindi area. However, the information Brouwer received about the region and the project set up, was outdated and inaccurate. Upon her arrival, GVs and encadreurs (appointed officials by the national government since 1980) assumed that she knew all about their work and what they hoped to accomplish with their help. While these initial encounters and meetings were somewhat helpful because a better image of the local context was provided, it revealed just how deficient communication was and how inconsistent the encadreurs were in terms of implementing policy. Brouwer states, “Soon two encadreurs were transferred to a different region...The encadreurs who had been transferred, officially were replaced, but one of the two successors only after almost a year arrived in the village, while the other has only been spotted in the village around the monthly pay day. The remaining encadreurs, too, are not always to be found in their villages.”²⁶⁷ (842) Brouwer explains this in terms of inconsistent payment of salaries and local level corruption.

Brouwer seems to highlight the encadreurs as a problematic sector because they act as the main communicative agents between the regional and local authorities, operating with limited oversight and sometimes abusing their powers or not taking their position seriously. In terms of Brouwer’s program, it seems that the information communicated by several local encadreurs to the ORD and then to UNAIS was problematic. “Their training is limited, and there is hardly any

²⁶⁷ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 2.

supervision of their work” and the ORD official who was to oversee the encadreurs in the Kindi area was nowhere to be found.²⁶⁸ (843)

Aside from encountering a less than ideal organizational network of coordination between the GVs and higher authorities, Brouwer is aghast at the antiquated and completely inefficient system of development credits, observing that lack of evolution of credit policy had led to their becoming even less village-user friendly and navigable for GVs. Further, despite the GV being officially responsible for requesting and distributing credits in Kindi, a traditional chief decided who could and could not receive money, limiting credit distribution to the chiefs family and supporters. The system was also restrictive because it obliged the use of credits for specific projects to be embarked upon in tandem, for example, credits were only available if the GV committed to the construction of a cereal bank and a mill.²⁶⁹ Only after these projects were completed could the group use the rest of the money for other measures.

The wait times for the allocation of funding were long, bureaucracy had to be navigated and a literacy gap left GVs waiting for years before funding could be received and applied for again. The old system was so inefficient that, “some of the more active encadreurs had discovered, in order to avoid the time consuming procedures of the ORD, alternative ways to finance their projects,” including turning to churches with international financial connections, foreign embassies and aid groups operating in nearby communities.²⁷⁰ Brouwer emphasizes that “The advantages for a GV of these ways of funding are clear: there is no obligation to pay back, and the system works much faster. Despite these advantages these possibilities are not fully

²⁶⁸ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 3.

²⁶⁹ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 3.

²⁷⁰ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 4.

exploited by the encadeurs...”²⁷¹ As soon as the CNR came to power and secured its place as the state authority, it did away with the credit system and embraced a twofold plan for allocating resources to the villages. It set up CDRs to act as mobilized implementors of policy and sent various other government officials and experts to advise them, while simultaneously observing, in the same way that Brouwer did, that a multitude of non-conditional funds and resources were available by coordinating with religious groups, embassies, and smaller NGOs that did not require any concessions to continue their work.

With the credit system broken and the encadeurs inconsistent, the GVs had high hopes for, and in many cases had come to depend upon, international assistance through direct intervention. Village groups expressed eagerness to work on any project Brouwer suggested because they consistently lacked means, funding and technical support, and believed that Brouwer could be a source of immediate investment. But there was an acute lack of understanding of her position in UNAIS and technical training which she intended to apply in Kindi. In terms of the village being adequately prepared to receive her, Brouwer believes that they were misinformed by the encadeurs or only given brief notice that she would be arriving, “because the aim of my presence was not entirely clear to the villagers...The little experience these people have with ex-patriot [sic] help must have given them faith that we, too, would supply goods and money.”²⁷²

However, despite all these aforementioned institutional problems, ranging from the limits put on the GVs to lack of understanding of local conditions at UNAIS, the major roadblock to Brouwer’s intended project was the notable lack of water. As was outlined in “Le Sahel Refluriara” the years 1983 through 1985 were drought stricken, with the CNR requiring massive

²⁷¹ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 4.

²⁷² Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 5.

assistance from FEME and CA to alleviate famine conditions. Locally in Kindi the lack of water affected the Kindi project and many other projects across Burkina Faso as dry season agriculture was almost untenable. Brouwer very quickly discovered the infeasibility of dry season market gardening, due to drought conditions, despite the GVs being eager to take up this plan and requests for funding and equipment. Brouwer expresses disappointment about her briefing from UNAIS as outdated based on hearing “ that there must have been gardening some ten years ago, but this had disappeared with the worsening of the water situation.” The GVs, for their part, believed that such a project was attainable but only with additional wells being dug, something that Brouwer had no funding or expertise in.

I want to highlight this disconnect over the possibilities of project implementation, and NGO-government communication, specifically relating to water because concepts about the environment in the Sahel, from a western standpoint especially, are often distorted and inaccurate. The assumption is common among western NGOs that the decline of the environmental prosperity in the Sahel is the result of more than just changing weather patterns, but of the negligence of Sahelian peoples in managing their resources and environment in a pragmatic manner in times of the fluctuation of rainfall. While environmental mismanagement certainly happens in some cases in the Sahel, most participants in subsistence agriculture have an intimate relationship with the land they work and make great effort treat it in a manner which will both produce enough for subsistence and make sure the soil does not become completely exhausted due to overplanting.

The natural western inclination to introduce mechanized agricultural methods, such as tractors, artificial fertilizers and genetically modified varieties of food staples, has been largely rejected by the academic community and Sahelian farmers. Project intervention studies have shown that conservation, rather than mechanization is crucial “on formerly degraded lands

which have been reclaimed, increased soil and water conservation as well as the application of organic manure have led to the considerable soil improvement even after one or two years.”²⁷³ In the case of Kindi, as well as deciding that dry season vegetable gardening was impossible, Brouwer also rejected the introduction of mechanizing technology due to consistently poor and uncertain results when applied in Burkina Faso.

Reij’s observations of the Agro-Forestry Project (PAF) in Burkina Faso, shows that farmers were committed to their own methodology based on the availability of labor and social distribution of land, preferring water conservation and soil renewal methods, to the introduction of foreign materials and methods.²⁷⁴ In this same vein, many farmers in Kindi and elsewhere were resistant to altering their contemporary pattern of planting. What villagers expressed the most need for was not improved planting methods but investment in conservation projects. What were termed “traditional” methods were actually extremely flexible and had developed on a season to season basis as Burkinabé altered their methods to correspond with environmental conditions. It quickly became obvious to Brouwer that she could be most useful in the search for solutions to the problem of drought.

Brouwer’s reassessment of her role and the role of her project in Kindi is an important testament to the gap between NGO’s understanding of situations in the Burkina Faso, and a need for the establishment of better networks of communication between governmental authorities, rural communities and internationally based aid groups. Brouwer’s reassessment lead to the establishment of connections with a Belgian project called “Action Micro-Barrages,” (AMB) and the Dutch embassy in Ouagadougou.²⁷⁵ Brouwer became increasingly interested in working with

²⁷³ Chris Reij, "The Agro-Forestry Project in Burkina Faso: An Analysis of Popular Participation in Soil and Water Conservation." International Institute for Environment and Development no. B9 (1989), 9.

²⁷⁴ Reij, “The Agro-Forestry Project in Burkina Faso,” 4, 7, 11-12.

²⁷⁵ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 6.

AMB in having them come to teach their methods for finding the correct placement of and constructing a small dam for water conservation.²⁷⁶ The designs for these dams are given to the GVs for free by the AMB and after the initial survey work done by a Belgian volunteer, the construction is left up to the GVs while the Belgian volunteer returns to check on the project at regular intervals. While Brouwer could not apply her expertise in agriculture, she was able to find a role facilitating the provision of assistance and training in water conservation to Kindi.

Water conservation projects like Brouwer was attempting to initiate in Kindi, weren't always unanimously accepted by the local social forces. Brouwer reports that before the project in Kindi could get underway, "The so-called [sic] 'chef-de-terre', an influential traditional leader, objected against the dam being built in a certain space because of a sacred spot nearby. The GV, composed of young farmers, under the leadership of a progressive member of their family (Paul Zoundi), wants to see an end to the traditional 'chefferie'. They therefore had not informed the 'chef-de-terre', nor the 'vieux', the old men of their quarter."²⁷⁷ The GV that Brouwer mentions was composed socially disadvantaged community members who likely felt empowered by the CNR to bypass the traditional chiefs. Paul Zoundi and the Kindi GV probably saw the dam project as the perfect opportunity to demonstrate that they no longer had to fully cooperate with the 'chef-de-terre' and could act as the decision makers at the local level because of their national mandate. The chief's opposition did delay the project but after the situation was arbitrated by the regional prefect, the project went ahead as originally planned by the GV and AMB.

²⁷⁶ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 6-8.

In terms of the technological aspects of AMB's project, "The dam is designed, taking into account maximum taking into account the maximum rainfall in hundred [sic] expected for the area. Generally the length of a dam...is about 100 m. The height is about 2.5 m." Two overflow reservoirs are made of cement while the primary reservoir is made with tampered clay layers to prevent leaking, in order to prevent collapse of the dam.

²⁷⁷ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 8.

The issue of land use and rights came to the forefront in the early revolutionary period particularly due to the CNR's drastic shift away from relying on traditional authorities for rural support, to the much larger masses of disadvantaged young farmers. During the period that Brouwer worked in Kindi, the CNR attempted to socially shift land control from the chiefs to actors who would come to compose the CDRs. While the CNR had been vocal about the CDRs relieving the chiefs of their land management responsibilities, there was no cohesive national land policy until the decree of July of 1984 which nationalized all land and entrusted decision making about its use and distribution to the CDRs. In reality, the break from the traditional system was not clean or orderly. While the hegemony of the chief was to be destroyed, it came to be recognized that land reform could not be achieved in a successful manner without their participation.

There were also ethnic dimensions to water and land use which came out through the medium of the dam building project in Kindi. A group of local Fulani herders who grazed their cattle in the area was eager for the dam project to be completed but, "they were not prepared to work on the construction, but wanted to make use of it all the same, as a watering-place for their animals."²⁷⁸ Brouwer admits freely that she was unaware of these local sorts of land use conflict, both between traditional chiefs and CDRs and between the ethnic Mossi farmers and Fulani herders. These are the types of issues which must be settled locally because the imposition of foreign ideas of land rights and participation can be projected on to situations which have many local and social subtleties. There are certain methods, which have been established over centuries, for the Mossi and Fulani to engage in diplomacy and come to some kind of agreement based on localized economic principals.²⁷⁹ In the nationalization of land, the CNR did not

²⁷⁸ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 8-9.

²⁷⁹ Richard Vengroff, *Upper Volta: Environmental Uncertainty and Livestock Production* (Lubbock, TX: International Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Land Studies, 1980), 25, 34-35.

attempt to discourage these types of interaction, rather merely mandating that those negotiations be undertaken by members of democratically elected committees through the CDRs. Foreigners and expatriates were encouraged to avoid becoming involved in such discussions because they were there for reasons of providing technical assistance, not for giving out political advice.²⁸⁰

Despite engaging with the GV, CDR and other NGOs in the Kindi area as a facilitator of various water conservation projects and the acquisition of funds, Brouwer recognized that she was not the right person to be taking up such projects.²⁸¹ Brouwer intended to leave before seeing through some of the projects she had begun to facilitate, such as a women's communal building in Lalle, a small town near Kindi. The women's group in this village was well organized, active and had a good grasp of what they wanted to do and what materials they needed to assist in improving resource management in their village, as well as stimulate small-scale trading activities. Brouwer was able to secure a small grant from the Dutch embassy in Ouagadougou to purchase windows, roof plates and a door, while the women's group was prepared to organize to make mud bricks.²⁸² A member of the local GV, a mason by trade, agreed to draw a blueprint and coordinate the construction of the building for free. Though Brouwer did not stay long enough to see the finished project, she was suspicious of the encadreur who had connected her to the women's group in the first place, because after the funding had been acquired and the project begun, it was he who informed Brouwer that the village would also receive money from Cathwell for constructing such a building. The original investment by the Dutch was contingent upon this not being the case.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Sten Hagberg, *Between Peace and Justice: Dispute Settlement between Karaboro Agriculturalists and Fulbe Agro-pastoralists in Burkina Faso* (Uppsala, Sweden: Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, 1988), 55-57.

²⁸¹ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 7.

²⁸² Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 7.

²⁸³ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 8.

While this specific situation was a harmless effort to strategically utilize the various resources offered by the regional NGOs, it leads Brouwer to conclude that, “This experience convinced me once more of the necessity of knowing local circumstances thoroughly [sic]. Without this a clever encadreur or other influential person can easily misuse the presence of a volunteer.”²⁸⁴ This sentiment was shared by the CNR, specifically relating to the vast network of CDRs which had been given a powerful mandate in rural areas. The creation of SPONG as an institutional mechanism to coordinate the work of NGOs on a national level sought to overcome the possibility of misuse of NGO volunteers and make sure projects were implemented and completed at the democratic will of the people, rather than based on the decision making of a single individual, even if that individual’s scheme would benefit the people in a broader manner.

Theoretically, the broad coordination of NGO projects in many localities, would evenly distribute the benefits available through the presence volunteer groups, making encadreur, GVs and CDRs feel less inclined to work the system in order to provide improvements for their village. If such needs could be fulfilled through these coordination and communication methods via SPONG, it would become unnecessary for well-intentioned individuals to deceive expatriates, allowing for the identification of those who intended to act in a self-interested manner. The presence of a limited number of expatriates that were familiar with local circumstances and possessed open lines of communication with SPONG, was also important to the viability of this concept. The CNR intended to end the era of the clueless aid worker and introduces processes that maximized efficiency through improved communication and mutual understanding of how projects implementation would be formatted.

Brouwer’s report is extremely informative in terms of understanding the immediate impact of the 1983 revolution and the CNR’s plans for massive reform of the state, the land and

²⁸⁴ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 8.

society. The policies implemented on a national level are identified by Brouwer as coming into effect in Kindi, demonstrating that revolutionary rhetoric was not simply hollow promises intended to build legitimacy. This recognition did not mean uncritical acceptance however, as Brouwer critically analyzed the CNR's new measures to counteract deforestation and erosion through the planting of trees and development of more efficient methods for consuming wood. Kindi, which is in close proximity to Koudougou was one of the first areas where the 'Projet Foyers Ameliores' was developed as a pilot project before being taken nationally. This project was based around a group of animatrices and an animateur, government employees who had been trained in the production of a new type of wood burning stove which had been found to be more efficient.²⁸⁵

The stove itself was developed in Burkina Faso, under the auspices of the CNR, so that it could be built by anyone, using materials that were cheap and abundant locally. The new department of 'Eaux et Forets' which was created by the CNR specifically to develop a series of programs to engage in conservation and reforestation efforts, through drawing on and improving local methods which were native to Burkina Faso. The inclination on the part of the CNR to make sure that traditional processes were not disturbed but rather reformed and improved, indicated a suspicion of NGOs and a strong sentiment that, with the correct organization and resource inputs, local methods could be reformatted to work seamlessly against the backdrop of the contemporary material realities of Burkina Faso. Such a focus allowed the CNR and many of its programs to remain popular in rural areas and for the CDRs to develop into dynamic and energetic agents of positive development in many cases.²⁸⁶ Brouwer did observe some reluctance to take up the program among women in areas where serious water shortages were taking place,

²⁸⁵ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 9.

²⁸⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 27, 32.

which may have been a result of wanting to focus more on water conservation than forest conservation, indicating that local sentiments could influence which projects were implemented in a specific village.²⁸⁷

Brouwer indicated that the ‘Projet Foyers Ameliores’ may be impractical in terms of saving wood because, after a couple of training sessions and demonstrations, local women in Kindi and Tio still tended to use the same amount of wood in their burning activities, indicating that while the stove may have potential to save wood, it did not do so in practice because local women were not familiar enough with its use after limited exposure to training.²⁸⁸ While Brouwer readily admits that she is largely unaware of local circumstances and has even less understanding of the nature of national projects, partially due to unpreparedness at UNAIS and partially due to the newness of SPONG, she is critical of the stove program on the grounds that it, “should be done as part of a whole of measures to counteract [sic] deforestation and erosion. Other measures are reforestation, water conservation by means of dams, small dikes, covering of the soil with stalks of the harvest crop...” and that, “little attention is given to the relationship between environment and wood conserving, but it is not part of an integrated complex of improving measures.”²⁸⁹

At this time in the revolutionary period, the department of ‘Eaux et Forets’ was engaged in pilot projects, many in the rural periphery of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso in an effort to work toward the development of an integrated national environmental conservation project. With the experimental properties of this period in mind, Brouwer’s criticisms seem less warranted and based on observations from a single vantage. Further, her observation that the ‘Projet Foyers

²⁸⁷ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 9-11.

²⁸⁸ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 10.

²⁸⁹ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 10-11.

Ameliores' is not communicated to women in Kindi based on its potential for ecological improvements, but rather on the money saving properties that the lower consumption of wood will have for the individual or family, holds some merit. However, there are several reasons that this may be the case other than poor training methods or ignorance.²⁹⁰ The assumptions often made by expatriates, that governmental actors are disorganized or do not possess the correct capacities to improve resource management, resulted from the lack of a clear communication to expatriates of how their local projects fit in with national goals. The improved cook stove project, when observed in the context of national policies, demonstrates that the CNR was developing and implementing projects strategically and despite the imperfection of these processes, the confusion and disorganization was an attribute of European observers, rather than the Burkinabé people and the CNR.

The CNR, in its larger scale conservation efforts, wanted to emphasize both the positive effect conservation could have on the national and individual levels as a method for improving participation in popular mobilizations and resource improvement projects. The CNR's educational efforts in ecological science also came along slowly in the rural areas as many rural villagers were illiterate and did not understand their local environment in terms of academic ecological terminology, necessitating the tactful conveying information about conservation efforts. Brouwer asserted that not informing women in Kindi and Tio about the ecological aspect of the project, hurt its ability to have a positive impact in these terms, because a full understanding of the project was not achieved and rural localities continued to cut down the same amount of trees so as to develop a larger surplus of firewood.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 10-12.

²⁹¹ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 10-11.

Despite many progressive statements and the recognition of the need for NGOs to become better informed about the material condition in the rural localities in countries like Burkina Faso, Brouwer's conclusion offers many views

While there are certainly instances where individual malpractice in terms of agriculture and resource use is degrading, this does not occur in a vast scale, as most rural cultivators have an intimate relationship with the land and have engaged in gradual methodological adjustment over several centuries.²⁹² Brouwer may have failed to realize that adjustments were taking place on the local and individual level to changing environmental realities, because of her brief period of observation. While she may have recognized the role of colonialism in disrupting such processes, Brouwer does not express this, ascribing the ‘backward farmer’ role to the vast rural population.²⁹³ However, abuse of the environment in Burkina Faso is a fundamental legacy of French colonial occupation, as European technocrats attempted to introduce programs of capital producing extraction, rather than allowing locals to continue their process of methodological adjustment to their changing environment.²⁹⁴

Brouwer ultimately expresses what the CNR hoped to achieve through SPONG, stating that because the coordination and implementation of ecological conservation and agricultural improvement projects are not easy, “volunteer[s] will have to work together with organizations that work in the same field...part of a larger scheme,” and that, “In the ideal case, all this is coordinated by the government, but in Upper Volta [Burkina Faso] for the time being this will presumably not be a feasible situation.” While lamenting the newness and relative disorganization of the recently established CNR, there are some hopeful tones within Brouwer’s conclusions pertaining to government programs. Brouwer is also aware of the CNR’s desire to decrease the number of volunteers and create a better coordinated and more consolidated

based in western stereotyping of African’s relationship to their environment stating, “largescale deforestation, overgrazing and neglecting soil conserving measures, erosion has destroyed large areas in the country...This, and the increasing population-pressure are why still more soil has to be used for agriculture, and fallow periods abolished.”

²⁹² Mark Breusers, “Responses to Climate Variability in the Kaya Region, Burkina Faso,” in *The Impact of Climate Change on Drylands: With a Focus on West Africa*, ed. A.J. Dietz, R. Ruben, A. Verhagen (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 209-212.

²⁹³ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 11.

²⁹⁴ David, *Changing Places*, 60.

network of NGOs and aid workers that can offer funding, training and higher level organizers, rather than technicians and researchers, like herself.²⁹⁵

What can be learned from Brouwer's account is that there were multiple discontinuities between NGOs and the places and people they hoped to work with, as well as with the CNR, which was taking a drastically different approach to accepting aid and organizing NGOs in Burkina Faso. While the CNR certainly spent time consolidating itself in Ouagadougou after taking power, its popular mandate also allowed it to move on relatively quickly and plan for long term development projects, which were many and required a great deal of planning and intention. Kindi provides us with a view of how those projects intersect on the village level and how expatriate volunteers are caught up in these intersections. In addition to Brouwer, two nurses, Sarah Wilson and Moira Spence, were also placed in Kindi by UNAIS to help with the implementation of the SSP. The placement of these nurses came as a result of the lobbying efforts of the ASC Julien Somé in 1982-83. Additional funding came from CA for materials to build a health center, hire personnel, buy medicine and acquire mopeds for transportation purposes.

Somé's lobbying of UNAIS and CA reflected in a report to the Koudougou regional SSP director, demonstrating its strategic role in the CNRs rural development plans. While this report was written in the wake of the departure of the UNAIS volunteers, it shows how Somé presented the project to higher level authorities in the wake of a major failure. This report is structured in 3 distinctive stages, as an overview of the SSP program, as Julien's training and experience in Kindi and as a detailed account of the material realities facing the implementation of the SSP in Kindi. The overview of the project clearly links revolutionary policy with the presence of NGOs in a specific capacity, as Somé states, "The Kindi Health and Social Advancement Center

²⁹⁵ Report of the Agricultural Side of the Kindi-Project in Upper-Volta: June 1983-June 1984 by Hanneke Brouwer, July 1984, 11-12.

(CSPS) is servicing a number of surrounding villages, 10 of which are in the Kindi department. The ten are gathered around a primary health care project supported by two NGOs: the CA and the UNAIS. The SSP has been adopted by Burkina Faso as a revolutionary strategy, to enable everyone and everyone to have access to the health system on their own.”²⁹⁶ (803) The CSPS in Kindi, which had been established prior to the revolution in 1982 became the, “poste de santé primaire" (PSP) which was the nationally sanctioned structure which would implement the SSP on the village level.²⁹⁷

While the project began before the revolution, and had NGO interest and cooperation secured in 1982, the revolution fundamentally altered it by providing a framework for implementation and structure, where there previously was none that could be considered detailed and realistic. When this new framework was finalized and introduced less than a year after the revolution, Somé observed that the project had reached an important juncture as “1984 is the beginning of the study of the environment and sensitization in 3 villages”.²⁹⁸ By obtaining detailed information about every PSP locality, the CNR planned to organize the implementation of SSP in such a manner as to be as cost effective and efficient as possible. The CNR recognized that Burkina Faso was a poor country, with depleted state funds from the corruption of previous regimes, and a decline in agriculture, the primary economic activity of most of the population, due to shifting weather patterns and the diminished capacity of subsistence agriculturalists to react quickly through the subtle alteration of their methods.²⁹⁹ The CNR’s recognition of these

²⁹⁶ Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 2nd deposit, 1-2. Translated from French: “le centre de santé et de promotion sociale (C.S.P.S) de Kindi dessert un certain nombre de villages environnants dont 10 du département de Kindi, Les dix sont réunis autour d'un projet de soins de santé primaires soutenu par deux ONG: le CA et l'UNAIS. Les SSP ont été adoptés par le Burkina Faso comme stratégie révolutionnaire d'ailleurs, pour permettre à tout un chacun et a tous d'avoir accès par lui-même au system de sante.”

²⁹⁷ Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, 1.

²⁹⁸ Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, 3.

Translated from French: “1984 c'est le début de l'étude du milieu et de la sensibilisation dans 3 villages.”

²⁹⁹ M.V.K. Sivakumar and Faustin Gnomou, *Agroclimatology of West Africa: Burkina Faso* (Patancheru, India: International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, 1987), 5-6, 22, 35.

material conditions lead it to react by seeking out scientifically derived research and data, which would help it pursue policies of self-imposed austerity and the universal provision of services simultaneously.

Somé's situation in Kindi and his report back to the province level director, was one of thousands sent in across Burkina Faso as every PSP presented a similar report, providing the CNR with knowledge of the people working there, the state of health care facilities before the establishment of the PSP, the difficulties encountered at the PSP and the needs and desires outlined by the ASC for the project to be successful. In Kindi, the people were Somé and seven other staff members, including the UNAIS volunteer nurses. The health care facility had been established in 1982 and had relatively modern capacities and had support from NGOs. The main difficulties in Kindi to the implementation of the SSP as mandated were, a lack of studies of the environment to determine health threats, a lack of ability to conduct training programs for the villagers and staff and a lack of experience among everybody there. Julien was an administrator, not a doctor, and had limited knowledge of the area, while the UNAIS nurses were not trained for primary health care but rather emergency response and the remaining staff members were 2 midwives, a head nurse, a driver and two others whose positions could not be interpreted.³⁰⁰ Further, there had not been a CSV established yet and the only local participation came from the two midwives.³⁰¹

Another difficulty encountered in Kindi related to the introduction of the new training guidelines for when collective work was to begin on the construction of the dispensary to go along with the CSPS, the local organization of the CSV and the 'sensibilisation' of the villagers to the methods and goals of the new program.³⁰² Julien Somé maintained that primary health care

³⁰⁰ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 8-9.

³⁰¹ Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, 2-3.

³⁰² Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, 3.

for all could be achieved in Kindi but only through the SSP, which Somé criticized for the government's lack of commitment of resources, "the health goal for all in the year 2000 can only be achieved by means of PHC. It so happens that so far, at the governmental level, nothing is being done to: inform and train the trainers, create the primary health posts by the state. The few timid initiatives in the field are from WHO or NGOs."³⁰³ This dual criticism of the higher authorities proctoring the SSP and expressed disappointment with the skills of the expatriate nurses, shows frustration with the cautious gradualism of the NGOs and the desire to study results before implementing programs fully, on the part of the CNR.

The departure in question of Sara Wilson and Moira Spence, along with Hanneke Brouwer, is detailed in a final report to which all three contributed, criticizing their placement in Kindi and making recommendations for how UNAIS could better coordinate with local governmental and non-governmental actors. The volunteers expressed their views unambiguously about the project, stating, "it has taken us some months to disassociate our culture shock from our inappropriateness to be here," and the many disappointments experienced and overall sense of inadequacy pertaining to the preparation they were given by UNAIS for what they were going to become a part of.³⁰⁴ The first, and seemingly primary concern of the report was the lack of transparency coming from UNAIS about from where they acquired their information and how they derived their volunteer training qualifications from it.

The expatriates seemed to recognize that the survey from local activist Paul Zoundi, almost single handedly informed the UNAIS coordination of the project in its entirety. The report picked apart Zoundi's work retrospectively, pointing out every inconsistency and vague

³⁰³ Report de Stage: Session 41 du CESAO by Jean Julien Somé, August 29th 1984, 4.

Translated from French: "l'objectif sante pour tous en l'an 2000 n peut être atteint que par le moyen des SSP. Il se trouve que jusque-là, sur le plan gouvernemental rien n'est fait pour: informer et former les agents formateurs, créer les postes de santé primaires par l'état. Les quelques timides initiatives sur le terrain sont de l'OMS ou d'ONG."

³⁰⁴ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 1-2.

statement that UNAIS was presumed to have missed. The Zoundi report, on which UNAIS based its program was from 1981 and made several false, misleading and questionable claims about conditions there. Notably, the report quotes Zoundi as lamenting, “There is relatively little ‘aid’ coming into the region” for which no evidence is provided and other reports, such as that of Henrietta Moore, state that there is an oversaturation of aid groups in the Koudougou area (in which Kindi is located) and Burkina Faso in general.³⁰⁵ Aid saturation is exacerbated by disorganization and endangers the development process and can actually contribute to continued environmental degradation.³⁰⁶

Another extremely misleading claim which UNAIS appeared not to pick up on was the claim that, “the poverty of the soils is the major problem for productivity in the present farming conditions.”³⁰⁷ However, this was known not to be the case as Burkina Faso was in a period of drought throughout the north and central regions, causing agriculturalists to produce below subsistence level. Based on the placement of Brouwer as a dry season vegetable expert, UNAIS took Zoundi at his word and determined that Brouwer could be effective in introducing modern growing and fertilization techniques. Indicated in Brouwer’s 1983-1984 report from Kindi, she quickly found out that the degradation of soil presented a much less serious problem than lack of water. Further, CA, a group with which UNAIS worked with in Kindi, was helping to fund and organize the national famine relief project in Burkina Faso at this time. Though these two NGOs worked closely, it appears that UNAIS did not cross-reference the Zoundi report with CA officials who possessed extensive knowledge about agricultural realities across the country.

The activities of NGOs in Burkina Faso had long been uncoordinated and cumbersome for the Burkinabé people. Although many aid groups provided services that were necessary and

³⁰⁵ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 4.

³⁰⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 36, 119-123.

³⁰⁷ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 4.

appreciated, there was also a sense of the re-introduction of colonial elements, in terms of white technocrats coming from Europe to pick at well established, but constantly evolving, methods at producing at or above subsistence levels.³⁰⁸ There was not always a popular mandate for the entrance of aid workers into a community and it sometimes resulted in inter-familial conflicts and capitalization on the presence of NGOs by self-serving actors on the local or regional level.³⁰⁹ Dispute over the popular mandate of the presence of the volunteers is questioned in the report, specifically related to the degree to which the GV is representative of the village as a whole since, its membership had not been open to everyone and thus could not be the best group to coordinate the aid projects.³¹⁰ In essence, the volunteer's report determined that Zoundi's account had elements that were intentionally misleading, showing Kindi to UNAIS as projected upon by the GV, in order to generally further their interests. The report maintained that conditions on the ground in terms of local organization were drastically different than reported, "In reality, we have found these organizations to be different to the description given and, in some cases, they are non-existent."³¹¹

A major indicator of the leanings of Zoundi and the GV in the volunteer's assessment of his report is that, "throughout the study there is no mention of the Chef de Terre, Chef du Village...even when there is a direct reference to the ownership of the land, there is no mention of the role of the Chef de Terre (as we understand it, the usage/ownership of land is under the direction of the Chef de Terre, and he has to be consulted when changes are proposed."³¹² This section of the report served to clue in the reader to the potential for misrepresentation because of land usage disputes between the GV, led by an educated activist in Zoundi and composed of

³⁰⁸ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 34.

³⁰⁹ Hagberg, *Between Peace and Justice*, 70-71.

³¹⁰ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 5-6.

³¹¹ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 6.

³¹² Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 7.

families who were most likely underserved by the traditional authorities. It also indicates that there existed popular anti-chief sentiments in Burkina Faso, which was one of the popular elements of rural reform the CNR picked up on after taking power.³¹³ While the land reform decree had not been introduced yet when this report was written, leaving land nominally under the control of traditional authorities, GVs were encouraged to recompose themselves as CDRs and hold elections to give them a popular mandate and then to overrule or sideline the chiefs at some strategic juncture in order to end their perceived irrational power.

The volunteers report expressed clear concern with both how Zoundi sought to discredit the chiefs by not including them, but also that UNAIS seemed to accept this explanation without critique, "It is very worrying that the study [Zoundi report] does not refer to the traditional systems and that it does not give an accurate description of the village group work which existed three years ago. Surely, if the village groups are requesting outside aid, that aid must be integrated with the systems that exist and not grafted onto something which is not understood."³¹⁴ It also appears, based on the discoveries made by Sarah Wilson and Moira Spence upon beginning their work in the village, that the request for assistance for the commencement of the primary health care project, was not part of overarching popular sentiments from the villagers. The primary health care project began in 1978 under the Lamizana government and was formatted completely differently. Three regime changes later, all of this appears to have become muddled and whatever popular design had begun in Kindi and other villages at that time, was no longer prevalent by the time UNAIS placed its workers in the area.³¹⁵

³¹³ Sanou Saidou, "Land Tenure Structures in the Agricultural Sector of Houde Burkina Faso: A Study in Rural Social Change and Development." Ph.D. diss. , Michigan State University, 1986, 125-126.

³¹⁴ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 7.

³¹⁵ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 8-10.

Responding to the specifics in the project details from UNAIS which states that the villagers, represented by the GV, requested that health workers be sent to their village, the report states that this seems to be a complete falsification and imposition as, “the volunteers feel that they have been put in the position of imposing their presence on the area, as opposed to responding to a request, therefore their presence cannot be considered developmental.”³¹⁶ This statement gets right at the core of modern concepts pertaining to NGO lead development projects, which Hans Holmen determined were often non-democratic and lacked transparency in terms of presenting themselves as fulfilling the wants of the population. Holmen states, “...NGOs were often found not to be the democratic institutions they were expected to be, and behind their rhetoric of participation and empowerment one often found a desire to control and direct. *Conscientization* often turned out to be a euphemism for making grassroots see things the outsider’s way.”³¹⁷ Holmen maintains that this is not always the case but that it was especially prevalent in the first 3 decades of independence, during the rush of NGO involvement on the African continent. It appears that the UNAIS volunteer involvement in the Kindi project arrived under false pretenses and at a time of important transition in terms of the SSP and in Burkina Faso in general. The reality of the situation may be that UNAIS had identified Kindi before even seeing Zoundi’s report and used that report to justify their decision to begin a project there, largely because projects at Kelbo and Temnaore, in the same region, had been successful.³¹⁸

Based on academic studies of aid in Burkina Faso in this period, saturation was real and almost always the result of NGOs scrambling to take up strategic positions in order to re-enforce their programs under the pretext of popular demand, even when this demand did not exist. Burkina Faso engaged in what Holmen refers to as a “non-incorporation strategy” prior to and

³¹⁶ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 10.

³¹⁷ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 20.

³¹⁸ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 12-13.

following the revolution, allowing the gap in state service to be filled by legitimate grassroots organizations, of which Burkina Faso has many dynamic groups of farmers associations and rural cooperatives, as well as foreign partner NGOs, which may have a greater presence in Burkina Faso than any other West African country.³¹⁹ However, the strategy of non-incorporation, discontinued during the revolutionary period, left gaps where NGOs could abuse their relative freedom of operation and for there to be substantial overlap through the emergence of inefficient parallel structures, which often competed in a detrimental manner to provide the same services in the same places.³²⁰ The report submitted by the volunteers to UNAIS after their departure from Kindi states, “UNAIS clearly stated that we had been requested by the village groups in an advisory role...the important point being that the village groups had actively requested assistance. In reality, we have found that the village groups have not requested our assistance...”³²¹ Further, the report states that the primary health care project that UNAIS had in mind was not only not what the villagers wanted, but it was also not in line with the SSP being developed and implemented on a pilot basis by the CNR, leading the report to conclude that, “the only possible role open to us would be to help enforce the government primary health care plan.”³²²

Placing Project Volunteers Under Circumstance of Political Instability

While UNAIS project planners premised their work on biased and outdated information and rushed to establish its programs as quickly as possible so as not to be the first operating in Kindi, it also did so in the midst of political instability. The placement also took place in a time of political turbulence in which a military junta which had formed in November of 1982, after

³¹⁹ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 120-121, 149.

³²⁰ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 121-122.

³²¹ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 20-21.

³²² Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 21.

overthrowing the previous military government, the CMRPN, split along ideological lines, resulting in the formation of the CSP-II under the leadership of Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo.³²³ The CSP arrested the entire left wing of the junta in May 1983, most notably Thomas Sankara and Jean-Baptiste Lingani, a highly unpopular move. The reaction is described by Harsch, “The Ouedraogo government was under considerable pressure, and from opposing sides. The protests in the streets prompted the president to free Sankara and Lingani from their place of detention...and instead put them under house arrest...So for a period of about two months, [Burkina Faso] remained in a state of limbo, politically divided between competing camps.”³²⁴ Things came to a head in August when the left wing of the CSP prevailed and troops from Po loyal to Sankara, under the command of Blaise Compaoré, took Ouagadougou and installed Sankara as president of the new CNR.

This episode occurred while Moira Spence and Sara Wilson waited in Ouagadougou attempting to learn the local language and get acclimated to the country. Their report states that, “There were ‘sessions’ planned to learn about different subjects of life in Upper Volta, but (mainly because of the revolution 4.8.83), only a lecture about agriculture, and one about trade unions, took place.”³²⁵ All of the previous shortcomings of UNAIS planning combined with the turbulence of the period surrounding the placement of the volunteers in the country, created less than ideal circumstance for the volunteers themselves, and quickly led them to realize that they could not effectively fulfill their roles in the country. However, the reported conditions surrounding the departure of the volunteers, which portray the situation in Kindi as disorganized as well as the citizens and administrative structures being unwilling and unable to support them

³²³ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 42-43.

³²⁴ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 47-49.

³²⁵ Kindi: Project Analysis by Hannake Brouwer, Moira Spence and Sara Wilson, March 1984, 26-27.

effectively, contrasts with a letter from Somé who attempted to assure UNAIS that this was not so since,

certain materials are acquired and will serve for the continuity of training and health education others must become property of the villagers if the spirit of self-promotion is implanted: this is how their staffing and equipment and medicines must be renewed by the villagers in their village and in the village pharmacy. This will be done through the sale of products and, or participation in the cost of care. On behalf of SGS and CDRs please accept our best wishes for this new year 1985 which we hope will see the widening and deepening of our relations for the benefit of the people of Kindi.³²⁶

Somé tried to undercut the almost wholly negative experience of the volunteers by showing that the government had been able to effectively proliferate its program into rural communities, and, while funding remained lacking, plenty of materials were available for the implementation of the program which were acquired by the local GV and CDR in a manner that reflected the popular perceptions of the community and expressed a clear interest in primary health care from the grassroots. Somé reiterates that more popular participation and education will be necessary, but that the pursuit of primary health care has moved forward in line with the CNR's program objectives and with the local assistance of local NGOs, rather than under their lead and their program designs. The instability of the revolution is portrayed as not having a serious effect on the Kindi project, as the volunteers alluded to, and it is up to Somé to reassure the international partners in Kindi that the situation has not only stabilized but improved substantially due to people's commitment to the revolution.

³²⁶ Soins de Sante Primaire a Kindi: Projet de Financement Janvier-Decembre 1984 Adresse a Christian Aid by Jean Julien Somé, December 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 4.

Translated from French: "Certain matériels sont des acquis et serviront à la continuité de la formation et de l'éducation sanitaire d'autres doivent devenir propriété des villageois si l'esprit d'autopromotion s'implante: c'est ainsi que cette leur dotation et matériel et médicaments doit être renouvelé par les villageois dans leur village et dans la pharmacie villageois. Ceci se fera par le vente des produits et, ou la participation aux frais de soins. Au nom des GV et des CDR veuillez accepter nos vœux meilleurs pour cette année nouvelle 1985 qui nous le souhaitons verra l'élargissement et l'approfondissement de nos relations au profit des populations de Kindi."

Despite the departure of the volunteers, Bernard Taylor of UNAIS noted in a follow-up with Julien Somé and Paul Zoundi that they were in, “an optimistic mood, in spite of the setback that have been experienced in the work at Kindi. I think this optimism comes from a new understanding of the work at hand together with a realisation of what they (Julien) can achieve on their own and what type of assistance is actually available from others (e.g. UNAIS).”³²⁷ In this same response to the report released by Henrietta Moore which argued that, based on the reports of the UNAIS Kindi volunteers, that all UNAIS programs should be discontinued in Kindi, Taylor recognizes that the CNR wants to reduce the number of expatriate volunteers working in rural areas.³²⁸ Despite this, Taylor believes that there still can be a role for UNAIS in Kindi, working to place volunteers in coordination with the government on a short term basis to build dams (the suggestion made by Brouwer of how resources could be better utilized in Kindi according to the expressed needs of the local population) as well as continuing to support Julien Some’s training and providing material support for the SSP in compliance with the specific guidelines of the CNR.³²⁹

Another reason for this continued optimism may have been the reassurances from Sarah Hughes of CA that funding and material will continue to be made available to the PSP in Kindi, which Julien alludes to in a letter, “After the stop or at least the slowdown created by the sudden departure of Kindi volunteers it is with pleasure that we receive the conviction from you that this is only an incident and that you maintain your presence in the Kindi project. The different

³²⁷ Correspondence from Bernard Taylor to Sarah Hughes, September 13th 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 3rd deposit, 1-2.

³²⁸ Correspondence from Bernard Taylor to Sarah Hughes, September 13th 1984, 2.

³²⁹ Memo: Reassessment of the BF Programme, from Paul and Linda Jenkins to UNAIS staff PG, GM, BT, MW, JC, BG and Sarah Hughes, September 11th 1984, 1-3.

Translated from French: “Après le coup d'arrêt ou du moins le ralentissement crée par le départ brus que des volontaires de Kindi c'est avec plaisir que nous recevons la conviction de votre part que ce fait n'est qu'un incident et que vous maintenez votre présence dans le projet de Kindi. Les différentes implications de ce départ, c'est à dire les raisons et la nécessité ou pas d'envoyer d'autre volontaires ont été déjà à plusieurs reprises et en différents lieux discutés.”

implications of this departure, i.e. the reasons and the need or not to send other volunteers have already been several times and in different places discussed.”³³⁰ (824) The stabilizing presence of Paul and Linda Jenkins, two veteran volunteers who had spent a considerable amount of time in Kindi and Kelbo on behalf of UNAIS and CA, also allowed for Somé and his staff at the PSP to reconsolidate their efforts around the re-specified guidelines of the SSP in order to put the materials and funds from CA to use and to reach out to the CNR for organizational and mobilization assistance. The provincial director of the SSP was able to place Dr. Gue in Kindi and give more responsibility to the matron nurse, Prosper Kabore, while Julien Some was sent for further training, funded by CA, at CESAO in Bobo-Dioulasso.³³¹ (825) This restructuring was seen as part of a process for preparing the ground for a further influx of aid to the PSP and the possible re-placement of volunteers.

In December 1984, after Somé returned from further administrative training at CESAO, he wrote another letter to CA, this time directed at Martin Whiteside, a conservation expert and personnel placement authority, providing a more accurate depiction of the situation in Kindi than that which UNAIS utilized when placing their volunteers in 1983. At this time, UNAIS had recalled its volunteers and began the process of program re-evaluation, leaving an opening for the possible placement of CA volunteers in Kindi to support the SSP. Somé laid out the realities of the situation related to why the program would be slow at first and what material situations at the village level would have to be addressed by staff at the PSP, as well as any volunteers placed by CA at that point. Somé seemed to approach the prospect of volunteers with greater caution and flexibility when speaking to CA,

regarding your administrative and nursing staff, we do not find any inconvenience to the delay that is imposed on you and also on us. As for the impact on our program, it will not be very noticeable for the following reasons: By browsing the planning

³³⁰ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Sarah Huges, August 16th 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 1.

³³¹ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Sarah Huges, August 16th 1984, 2.

that we propose to practice, we have six months for the bulk of the startup unless late or lack of equipment and other requests of CA that you will find attached. Two other setbacks will arise and may delay the normal course of the program. The first, temporarily, is organizational at the village level: The village health committee? Should we let health problems be managed by the village groups? Or by the CDR? The second most serious is the drought. It is particularly hard this year in Kindi and its surroundings...³³²

Somé also used this letter to make critical remarks about the UNAIS program in a manner which suggests that they did a poor job with their volunteer placement and that he did not know when collaboration with UNAIS would resume, in terms of volunteer placement, “Your nursing staff will be welcome and we will be [the only volunteers] for the continuation of the program...so we will work together while waiting for our future and new collaborators of the UNAIS of Ouaga and Kindi hoping not to 'try' anymore as with Moira and Sara.”³³³ This criticism on the part of Somé was offered as encouragement to UNAIS to both send volunteers but also that adherence to the CNR policy toward aid groups and the guidelines of the SSP was mandatory for the relationship to work out.

The mention of the drought by Julien as one of the main health risks in the region is notable and seconded by Paul Zoundi, who is quick to point out that the famine has affected Kindi despite its more southern geography. Due to the length and seriousness of the drought, environmental conditions deteriorated and effected grain supplies in the more northern areas of

³³² Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Martin Whiteside, December 18th 1984, Burkina Faso 10 - Primary Health Care and Dry Season Agriculture Kindi - project file 1984-1985, Box CA4/A/20, 4th deposit, 1
Translated from French: “Concernant votre personnel administratif et infirmier, nous ne trouvons aucun inconvénient au délai qui s'impose à vous et aussi à nous. Quant aux incidences sur notre programme il ne seront pas très notables pour les raisons suivantes: En parcourant le planing [sic] que nous nous proposons de pratiquer, nous avons six mois pour le gros du démarrage sauf retard ou manque de matériel et autres demandes a CA que vous trouverez ci-joint. Deux autres handicaps se poseront a nous et peuvent retarder le déroulement normal du programme. Le premier temporaire est d'ordre organisationnel au niveau villageois: Le comité de sante villageois? Faut-il laisser gérer problèmes de la sante par les groupements villageois? Ou par les CDR? Le second plus durable et éprouvant la sécheresse. Elle est particulièrement dure cette année a Kindi et ses environs.”

³³³ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Martin Whiteside, December 18th 1984, 1-3.
Translated from French: “Votre personnel infirmier sera le bienvenu et nous l'adopterons pour la poursuite du programme...Nous travaillons donc ensemble en attendant nos futurs et nouveaux collaborateurs de l'UNAIS de Ouaga et Kindi en espérant vivement ne plus 'essayer' comme avec Moira et Sara.”

the Mossi Plateau and forms of supplementary agriculture in Kindi. Considering that Zoundi, a well-connected actor was probably aware of CA's famine relief activities through FEME, also reached out to CA in this regard, "Also the population in general and the village groups in particular by my voice urgently requested your intervention in this crisis which will not fail to make many victims. This is why I think that the installation of a cereal bank among others could solve a lot of the problem. You will find attached a cereal bank project which I hope will arouse great interest. Also in the hope that this request will find a favorable answer."³³⁴

Zoundi's awareness of the inconsistencies between this and his report to UNAS in 1982 is unknown, but in both cases, the strategic objective was the allocation of resources to offset the effects of the drought, whether this was presented to UNAS as a need for dry season agricultural training or to CA as a need for cereal storage and management infrastructure. As we have seen, the CNR encouraged and empowered local actors like Somé and Zoundi to develop their own techniques for drawing in resources from abroad to fill the funding gap left by the anti-imperialist policies of rejecting conditional aid at the national level. Sometimes, the dishonesty or bending of the truth, employed by these actors as they sought to strategically lobby for aid, can be clearly identified as contributing to the failures of aid programs. The CNR did not endorse these tactics as it observed such failures taking place and strove to strengthen ties between itself, local officials and aid groups in order to improve communication, coordination and understanding about the needs of the population and how best each actor could contribute to the revolutionary development process.

³³⁴ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Martin Whiteside, December 18th 1984, 2-3.

What Are Legitimate Forms of Rural Development in Burkina Faso ?

As the revolution matured, networks of communication on the local level became more connected and efficient because of the participation of the central government, something which had not been the case previously in Burkina Faso and was seldom observed in African states in this period. The disillusionment with government involvement in development led many academics to move away from endorsing African states in their top-down approach and embrace the concept of natural, upward development from the grassroots. To this point, Holmen argues that, “Widespread disappointment with the modernization paradigm, with ineffective foreign development aid, with top down mobilization and extension strategies, and with Africa’s often anti-developmental governments has led to a radical change...it is now emphasized that development...must come from below, from the grassroots...if and when they so decide.”³³⁵

While it is easy to theorize that this is a pre-requisite for successful development, reality is more nuanced and people’s lives depend every day on the actions of various organizations, including the government in some cases. Foreign aid groups, domestic NGOs and a variety of outside interest groups all have an effect on the different forms of development taking place and it is almost never the grassroots making decisions about development in complete isolation.

The CNR in Burkina Faso was not just another military junta or kleptocratic African government that was less interested in equal opportunities for development in the rural areas, than in consolidation of patronage networks in the urban centers.³³⁶ In order for the CNR to be able to consolidate authority and stay in power, it had to rely on sectors other than the urban bourgeoisie and small working class, instead turning to the rural areas to help with drought and famine relief, the most pressing issues to life in rural Burkina Faso since the 1970s. Holmen names Burkina Faso as a success story in terms of the development of what he and other

³³⁵ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 8.

³³⁶ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 89-91.

academics see as legitimate grassroots NGOs, giving only brief mention to the revolution and the, “culture of self-help is said to permeate society, and elite capture of NGOs may be limited. As is recognized widely in literature on the country, “The Sankara era (Captain Sankara ruled Burkina from 1983 to 1987) continues to define Burkina Faso.’ The former president’s revolutionary reform policies, which aimed for an African socialist society based on communities and self-reliance, are said to live on in the memory of many Burkinabé.”³³⁷ The mention of the CNR, conflated with the figure of Sankara, is given only brief consideration while the Naam movement, considered by Holmen to be a true grassroots expression of development oriented organization, is placed in the forefront.

Naam spontaneously developed in the 1970s in the Yatenga region to take on drought relief projects, receiving some external and governmental assistance, but organizing itself and operating on an independent basis and along traditional lines of lineage based patriarchy.³³⁸ Though the central claim of Holmen’s book rests upon the assumption that the more grassroots the organization, the better the outcomes for development will be, Naam shows that this may not be the case, at least in terms of western perceptions of development success since “the Naam movement...is frequently referred to as a West African success story. Nevertheless...a study...found that their contribution to village-level poverty reduction appears to be limited.”³³⁹ The founding and proliferation of Naam was essentially to cope with severe drought, not to fulfill an abstract, westernized definition of development, and while it did take on projects related to these concepts of development, lamenting its lack of success of attaining widespread poverty relief in Burkina Faso is negligent to the purpose that was put in to it by the grassroots. This is not a detraction of Naam but rather a re-identification of its purpose, as a network of

³³⁷ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 122.

³³⁸ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 151-152, 154.

³³⁹ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 170.

small scale village projects that saved many lives through their activities and eased rural conditions, with only limited assistance from abroad.³⁴⁰

Naam lacked the cohesive planning mechanisms to create and fulfill projects in a systematic way that would embrace the whole country and provide services that were out of reach for Naam groups that had access only to funding and not training and planning. While it was progressive to limit their interactions with top down NGOs that sought to impose themselves on Burkinabé rural life, it was also limiting. What the CNR attempted to do was introduce a highly structured system through which groups like Naam, as well as farmers associations, GVs and CDRs, could gain access to the resources, in terms of money/materials and planning/training, in a way that would limit the exploitative impulses of foreign NGOs. The CNR, through SPONG would keep track of NGO activities and place them according to expertise and need in specific rural areas. Limiting the number of volunteers coming from Europe and elsewhere was intended to provide the basis for training and cooperation but also limit saturation and keep rural inhabitants feel in control of the situation, rather than feeling burdened by invading white aid workers. I would stress, in opposition to Holmen, that independence from externally imposed conditionalities, guaranteed by government planning, is key rather than isolation or limited exposure in an attempt to maintain the purity of the grassroots.

The presence of NGOs and international donor organizations remains prevalent in Burkina Faso and a considerable amount of literature has been devoted to this topic, from Lars Engberg-Pederson, Hans Holmen, Pierre Englebert, Souleymane Zeba and a multitude of others. Engberg-Pederson utilizes a remarkable amount of historical analysis, seeking to outline the relationships between the multitude of social sectors interacting in Burkina Faso across space and time. The author not only recognizes the necessity of clear lines of communication between

³⁴⁰ Holmen, *Snakes in Paradise*, 153.

political authorities and NGOs, but also the intertwinement of politics with development assistance, or external aid, as it is a commodity which is battled over and often distributed on an uneven basis. Project interventions for resource management are put under scrutiny in his study, which contends that the development of liberal democratic institutions in Burkina Faso has mixed with external intervention projects into a, “forceful cocktail” which intimately links development assistance and political change.³⁴¹

However, the focus of the study is in the post-revolutionary period, and while informative of many of the developments in that era, it does not regard the revolution as a turning point, as this paper does, but rather places primary importance on the liberalization of politics starting in 1989. Holmen too has already demonstrated that he does not regard the revolutionary period with any special significance, while Englebert is a critical observer, arguing that the revolution was an interesting but rather unremarkable part of a larger trend of political instability, and that the rural population has largely adopted strategies that welcome outside assistance in terms of food aid and cashcrop or non-cropping occupations.³⁴² Zeba also makes arguments in this same direct, that every government to wield state authority in Burkina Faso has proved to be a large disappointment to development prospects and that it is time for NGOs to have a greater role in the design and deployment of development programs, as well as engaging in politics to support, “the broadening of the political arena” and “in setting up democratic institutions and the training of the private sector, especially the press.”³⁴³ In terms of the revolution, Zeba does admit that its programs produced results but also laments the top down approach, lack of coordination of different departments and confusion over new landholding rules. Zeba ultimately expresses a preference for the support of external NGOs to the government attempting to create its own

³⁴¹ Engberg-Pedersen, *Endangering Development*, 2-3.

³⁴² Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 61, 88-89.

³⁴³ Souleymane Zeba, “The Role of NGOs in Reforming Natural Resource Management Policies in Burkina Faso,” International Institute for Environment and Development, *Drylands Programme* no. 68 (December 1996): 2.

development schemes, lauding the adoption of a Structural Adjustment Program from the IMF in 1988.³⁴⁴

Overall, most of the academics to write on NGOs in Burkina Faso have not regarded the new policies of the revolutionary period to be anything out of the ordinary or much different from its predecessors. However, as I aimed to show above, interaction between domestic NGOs, international donors and the government, was fundamentally altered during the revolutionary period as these independent groups were put under greater regulation and programs were implemented to reduce dependence on outside aid. The assertion that the revolution implemented its programs in a top down manner can also be disputed as the local mechanisms of state power, the CDRs, possessed democratic traits but were also encouraged to operate with the specific material conditions of their locality in mind. It appears that, while academics writing from a historical perspective such as Harsch, Williamson, Sawadogo, Brittain, Banegas, Valere Somé, Martens, Gakunzi, Andriamirado and Bamouni, all regard the revolution as a major juncture in Burkinabé history, academics examining the evolution of NGO activities have looked past the revolutionary period, to the neo-liberal policies of the Compaoré era. My contention is that the Burkinabé revolution is a crucial juncture for examining the intersection of popular mobility with the forces acting upon the people, the land and the social structures, underscoring NGOs as being one of these forces must be examined as part of the historical landscape of *dependency* and *development* rather than as institutions with no role in the historical process.

³⁴⁴ Zeba, “The Role of NGOs in Reforming Natural Resource Mangement Policies,” 3.

Chapter 4

Drawing on Popular Mass Mobility for Revolutionary Land Reform

The final section of this paper will synthesize the subjects of circular migration and NGO activity into an argument about *space* and how movement between spaces and the intervention of external actors on the use of space, is part of a historical process, and, if channeled correctly, can culminate in the expression of revolutionary mass mobilization. The CNR drew on this particular mass mobility to legitimize its existence as governing body and attempted to tap into it by fundamentally reconceptualizing how space was perceived socially and legally, through the medium of land reform, as well as the alteration of land use process through environmentalist advocacy. This section will touch on several aforementioned themes and draw on secondary source literature, as well as the 1985 follow up to the land nationalization decree of 1984, Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, which elaborated upon land use in terms of distribution and environmentalism.³⁴⁵

A primary theme will be the gendered division of labor, with a focus on women's changing role in Burkina Faso as it pertains to agriculture, land rights and resource improvement activities, some of which I touched upon in the first chapter. Another theme will be governmentally mandated environmentalism, which became a crucial concept to the CNR as it attempted to achieve food self-sufficiency in the wake of period of protracted drought and which will be examined through the medium of several authors who have studied the Burkinabé and greater Sahelian environment. The final theme will be the displacement of traditional rural authorities by the state, which will primarily be viewed through Decret 85-404, as the CNR attempted to consolidate itself in a new way, not relying on the feudal chiefs, who were viewed

³⁴⁵ Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Portant Application de la Réorganisation Agraire et Foncière au Burkina Faso, June 29th 1985, Land Tenure Center Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

generally as enemies of the people, and instead vested authority in the CDRs, which were supposed to be democratically elected councils for popular mobilization and local governance.

I intend for this section to bring the overarching arguments and assertions of this paper full circle, that spatial navigation by humans in a certain geographical context creates not only a shared history, but contributes to the development of popular mobilization based on intersectional oppressions of gender and the urban-rural divide, outside impositions and the independent agency of the environment. In Burkina Faso specifically, this popular mobility flared up in 1983, resulting in a revolutionary movement which, while not ultimately a sustained process, permeated throughout the region and effected how the Burkinabé people interacted with each other, the stranger and their environment. The colonially imposed process of circular migration, the flooding of the country with aid groups, volunteers, newly formed NGOs and international program loans and the creation of a state of *dependency* created a specific mobility which a group of young Marxist military officers drew upon and utilized strategically not only in seizing state power, but for establishing a basis for their continued rule.

For the five years of the Burkinabé revolution, these officers and their coalition of supporters attempted to draw on popular mobility which they too could feel and were innately a part of, in order to mend what they saw as the underlying problems of their country's poverty and dependence on massive quantities of outside support. Recognizing that geographic and ecological *space* is where this process played out, will help in furthering our understanding of the Burkinabé revolution. A crucial study which will inform much of this chapter is *Rebuilding the Local Landscape: Environmental Management in Burkina Faso* by Chris Howorth who argues that in Burkina Faso, "the peasant mode of production has shown itself to be efficient in providing subsistence to the household and ensuring family survival [and]...that development can

occur within the peasant mode of production, as it has always done.”³⁴⁶ Once again, the environment is not viewed as a static ecology which is acted on and degraded by humans but as something deeply integrated into the dynamics of social life in arming and pastoral societies inhabiting everchanging environments, we are led to consider how economic institutions, political and gender relations, intellectual leadership and more imperatives may have been involved in the process of environmental adaptation.”³⁴⁷

Writing after the end of the revolutionary period, Howorth shows that, in contrast to the approach taken by the Compaoré post-revolutionary regime, the CNR’s new land management projects sought to tap in to the relationship between rural farmers and the land, which had been disrupted, but not destroyed through the imposition of colonialism. The CNR developed many of these new policies “to provide community organizational structures to allow for bottom-up planning and project co-ordination. [This new layer of organization] originated from a political will to improve national planning and investment from a grassroots base, i.e. the village, through building organizational and institutional structures.”³⁴⁸ The agrarian and tenure decrees ‘Reforme Agraire et Fonciere, ordonnance no. 84 du 4/8/1984 et decret de 4/8/1985’ nationalized the land and intended to eliminate feudal practices which the CNR viewed as illegitimate structures for land tenure and resource management. The emphasis on the illegitimacy of these structures is premised on their connection to French colonialism, specifically in relation to the substantial powers endowed upon rural chiefs and land priests, naming them as a disruptive force rather than an innate part of the peasant mode of production.³⁴⁹ While it is recognized that the land reforms were never fully implemented and often comprised a disruption to the peasant mode of

³⁴⁶ Chris Howorth, *Rebuilding the Local Landscape: Environmental Management in Burkina Faso* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999), 1.

³⁴⁷ Howorth, *Rebuilding the Local Landscape*, 7.

³⁴⁸ Howorth, *Rebuilding the Local Landscape*, 39.

³⁴⁹ Howorth, *Rebuilding the Local Landscape*, 37-38, 45.

production themselves, Howorth is able to demonstrate that the CNR recognized the legitimacy of traditional relationships to land, as well as theorizing on how such relationships could be restored and improved upon in terms of ecological conservation, the gendered division of labor and the institutionalization of practices from the bottom up.

Breaking Down Restrictions on Women's Access to Land

If one is to know anything about Burkina Faso or the Burkinabé revolution, it is essential that an understanding of the gendered division of labor, which exists among each of the country's ethnic groups, and how the revolution attempted to amend the restrictions these divisions placed on progressive agricultural and environmental reform. The CNR was the first Burkinabé government to recognize the multiple oppressions women experienced via the colonially imposed systems of circular migration and natural resource exploitation and the domestic norms of patriarchal rule, demonstrated by Skinner, Hammond and David. Women's liberation was taken seriously in terms of rhetoric and policy, despite statements to the contrary by Englebert, and was encapsulated by Sankara in a March, 1987 speech where he stated,

Women's fate is bound up with that of the exploited male. This interdependence arises from the exploitation that both men and women suffer, exploitation that binds them together historically. This should not, however, make us lose sight of the specific reality of women's situation. The conditions of their lives are determined by more than economic factors, and they show that women are victims of a specific oppression. The specific character of this oppression cannot be explained away by equating different situations through superficial and childish simplifications...It's clear that the difference between the sexes is a feature of human society. It's also clear that this difference determines the particular relations that prevent us from viewing women, even in the framework of economic production, as simply female workers....the net result is that women's reality constitutes an ongoing problem.³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ Sankara, "The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women: On International Women's Day, March 8, 1987," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 343-344.

Aside from a rhetorical commitment to women's liberation, the CNR also integrated these concepts into all of its policies, including rural democratization through CDRs which were mandated to be comprised of at least 40% women and that two leadership positions in each local bureau be occupied by women.³⁵¹ After it became apparent that women were still intimidated by patriarchal authorities and often only nominally filled the roles they were appointed to in the CDRs, the CNR went about establishing an independent women's cells would be formed within the CDRs to ensure that women had a stronger mandate for their right to participation and the holding of leadership positions in what was supposed to be a series of democratic and representative organizations.³⁵² These cells were represented nationally by the Women's Union of Burkina (UFB) which wielded considerable influence in the CNR and agricultural offices like OFNACER and the ORDs.

However, the organizations and policies geared toward the essentialist concept of women's liberation, came from the top down and mostly from men. While the CNR did have many women operating a high administrative levels and contributing to the generation of new political stances on women's issues, the version of women's liberation which was applied was not a product of Burkinabé women liberating themselves and deciding their own direction as members of a new society. Like in many other revolutionary states and movements, a group of men, despite being self-proclaimed feminists, controlled many of the essential aspects of how women's liberation would take place, depriving it of the authenticity of being part of the actual 'liberation' process. Despite the development and implementation of affirmative action policies which intended to elevate women to political positions from which they could empower themselves, this era should not be depicted as having brought about the authentic liberation of women, which cannot occur when men are the main actors defining what liberation means.

³⁵¹ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 84, 91-93.

³⁵² Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 92.

Institutionally, the revolution pursued Women's Liberation through the assurance greater degree of representation and participation of women in the CDRs. In terms of the policies which were developed and deployed during the revolutionary period, there was always an emphasis placed on the importance of engaging women and creating situations where they can properly "assert themselves, demolishing in the process all the male-chauvinist, backwards conceptions of men."³⁵³ As demonstrated by David, women' crucial to maintaining the viability of agricultural production and holding together the fabric of rural society in Burkina Faso, as the absence of men who have migrated as part of the circular migration system, or left to live in urban areas, creates situations under which women must take on new roles in the process of social reproduction, but without being allowed any decision making power by the patriarchal traditional authorities.³⁵⁴ Women in Burkina Faso have an historically important role in resource improvement and revitalization projects, which are mainly comprised of environmental conservation activates intended to improve soil qualities, reduce water shortages and apply new technologies in a way that will allow Burkinabé agriculture to adapt to prevailing environmental conditions.

The work by David is especially important to understanding how shifts in the environment altered interactions, creating instability for Burkinabé rural populations, and women specifically as, "the droughts of the early 1970s and 1980s destabilized this region. People reacted by further expanding cultivated areas in an attempt to compensate for uncertainty and the falling yields. At the same time growing populations demanded extra land and even more marginal land came under cultivation."³⁵⁵ While David actively asserts that state intervention

³⁵³ Sankara, "The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women: On International Women's Day, March 8, 1987," from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 357.

³⁵⁴ David, *Changing Places*, 58-59, 68-71.

³⁵⁵ David, *Changing Places*, 62.

during the revolutionary period proved to be unsuccessful because it was not sustained for the long term, the author does note that it pursued extremely progressive, nationwide policies to start, “reafforestation programmes, promote agroforestry, encourage the use of improved stoves, abolish colonial management systems, and establish village and district level revolutionary committees.”³⁵⁶ Such projects were necessary to the CNR’s vision of shedding colonial and neocolonial relationships with land and the environment through the practice of strategic adaptation and rejection of imposed practices, in favor of those which best suit the material conditions and the needs of the locality. In other words, the revolution represented the expression that women’s social positions were unsustainable because of their newly predominant role in agriculture did not allow them to efficiently carry out the functions necessary to sustain life.

The recent history of Burkina Faso has been defined by difficult environmental conditions, exacerbated by circular migration and land degradation due to declining rainfalls, and sustained primarily by women, whose labor props up Burkinabé agricultural subsistence through drought, famine and loss of vital dry season labor. The production of food is a staple of life, and societies that depend on their own labor and land to produce what they consume can come to find themselves in precarious positions. The fluctuations of the environment is one of the factors contribution to this precariousness, but, as Cynthia Brantley argues, human factors are important to recognize as well since, “social conditions can have a serious impact on food production and consumption.”³⁵⁷ In Burkina Faso, it was the perception of the revolutionary government that the circumstances surrounding the social conditions of women had and would continue to have a deleterious effect on prospects for attaining food self-sufficiency and engaging in mass environmentalist projects.

³⁵⁶ David, *Changing Places*, 63.

³⁵⁷ Cynthia Brantley, *Feeding Families: African Realities and British Ideas of Nutrition and Development in Early Colonial Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers, 2002), 9.

The expressions from chapter two clearly delineate that water is not in enough abundance to sustain life in some regions without outside intervention, as shown through the national coordination for the FEME famine relief programs of 1984 and 1985. It was also demonstrated on the local level as the UNAIS volunteer in Kindi encountered a situation where dry season vegetable gardens were an impossibility. Being able to understand the changing of weather patterns, as Sivakumar and Gnomou contend, can be done, “in agronomically relevant terms [and] is an important activity that could aid crop planning.”³⁵⁸ These authors highlight many reasons as to why adaption to a variable climate has been difficult in Burkina Faso in the second half of the 20th century, including burning the bush, lack of western tools and technologies and lack of coordination between agriculturalist and pastoralist societies. However their analysis fails to mention that the strict regulation of women’s social roles by the patriarchal elites could represent a similar problem.³⁵⁹ The argument put forth by Sankara and the CNR was thus, that social, as well as technical, adjustment to environmental shifts had also been disrupted by colonization and neo-colonialism and in order for society to adjust properly, a proactive approach would need to be taken through the medium of the revolution.

This is why the 1984 and 1985 decrees, bold and progressive documents for their time, enshrined water as a right for everybody and determined that the CNR would utilize all appropriate methods in order to make water available to all, in a capacity where it was abundant and could contribute to progressive development.³⁶⁰ In terms of land management and allocation processes, the CNR made cropping land available to any real or natural person or group, regardless of whether they are familial associations, cooperatives or individual, putting women

³⁵⁸ Sivakumar and Gnomou, *Agroclimatology of West Africa: Burkina Faso*, 3.

³⁵⁹ Sivakumar and Gnomou, *Agroclimatology of West Africa: Burkina Faso*, 4-5.

³⁶⁰ Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Articles 183, 185, 188, 196.

on equal legal footing as men.³⁶¹ Articles 91 and 92 specifically allow for the allocation of land based on uniform parceling and that land allocation commissions composed by members of the local CDR, to make sure that allocation was equitable and that the authority lay with supposedly democratic, rather than traditional authorities with patronage networks and socio-economic interests in which families and individuals have access to land.³⁶² The gender neutrality of these decrees, combined with the mandated inclusion of women in the local political process, intended to allow for women to express greater social agency by applying and being approved for the allocation of land by the local CDR, circumventing the social constraints of traditional, patriarchal land ownership and decision making practices.

The legal circumvention of traditional authorities granted greater opportunities to women and young people to consolidate their social position through the control of a parcel of land. Possession of land was the first step in assuring autonomy through control of growing practices and capital generated by the produce. Women whose husbands or brothers had migrated did not have access to land because they were not considered by traditional authorities to be capable of formal decision-making processes related to land management and agriculture, even though informally, women had been involved in such processes intimately. Henderson, Warner and Ferguson find that, “women’s role in the Central Plateau farm work has increased to primary importance as a result of out-migration of prime age males...Females do a wide variety of tasks ordinarily considered to be male work besides their regular duties during the rainy season, reducing time spent on household tasks and crafts as possibly.”³⁶³ (Henderson, Warner, Ferguson 26) While this study is primarily concerned with women’s time allocation and introducing technology and processes which would cut down on the time women spent on household

³⁶¹ Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Articles 87-89.

³⁶² Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Articles 91-92.

³⁶³ Helen Henderson, Judith Warner and Nancy Ferguson, *Women in Upper Volta: Working Paper #2* (Tucson, AZ: Women in Development Program of the Office of the Council for International Programs, 1982), 26.

processes, specifically the grinding of grain, the findings indicate that such, “labor-saving technologies do not necessarily reduce women’s work load. There is a tendency for women to compensate for time gained by increasing their household services.”³⁶⁴

Based on these results, I argue that introducing new technologies to improve time management was not the primary factor limiting women’s ability to act in a more progressive role in agricultural organizing and land management. Rather, it is the social structures which were affected by exposure to colonialism and the capitalist world market, keeping women from owning land and making decisions related to land management, which are processes which could contribute to better agricultural outcomes despite a continued state of environmental uncertainty. Viviane Compaoré demonstrates that the revolution marked the beginning of the state taking women’s liberation and management in the agricultural sector seriously since, “the political will to promote women is prevalent in Burkina Faso and is the pre-condition for a new mentality which will enable women to assume responsibility for the fate of the country, side by side with men, without inhibitions. This is the pre-requisite for the full utilization of all human resources and the means for a more equitable distribution of income.”³⁶⁵

Optimization of human resources is key to both the development process and maintaining subsistence in times of environmental uncertainty. Compaoré is a proponent of the CNR policy stipulating that women’s marital status should not dictate the degree to which they can participate economically, rather providing proactive educational and training services and expanding upon land nationalization projects to assure access and, “create a rational framework within which all interventions for women could be undertaken in an optimal manner.”³⁶⁶ The

³⁶⁴ Henderson, Warner and Ferguson, *Women in Upper Volta*, 64.

³⁶⁵ Viviane Yolande Compaoré, “Strategies and Programmes for the Promotion of Women in the Agricultural Sector in Burkina Faso,” in *Women in the Development Process* ed. Claudia von Braunmuhl (Berlin: German Foundation for International Development, 1991), 45.

³⁶⁶ Compaore, “Strategies and Programmes for the Promotion of Women,” 47-50.

revolution's progressive policies toward the empowerment of women, as indicated by Compaoré, while not ever fully put into place, were a way in which the CNR sought to turn popular mobility into centralized practice. Many Burkinabé recognized the role women already practiced in agriculture, further enshrining a widespread mentality that women's issues needed to be taken seriously and that providing opportunities for women's self-empowerment, would be crucial. However, the revolutionary state was not the only actor working on projects which would empower women and create new economic opportunities in terms of agriculture, trade and wage labor.

Western Aid groups like CA often had many questions about women's role in sponsored development projects and how the community would react to such involvement, as well as the vision of the government pertaining to women's overall involvement in national 'development'. Funding often comes in larger sums when the government is dedicated, at least rhetorically, to providing women with technical training, literacy training, and certain protections against traditional practices that are seen as abusive or archaic. To return to the Kindi project from Chapter 2, Jean Julien Somé did not idealize the progress the government had made in its movement for the Liberation of Women, describing it as a "thorny" issue locally and a national question that needs to be resolved. In Kindi specifically, women were far less organized publicly than men. The local women's communal organization managed some collective work and small projects, while a neighboring group, according to Brouwer, had much better organizing capacities, but may have been manipulated by a local man. There is no indication from the Kindi files that a URB cell had been formed in conjunction with the local CDR by late 1985.

Burkinabé women hold a multitude of household responsibilities in Kindi, and throughout the country generally, reducing the amount of time and energy available to mobilize in the way that aid groups and the government would like to see demonstrated. This is pointed

out as a problem because, as Somé advises “in our own view, the concerns of women are at several levels depending on time use (you have to go tens of kilometers to get the water to grind the flour, do the housework, etc.). These different activities hinder the availability of women whose participation in community activities is well limited.”³⁶⁷ While concerns women’s time may be less important than their social status, the importance of women in the agricultural systems of Burkina Faso and in the upkeep of the family and fields while men engaged in circular migration, women’s involvement in other projects, such as the implementation of the SSP, was both challenging and necessary.

The issues expressed in Kindi are often the same across regions and types of projects, as western aid groups and NGOs bring with them a particular conception of what women’s economic participation should look like and participation should be initiated, concepts which clashed with both traditional authorities and CNR programs. The revolution was premised on the idea that the people of Burkina Faso would pursue social and economic development in their own way. There was a recognition that the process would be gradual and that it would be important to draw on scientific understandings of the environmental and historical material assessments of society. Studies of project interventions, like that of Henderson, Warner and Ferguson, show that outside actors often lacked these understandings, leading to results that were unintended or wholly unhelpful. This is recognized by Pallé as who argues that women’s “producer” role is often not adequately recognized or examined by NGOs in Burkina Faso which aim to integrate women into the development process.³⁶⁸ Pallé contends that there are many

³⁶⁷ Correspondence from Jean Julien Somé to Sally Meachim, March 18th 1985, 3-4.

Translated from French: "à notre avis, les préoccupations des femmes se situent à plusieurs niveaux selon les périodes (il faut parcourir des dizaines de kilomètres pour avoir l'eau pour mouliner la farine, faire le ménage, etc.). Ces différentes activités entravent la disponibilité des femmes dont la participation aux activités communautaires est bien limitée."

³⁶⁸ Bernadette Pallé, “NGO Activities for the Promotion of Women in Burkina Faso: Strategies and Programmes in the Agricultural Sector,” in *Women in the Development Process* ed. Claudia von Braunmühl (Berlin: German Foundation for International Development, 1991), 56.

limiting factors to NGOs work based on the role as external actors, which limits the impact they can have, necessitating greater coordination with the national government and more research on local conditions.³⁶⁹

A basis for Pallé's recommendation can be viewed through the Equal Access Project, which intended to train rural female para-professionals in Burkina Faso in the late 1970s in an attempt to increase women's participation in public affairs and decision making. In this pre-revolutionary project, which was funded by UNESCO and implemented by European academics, the government having minimal involvement. This project attempted to connect the core to the periphery in terms of training women to be able to facilitate the creation of a class of educated female counterparts with mobilization capabilities, making communication of women's issues to central authorities easier.³⁷⁰ The central problem that the project intended to address was the poor nutritional health, living conditions and enormous work load of rural women, due to lack of empowerment to engage in the development process, which would ultimately affect them and their families.³⁷¹

The project "emphasis was on community development through self-help with women's participation treated as a necessary element of that development," meaning that men were not excluded but much of the onus for the utilization of resources provided was on women themselves, who had been chosen to be project "animatrices" and midwives.³⁷² Despite a more developed understanding of women's social situation in Burkina Faso in relation to control over land and decision making in a general sense, the project still attempted to build upon the existing social limits on women's ability to mobilize villagers for projects or obtain resources to

³⁶⁹ Pallé, "NGO Activities for the Promotion of Women in Burkina Faso," 65-66.

³⁷⁰ Ellen Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Center for International Studies Rural Development Committee, 1981), 6.

³⁷¹ Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development*, 7-8.

³⁷² Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development*, 9.

implement projects.³⁷³ Taylor is thus skeptical of the social premise of the project and states that expanding and changing traditional roles in a non-invasive way would be necessary to improve the effectiveness of the project without undermining its potential.³⁷⁴ Many of the same aspects which the CNR would later emphasize, such as greater project coordination, reduction of dependency on external aid, limiting of the role of the traditional chief in influencing project implementation and providing women with land access through state sponsored reforms, appear in Taylor's study, showing academic backing for the revolutionary framework, based on sociological analysis of an external project intervention geared toward women.³⁷⁵

Women's contribution to agriculture in Burkina Faso is crucial and greater understandings of the revolutionary period can be drawn from an analysis of women's relationships to land use and resource management. External NGOs recognized that women's disadvantaged social position detracted from positive economic development, but were not familiar enough with localized processes and relationships to be able to effectively implement project interventions without major government assistance. The Equal Access project, the Kindi SSP, and other projects which have intended to create frameworks through which women could become active participants in development, all lacked the necessary knowledge and coordination with a popular state authority, for their programs to be successful. The CNR attempted to create conditions under which greater coordination could take place and outside organizations could work in a consolidated manner on projects which were both democratically chosen at the local level and were backed by state planning and funding, identifying women as, arguably, the most important actors in making this process a success. Though the revolution began to be disassembled in 1987, the status of women was greatly improved in Burkina Faso, allowing for

³⁷³ Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development*, 16.

³⁷⁴ Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development*, 17.

³⁷⁵ Taylor, *Women Paraprofessionals in Upper Volta's Rural Development*, 23-24, 27, 33,35, 51.

the progress made related to women's empowerment to reverberate through time and continue to be improved on by socially and historically conscious actors.

Compensating for Shifting Ecologies in Land Use Reform

Whether it is men or women who possess formal responsibility for land allocation and management, the commencement of resource improvement projects, and the distribution of the land's produce, the availability of fertile land is critical in sustaining life in Burkina Faso and cannot be separated from historical analysis of the country. The CNR argued that women needed to take a more authoritative role in the formal management of land but also recognized that this would not happen overnight and that further reforms needed to take place to make sure that those empowered by the patriarchal social structures to make land management decisions, used land in a fair and ecologically efficient manner. The literature on land use and the environment in Burkina Faso is more extensive than any other academic field focusing on the country, thus making it difficult to represent all the studies and authors in a sufficient manner.

This being said, I will highlight the arguments of several important authors who take a historical approach in this section along with the 1985 decree which established how land was to be allocated and used after being nationalized. I aim to use this section to bring my argument full circle, demonstrating that the masses were invested in the revolution, specifically the frustration of a large segment of the population, due to the monopolizing of land by patriarchal elders and its ever-declining condition resulting from this disruptive and colonially derived practice. The CNR saw the social reorganization of land as part of a continuous system of humans adjusting their practices to their environmental realities, which studies broadly recognize as being true in Burkina Faso and elsewhere. However, some analysts focus on the concept of private property and the perceived usurpation of potential commercial development by the revolutionary land

reforms, perceiving human adjustment as taking place through the medium of capitalist institutions rather than those developed by the state.

The agricultural policies of pre-revolutionary regimes often lacked continuity due to a focus on urban development and the instability of various political projects of the long tenured Lamizana government. From independence to 1973 Lecaillon and Morrison argue that, “the government...had no strong inclination to intervene in and regulate the economy.”³⁷⁶ These authors strongly link government willingness and ability to participate in the design and implementation of rural economic policies to climatic conditions, as well as the availability of foreign aid and intervention as effectual, even in situations where most of the food produced was consumed by the farmers. Investment in rural infrastructure and improved production techniques increased from 1974 onward as rainfall returned to normal levels after three years of drought. Beyond the particular nuances of the various state policies toward agricultural development, the various political efforts toward these ends seemed to be seeking all-encompassing development in both the food and cash crop sectors, even if these developments were not always complimentary.³⁷⁷

The policy of primary importance which came out of this later era was the creation of the ORD (Organisation Régionale de Développement) to decentralize authority over certain sectors of the rural economy, overseen by local authorities and assigned experts who managed various project geared toward crop production, irrigation and population re-settlement. The main limitation of the ORD and the reason for its relative ineffectiveness in both the centre and periphery of rural Burkina Faso, seems to be that farmer had to pay in too much to be able to

³⁷⁶ Jacques Lecaillon and Christian Morrison, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso* (Paris: Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 1985), 55.

³⁷⁷ Lecaillon and Morrison, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso*, 57.

participate in projects which aimed to supply improved fertilizers and equipment.³⁷⁸ In contrast, the policies which were put in place during the revolution provided training and much equipment for free or drew on the SPONG network in order to place an appropriate project development group or NGO in the area. Prior to the revolution, the ORDs in coordination with OFNACER were tasked with setting prices in a manner which would draw on existing elasticity to keep productivity growing, producer prices stable and marketing regulated among traders officially licensed by the ORDs.³⁷⁹

This study is important despite its parameters not encompassing any part of the revolutionary period because it demonstrates the conditions and historical progression of state policies toward the development of agriculture directly preceding 1983. During this period, the primary constraint to the success of agricultural programs was the environment, the inconsistency of which the authors describe as hazardous and fundamental handicap.³⁸⁰ The study underscores the necessity of extensive foreign aid if basic agricultural prospects are going to be improved and ecological disaster avoid, and advises that agricultural security could be improved through the construction of modern grain storage facilities and the establishment of cereal banks in food insecure regions.³⁸¹ Upon taking, the CNR proposed and began to put into place agricultural policies both contrary and complimentary to these conclusions, decreasing levels of accepted foreign assistance and integrating existing producer cooperatives and cereal banks into the new CDRs, in order to secure food supplies against speculation and encourage higher levels of production.

³⁷⁸ Lecaillon and Morrisson, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso*, 57-59.

³⁷⁹ Lecaillon and Morrisson, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso*, 79, 84, 95-96.

³⁸⁰ Lecaillon and Morrisson, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso*, 140.

³⁸¹ Lecaillon and Morrisson, *Economic Policies and Agricultural Performance: The Case of Burkina Faso*, 143-145.

The policies of the CNR did not seek to follow western nor Soviet models in terms of land and resource management. Other notable revolutionary states on the African continent such as The People's Republic of Benin, The People's Republic of the Congo, and the Derg government of Ethiopia, all pursued degrees of agricultural modernization through land nationalization and collectivization, the latter of which was not pursued by the CNR. In his political orientation speech, Sankara spoke about how the revolution took place under very specific circumstances, indicating that it would not look like other revolutionary movements in that it would attempt to set rational goals for improved outputs and not let the country become indebted to outside firms for purchases of the expensive equipment and infrastructure collectivization would have required. Sankara assessed the characteristics of Burkina Faso in the orientation speech, separating it from all other revolutionary circumstances by stating that it was,

“a revolution that is unfolding in a backward, agricultural country, where the weight of tradition and ideology emanating from a feudal-type social organization weights very heavily on the popular masses. It is a revolution in a country that, because of imperialism's domination and exploitation of our people, has evolved from a colony into a neocolony. It is a revolution occurring in a country still characterized by the lack of an organized working class conscious of its historic mission, and which therefore possesses no tradition of revolutionary struggle. It is a revolution occurring in a small country on the continent, at a time when, on the international level, the revolutionary movement is coming apart day by day, without any visible hope of seeing a homogenous bloc arise capable of giving a stimulus and practical support to nascent revolutionary movements. This set of historical, geographical, and sociological circumstances gives a certain, specific stamp to our revolution.”³⁸²
(Sanara 90-91)

Specifically due to the limitations of material circumstances, Sankara asserts that the Burkinabé revolution cannot try to replicate other revolutionary processes. Both Filippello and Nguyen Tien Hung demonstrate that such processes of attempted revolutionary replication of the Soviet model for national development took place in Benin and the Congo's revolutionary and that these processes, while still recognizing the presences of popular mobility, were not able to

³⁸² Sankara, “Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination: Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1983,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 90-91.

establish revolutionary states which inspired much support or consolidated lasting achievements.³⁸³

It is important to recognize that the Burkinabé revolution of 1983 was unique because some of its leaders possessed an advanced, yet imperfect, understanding of the limitations of applying learned ideologies based around revolutionary processes which took place under alternate circumstances. In other words, the argument being made by Sankara herein, is that for a revolutionary process to be successfully carried through, an extraordinarily specific analysis of the historical, spatial and social circumstances of the popular mobilization which fueled it, must be conducted in order to interpret the correct implementation of policies and programs.

According to Sankara, the CNR attempted to conduct such an analysis and implement programs which were developed accordingly, in order to make the revolutionary governmental formation into a scaffolding through which popular mobilization could operate and indicate through the shifting of tensions, if it correctly interpreted material solutions through policy. Re-interpreting how people wished to interact with the land, on which they lived and sustained their existence, was thus an important process to the success of the revolution and one which needed to undergo rigorous study and meticulous administrative restructuring.

Support for land nationalization in Burkina Faso was not universal either, but the reform itself was drawn from expressed needs of a sector of the population and based on a particular material analysis, rather than being drawn from a crude and immaterial replication of Soviet policy. Englebert argues that the nationalization of land was confusing to most rural agriculturalists and was rejected by traditional chiefs and socially prominent families that benefited from prevailing land arrangements.³⁸⁴ However, the nationalization decree was not felt

³⁸³ Marcus Filippello, *The Nature of the Path: Reading a West African Road* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); G. Nguyen Tien Hung, *Agriculture and Rural Development in the People's Republic of the Congo* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc, 1987).

³⁸⁴ Englebert, *Burkina Faso*, 58-60.

immediately in most rural localities, and in some not at all during the revolution, as the CNR intended it to be a gradual process which slowly transitioned land arrangements away from allocation systems based on familial composition and social position, as decided by the chief, to a system based on familial need, production capacity and ability/willingness to practice rational and ecologically friendly agricultural techniques.

In opposition to the state management approach to ecological reform, Faure ascribes the land with potential commercial value which could have helped the economic development of Burkina Faso, despite the predominance of traditional perceptions land distribution and tenure, arguing that “the Revolution forestalled such land privatization attempts. It also tried to curtail the powers of landholders: local family heads and those with customary rights.”³⁸⁵ While Faure considers that the nationalization project could have been helpful to ending ambiguities over land ownership and use, which would hopefully dispel potential conflict and keep land from being sold to traders and international industries, the conveying of the reform to the public became distorted and the public reaction to the decree took on excessive characteristics.³⁸⁶ (Faure 5) The land issue was a great concern to the revolution, not only because nationalization would limit the extent to which external capital could be used to expropriate it, but also because there was a need to expand food production. Faure shows that the land nationalization decree allowed for the extension of farm lands, since land access was no longer restricted by traditional authorities, but it also created problems of migration from the Mossi plateau to more fertile lands in the southwest, as well as the clearing of forests and grazing lands, a process which troubled the CNR and lead to a section of the 1985 decree to mandate the conservation of forests and reforestation projects in rural localities.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Armelle Faure, “Private Land Ownership in Rural Burkina Faso,” *Dryland Programme Issue Papers* no. 59 (October 1995): 4.

³⁸⁶ Faure, “Private Land Ownership in Rural Burkina Faso,” 5.

³⁸⁷ Faure, “Private Land Ownership in Rural Burkina Faso,” 5-6; Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Articles 244-261.

Reacting to Malthusian reasoning that overpopulation in Burkina Faso was imminent, Breusers argues that Burkinabé agriculturalists were able to accommodate population growth by adjusting their techniques, applying organic and mineral based manure to larger areas of cultivated land, allowing for the shortening of fallow periods and better harvest results.³⁸⁸ However, labor shortages due to circular migration and more land being used for the cultivation of cash crops, in the form of cotton and groundnuts, the forced cultivation, and later profitization of which contributed to the inability of soil fertility to be reconstituted with longer fallows, and for the production of food to keep pace with the growing demand in times of environmental uncertainty.³⁸⁹ Breuser subjects prevailing concepts of environmental uncertainty in Burkina Faso to historical interpretation, making an extremely compelling argument that overcomes western narratives of African ignorance in relation to land use. The coercive and violent colonial system directly caused, “the break-up of villages and the seemingly random settlement of farmers in isolated compounds in refuge areas. The image that arose was one of disruption of a society in social and economic disarray. Still, behind this disarray, certain creative and reconstructive forces were at play.”³⁹⁰ French colonization was extremely disruptive to Burkinabé processes of social and technical adjustment to changing environmental circumstances, with the continuation of these progressive cycles predicated on the removal of external impediments.

Like Breuser, Ouedraogo also identifies colonialism as disruptive but states that traditional systems for the political control of land, such as *moaga* which acted as a mechanism to solidify the control of land by members of Mossi royal families, offer more stability and potential adaptability to changing environmental conditions. Ouedraogo argues systems like

³⁸⁸ Breusers, “Responses to Climate Variability in the Kaya Region, Burkina Faso,” 213, 215.

³⁸⁹ Breusers, “Responses to Climate Variability in the Kaya Region, Burkina Faso,” 215.

³⁹⁰ Breusers, “Responses to Climate Variability in the Kaya Region, Burkina Faso,” 221.

moaga are, “closely linked to historic modes of tenure” pertaining to land in the Mossi Plateau and specifically where water is relatively more abundant.³⁹¹ The author sees the interaction between post-independence attempts at land modernization and customary uses, as having been historically disruptive, indicating that the insecurity associated with traditional forms of land tenure is a misplaced assumption.³⁹² In the post-revolutionary era, when land privatization measures were put into place in 1993 and 1996, Ouedraogo finds that such meshing of state sanctioned privatization and endorsement of traditional structures actually had a more positive effect around Lake Bazega, the area of study, than did heavy state interventionism.³⁹³ Even though the 1996 reforms attempt to formalize land access, “a disjointed national land policy wavering between the legislative and the contractual options...” Ouedraogo seeks to highlight that the overall withdrawal of the state from management activities has led to the renewal of progressive approaches of land use around traditional forms of control and ownership.³⁹⁴

While much of the language in the 1984 and 1985 decrees intended to address the ecological changes that came with the progressive decline of rainfall since the early 1970s, provisions were also made in relation to the agriculturally prosperous south-western region of Burkina Faso. This area was populated by indigenous Bobo, Bwa, Senoufo and Goin, as well as migrants from the central and northern regions, primarily Mossi but including Fulani (Peuhl) herders as well. Higher and more consistent amounts of rainfall in this area, which is a mix of sandy soiled highlands and densely soiled lowlands, has experienced a process of land tenure adjustment according to Paré, who argues that land management and distribution has evolved due to regional economic, rather than environmental shifts, but has also been effected by serious

³⁹¹ Sayouba Ouedraogo, “New Actors and Lan Acquisition Around Lake Bazega, Burkina Faso,” *Dryland Programme Issue Papers* no. 138 (March 2006): 6, 8.

³⁹² Ouedraogo, “New Actors and Lan Acquisition Around Lake Bazega, Burkina Faso,” 1-2.

³⁹³ Ouedraogo, “New Actors and Lan Acquisition Around Lake Bazega, Burkina Faso,” 21.

³⁹⁴ Ouedraogo, “New Actors and Lan Acquisition Around Lake Bazega, Burkina Faso,” 32, 36.

environmental changes in other parts of the country.³⁹⁵ A capitalist based relationship to the land was introduced during the colonial era, as the French sought to exploit this region for cotton production, encouraging farmers to expand the amount of land devoted to this crop but allowing for the maintenance of traditional land tenure processes.

Paré shows that the economic potential of this area in relation to the world market could be complementary to the influx of migrants from the Mossi plateau, but also detrimental due to governmental intervention, and specifically the land nationalization and reallocation plan which emerged from the 1984 and 1985 decrees. Initially low population density and the presence of unclaimed lands allowed for the expansion of both cash and staple crops, but as land began to fill up, agreements between migrants and landholders had to be sought out in order to make sure everybody had land access and a place in the subsistence economy. Such agreements came in the form of short term renting of land, exchange of access to farming equipment for land, exchange of labor for land and exchange of produce for land. The danger of such arrangements taking place in a zone where cash crops were predominant was that “landlords are often tempted to revoke the contract, at the instigation of better-off migrants (...enriched by cotton production, trading or transport...) who make them better offers.”³⁹⁶ The land reform of 1984 attempted to decrease uncertainty for migrants or socially peripheral families, who had entered into agreements with traditional land holders by securing the right to a parcel to be allocated by the CDR. It also ushered in a great degree of instability and resulted in feelings of ethnic animosity between locals, who began to scale back mutually beneficial land sharing practices, and migrants, who occupied land citing the reallocation decrees.

³⁹⁵ Lacinan Paré, *Negotiating Rights: Access to Land in the Cotton Zone, Burkina Faso* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development Drylands Programme, 2001), 2, 6-8.

³⁹⁶ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 13.

Ultimately, dissatisfaction resulted for many as full enforcement of the new policy was not possible given the administrative capacities of local units of revolutionary governance. This led to conflict between migrants, who attempted to claim land which had been loaned to them, and those that controlled the allocation of land, who hoped to get ahead of the enforcement of the decree by ending agreements with migrants and increasing the amount of land devoted to the cultivation of cotton.³⁹⁷ Traditional processes remained omni-present but land holders grew more conservative with their allocations, while the CDRs took to allocating the least desirable land to migrants who had been the victims of voided agreements.³⁹⁸ The 1984 decree and 1985 follow-up are characterized by Paré as the beginning of a gradual shift toward state empowered actors as the new authorities on land allocation and use, which is the process which the CNR intended to commence and carry through.³⁹⁹

There were many unintended and disruptive consequences to this process as access to land became more tenuous for migrants as indigenous populations sought to consolidate control and capitalize upon their advantaged position by imposing new conditions and increasing rents, while simultaneously keeping more land for cotton cultivation, a strategy which decreased the quality of the soil over the years and contributed to food security within and outside the region.⁴⁰⁰ This was the exact opposite of what the CNR intended to happen and demonstrates both the inability of the correct adjustment policy to be applied in this area as well as the shortcomings of an attempt at land tenure standardization in the context of a region where extensive capitalist relationships had developed under colonialism and become ingrained in regional processes of securing one's livelihood.⁴⁰¹ The CNR's understanding of the exact

³⁹⁷ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 16.

³⁹⁸ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 18.

³⁹⁹ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 19, 24.

⁴⁰⁰ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 21-22.

⁴⁰¹ Paré, *Negotiating Rights*, 22-23.

consequences of colonialism on a regional basis was inconsistent and merited greater caution in terms of policy implementation than was often demonstrated. Politically, the CNR was merely continuing its attempts to help society readjust to new ecological conditions but the presence of popular mobilities in support of this broad stance did not mean that specifically geared policies would be widely reacted to in the way the CNR imagine they would. Greater flexibility and a more gradual implementation benchmarks may have been more practical but would have run contrary to the revolutionary rhetoric of the CNR.

Disrupting the Disruptors: Displacing Traditional Authorities

The argument that colonialism was, and neocolonialism continues to be, disruptive, fits well with the material analysis of the CNR and Dependency Theory rhetoric espoused by Thomas Sankara. The disruptions of colonialism and neocolonialism had driven deep within Burkinabé society, particularly in relation to agricultural practices, and a new route was needed if these trends were to be reversed. The land reforms of the revolutionary era constituted this new route, and regardless of how successful they were, who liked or disliked them and to what degree they were even effective, their implementation was based on a very specific dialectical process, which intended to tap into the popular mobility of the Burkinabé people in order to mend the country's most prevalent social, economic and ecological ills. While land nationalization was not abnormal in African revolutionary states, the extensive follow-up to the nationalization decree, which intended to establish a specific set of policies for environmental management, was something lost in the pretenses of industrialization in Benin and Congo.

As was underscored in chapter two, the availability of water is, above all else, the determinant factor in the sustenance of agricultural self-sufficiency and population stability. This is recognized in Article 196 of the decree which states, “the distribution of water resources must

at all times take into account the social and economic needs of the population. The water supply of the populations remains in all cases the priority element in the allocation of the resources.”⁴⁰² It is made clear in subsequent articles that the availability of water for human consumption takes precedence over all other products and that it would be the responsibility of regional water authorities to divert water for human consumption in times of drought and famine. While several articles are dedicated to qualitative protection of water for human consumption, more importantly for this paper is the assurance that sufficient quantities of water will be available to the population for personal consumption and agriculture. For this, articles 211-233 established an administrative authority for the quantitative management of water which would take on two major projects; the management of water in “zones concernées” and the development of different techniques for the holding of water throughout the country.⁴⁰³ The articles mandate the hiring of water engineers, geological experts, and for training to take place on multiple administrative levels in water management techniques specific to the conditions of that area.

While nationalization decrees in other countries were structured to allow the state unlimited authority over land use and natural resources, usually defined as particular contributions to the process of national development, the 1985 decree defines protections against state intervention in relation to water use, a process which would be subject to the authorization of local authorities in the CDRs, as article 224 states, “in the case of shallow water sources, it determines the facilities that are subject to authorization and specifies, where applicable, the limits of exemption from authorization for withdrawals for non-domestic purposes, the facilities

⁴⁰² Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Article 196.

Translated from French: “la distribution des ressources en eau devra, a tout moment tenir compte des besoins sociaux et économiques des populations. L'alimentation en eau des populations demeure dans tous les cas l'élément prioritaire dans l'allocation des ressources.”

⁴⁰³ Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Articles 218, 211-233.

Translated from French: “s'il s'agit d'eaux superficielles, il détermine les installations qui sont soumis à autorisation et précise, s'il y a lieu, les limites de dispense d'autorisation pour les prélèvements effectués à des fins non domestiques dont les installations peuvent bénéficier compte tenu de leur incidence sur la ressource.”

of which may benefit considering their impact on the resource.”⁴⁰⁴ These protections of local water resources are expanded upon in following articles but the overarching intention was to make sure local revolutionary committees were empowered to manage water resources in a manner specific to local conditions, but that the state was organized and had provisions readily available to empower their participation in improving water management processes regardless of the severity of local conditions.

However, as many authors who analyze modern land management processes in Burkina Faso note, these protections were only endowed upon bodies which were empowered by the revolution, mainly the CDRs, and did not apply to pre-revolutionary land ownership and management patterns, unless those patterns were adopted by the local CDR, rather than by the traditional chiefs. The assumption of local control over land by the CDRs or transfer of land management processes away from familial or traditional authorities, did not take place everywhere and the CDRs had a particularly difficult time in areas of water abundance and high quality agricultural land. The agricultural shortfalls during the drought of 1983-5, as well as the continued prominence of land distribution systems based on social status, allowed for CDRs to become enfranchised in harder hit areas. This indicates that the expressions of support for the revolution in many rural areas was intertwined with dissatisfaction over land use policies and the necessity of buying imported food at higher prices to offset losses which were perceived to be a result of prevailing land use and resource management processes.

Various combinations of popular mobilization among the masses, which most likely was not steeped in specifically Marxist-Leninist rhetoric popular among many within the CNR, contributed to the formation of rural CDRs and allowed for their appropriation of land and resource management responsibility. The expression of such responsibilities barely had time to

⁴⁰⁴ Decret no. 85-404/CNR/PRES, Article 224.

develop before the revolution was brought down due to a political fracture in the CNR, but from the limited time which local revolutionary activists had to begin this process, we can observe the various successes and shortcomings of the CDR model in these terms. Kelly reports that broken water infrastructure was a major problem for localities hit by drought, arguing that, “the [CNR] has reported that a significant number of wells and bore holes in the north are unusable due to broken pumps. Repairs to these wells, particularly the bore holes, would have been relatively easy and resulted in an immediate increase in available water supplies.”⁴⁰⁵ This indicates that while the CNR was aware based on communication with local revolutionary authorities that water infrastructure was breaking down, it did not possess the money or expertise to repair these elements in a timely enough manner to avoid drought. This may also be an indicator as to why water infrastructure management is so heavily underscored in the 1985 decree.

While the 1984 and 1985 decrees are important in many ways, touching on the need to reverse the trend of deforestation, the regulation exploitative activities such as mining and the management of wildlife in relation to both domesticated cattle and the hunting of wild creatures, these are subjects which need to be approached under a different historical research design. The importance of the 1985 decree particularly, as a follow up to the land nationalization of 1984, is that it sought to enfranchise different groups to wield power over land and water resources, taking the role away from lineage elders and traditional chiefs and granting greater agency to women, young men of a lower social status and technicians recruited to serve the CNR at local and regional levels. The hope was that this process would set Burkina Faso on a course to bridge the social inequalities which existed in rural society and to renew the process under which agriculturalists adjusted to their environmental realities in order to produce at subsistence levels.

⁴⁰⁵ Kelly, “The Situation in Burkina Faso,” 9.

The CNR believed that it could re-stimulate and contribute to the efficiency of this process by sidelining traditional chiefs, who were viewed as backward and enemies of the people, and drawing on scientific techniques that would allow for more water to be conserved and for land to be utilized in efficient and sustainable ways. It drew on these popular mobilities not only to legitimate itself as a viable political entity, but also drew on the ideologically and institutionally structured approach of the CNR in order to justify their actions on a local level, creating a mutual dependence between rural actors who were disenfranchised by the traditional system and CNR authorities in Ouagadougou who were pursuing policies to initiate broader social and economic restructuring. The policy initiatives which intended to limit circular migration and to break down barriers to women's decision making in agriculture were intertwined with land use as those who participated in circular migration often did so because their social position limited their access to land, and left women in a position where they took on the role of primary agricultural actors with no formal decision making power.

From a purely Marxist standpoint, the CNR observed a class division and sought to overturn it to legitimize its power in the short term, and transform the young country for the better in the long term. Though this is certainly an oversimplified interpretation of the CNR's view of the country and the complex social relationships taking place among the roughly 60 ethnic groups, within social structures that amounted to a synthesis of traditional, colonial and Marxist-Leninist thought, such an interpretation gets at the core of how the revolution functioned as a broad social alliance for drastic restructuring of society. The segment of the population which the CNR sought to reach with its rhetoric and policies was the segment dissatisfied with the ineffective political process of predecessor regimes, which were steeped in neocolonialism and lack of interest in rural affairs.

A greater role for the national government in rural areas and among agriculturalists, albeit on the terms of these populations, was seen as necessary by these disadvantaged populations, leading to initially broad support for the CNR. Inevitably, the policies and implementation processes commenced during the revolution effected everybody in different ways and caused the popularity of the revolution to decline among some demographics, though the CNR for its part was confident that, as its land reform and agrarian management projects began to come to fruition, skeptics from within their target group would realize that the revolution benefited their interests, despite the sometimes turbulent reform process. The CNR did not entertain fantasies of total satisfaction over the land reform policies of nationalization and ecological regulation and knew that constant adjustments to policy would be necessary in order to earn the trust of the disenfranchised majority. Expectations of universal acceptance across socio-economic sectors would have been unrealistic and remains so despite academic criticisms, leaving the CNR and CDRs in a position where their populist and revolutionary rhetoric was not completely reflective of attitudes among the masses.

Conclusion

Contested Narratives and Theoretical Avenues

The revolutionary period in Burkina Faso was ultimately unable to survive and its institutional roots proved to be shallow, unable to withstand political pressures coming from forces both within and outside of the CNR. The implementation of revolutionary programs beginning in 1983 were only beginning to take root in society when the coup d'état of October 1987 threw the future of the revolution into question. A quiet but serious rift had been developing within the CNR since 1986 between Sankara and Blaise Compaoré and when the smoke cleared, Sankara and most of his main supporters were dead or had fled the country. The

October 15, 1987 coup d'état which ultimately marked the beginning of the end for the revolution, is a contested narrative. Compaoré drew back from the revolutionary process, consolidating his position in the CNR and becoming more critical of Sankara's insistence that some programs needed to be sped up while others should be slowed down and restructured. Compaoré was not a theorist like Sankara and had much less ideologically invested in trying to form the revolution into an authentic mechanism through which the ideas the mobilized masses of Burkinabé could be expressed.

Retrospectively, it appears that Compaoré forsook revolutionary policies because power and money were at stake and his participation in the assassination of Sankara in 1987, followed by the assassinations of Jean-Baptiste Lingani and Henry Zongo in 1989, are representative of his willingness to eliminate all his rivals and all vestiges of the revolutionary system.⁴⁰⁶

Compaoré first proclaimed that the new Fronte Populaire (FP) government would begin the "rectification of the revolution" immediately after the coup, smearing Sankara as a traitor who had sold out to imperialist powers for personal gain, a notion which Cudjoe portrays as absurd since it was Compaoré who had met with Houphet-Boigny and Guy Penne in Abidjan to secure their blessing and support.⁴⁰⁷ Instead of "rectifying" the revolution, Compaoré dismantled it. While facing immediate backlash from many of the most committed CDRs as well as elements within the army, Compaoré was able to consolidate the authority of the FP by 1988, stripping the CDRs of their administrative power and reigning in the revolutionary mechanisms which had been put in place to allow broad popular engagement with politics and development.

In 1989, Compaoré purged the FP of the last revolutionary elements with a similar justification for his elimination of Sankara, that they intended to betray the revolution and kill Compaoré. A new constitution was then prepared in 1990 and voted on in 1991, establishing a

⁴⁰⁶ Alfred Cudjoe, *Who Killed Sankara?* (Accra, Ghana: Self Published, 1988), 36-37.

⁴⁰⁷ Cudjoe, *Who Killed Sankara?*, 33-34.

formally liberal democratic political structure with a powerful presidential position, which Compaoré won with a reported 100% of the vote, though turnout was only around 27%. The year 1991 can thus be viewed as a formal ending to all vestiges of the revolution, while in a more practical sense, the revolution ended when troops loyal to Compaoré ambushed and murdered Sankara and most of his cabinet members on October 15, 1987. Ernest Harsch describes the repression, corruption and integration of Burkina Faso into the neocolonial fold extensively in his excellent history of Burkina Faso, but also clearly identifies that the popular mobility which were seized upon by the CNR, did not simply vanish. Instead, such mobility simmered below the surface throughout Compaoré's protracted and largely undemocratic rule, flaring up again in 2014 as the correct stimuli once again presented itself.⁴⁰⁸

Harsch portrays the 2014 revolution in Burkina Faso as drawn from the same popular concepts of mass involvement in and oversight of the political process, self-sufficiency rather than reliance on outside donors who were often self-serving and the creation of institutions to protect the Burkinabé against the potential for ecological disaster.⁴⁰⁹ By the time Compaoré was forced to flee to Cote d'Ivoire 27 years into his rule, very few of these prevailing concerns had been addressed and popular dissatisfaction with Compaoré's regime had reached a breaking point because of this. While the institutional structures of the CNR had proven to be insufficient for the immediate expression of the popular mobilization which drove the revolution in 1983, and the translation of ideology into practice was often flawed, the neo-liberal policies and dictatorial political system of the Compaoré era failed to improve on this, resulting, as some have argued, in greater harm to the country's prospects for development.

In this paper, I have argued that the historical portrayal of the revolutionary period in Burkina Faso has been limited in terms of an overall lack of English language literature and in

⁴⁰⁸ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 58.

⁴⁰⁹ Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, PG#.

relation to the academic engagements, which have tended to make moralizing arguments about the revolution and its policies as good vs. bad and right vs. wrong. This creates the necessity for further academic research based on the analysis of this important period in Burkinabé, and broader regional and possibly Atlantic World, history that transcends narratives which attempt to retrospectively project moralizing narratives on to the revolutionary process. The revolution should be viewed academically as neither good or bad, but as a process with unique qualities which can lead us to a greater understanding of the ways in which popular mobility has manifested itself among the masses and been interpreted by individual actors and governmental entities.

The recent evolution of historical literature on Africa in the second half of the 20th century has guided the formation of many of my supplementary arguments, providing the framework through which I can integrate ideas of human relationships within Africa, with international actors and with the environment. To this end, I have argued that the Burkinabé's interactions with these agential forces has resulted in the disruption of what one could perceive to be the prevailing indigenous process of adjustment to ecological changes. Since Burkinabé processes of social reproduction are intimately linked to the environment, an actor that exerts various kinds and degrees of pressure upon populations, the development of methods to adjust to such fluctuations has been historically crucial. I have also argued that colonialism and neocolonialism, the imposition of social and economic alterations by outside actors, constituted serious disruptions to Burkinabé methods of adjustment and lead to social fractures with serious consequences.

The French colonial design of circular migration and its sustained impact to the present, followed by the introduction of myriad of NGOs which brought with them westernized concepts for development, represented serious pressures on Burkinabé social cohesion and the ability to

reproduce life, across demographics. I posit that the CNR, the political apparatus which emerged out of the 1983 revolution, intended to make itself into the framework through which the popular mobilization that brought it to power could be expressed, leading to a process of self-correction and readjustment to environmental and material realities. The CNR operated on the idea that through the application of concepts of Marxism-Leninism, Dependency Theory and modern African revolutionary thought, they could create policies and institutions that would distance Burkina Faso from outside influences and reinvigorate the population to not only resume its pre-colonial process of environment adjustment, but to improve upon these processes by utilizing modern techniques with implications for development outside of the western framework.

It is at this juncture that I want to approach the theoretical influences on Thomas Sankara and the CNR to demonstrate why policies and institutions developed the way they did during the revolutionary period and propose a framework that could be used in future works on modern African history. The definition of terms like *development*, *underdevelopment*, *dependence*, and *modernization* were derived by Sankara and the CNR from contemporary political writers and revolutionaries and applied in ways that were believed to fit the material circumstances of Burkina Faso in the mid 1980s. The theoretical analysis of this concluding section will serve to connect many of the concepts highlighted throughout this paper and clarify the relationship between political theory and revolutionary praxis in Burkina Faso. I will engage with writers such as Walter Rodney, Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral before connecting these literary works to Sankara's ideological inclinations and policy proposals.

Walter Rodney, the foremost academic and Marxist political theorist of Guyana, addressed all the above terms in ways that laid the groundwork for the academic sub-field of "Dependency Theory" which was then contributed to in greater depth by Amin, Wallerstein and others. Rodney was forthright with his definitions, recognizing both human and environmental

agency in economic and social processes, addressing the economic aspect of *development* when the members of a society “increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity...is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized.”⁴¹⁰ The changing capacities of a society which allow for its economic *development* also allow for, “changes in the rest of the superstructure of society- including the sphere of ideology and social beliefs.”⁴¹¹

Rodney’s utilization of the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx, allow for a continuous interpretation of the parallel development of Africa and Europe along different courses, upon which is premised further definitions of *underdevelopment* and the definitional premise of *dependency*. To this end, Rodney claims,

it is necessary to re-emphasize that development and underdevelopment are not only comparative terms, but that they also have a dialectical relationship one to the other: that is to say, the two help produce each other by interaction. Western Europe and Africa had a relationship which insured the transfer of wealth from Africa to Europe...The developed and underdeveloped parts of the present capitalist section of the world have been in continuous contact for four and a half centuries...[and] over that period Africa helped to develop Western Europe in the same proportion as Western Europe helped to underdevelop Africa.⁴¹²

The contention is that an inverse relationship formed between Africa and the western powers that affected Africa in a certain way and allowed for the active exemplification of not only *development* but *underdevelopment* as well, with historical background and modern context.

Participation in, and intertwinement with European derived forms of international commerce, Rodney argues, of which African’s had no part in creating the rules of, laid the foundation for *dependency*, or rather the establishment of separate spheres of “metropole and dependency” where the former was the heart of the capitalist market where capital was

⁴¹⁰ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1974), 4.

⁴¹¹ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 6.

⁴¹² Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 75.

accumulated and the latter was the extension through which such capital could be obtained through commodity extraction, in terms of raw assets and human chattel.⁴¹³ Rodney frames the uneven processes of material development as the reason for Europe's ability to gradually concretize its grip on African lands and commodities since, "European society was leaving feudalism and was moving towards capitalism; African society was then entering a phase comparable to feudalism," giving, "Europeans a headstart over humanity elsewhere in the scientific understanding of the universe, the making of tools and the efficient organization of labor."⁴¹⁴ By virtue of this headstart, European nations were able to create conditions under which they could exact a legally recognized exploitation of Africa, creating a paradox of *underdevelopment* where the material riches and suitable environment of Africa benefited European development at the expense of potential African development.⁴¹⁵

Connecting Rodney's theories to the Burkinabé revolution, his definitions of *development* and *underdevelopment*, allow us a deeper understanding of the lens through which this specific group of revolutionaries viewed the historical relationship between France (and Europe as a whole) and Burkina Faso (and Africa as a whole). France had upset Burkinabé development through the violence of extractive colonialism and the continuation of such interventionist policies in the era of neo-colonial, formal independence. In the view of the Burkinabé revolutionaries, it was time to drastically reduce the amount of contact between Burkina Faso and European influences through the restructuring of society in a manner that would theoretically reduce *dependence* through self-sufficiency and cooperation with other African states. In this vein of thought, Rodney disputes fully the idea that Africa had any need for, or benefited in any way from, European colonization, which many imperialist powers portrayed as a civilizing

⁴¹³ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 76-77, 100.

⁴¹⁴ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 78.

⁴¹⁵ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 20-21.

mission, but in reality was nothing more than farce intended to justify violent extraction and economic integration.⁴¹⁶ While the extractive aspect was mainly for the accumulation of physical or material capital, the integrative aspect was intended to perpetuate the conditions under which extraction could take place.⁴¹⁷

Such integration required the structuring of African colonial society and economies in a particular manner which Rodney refers to as, “the conditions most favorable to the expansion of capitalism and the plunder of Africa.”⁴¹⁸ The establishment of taxes on Africans, the education of certain Africans in administrative capacities, the selective pursuit of “public works” projects and the development of laws and norms pertaining to land use, the marketing of products and labor movement, all played roles in the overarching project of European colonialism.⁴¹⁹ While dismissing the idea that the exploitation of Africa was the only factor contributing to the development of a powerful form of European capitalism, Rodney makes the argument that African and European trajectories were already intimately interwoven by this point.

Because of the aforementioned inverse relationship between *development* and *underdevelopment* and the perceived necessity of the European colonizers to perpetuate the conditions of their own *development* through colonialism and imperialist projects, *dependency* thus could be defined in terms of power, or a lack of power on the part of the dependent, since “Power is the ultimate determinant in human society...It implies the ability to defend one’s interests and if necessary to impose one’s will by any means available. In relations between people, the question of power determines maneuverability in bargaining, the extent to which on people respect the interests of another, and eventually the extent to which a people survive as a

⁴¹⁶ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 138, 149-150.

⁴¹⁷ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 236.

⁴¹⁸ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 164.

⁴¹⁹ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 164-167, 171, 240

physical and cultural entity. When one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society, that in itself is a form of underdevelopment.”⁴²⁰

In essence, Rodney argues that *dependency* is an expression of advanced *underdevelopment* and is a result of a societal loss of the powers of self-determination, powers which can be recovered if the correct process was pursued. This process included the reification of the African nation state, which had been prematurely destroyed by the colonial imposition of unnatural “tribalism”, the elimination of monocultures which destroyed agricultural capacities and lead to famine and the endemic malnutrition of the African body across generations. Rodney thus advocated for the restructuring of African educational institutions in a manner that removed the deleterious effects of European influences while embracing and employing modern technology in an African way in which, “the learning process being directly related to the pattern of work in society...its close links with social life...its collective nature its many-sidedness; and its progressive development in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child [there being] no separation of education and productive activity or any division between manual and intellectual education.”⁴²¹

Rodney’s proposals for rectification in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* are less concise than his criticisms, an aspect which is made up for by Wallerstein and Amin as they develop and deploy their analytical framework for overcoming *dependency*. Wallerstein works off of Rodney in a broader sense in constructing an image of capitalism as an all-encompassing, but limiting, world system in which the core and the periphery, the *developed* and the *underdeveloped* are sectors performing different functions in the maintenance of such a

⁴²⁰ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 224.

⁴²¹ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 228, 235, 239.

system.⁴²² In the absence of a socialist world system of economic relationships and governance, despite the existence of socialist blocs of states, *underdeveloped* states operating in the periphery of the world economy must manifest, “alternate strategies in the light of the fact that only a minority can ‘make it’ within the framework of the [capitalist] world-system...that would only lead us to ask about the possibilities of some more radical systematic transformation...the strategy of seizing the change, the strategy of promotion by invitation, and the strategy of self-reliance.”⁴²³

Wallerstein posits that each strategy has an appropriate set of material conditions under which to be pursued, and that a sympathetic reading of Tanzania’s *Ujamaa* era can point to such appropriate conditions where, “economic decolonization and development will be agonizingly slow even with efficient policy formulation and execution and the best likely external economic developments...and carefully pursued strategy of development including economic independence as a goal can be consistent with an accelerating rate of economic as well as social and political development.”⁴²⁴ There are obvious historical continuities between Tanzania during the *Ujamaa* era and the revolutionary period in Burkina Faso, which come through in the rhetorical and structural embrace of the ‘strategy of self-reliance’ as part of a revolutionary, nation building project.

Nation states like Burkina Faso and Tanzania, embraced ‘strategic self-reliance’ because of the perception that the continued exposure of their small, subsistence based economies, to the fluctuations of the world market, were overwhelmingly harmful and that self-sufficiency provided the protections need against exploitation by the *developed* countries (France, the United

⁴²² Immanuel Wallerstein, “Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation within the Capitalist World Economy,” in *The capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 67-68.

⁴²³ Wallerstein, “Dependence in an Interdependent World,” 76.

⁴²⁴ Wallerstein, “Dependence in an Interdependent World,” 81.

Kingdom, the United States) and *semi-peripheral* countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Brazil, Egypt, Saudi Arabia) which benefited from participation in the world economy, but only as a result of being under the control the *developed* countries.⁴²⁵ The degree of involvement with the world of countries with small subsistence economies, is a product of the necessity of wage employment for the individual, developed through the imposition of colonialism, which maintained and perpetuated dependence after formal independence, creating fluctuating norms of land use and labor allocation based on changes in the world market.

However, this type of involvement with the world economy perpetuates *dependence* and makes the reproduction of life more difficult, as the inconsistent presence of adequate labor to produce at subsistence levels, combined with environmental shifts, leads to conditions of famine, displacement and depopulation.⁴²⁶ Ultimately, the 'strategy of self-reliance' is a threat to the capitalist world economy because the availability of an abundance of laborers who can circulate between the wage labor and subsistence production has made remarkable contributions to prosperity of the *developed* countries and the concretization of the world capitalist system. The removal of such labor availability, through a whole scale return to subsistence production and principals of disciplined self-sufficiency are a mechanism that can be utilized to break the hold of *dependency* and begin a process of gradual modernization on domestic, popular terms.⁴²⁷

Engaging with Samir Amin can further our understanding of how Wallerstein's theories relate directly to Burkina Faso due to his framing of West African variations of *dependency* and African versions of class conflict. Amin, like Rodney, clearly dismisses any idea that colonialism was a boon to African *development* stating, "The subsequent development of the trading

⁴²⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Semiperipheral Countries and the Contemporary World Crisis," in *The capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 100.

⁴²⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rural Economy in the Modern World," in *The capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 128-129.

⁴²⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Class and Class Conflict in Contemporary Africa," in *The capitalist World-Economy: Essays by Immanuel Wallerstein* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 194-196.

economy during the colonial period was not to be a progression, but a step backwards, and one for which Africa is still paying heavily” and that this, “trading economy, which was based on an agricultural production for export obtained without any modernization of techniques, corresponded to the mediocrity of metropolitan capitalism. Made possible only by investments in a transport infrastructure...it allowed the colonial trading companies to make easy monopoly profits out of the system without either risks or investments.”⁴²⁸ West Africa specifically was a site for accelerated colonial exploitation in the post-war period which, “produced a crisis in the public finances of the colonies even before independence...[as] the French African colonies were unable to bear the cost of their administration; and ‘aid’ – technical assistance and various types of financial contribution – prolonged this basic dependence beyond 1960.”⁴²⁹

In examining Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire specifically as states with intertwined histories, Amin argues that for legitimate, independent *modernization* to take place, Burkina Faso’s labor power must be put to use in Burkina Faso rather than in Cote d’Ivoire. Decision making in relation to *development* techniques must be placed in the hands of the grass roots, a force which is, “More rational than the experts, with their dream of extending the use of animals to the whole continent – a transformation based on the idea of the European peasantry a century ago – the peasants of Africa have met these so-called attempts at modernization with the force of inertia.”⁴³⁰ The forces of neo-colonialism, Amin maintains, are not interested in this form of development because it does not contribute to profit and accumulation in the world capitalist market, and thus such forces will not contribute to the development of industrial infrastructure and organization of rural, agricultural democracy, which could lead to the evolution of Burkina Faso from a “non-viable state” to a truly independent entity.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, ix, xi.

⁴²⁹ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, xiii.

⁴³⁰ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 141.

⁴³¹ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 139-144.

Amin is able to conclude that the continued foreign domination of West Africa was the leading contributor to *underdevelopment* and thus *dependency* and that the so-called 'liberal solutions' to such conditions were inadequate and misleading. In terms of Burkina Faso, Amin is critical of the investment plans which were developed under Yameogo and Lamizana in cooperation with France, a system which operated under increasing contradiction which, "find expression in symptoms such as the growth in urban unemployment, a fall in the standard of living in rural areas, the repeated financial crises which are a constant feature of political life...The African states are not responsible for a system which is the direct result of colonial economic policies, since they were themselves created to meet the demands of the system."⁴³² The solutions offered by France and other western investors, came with promised figures for economic achievement which were unrealistic and actually resulted in a further deterioration of the country's prospects as the continuation of such policies, "within the limits of a small independent state insoluble problems for the treasury, without inducing automatic growth."⁴³³

Looking to how African revolutionary authors influenced the Burkinabé revolution, one can identify Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and the various speeches and writings of Amilcar Cabral as influential on Sankara and the CNR. African theoretical concepts of revolutionary activity are, after all, purported to possess aspects of class struggle, as shown by Wallerstein, and thus compose the basis for a legitimate break with *dependency* through the establishment of a revolutionary state. Fanon explores the nature of formal political independence in Africa and argues that, "in the majority of cases, for 95% of the population of under-developed countries, independence brings no immediate change..." and that while, "...independence has brought moral compensation to colonized peoples, and has established their

⁴³² Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 196.

⁴³³ Amin, *Neo-Colonialism*, 197-198.

dignity...they have not yet had time to elaborate a society, or to build up and affirm values.”⁴³⁴

Thus, this allows the “nationalist parties” which Fanon proclaims to be part of the residue of colonial occupation, possessing a mentality of petty individualism, bourgeoisie idealism and opportunism, leading them to bargain with both the forces of imperialism and the masses of their own country.⁴³⁵

These nationalist parties form the vanguard of neo-colonialism, Fanon argues, simply because they have been conditioned to do so, allowing nationalist leaders and politicians to channel the energy of the masses into “reasonable demands” rather than allowing this energy to take the form of revolutionary violence.⁴³⁶ Fanon does not advocate for pacifism or gradual reform through political systems left over from colonialism, opting instead to propose that, “The practice of violence binds them [the colonized masses] together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning. The groups recognise each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilises the people; that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction.”⁴³⁷ This unifying violence breaks down the colonial imposition of division through tribalism and regionalism, which was reinforced by the empowerment of pseudo-traditional chiefs and customary authorities, as well as the national bourgeoisie, who, while also disliking traditional authorities, ultimately seek to pacify violent struggle to their own benefit.⁴³⁸

Fanon is able to directly illustrate the misnomer of considering attainment of formal independence in Africa the achievement of legitimate national independence, as “the apotheosis

⁴³⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth: A Negro Psychoanalyst’s Study of the Problems of Racism & Colonialism in the World Today* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1961), 62, 64.

⁴³⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 39, 49, 52-54.

⁴³⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 57.

⁴³⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 73.

⁴³⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 73-74.

of independence is transformed into the curse of independence, and the colonial power through its immense resources of coercion condemns the young nation to regression.”⁴³⁹ (Fanon 76-77) The nationalist leaders, who accept this challenge of independence, are ultimately unsuccessful because of the conditions of external oppression where “an autarkic regime is set up and each state, with the miserable resources it has at hand, tries to find an answer to the nation’s great hunger and poverty...” while others forego the challenge and accept the conditions of independence resulting in, “the former dominated country becom[ing] an economically dependent country.”⁴⁴⁰ These points lead to the ultimate argument that independence willingly granted by the colonial authorities is not independence truly achieved because there are conditions that come with continued cooperation with and institutionally breaking from the colonial apparatus. Revolutionary violence in some form must be employed to establish a basis for the development of national consciousness and the mobilization of the human energy which must be employed for legitimate independence and national development.⁴⁴¹

The ideological necessity of a revolution to overcome *dependency* helps us understand how the revolutionaries in Burkina Faso derived their methods from Fanon’s framework. As Harsch showed in his historical study, Burkina Faso’s nationalist leadership took the route of cooperation with France and used its mandate, during the Yameogo years and after, to accumulate wealth and construct patronage systems to maintain their influence and build their base of urban support, neglecting the rural population by engaging in exchange with pseudo-traditional chiefs securing votes and relative calm for payouts and minimal disturbances to their personal patronage structures.⁴⁴² It is somewhat obvious that the Burkinabé revolutionaries were able to take seriously Fanon’s critiques of nationalist political parties which developed at the end

⁴³⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 78-80.

⁴⁴⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 77.

⁴⁴¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 70.

⁴⁴² Harsch, *Burkina Faso*, 19.

in in the immediate aftermath of the colonial period. These political parties mostly developed support in urban settings, avoiding the rural areas and grudgingly cooperating with traditional chiefs, because of the challenges posed by communicating with the rural population and circumventing the traditional authorities.⁴⁴³

Fanon argues that a new way of engaging rural populations must be derived for any kind of national authority to subdue the distrust and natural hostility toward governance and administer the popular energies of the peasantry in a way that will tap into their revolutionary potential. It is the rural people that must be at the forefront since it, “constitutes the only spontaneously revolutionary force of the country,” and it will take educated militants from the nationalist party disassociating themselves with reformism and useless political commentary, to establish a mutual understanding with the rural population of the goal of national independence.⁴⁴⁴ It becomes relatively obvious that the Burkinabé revolutionaries took this aspect of Fanon’s revolutionary theory extremely seriously by setting up CDRs through which the rural masses could express themselves politically as well as receive direction from the centralized revolutionary forces of the CNR. Using revolutionary methods to reorganize rural society is aimed at developing a collective mentality or energy, that can be channeled clearly into essential reforms and development.

As this collective mentality takes charge and spaces are occupied by humans, from whom is pouring forth popular energy intended to enact absolute and fundamental change, Fanon contends that the process of national liberation has begun in earnest. Though it is not complete, and will not be complete until many other objectives have been accomplished, there is a realization on the part of the militant leaders that their perception of politics has changed and that it is no longer an activity intended to lull or mystify the people, but one of education and

⁴⁴³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 88-90.

⁴⁴⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 99, 101.

intensification of the struggle. The introduction of this type of politics and its spread to the people of all areas, not in a way to supplant, but to adapt to recognized ways of national existence, creating conditions where “traditional institutions are reinforced, deepened and sometimes literally transformed. The tribunals which settle disputes, the *djemaas* and the village assemblies turn into revolutionary tribunals and political and military committees...in every village hosts of political commissioners spring up, and the people, who are beginning to splinter upon the reefs of misunderstanding, will be shown their bearings by these political pilots.”⁴⁴⁵ This is not to say that at this point the process had become insoluble because national consciousness can easily be misused and misdirected by any number of political forces.

While Fanon speaks mostly of political mechanisms which can be employed to overcome *dependence* and for the commencement of processes for material and psychological liberation from colonial domination, Amilcar Cabral identifies the struggle to overcome colonialism in terms of “cultural resistance.” Cabral hypothesizes that cultural resistance to the necessarily damaging imposition of imperialist domination, arises in many places and times continuously throughout the process of domination, but must evolve and take new forms in order to fully contest this domination.⁴⁴⁶ The contemporary cultural situation of a given society is the result of particular economic and political activities that result in a certain form of material development, leading Cabral to posit that

“the value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated...Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people’s history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment...within a society...[and] among different societies.”⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 114.

⁴⁴⁶ Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral* ed. Africa Information Service (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), 40.

⁴⁴⁷ Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” in *Return to the Source*, 41.

Concerted struggle against imperialism emerges out of cultural resistance, eventually becoming national liberation in direct opposition to imperialism. Cultural resistance can also be viewed as a popular expression of dissatisfaction and dissent in the context of neocolonial domination of formally independent African states and the source of popular energies for revolutionary activity to break from this condition, which occurred in Burkina Faso in 1983.

According to Cabral, national liberation is not defined as a return to pre-colonial conditions and traditional modes of production, because the culture of dominated societies cannot reverse the touch of imperialism. Instead, the formation of a nation recognized and treated internationally as a sovereign entity must be allowed to take place, with the reclaiming of national productive forces and the utilization of these forces for the development of the liberated people in the most appropriate manner, related to specific cultural contexts.⁴⁴⁸ In a similar line of thought to Fanon, though expressing himself in terms of cultural freedom rather than Fanon's emphasis on the political and psychological, Cabral states,

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture. Thus, it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of *culture*.⁴⁴⁹

Any national liberation movement must embody the mass character and cultural character of society as a whole, necessitating an intimate process of social analysis to determine how the economic and cultural interests of particular sectors of society will orient themselves toward the national liberation process.⁴⁵⁰ Cabral builds on Fanon's theory of urban-rural connection as a necessity for national liberation but it also distinguishes to the many cultures which exist inside

⁴⁴⁸ Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source*, 43.

⁴⁴⁹ Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source*, 43.

⁴⁵⁰ Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in *Return to the Source*, 44-47.

the arbitrary borders of the new nation states. Cabral proposes a re-Africanization of culture but in a way that does not simply turn the fruits of the liberation struggle over to the members of privileged classes who participated in the struggle. Instead, “the liberation movement must, on the cultural level just as on the political level, base its action in popular culture, whatever may be the diversity of levels of culture in the country.”⁴⁵¹

In addition to re-Africanization and contact with the, “positive cultural values of every well-defined social group,” a new aspect must be added, which Cabral calls the *national dimension*, essentially the construction of a harmonious nation based not on the dominance of any single class or ethnic group, but upon the intimate examination and intertwining of the culture of all social groups in order to form a cohesive national culture.⁴⁵² Only in this way can a liberation movement be truly successful, achieving national unity through a, “total identification with the environmental reality and with the fundamental problems and aspirations of the people; and...by progressive cultural identification of the various social groups participating in the struggle.”⁴⁵³ The theoretical writings of Fanon and Cabral were, and continue to be, often drawn upon by revolutionaries in Africa and elsewhere, who have not only sought to liberate their countries from the direct grips of colonialism, but from subtle neo-colonial dominance as well. We can identify the Burkinabé revolution in terms of this latter form of national liberation, as its main theoretician, Thomas Sankara, lived and operated in a different period and under different circumstances than Fanon or Cabral but we can still clearly identify aspects of each revolutionary’s theories present in Sankara’s dialectic and the actual policies of the CNR. Sankara’s October 1983 Political Orientation Speech shows a clear connection to the importance

⁴⁵¹ Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” in *Return to the Source*, 47, 50.

⁴⁵² Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” in *Return to the Source*, 48.

⁴⁵³ Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” in *Return to the Source*, 48.

with which Fanon imbues rural populations and the necessity of urban militants connecting with the popular energies in these areas.

Sankara specifically invoked Fanon in this speech as he identified the base of support for the revolution as “this great majority...the peasants, the ‘wretched of the earth,’ who are expropriated, robbed, mistreated, imprisoned, scoffed at, and humiliated every day, and yet are among those whose labor creates wealth...it is the peasants who suffer most from the lack of buildings, of road infrastructure, and from lack of health facilities...[and have] greater sensitivity to social injustices and a desire for progress – end up rebelling...”⁴⁵⁴ Sankara, like Fanon, identifies the class of elites who benefit from neo-colonialism and the maintenance of a status quo which deprives the vast majority of benefits that would drastically improve their lives and national life as a whole. “The parasitic classes that had always profited from colonial and neocolonial [Burkina Faso] are, and will continue to be, hostile to the transformations undertaken by the revolutionary process,” and need to be replaced by an alliance of workers, rural peasants and military intellectuals who could wield power.⁴⁵⁵

Sankara also drew on Cabral as he speaks about the necessity of establishing local Committees for the Defense of the Revolution in every locality because, “for this revolution to be a genuinely popular revolution, it must proceed to destroy the neocolonial state machinery and organize new machinery capable of guaranteeing popular sovereignty...The CDRs are the authentic organization of the people, for wielding revolutionary power. This is the instrument the people have forged in order to take genuine command of their destiny and thereby extend their control into all areas of society.”⁴⁵⁶ Through the CDRs, Sankara theorized that a *national*

⁴⁵⁴ Sankara, “Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination: Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1983,” in *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 83-84.

⁴⁵⁵ Sankara, “Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination: Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1983,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 86, 89-90.

⁴⁵⁶ Sankara, “Building a New Society, Rid of Social Injustice and Imperialist Domination: Political Orientation Speech October 2, 1983,” from *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, 93-94.

dimension of revolutionary power would take shape, allowing for a greater understanding and synthesis of national culture and a clearer identification with the environmental realities, problems and aspirations of people living in many different contexts. In terms of foreign policy, Sankara's advocacy for practices based in Dependency Theory came in the form of breaking and rearranging ties with external actors by becoming more particular with foreign assistance and advocating for self-sufficiency and pursuit of development independent from forces seen as exploitative and imperialist. Sankara's education as a military officer in France, Morocco, Madagascar and Senegal provided him with a revolutionary itinerary of theoretical models for revolution in his home country. The CNR, though made up of many other actors with links to Marxist ideology and political organizing, was influenced at many junctures with Sankara's learned methods for interpreting conditions and applying policy, connecting Burkina Faso to a larger network of late Cold War revolutionary Marxist thought and intertwining its historical process with revolutions in other places and times.

Revolutions are determined to be significant by humanity because of the radical changes they often bring about in a particular society, but we must also analyze the preconditions that generated enough popular energy to fuel such an upheaval. Specific sequences of human interaction create evocative moments among populations and influence the perpetuation of human development based on the passage of time and interaction with the uncertainties of the environment. Humans will continue to interact and evoke emotions that spur an outpouring of energy amongst each other as mobile beings that are able to transport these variations of energy from one person to the other, causing them to spread and evolve. A revolution is the result of the spread, evolution and ultimate organization of this energy directed toward what is popularly viewed, even if fleetingly, as a solution to the endemic problems which necessitated the revolution in the first place. This historical analysis has sought to analyze the process of the

Burkinabé revolution, in hopes of finding more intimate narratives not only about the expression of popular energies through the medium of the CNR, but also how these energies can be identified as derived from a longer historical process over 100 years in the making.

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Appendix

Theoretical Underpinnings: Space, Dependency and National Liberation

The function of movement is key in to the de Certeau's conception of what composes the *Practice of Everyday Life*. The first crucial theoretical aspect on which de Certeau premises his work is that, "A distinction is required other than the one that distributes behaviors according to their *place* and qualifies them thus by the fact that they are located on one or another square of the social checkerboard."⁴⁵⁷ These social actors, "traverse the frontiers dividing time, place, and type of action," and "Although they remain dependent upon the possibilities offered by circumstances, these transverse *tactics* do not obey the law of the place, for they are not defined or identified by it. In this respect, they are not any more localizable than the technocratic *strategies* that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models."⁴⁵⁸ The concepts of strategy and tactics thus become oppositional in de Certeau's construction and form the basis for the analysis of systems and how social actors navigate them. Systems are defined as institutional frameworks, the imposition of laws, policies and regulations that aim to direct social actors in specific directions and to keep them enclosed in proscribed places. To provide a working definition of *strategy* and *tactic*, de Certeau states,

I call a *strategy* the calculation of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of tarts or threats can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment"...a *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power...What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer

⁴⁵⁷ Michal de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 29.

⁴⁵⁸ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 29.

themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers.⁴⁵⁹

In terms of how this relates to circular migration in Burkina Faso, one can view the attempt to impose a strategic system by the French in order to establish places of participation in wage labor and subsistence labor and regularize the specific spatial relationships at the expense of temporal ones, “Through the combinatory organization of the movements specific to units or groups of units.”⁴⁶⁰ One place is for a certain type of organized existence while the other is for another, and the movement between them is highly regulated to fit within certain parameters. The strategic model of the French, however, is undermined by the tactical actors within the system, young Burkinabé men who pin their hopes for survival not on adherence to an exploitative system but to the clever utilization of time and space within the system.⁴⁶¹ Tactics can be identified across diverse historical processes and, “in the farthest reaches of the domain of the living, as if they managed to surmount not only the strategic distributions of historical institutions but also the break established by the very institution of consciousness.”⁴⁶² However, de Certeau intends to analyze a more modern tactical navigation of space,

On the scale of contemporary history, it also seems that the generalization and expansion of technocratic rationality have created, between the links of the system, a fragmentation and explosive growth of these practices which were formerly regulated by stable local units. Tactics are more and more frequently going of their tracks. Cut loose from the traditional communities that circumscribed their functioning, they have begun to wander everywhere in a space which is becoming at once more homogeneous and more extensive. Consumers are transformed into immigrants. The system in which they move about is too vast to be able to fix them in one place, but too constraining for them ever to be able to escape from it and go into exile elsewhere...Because of this, the “strategic” model is also transformed, as if defeated by its own success...⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35-37.

⁴⁶⁰ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 38.

⁴⁶¹ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 38-39.

⁴⁶² de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 40.

⁴⁶³ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 40.

These concepts fit very well with how academics have conceptualized the reason for the formation and particular developments within the circular migration system and will make clear why I argue that de Certeau assists in accounting for mobile participants composing such a system. In order to better conceptualize space, how strategic systems design it and how tactical actors navigate it, I will draw on de Certeau's hypothetical movement of walker through a city, an example of a navigable space which can be drawn upon. In this conceptualization, de Certeau tries, "to locate the practices that are foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. These practices of space refer to a specific form of *operations*, to 'another spatiality', and to an *opaque and blind* mobility characteristic of the bustling city. A *migrational*, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city."⁴⁶⁴ The physical foundations of space are treated by tactical and mobile participants in their planned patterns in a manner which,

repeatedly produces effects contrary to those at which it aims: the profit system generates a loss which, in the multiple forms of wretchedness and poverty outside the system and of waste inside it, constantly turns production into "expenditure." Moreover, the rationalization of the city leads to its mythification in strategic discourses, which are calculations based on the hypothesis or the necessity of its destruction in order to arrive at a final decision. Finally, the functionalist organization, by privileging progress, causes the condition of its own possibility - space itself- to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology.⁴⁶⁵

Tactical movement creates space which is oppositional to the contrived places of the systems which technocratic and political authorities intend to impose. Movement is key because it cannot be contained, especially within the context of connecting millions of people to the world economy with a limited capacity in terms of personnel and infrastructural development, to restrict such movement to an orderly and regularized traversing between geographical places. To

⁴⁶⁴ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93.

⁴⁶⁵ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 95.

put this in de Certeau's words, "A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities."⁴⁶⁶ Because de Certeau emphasizes that direction and velocity are comprising factors of space, one can surmise that systems depending on the mobility of social actors are best characterized through this lens; tactical vs. strategic, space vs. place.

In examining circular migration as a process intimately related to the revolution in Burkina Faso, I hope to demonstrate the manner in which the imposition of an outside conceptualization of how social actors should operate in two polarized places, generated the opportunity for spaces to be created specifically because these social actors were pinned as the mobile elements of a larger, idealized system of spatial organization. The progression of this system's implementation altered the daily practices and initiated a new set of operations which articulated the opposition between the proscribed place and the derived space. The milieu of spatial actions that are realized by these social actors become *operations* which, "specify 'spaces' by the actions of historical *subjects* (a movement always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history)."⁴⁶⁷ The milieu is recorded in the history of particular movements and phases of collective movements and will be analyzed in the context of the aforementioned popular mass mobilization that culminated in the 1983 Burkinabé revolution.

In terms of historical material realities, the imposition of a system both creates space for operations and severe limitations on attainable realities. In terms of Burkina Faso, these realities

⁴⁶⁶ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

⁴⁶⁷ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 118.

are economic in nature and restricted by the imposition of circular migration, which was never designed to benefit the system's mobile participants. On this line of thought, de Certeau states, "it is the partition of space that structures it. Everything refers in fact to this differentiation which makes possible the isolation and interplay of distinct spaces. From the distinction that separates a subject from its exteriority to the distinctions that localize objects, from the home to the journey, from the functioning urban network to that of the rural landscape, there is no spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers."⁴⁶⁸ These frontiers are the specific limitations to derived space, because space is the product of a system that intends to restrict and control social actors through the exercise of power. For the Burkinabé, the space created by the imposition of circular migration is both liberating from adherence to local systems and confining because such spatial mobility was created in the context of serving French colonial ideology, which though never fully realized, limited the degree of agency that could be expressed by mobile participants in the system.

⁴⁶⁸ de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 123.