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Wittika Chaplet April 10, 2023

The World in the Garden: A Kaleidoscopic History of Place-making, Land, Security, and Environmentalism in a West African Urban Garden

by

Wittika Chaplet

Clifton Crais

Adviser

History

Clifton Crais

Adviser

Mariana Candido

Committee Member

Susan E Gagliardi

Committee Member

2023

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Wittika Chaplet

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Abstract

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This thesis seeks to examine the world through the lens of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, a vast collection of urban market-vegetable gardens in Burkina Faso's second largest city. It explores how the Gardens are entangled in some of Burkina Faso's central tensions; land sovereignty; political power and corruption; economic autonomy and economic development; military and social stability. The first chapter explores the history of the French conquest and colonization of the Southwestern region of Burkina Faso, and the violence in which the Gardens emerged as a form of forced labor for the colonial administration. I argue that the decision of elder gardeners to expand the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima in the 1970s transformed the Gardens from a site of violence and repression into a tool for cultural and economic autonomy. The second chapter complicates this sense of autonomy by discussing Burkina Faso's fraught history of land tenure as it relates to the Gardens. A proximity to Bobo Dioulasso's military camp led to an attempted eviction in 2019 which threatened the existence of the Gardens. The precarity of the land on which the gardeners build their livelihoods has led to significant economic insecurity for the gardeners. Moreover, this precarity reflects a wider history of struggle over land in Africa which was exacerbated during the colonial period, and manifests in different ways across the continent. The relationship between the military, the Gardens, and both environmental and security crises is explored further in chapter three, which tackles the rising armed conflict in Burkina Faso, and explores how the historical resilience of the gardeners can shift the way we think about militarization and security. I argue that rising militaristic rhetoric around security ignores the socio-economic factors that are crucial to both exacerbating, and abating insecurity. I use the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima as a window through which to explore the history of agricultural resilience and dynamic adaptation to the convergence of social and environmental crisis in Burkina Faso. I argue that they can be used to conceptualize approaches to security which include social and economic approaches that encourage self-sufficiency and uplift communities who have proven incredible resilience to crisis.

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Most of all, I am grateful to the gardeners of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, without whom none of my research would be possible. I owe a great debt to the kindness of the people I interviewed, and their willingness to indulge my annoying and sometimes apparaently irrelevant questions. I am particularly grateful to Karim Sanou, the vice president of the gardeners' coalition, who introduced me to and facilitated my meetings with most of the people whose interviews informed this paper. I am also grateful to Ali Watara, who interpreted my interview with Asati and Yenneba Sanou, and to the many people who guided me and welcomed me everytime I made my way through the labyrinthine paths of the Gardens. I do not pretend that this paper will do justice to their lives, or to their stories, I know that it will not. I can only hope that it will do justice to our conversations, and to the information they were willing to lend me, despite my ignorance of their languages and my distance from the continuity of their lives.

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Introduction

I'm going to tell you a story about the world. It begins under the shade of a mango tree, sitting on a wooden plank stretched across a tire, above a 25 meter drop down to clean well water. A light breeze rustles the leaves of the mango tree as Adama, wearing flip flops with the heel worn through, submerges his two metal watering cans in a concrete basin, before lifting them out to water the plots of peppers, strawberries, and lettuce stretching out beyond the shade of the mango tree.

"*Katchana!*" Ali calls out as he walks by Adama's garden plot on a raised path.

Adama pauses his watering to look up, "*Eche."*

"*Lumandao?*"

"*Eche*."

"*Worotiluma?*"

"*Sharatche.*"[1]

Adama resumes his watering, but Ali walks on, past the neighboring plot, where two women harvest lettuce, placing the produce into vast tin bassins. He continues past the next plot where two men water tomatoes and spinach while three men sit talking under a citrus tree, their voices carried away by the breeze. Ali turns down a narrower path between tall stalks of moringa[2] bordering more vegetable plots, and finally arrives at his own garden. The women who own the neighboring plot are already hard at work. Asati waters the spinach while Yenneba uses the well water to get started on the laundry for her family of eight.

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[1] This is a Madarè greeting for the morning. Roughly translated from my understanding, *Katchana* means good morning or how did you sleep? *Eche* means peacefully. *Lumandao* asks how is your family, and *worotiluma* asks how is your home, or the people living with you. *Sharatche* means everyone is peaceful.

[2] Moringa is a small, drought resistant tree with many medicinal uses. Some gardeners grow rows of moringa on the borders of their garden plots.

The two women Ali saw harvesting lettuce earlier walk past him now as he refills his watering cans. The tin basins balanced on their heads are piled high with lettuce. They walk through the long stretches of gardens and trees to the ravine which stretches along the border of the gardens. Gripping their basins with one hand, they walk slowly across the wide metal pipe which spans the ravine, up the street, passing the tailor sitting on his porch, working at his sewing machine, and the group of women on the corner who sell sweet potato fries and savory donuts. The two women walk up to the paved road and cross the street to where the *marché de Bolomakoté* (market of Bolomakoté) is already bustling with morning activity.

Figure 1: The internal wholesale market in the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima. Photo by Wittika Chaplet, 2019.

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are a collection of high-density urban agriculture plots near the center of Bobo Dioulasso. Situated in the south-west of the country, Bobo Dioulasso is Burkina Faso's second largest city, often referred to as its cultural capital. The city falls into the southern sudanic climatic zone, and although the region's soils are not particularly

rich in organic material, its network of springs and rivers sets it apart from the country's more arid northern regions.[3] As a result, Bobo Dioulasso, and its surrounding countryside, is a relatively favorable region for intensive vegetable production, and it has been an agricultural center for centuries.[4]

In the south eastern part of the city, the Gardens are wedged between Bobo Dioulasso's military camp, and the vibrant neighborhoods of Bolomakoté and Kuinima. They stretch for 65 hectares, containing around 1000 wells which irrigate the vegetable plots of nearly as many families whose livelihoods depend on the gardens. Vegetables grown and harvested in the Gardens are sold within the Gardens, as well as in the *marché de Bolomakoté*, and markets across the city, including the city's famous *grand marché*.[5] Vendors who harvest produce from the Gardens in order to garner cheaper prices fan out across the city, lining its streets and distributing fresh vegetables to even its most northern neighborhoods. Some gardeners load up their harvests onto the backs of moped carts and bring them to the bus stations, where their produce is shipped to Ouagadougou, the capital, and as far as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and even France.[6]

Perhaps a more accurate term to describe the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima in English would be urban farms, since the word "garden" is often associated with more aesthetic cultivation like flower gardens, which the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are not. In French, the word "*jardin*" is more associated with small-scale commercial agriculture than its English equivalent. Nevertheless, I have decided to stick to the more direct translation despite this

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[3] Susanne Freidberg. "Making a Living: A Social History of Market-Garden Work in the Regional Economy of Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1996): 28.
[4] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 28.
[5] Great Market, the largest and most central market in Bobo Dioulasso.
[6] Bakari Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet and Christophe Kaboré, January 2019.

slightly different connotation, provided that my readers keep in mind that the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are not aesthetic cultivations, but rather an essential feature of Bobo Dioulasso's urban economy, on which several hundreds of families depend for their livelihoods. Most of my French to English translations in this paper take this approach. Translation is always rife with complexities and nuances, especially in West Africa, where colonial languages have been imposed on, and mingled with local languages. In general, my approach has been to mirror as much as possible the language that the gardeners used in my conversations with them, except in specific cases.

Figure 2: A vegetable plot in the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima. This garden plot is typical; suspended over the well, a bucket made from a yellow plastic container hangs from a pulley system. When watering their vegetables, a gardener draws water from the well using the bucket, and fills up the nearby metal basin. Once the basin is full, the two metal watering cans also pictured above are then submerged into the basin and used to water the vegetables.

Clothes hanging on the nearby tree, and a bench made out of a large branch are indications of how garden plots also become social spaces of rest and conversation. Photo by Wittika Chaplet, 2019.

One such case is the name of the ethnic group to which the vast majority of the gardeners belong. Most people — including most gardeners — refer to this ethnic group as "Bobo," but Burkinabè historian Bruno Doti Sanou advocates for the use of the word *Madarè* instead. "Bobofing" is the name that Dioula people labeled the Madarè when they immigrated to the region from Kong, or what is today northern Côte d'Ivoire.[7] "Bobo" is an onomatopoeia that means "mute."[8] Madarè, on the other hand, is the word used by Madarè people to refer to themselves, and it is translated directly to "I say that": I (Ma) Say (Da) That (Rè). It is pronounced differently in different regions, but Madarè is the pronunciation in the Sya dialect (the region around Bobo Dioulasso), which is understood by most other dialects.[9] *Madrèsi* refers to the ethnicity of Madarè people. Sanou describes the significance of this word as the desire that "all sons of this ethnicity be 'men of speech [*parole*].'"[10]

Brief Historical Context

Oral history traces Madarè history in the southwestern region of today's Burkina Faso to a migration from Mandé, a poorly defined region likely indicating parts of Guinea and Mali.[11] However, archeological evidence suggests that the Madarè have inhabited the region for much longer, tracing their history to prehistoric times, and suggesting that the Madarèsi ethnicity likely developed from autochthonous groups of cultivators "very anciently implanted."[12] Much more

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[7] Doti Bruno Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales: Traditions et Coutumes en Afrique Noire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014), 39.
[8] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 39.
[9] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 39.
[10] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 39.
[11] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 40.
[12] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 41, quoting Guy le Moal, *Les Bobo: Nature et Fonction des Masques* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1980), 6-7.

research remains to be done about Madarè history, but for the purposes of this paper, what matters is that the Madarè have inhabited the region of Sya for centuries, and that apart from the small griot and blacksmith castes, they have defined themselves for a very long time as *san-san*, or cultivating peoples.[13]

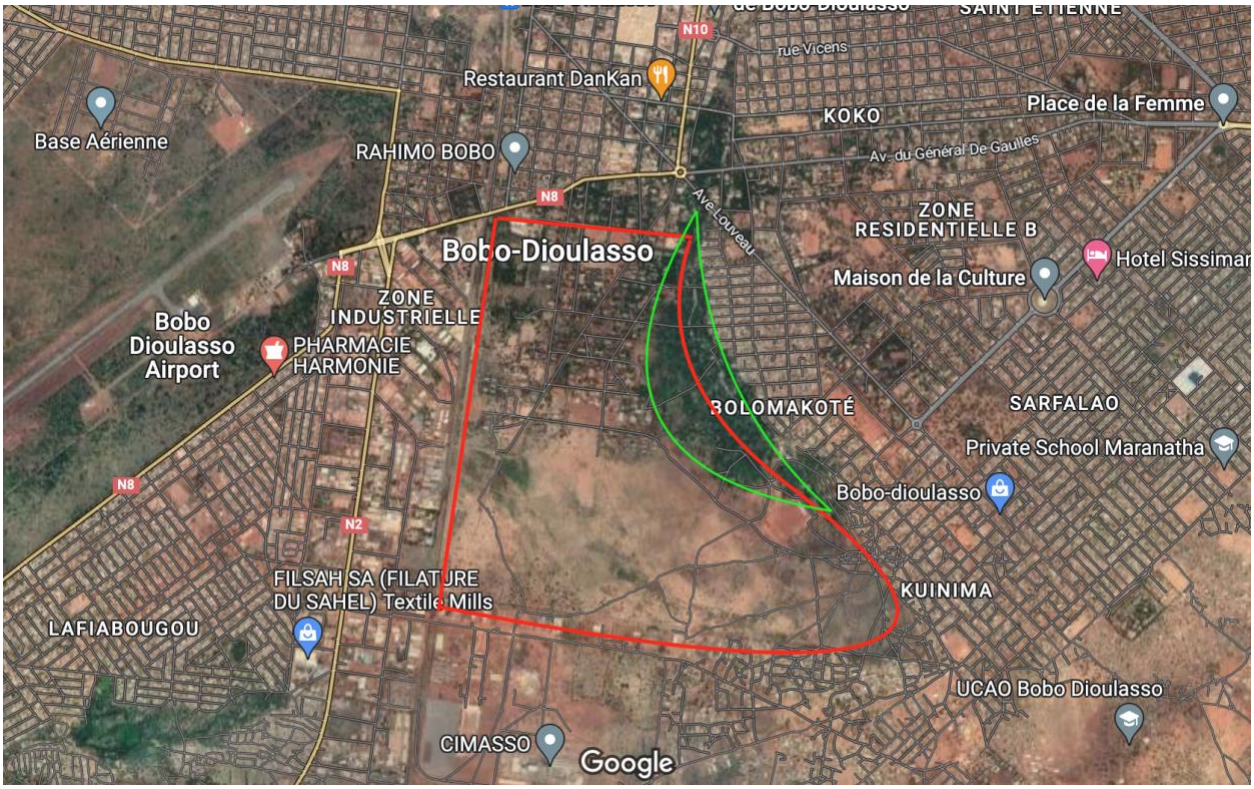

Figure 3: Map of the southwestern part of Bobo Dioulasso. The approximate borders of Bobo Dioulasso's military camp are highlighted in red, and the approximate borders of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are highlighted in green. I could not find official maps of either the camp or the Gardens so the highlights are my own and are meant to serve as general indications of size and proximity rather than exact indications. Screenshot from Google Maps, April 2023.

Kuinima was a town, originally independent from Bobo Dioulasso, but by the 1960s, Kuinima was incorporated into the city as its urban population ballooned along with the city perimeter.[14] Bolomakoté is a neighborhood comprised of people from a different town whose

[13] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 52.
[14] Lisa Homann, "When Muslims Masquerade: Lo Gue Performance in Southwestern Burkina Faso" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011).

population was forced to move and therefore settled in Bolomakoté. The identity of Kuinima as a town separate from the city remains, even as it has been completely incorporated into urban life. For this reason, some internal political structures remain, like the chief of Kuinima, who still has a certain degree of authority in the neighborhood. Like any part of the city, there is a mixing of different groups of people with different histories of varying lengths in the region. However, Kuinima does retain a relatively more homogenous and historic identity. Bolomakoté is implicated in this history, but it is slightly more diverse and metropolitan.

Before colonization, when most of West Africa's main trade routes were not coastal but rather internal and oriented towards trans-Saharan routes, the region now referred to as Burkina Faso was an essential link between its surrounding regions and the trans-Saharan trade. Bobo Dioulasso, then called Sya, was one of the major junctions for trans-Saharan caravans, renowned both as a site of exchange between these vast territories, but also for its robust artisanal and agricultural communities.[15] Thus, the region was at the center of a vibrant and robust interregional trade, supported by a very long historically agriculture-based local economy.

The World in the Garden

I place the world in the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima because I want to explore them as a microcosm of how people create lives and futures worth living in the midst of precarity, crisis, and historical trauma. As climate change accelerates, and global economic, environmental, and security crises become increasingly constant, it has become crucial to explore alternative imaginaries of the future which are not based on the fantasy of infinite growth, but rather on diverse, particularized, and place-based systems like the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima which are able to grow roots as deep as they are adaptable.

[15] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 1.

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are not singular; similar urban vegetable production can be found in many West African cities, including in Bobo Dioulasso itself. I am not arguing that the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are a silver arrow, or a model to be followed. Rather, I seek to emphasize how the Gardens are entangled in some of the essential tensions in Burkina Faso; land sovereignty, political power and corruption, economic autonomy versus economic development, and military versus social stability. It is by exploring how the Gardens interact with these overlapping tensions that I hope to tell a story about the world.

The Growing Pains of an Inexperienced Researcher

My relationship with the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima began during the months of January and February of 2019, when an activist friend of my mother's asked me to make a documentary to chronicle the efforts of the gardeners' resistance to eviction threats from the Bobo Dioulasso military camp. At the time, I had never made a documentary alone,[16] nor was I yet a scholar of history. I had read no oral history theory on which I might base my interviews, and all of my interviews were filmed. All the people I spoke to were aware that I intended to use their interviews to advocate against the eviction threats. For these reasons, the interviews I have from 2019 are a useful resource, but they must be considered with extra caution, in full awareness of the circumstances under which they were conducted and the bias this may have produced.

In 2022, I returned to Bobo Dioulasso for the month of June in order to collect oral history interviews for this paper. This time, I neither filmed nor recorded my interviews. I tried to allow the people I interviewed to govern our conversations and discuss what mattered to them. Abdullahi A. Ibrahim outlines the fraught history of ethnography, particularly of people living in

[16] I had worked with a group of eleven students in high school to make a twenty minute documentary, with the guidance of an experienced filmmaker.

former colonies, in his chapter titled "The Birth of the Interview: The Thin and Fat of It" in *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*. He describes the ethnographic interview as a colonial method which breeds dishonesty.[17]

But the solution, he writes, is not to insist on discovering "lies" in the answers of interviewees. Abdullahi provides the example of American anthropologist Paul Stoller who, after his initial indignation that one of the people he interviewed had lied to him, quickly learned that he would have to relax his "methodological interview fundamentalism" in favor of a more "mellow attitude toward learning about the Songhay of the Niger."[18] An old Muslim cleric advised him, "You must learn to sit with people, Monsieur Paul. You must learn to sit and listen. You must learn the meaning of the Songhay adage: One kills something thin in appearance to discover that inside that it is fat."[19] I had an experience that parallels Paul Stoller's when I attended a discussion at the *Institut Free Afrik* in Bobo Dioulasso and briefly shared the topic of my research with the group of young people who had gathered. One of the men in the room asked me if I spoke Bobo. When I replied that I did not, he told me that my research was pointless; the gardeners would not tell me anything true.

I took his criticism to heart. Although I do not believe that any of the people I interviewed lied to me, I know that as an outsider — especially one with only brief experiences in the region — my research is doomed to contain gaping holes. Moreover, I did not have the time nor the resources to stay in Bobo Dioulasso for more than a month, which is woefully short, especially given that the gardeners also have limited time, as they work most of the day. My stay

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[17] Abdullahi A. Ibrahim, "The Birth of the Interview: The Thin and Fat of It," in *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History*, eds. Luise White, Stephan F. Miescher, and David William Cohen (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001).
[18] Abdullahi, "The Birth of the Interview: The Thin and Fat of It," 109.
[19] Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes. *In Sorcery's Shadow: A Memoir of Apprenticeship Among the Songhay of Niger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 10-11.

was also during the month of June, the beginning of the rainy season, during which most of the gardeners work their city plots only in the early morning, and work in the fields outside of the city the rest of the day. Thus, I could not forego the efficiency of the interview format, as flawed as it may be, because I simply did not have the time to "sit and listen" as much as I would have liked.

Nevertheless, many of the gardeners with whom I spoke voiced a genuine interest in sharing their stories and calling attention to their livelihoods. The criticism I received from the man at the Institut Free Afrik discussion was a legitimate critique of outsiders (particularly white descendants of former colonizers) telling stories they do not understand. It is a criticism that is not to be minimized, and that must inform how I engage with my research. However, it was also embedded in another critique -- one I witnessed often whenever I left the tight-knit neighborhood of Bolomakoté -- that the gardeners of Bolomakoté are peasants, and that therefore they are lazy and dishonest. This prejudice likely also emerges from the colonial dimensions of the Gardens' history, as will be explored further in chapter one. The urban gardens of Bobo Dioulasso were initially created by the French colonial administration as a form of forced labor, and the memory of shame and humiliation associated with this labor likely still informs perceptions of gardeners today. Nevertheless, this is a narrative which the agents of political power in Bobo Dioulasso, and in Burkina Faso more broadly, have actively promoted, often with very real consequences, such as the seizing of land and the disenfranchisement of "peasant" voices. In a country in which 80% of the population works in agriculture, delegitimizing "peasants" is a dangerous political weapon.

During my month-long stay in Bobo Dioulasso in the summer of 2022, I interviewed ten gardeners. Most of these interviews were group interviews, in order to facilitate communication

across languages, since I do not speak the Madarè language most of the gardeners are most comfortable with. My first interview was a group interview with four members of the coalition of gardeners that formed after the attempted forced eviction of 2019. These members were the president of the coalition, Adama Sanou, the vice president Karim Sanou, the secretary Ali Watara, and Abdoulaiye Sanou, who is Karim Sanou's brother and a member of the general body of the coalition. My only one-on-one interview was with former gardener Daouda Sanou, who also took me on a walk through the Gardens after our conversation, and helped me briefly interview Amidou Sanou and Mamadou Séré.

Ali Watara helped me interview Asati and Yenneba Sanou, two women who own their own garden plots. Women are involved in many aspects of cultivation, harvesting, and selling market vegetables, however it is rare that they own their own plots. I found Asati and Yenneba Sanou when I asked the members of the coalition in my first interview about the role of women in the Gardens. The four men insisted on the importance of women in gardening work, and Ali Watara offered to introduce me to Asati and Yenneba Sanou, whose garden plot neighbors his.

My final interview was with Ardjouma Sanou, an elder gardener, and Karim and Abdoulaiye Sanou helped me to interview him, although their roles were less akin to interpreters than active participants in the conversation. This last interview was the most successful one, in my opinion. I imagine that with another month of field research, I imagine that I may have been able to conduct more interviews half as fruitful as this conversation. I also had a conversation with Burkinabè historian Bruno Doti Sanou, whose generous knowledge and insights helped provide crucial context for this paper, and orient my research and oral interviews.

I also draw from many interviews I conducted in 2019 for *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*. These include three interviews with women market

vendors, six with men gardeners, as well as with other figures, such as a local ecologist, and Yssouf Sanou, an accountant and resident of Kuinima who has been working to support the gardeners efforts against eviction. I also interviewed two local business owners, and three residents of the precarious neighborhood to the south of Kuinima that was evicted in February of 2019, on the same day that the military attempted to evict the Gardens.

During both of my stays in Bobo Dioulasso, I lived in my mother's house in Bolomakoté, just a couple hundred feet from the Gardens. My mother has lived in this neighborhood for five years now. She is an outsider, but she is also considerably implicated in the community. Living with her meant living with an outsider, while also accessing a front row seat to witness the neighborhood of Bolomakoté everyday, and the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with our neighbors. Perhaps if I had had more time, or if it hadn't been the rainy season, or if I had more experience navigating this kind of work, I would have been able to "sit and listen"[20] to the gardeners as much as I initially imagined. In reality, nothing about fieldwork was as I expected, and I found myself constantly rethinking and reevaluating my methods, while navigating unexpected road blocks. Nevertheless, I consider the time I spent talking to my neighbors, and meeting people of the broader Bobo Dioulasso community, even outside the context of my research, to be nearly as valuable as my interviews. These are the experiences in which I simply "sat and listened" to voices of the place I had come to learn about.

My interviews are central to this paper, and feature strongly throughout. There is also so much good work from much more seasoned researchers on which I will lean heavily to deepen and expand my research. A few stand out from the pack, including Bruno Doti Sanou, a historian from Bobo Dioulasso who has written extensively on the region. Central to much of his work is

[20] Stoller. *In Sorcery's Shadow*, 10-11.

the reframing of tradition and custom in the region as dynamic processes which can be called upon to safeguard environmental resources where state power fails to. Susanne Freidberg's work on market-garden structures in Bobo Dioulasso from the 1990s is an invaluable resource, both as a history of market-gardening in the region, as well as a comparative reference for my own fieldwork conducted in 2019 and 2022. Sara Berry's work on African agrarian history has greatly influenced the way I explore the colonial history of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, as has the extensive scholarship of Burkinabè historian and intellectual Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Burkinabè historian Jeanne-Marie Kambou-Ferrand's incredibly detailed research on the history of the French conquest of Burkina Faso also proved invaluable.

For my brief foray into the prolific literature on land tenure in West Africa, I am grateful for the work of Sam Moyo, Dzodzi Tsikata, and Yakham Diop, as well as Antoine Dolcerocca. Pauline Peters' work helped inform some of my more critical understanding of the way land tenure debates have evolved in Africa. Sten Hagberg's scholarship provided much needed insight into the particularity of land and poverty dynamics in Burkina Faso specifically. Robert P. Marzec's thought about the relationship between militarization and ecology helped inform my third chapter, and Alfred Babo's research on the resilience of urban gardens in Côte d'Ivoire provided fruitful avenues for comparison and analysis. Burkinabè economist Dr. Ra-Sablga Ouèdraogo was instrumental in providing independent research on the social and economic impacts of the security crisis in Burkina Faso. His analysis of the ways in which non-military strategies are central to combating insecurity is central to my third chapter.

Structure

In chapter one, I outline how the Gardens were formed, and into what kind of world they emerged. Very soon after the French conquest of Sya, the French administration created several

market-gardens — including the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima — on the outskirts of the city, using the forced labor of Sya's newly conquered peoples. I explore the particular humiliation of forced labor so close to home and how this weighed on the way gardeners understood their work, and were understood by their communities. In the 1970s, a decade after independence, the elder gardeners made the decision to expand the Gardens in order to retain younger generations which were emigrating to Ouagadougou and Côte d'Ivoire to find work. I argue that with this decision, the gardeners transformed the Gardens from a structure of repression, into an agent of economic autonomy and a safeguarding of local culture.

Chapter two complicates the economic autonomy outlined in chapter one by discussing the history of land tenure in Bobo Dioulasso. The precarity of the land on which the gardeners build their livelihoods has led to significant economic insecurity for the gardeners. Moreover, this precarity reflects a wider history of struggle over land in Africa which was exacerbated during the colonial period, and manifests in different ways across the continent. The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are one of many examples that demonstrate the sticky legacy of colonial concepts of "customary" versus "formal" land tenure, or "informal" versus "formal" land markets. This chapter ends with an account of the attempted eviction of the Gardens on February 4th, 2019 and the lasting impacts of that violent day.

Chapter three zooms out to discuss how the Gardens interact with the security crisis that has been escalating in Burkina Faso — and in the West African Sahel more generally — for the past several years. I briefly explore the broad outlines of this conflict, and I argue that rising militaristic rhetoric around security ignores the socio-economic factors that are crucial to both exacerbating, and abating insecurity. I use the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima as a window through which to explore the history of agricultural resilience and dynamic adaptation to the

convergence of social and environmental crisis in Burkina Faso. I argue that they can be used to conceptualize approaches to security which include social and economic approaches that encourage self-sufficiency and uplift communities who have proven incredible resilience to crisis.

This paper is one story of the world that is the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima. Like any world, there are a thousand more. I will try to tell you one of the stories of these ever evolving Gardens. Perhaps it is better to think of it as an introduction, a preface, if you will. As good a preface as I can manage as an outsider, who does not speak either the Madarè or the Dioula language which most of the gardeners are most comfortable speaking. I hope that one day, a far more qualified writer will take up the rest of the story.

Chapter 1: "We Live Our Lives Here": The Construction Economic Autonomy with Colonized Seeds

"On me demande où se trouve l'impérialisme; regardez dans vos assiettes quand vous mangez. Les grains de riz, de maïs, de mils importés, c'est ça l'impérialisme, n'allez pas plus loin."

"You ask me where imperialism is found; look in your plates when you eat. The grains of rice, of corn, of imported millet, this is imperialism, no need to look further."

- Thomas Sankara, former President of Burkina Faso, assassinated in 1987

"One of the biggest problems with the world's longtime orientation toward Africa is a preference for interactions between governments, or between formal institutions, when the most vibrant, authentic, and economically significant interactions are between individuals and decentralized groups."

- Dayo Olopade, *The Bright Continent*

Blandine Sankara, the younger sister of Burkina Faso's former revolutionary president Thomas Sankara, remembers that when her brother was in office, the cities of Burkina Faso were plastered with placards saying, "*Libérez Votre Génie Créateur!*," or, "Liberate Your Creative Genius!"[21] These placards were an effort to encourage every citizen to imagine solutions to their problems using resources already at their disposal, by breaking the boundaries of the expected. In a country that had been independent for barely twenty years, the expected was inextricably linked to the colonial. The creative genius Sankara's government encouraged was one which allowed itself to imagine, and therefore to create, worlds beyond the expected, beyond the colonial and imperial.

[21] Blandine Sankara, "Blandine Sankara: L'agroécologie ou la métamorphose de la question de la souveraineté et de l'autonomie au Sahel" interview by Marie-Yemta Moussanang, Afrotopiques, Acast, March 17, 2022, audio, 16:40, https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/blandine-sankara-lagro%C3%A9cologie-ou-la-m%C3%A9tamorphose-de/id1467043608?i=1000554378453.

After rising to power in August 1983 amidst an alliance of young radical military officers and civilian political activists, Sankara was assassinated in 1987 in a military coup backed by the French and led by his right-hand man, Blaise Compaoré.[22] Within his short life, and even shorter term in office, Sankara's audacity to challenge imperialism and imagine worlds beyond it, left an indelible mark on the history of Burkina Faso, and the continent of Africa. His legacy lives on in the politicization and solidarity of his people, who shouted his name as they overthrew his assassin, Blaise Compaoré, in a peaceful revolution in 2014. In a different way, the Gardeners of Bolomakoté-Kuinima embody his legacy in their ability to make a world for themselves by cultivating autonomy on colonized soil; their ability to liberate their creative genius and transform the site of their repression into a place of life.

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima were originally created by the French colonial administration at the turn of the 20th century, as a form of forced labor. This chapter will explore the historical context in which they emerged, and discuss the violence of forced labor in what the French called Upper Volta, and its particular manifestation in Bobo Dioulasso's urban gardens. I use the work of Susanne Friedberg and Birahim Ciré Ba to find the voices of gardeners and residents of Bobo Dioulasso during the turbulence of the colonial period. The first half of the 20th century was a period of constant violence, precarity, and change in Bobo Dioulasso, and the gardeners' relationship to their work shifted many times during this period. A major turning point came in the 1970s, when the elder gardeners decided to expand the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima in order to retain the youth of the community, who were migrating to other cities to find work. This intentional transformation, coupled with the very long Madarè history of

[22] Ernest Harsch, *Thomas Sankara: An African Revolutionary* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014) 14.

agriculture, is what allowed for the Gardens to become the center of how the residents of Bolomakoté and Kuinima create lives worth living.

Early Colonial Conquest

The artificial borders traced and retraced during the colonial period,[23] which enclose what is now Burkina Faso, stitch together and rip through some sixty ethnic groups.[24] When the French set their sights on the region at the end of the 19th century, they considered the Mossi to be the most prominent people in the region, because their hierarchical empire more closely resembled European notions of power and wealth. But a myriad of political structures existed in the region, including structures without a centralized government, as well as decentralized monarchies, confederations of chiefdoms, or external hegemonies imposed on less hierarchical structures.[25] The borders, territories, and political structures of these many groups were moving and fluctuating. When the French began their conquest of the region, this matrix of differing and sometimes competing political and cultural groups was particularly turbulent.

Beginning in the 18th century, the sparsely populated region of the Pougouli, Téguésié, and Gan (today southwestern Burkina Faso) was subject to waves of migration crossing the Black Volta River from what is now Northern Ghana.[26] These migrants were pushed from their homes by a variety of factors, many of them exacerbated by, or direct results of colonization; demographic pressure, food shortages, the search for arable land, and escape from enslavers.[27]

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[23] The French colonial administration toyed with the borders around what is today Burkina Faso with astounding frequency. First delineated in 1898, in 1904 the territory was consolidated into the colony of Haut-Senegal-Niger until 1919 when it was again separated into the Colony of Haute Volta. In 1932 the colony was divided between three neighboring colonies, and was then reconstituted after the Second World War in 1947. (Ernest Harsch, *Thomas Sankara: An African Revolutionary* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014) 3.)

[24] Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (Boulder, CO.: Westview, 1996) 9.

[25] Joseph Ki-Zerbo in Jeanne-Marie Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaïques et Conquête Coloniale, 1885-1914* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1993) I.

[26] Jeanne-Marie Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaïques et Conquête Coloniale, 1885-1914* (Paris, France: L'Harmattan, 1993) 215.

[27] Kambou-Ferrand, 215.

The varied groups that came to call this region home were lumped together by the French and labeled "Lobi," though they had little in common save their similarly decentralized political structures.[28] These migrations are indicative of historical trends which continue to influence the region to this day; an entanglement of environmental precarity and centralized political violence, to which the region's different peoples demonstrated tenacious adaptability and resistance, respectively.

The Lobi region attracted West African conquerors for the same reason that it eventually attracted French and English conquerors: its reputation of agricultural wealth and rumored gold production.[29] The Dioula Watara of the Kong Empire, centered in what is today northeastern Côte d'Ivoire, set their sights on the Lobi region as a stepping stone for Northward expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.[30] However, they had difficulty maintaining power among the Lobi due to their decentralized political structure.[31] The region was also covetted by Samori Touré and Moktar Karantao, both of whom attempted conquest of this region shortly before, and even during, French conquest. In fact, Samori prepared to invade Sya[32] in July of 1897,[33] just a few months before the French conquered the city in September of the same year.[34] The Wataras, along with some Peul groups, including the Toucouleurs, used French conquest as

[28] Kambou-Ferrand,215-216.
[29] Kambou-Ferrand, 215-16.
[30] Kambou-Ferrand, 216.
[31] Kambou-Ferrand, 216.
[32] Sya is what Bobo Dioulasso was called before the French renamed it.
[33] Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaïques*, 231. Bobo Dioulasso surrendered to Samori before his army could attack the city, allowing commerce to continue without a war. His campaigns throughout the region had given him the reputation of "bending the entire region under terror"("*plier toute la région sous la terreur*"). However, Samori's attention was attracted elsewhere, mostly by French and British threats to other parts of his empire. So when the French arrived to conquer Bobo Dioulasso a few months later, Samori had left only a few people to defend the city.
[34] Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaïques*, 238.

an opportunity to consolidate contested power, and served to inform, guide, and militarily support colonial conquest.[35]

The conquest of this vast and diverse territory was rife with violence and resistance. The primary reason for the success of France's conquest was the coercion of and collaboration with local chiefs, often playing off of existing rivalries and conflicts of lineage.[36] However, even as chiefs negotiated with the demands of the budding colonial order, their people continued to resist and refuse colonial authority.[37] Moreover, the façade of negotiations and treaties were upheld by the brutal and bloody repression of rebellion, only exacerbated by the imbalance of weaponry.[38]

In a campaign against the Lobi from 1901-1902, 220 Africans were killed (officially) and 40 wounded as opposed to the 4 killed and 13 wounded on the colonizing force.[39] The colonizing army was usually also primarily made up of previously conquered Africans.[40] At the slightest sign of rebellion, force was used ruthlessly and even sadistically; pointing cannons at mosques, razing villages, burning crops to cause famine, burning people alive, and executing marabouts and chiefs.[41] Captain Bouvet smoked out a cave in which rebels were hiding for two days, eventually forcing the surrender of 80 men and 150 women and children.[42] During the siege of Bangassoko, the same captain occupied the wells of the town, causing its residents, dying of thirst, to fight hand in hand with the *tirailleurs* guarding the wells.[43] Only those who submitted

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[35] The Watara and Peul's role in the French conquest of Bobo Dioulasso is touched on on page 216, and further explained on page 382, of Kambou-Ferrand's 1993 *Peuples Voltaïques et Conquête Coloniale, 1885-1914*.
[36] Kambou-Ferrand, 75. See Part 2, Chapter 3 for a detailed historical account of the conquest of the Mossi empire. Kambou-Ferrand demonstrates how this conquest was predicated on the manipulation of lineage conflicts within the ruling family.
[37] Ki-Zerbo in Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaiques*, V.
[38] Ki-Zerbo, III.
[39] Ki-Zerbo, IV.
[40] Ki-Zerbo, IV.
[41] Ki-Zerbo, IV.
[42] Ki-Zerbo, VI.
[43] Ki-Zerbo, VI.

without condition to French rule were allowed to drink.[44] These same strategies were later used to repress resistance to forced labor.

French colonizers did not have the resources nor the capital to effectively maintain their hold on vast and politically diverse territories; their control relied on local hierarchies and power structures to serve as systems of enforcement. Given that local power structures were diverse, contested, and ever-changing, using them as the basis of the colonial regime meant basing this regime on conflict and change.[45] In places where clear hierarchies did not exist, or were too fluid to be useful, hierarchies were constructed. Power structures that opposed French rule, or were perceived as threats, were replaced or undermined. In the words of prominent scholar of African agrarian history Sara Berry, far from quieting conflict, colonialism generated a "'blizzard of claims and counterclaims' to rights over land and people," which propelled fractional struggle and division.[46]

Their reliance on local hierarchies meant that the French became obsessed with defining and understanding what they condescendingly called "tradition" and "custom." In French occupied territories, the official policy until 1933 was that of "*respect des coutumes*" or, "respect of customs," an ambiguous policy which was repeatedly revisited, spurring debate among the French colonial administration, French missionaries, and local populations. The decree was first ratified in 1903, stating that indigenous justice must apply local customs as long as they did not conflict with the "principles of French civilization."[47] The 1903 decree underwent several

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[44] Ki-Zerbo, VI.
[45] Berry, *No Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 29. Quoting John Dunn and A. F. Robertson. *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Brong Ahafo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 29.
[46] Berry, *No Condition is Permanent*," 73.
[47] Doti Bruno Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales: Traditions et Coutumes en Afrique Noire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014) 103-04.

reforms which did not fundamentally change its basis of *respect des coutumes*, but rather were reflective of the general anxiety and debates that arose around power and the terms on which it was exercised. In 1912, a reform maintained the 1903 decree but permitted indigenous people to bring litigations to court. 1924 saw a reform which also maintained the decree but reorganized the justice system. In 1931, it was reformed yet again, still claiming respect of customs, but with a provision in Article 6 regarding conflicts of custom, giving the responsibility to European functionaries to arbitrate these conflicts, and determine the measure to which 'ancestral' customs should be tempered or modified by French 'civilizational' principles.[48]

It is evident in these shifts in policy that even as West Africans under French control struggled to negotiate their place in "indigenous" law, French colonizers were also engaging in fraught debates and contradictions over their policy choices. Missionaries argued that it was necessary to shift away from 'tradition' and 'custom' in order to promote native 'evolution,' while the colonial administration feared the unrest that might arise from challenging the shaky power structures they relied on.[49] Amidst these competing contradictions, the idea of custom and tradition[50] became a vehicle for control, while simultaneously being one of the only avenues within the colonial administration through which West Africans could exercise a measure of self-determination.

When the French missionary group, *les Pères Blancs*, settled in Bobo Dioulasso in 1928, the debate over this policy shifted once more. Antione Blais, adjunct to the commander of the *cercle*, appreciated the missionaries' efforts to push the administration toward policies promoting

[48] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 104.
[49] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 104.
[50] By the 'idea of custom and tradition,' I mean to point out that a static and universally accepted definition or expression of these terms did not, and still does not exist. Thus, the policy of respecting custom was based on a — contested — idea of what custom actually was.

indigenous 'evolution.'[51] In 1933, he took it upon himself to ensure that elders would no longer "impose" custom on those who had converted to Christianity or Islam.[52] To enforce this adjustment, Blais employed a "*méthode musclée*"; forceful tactics which involved personally visiting elders and humiliating and belittling them.[53] Doti Bruno Sanou argues that this moment caused the humiliated elders to double down on custom, and close themselves off to the idea of 'modernity.'[54] Nevertheless, he goes on to argue, custom was ultimately weakened because the administration placed it in a position of inferiority in relation to the law.[55]

Thus colonialism is characterized, not simply by one group dominating another, but by intensifying negotiations between individuals, groups, and governments. The Gardens were in a particularly salient zone of negotiation, because they mark an interface between rural and urban, peasant and laborer, isolated and cosmopolitan, self-sufficient and interdependent. It is amidst these fraught contestations that the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima emerged.

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, An Origin Story

Determining the date of the Gardens' creation is difficult to do with total certainty. Yssouf Sanou, an accountant who lives near the Gardens and has been working closely with gardeners for several years, dates the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima to 1906. Ardjouma Sanou, an elder gardener whose family has worked in the Gardens for generations, claims that the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima were the first market-gardens to emerge in Bobo Dioulasso. Unfortunately, my research in the French administrative colonial archive in Aix-en-

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[51] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 105.
[52] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 105.
[53] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 105. Sanou includes an excerpt from Blais' visit with the elders of Tounouma in February of 1933, which highlights the extent of abusive language Blais used.
[54] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 105.
[55] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 105.

Provence did not yield any direct references to the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, which might have otherwise helped me to confirm my oral interviews.

Susanne Freidberg wrote extensively about market-gardening in Bobo Dioulasso, but focused on the gardens of Sakaby and Dogona in the north of the city. These gardens, she writes, emerged when the outbreak of World War I disrupted supply lines to the colonies and pushed French administrators to turn to food production in the more remote reaches of their territory.[56] The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, however, are on the other side of the city from Sakaby and Dogona and were likely created under different circumstances. A key difference is their proximity to Bobo Dioulasso's military camp. Most gardeners I spoke to tied the emergence of the Gardens to the camp, saying that the French military created the Gardens to provide vegetables more to their tastes. My oral history interviews also indicate that the Gardens were relatively small until their expansion in the 1970s, suggesting that the colonial administration likely created the larger *jardin publique* of Sakaby and Dogona for slightly different purposes than the (originally) smaller Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima. While Sakaby and Dogona were meant to fill a gap in commercial food production, Bolomakoté-Kuinima was likely meant to primarily supply the local French military and administration directly.

In this vein, it is entirely possible that Ardjouma Sanou's claim is correct and the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima were the first of their kind in Bobo Dioulasso, as they may have arisen along side the military camp, before the creation of the *jardin publique*. In any case, nearly every gardener I spoke to told me their families had worked in these gardens for three generations. Only Mamadou Séré, who I spoke to briefly on a walk through the Gardens, told me he rents his plot from a friend of his who he met when he came to get his education in the city. Those who

[56] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 29-30.

inherited their plots invariably trace their land back to their great-grandparents. It is safe to say that, regardless of their exact date of origin, the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima have existed for at least a hundred years, their emergence was intricately linked to the French colonial presence in Bobo Dioulasso, and they were thus fundamentally entangled in the intensified contestation over power, custom, and property,[57] which followed the French occupation.

The families of the vast majority of gardeners were cultivators long before French occupation. Most Madrèsi — those who were not in the small blacksmith or *griot* castes — self-identified as *san-san*, or "cultivating people."[58] Millet, fonio, sorghum (red and white), beans, tobacco, groundpeas, and "sauce vegetables" were grown for consumption and sale.[59] *Foroba* (common) plots were cultivated five days a week by able-bodied lineage members during the rainy season and *Zaakane* (private plots) were cultivated for household or individual use.[60] Bruno Doti Sanou described to me how plots were often left fallow for up to ten years, and cultivators would mix grains that are mutually beneficial, like planting néré trees amidst fonio cultivations.[61] Grain fields were often a few kilometers from town, but small vegetable gardens were also grown near the home, fertilized by kitchen compost, and usually tended to by women.[62] These gardens were primarily for personal consumption, and not for sale in markets.[63] Farming, and even vegetable gardening were not new to Madrèsi residents of Kuinima and Bolomakoté, however the market-gardening structure as it exists today, was.

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[57] See Berry, *No Condition is Permanent*, 29.
[58] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 52. (she's referencing Bruno Doti Sanou here, I'm still waiting on his book from ILL, but when I get it, I hope to reference him directly and deepen this historical context)
[59] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 52. And Bruno Doti Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[60] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 52.
[61] Bruno Doti Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[62] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 29.
[63] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 29.

According to Ardjouma Sanou, the Madarè word for tomato, *nasarinya*, means "*chose du blanc*," or, "thing of the white man." Today, tomatoes are one of the staple crops of the Gardens. Most gardeners did not tell me much about their great-grandparents, they focused more on the issues they face in the present, which made it difficult to learn anything specific about the experience of the generation of gardeners who were forced to take on market-gardening. Nevertheless, the word *nasarinya* gives us an indication of the way that market-gardening was initially perceived and understood by cultivators. These were vegetables cultivated for white people, not for Madrèsi, Zara, or other local Africans. For the great-grandparents of the gardeners of today, the Gardens were not a part of their own identity, they were a symbol of conquest and violent change.

Forced labor in many ways defined the French occupation of Upper Volta. Hoping to mirror what India had done for Britain, the French wanted to build cotton production in what was then French Soudan in the hopes of creating a vast supply region which would launch France's textile industry.[64] This plan was primarily based on massive irrigation schemes along the Niger River, although as with any colonial project, it was subject to much internal debate.[65] Upper Volta, on the other hand, had no comparable river to allow for large-scale irrigation of vast croplands.[66] The administration of the colony was thus tasked with the challenge of building and maintaining a self-sufficient territory on a limited budget, while simultaneously supplying other colonies with as much labor as possible to bolster their large-scale agricultural, infrastructural, and military campaigns.[67]

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[64] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 61-62.
[65] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 62.
[66] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 63.
[67] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 63.

Upper Volta, and especially the Mossi Plateau, was considered a labor well for the broader French colonial project.[68] Forced labor supported the administration and military operation of French colonialism, but it also crippled vast regions with induced famine and "chasses a l'homme," the chasing down and capture of men for conscription.[69] Voltaic workers were treated particularly abhorrently, even compared to workers exported from Senegal and French Soudan. They had no rights to speak of, and experienced systematic wage discrimination and segregation from other workers.[70] Moreover, within Upper Volta, the countryside was drained of young men, who left either to fulfill the forced labor demands of neighboring colonies, or to flee to the Gold Coast where wages and conditions were better.[71] This drain, combined with taxes, agricultural requisitions, and military conscriptions, made the conditions of life in Upper Volta extremely severe, especially in times of drought or pestilence.[72]

Unlike the north, where the land was poor and fragile, the relatively fertile region of Bobo Dioulasso was viewed by the French as a potential breadbasket for Côte d'Ivoire.[73] Thus, even when Bobo Dioulasso's depleted workforce could grow enough to sustain itself, the administration of the *cercle*[74] appropriated nearly everything they grew or gathered, even things they harvested from the wild.[75] Freidberg quotes one woman from Sakaby who remarked, "Soumbala, shea butter, eggs, brooms, even millet— everything went over there (to the cercle's

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[68] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 63.
[69] Ki-Zerbo in Kambou-Ferrand, *Peuples Voltaiques*, VI.
[70] Issiaka Mande, "Labor Market Constraints and Competition in Colonial Africa: Migrant Workers, Population, and Agricultural Production in Upper Volta," in *Movements, Borders, and Identities in Africa*, ed. Toyin Falola and Aribidesi Usman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 285-304.
[71] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 63-64.
[72] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 63.
[73] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 64.
[74] The French colonial administration divided their territory into *cercles*, or districts. Bobo Dioulasso was the headquarters of the *cercle* by the same name.
[75] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 64.

collection center)."[76] Market-gardens like the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, or the *jardin publique* of Sakaby and Dogona, were created and maintained with forced labor, which the administration justified by claiming it was in the best interests of the workers who would learn the "habit of work."[77] The Gardens were overseen by colonial administrators and experts brought in to teach market-gardening techniques, including one particularly cruel Malian supervisor remembered by many elders interviewed by Freidberg in the 1990s.[78] Freidberg argues that while market-gardening may not have been the most physically demanding form of forced labor, it was one of the most humiliating, because the gardens were so close to home; the visibility and the proximity of this humiliation created a "stronger collective sense of shame."[79]

The market-gardens of Bobo Dioulasso were forged in blood and pain, and this legacy follows the Gardens to this day. In fact, it is possible that the disdain for the gardeners that I encountered among people outside of Bolomakoté and Kuinima goes beyond a disdain for "peasants," and is also tied to the association of humiliation that the work of market-gardening came to symbolize during the colonial period. Thomas Sankara famously said in 1987 that Burkinabès could find imperialism in their plates, in the "grains of rice, of corn, [and] imported millet." This comment takes on interesting dimensions in the context of market-gardening. As Ardjouma clearly articulated, many of the vegetables cultivated in Bolomakoté today were not cultivated before French conquest, this is evident even in language. But are the tomatoes grown in the soil of Bolomakoté and Kuinima imperial tomatoes? Yes, to a certain extent, they will always be a reminder of conquest and loss of sovereignty, the things of the white man. But for the gardeners today, these tomatoes are also a symbol of autonomy, of self-determination.

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[76] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 64.
[77] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 65.
[78] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 68-69.
[79] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 73.

As Blandine Sankara explains in her interview on the podcast *Afrotopiques*, the baguette has become a staple of Burkinabè culinary life. Even in the most rural towns, baguettes have become a significant part of people's diets.[80] Wheat is not grown in Burkina Faso, meaning that a love for baguettes ties the country to international markets, exposing it to vulnerability which can have devastating consequences. If wheat prices suddenly rise, as they have recently in the wake of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, Burkina Faso's access to bread is entirely at the mercy of forces outside of its control. The tomato might be the "thing of the white man," but it does not bind Burkinabès to imperial systems. Nevertheless, given the violence and humiliation out of which these tomatoes grew, how then were gardeners able to adapt the tomatoes, and the market-garden structure in general, to become an agent of autonomy, rather than conquest?

Nearly every gardener I spoke to emphasized a pivotal moment in the history of the Gardens of Bolomakoté Kuinima. This turning point came after the abolition of forced labor in French colonies in 1946, and after the independence of Upper Volta in 1960. It was in the 1970s, as elders watched young men immigrating in droves to Côte d'Ivoire in search of work, that the elder gardeners made the decision to expand the Gardens. This decision transformed the Gardens from a tool of repression, to a tool for self-determination. The gardeners were "liberating their creative genius" to break from the expected. Their young men would then be able to stay close to home and work in the gardens, promoting the economic stability of the neighborhoods, as well as preserving cultural life, which relies heavily on younger generations to uphold.

The Gardens became a sort of insurance for the neighborhoods of Bolomakoté and Kuinima. Many gardeners emphasized to me that even people who received middle school and highschool diplomas came back to cultivate the Gardens if work was scarce, they were laid off,

[80] Sankara, interview.

or if they found they could make more in the Gardens than at their jobs. In a country rampant with unemployment, having the Gardens to fall back on can be life saving. Abdoulaiye Sanou, a gardener and the brother of the vice president of the gardeners' cooperative, told me, "without the gardens, we're dead."[81] In a volatile global market in which the invasion of a country on the other side of the world can grievously threaten access to wheat in West Africa, in a world in which pandemics can suddenly disrupt supply routes, and climate poses a constant threat and uncertainty, locally grown vegetables are a source of liberation.

The gardeners insist on the importance of the Gardens, not just as an economic resource, but also as a place in which people build their lives. Karim Sanou, the vice president of the gardeners' coalition, articulated the importance of the Gardens, stating, "We live our lives here."[82] In a later interview, Karim Sanou emphasized the integral part that the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima plays in the vibrant cultural life of the neighborhoods. Bolomakoté and Kuinima are known for their dynamic musical tradition, as well as a robust religious life, of which the most striking is the impressive masks that mark important moments in the community, like the death of an elder. A block from the market of Bolomakoté, on one of the streets that leads to the Gardens, the *balafon* makers can be found everyday, carving their xylophone-like instruments under the shade of two trees. Every Friday, the neighborhood's musicians gather to play the neighborhood's characteristic combination of djembe and balafon at a local kiosk, and many of the gardeners come to buy a drink, and dance. A local kiosk owner told me that he relies on the ability of the gardeners to buy a drink on Fridays to maintain his business. Karim Sanou emphasized the partnership between the balafon-makers and the gardeners to maintain the

[81] Abdoulaiye Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou and Ardjouma Sanou, by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[82] Karim Sanou, group interview with Abdoulaiye Sanou, Adama Sanou, and Ali Watara, by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

cultural life of the neighborhoods. In this way, the Gardens have become a social and cultural space, as well as an economic and agricultural one.

In a short interview in 2019, Boreima Sanou, an elder gardener, told me, "If we displace the gardens, it would be like displacing the entire country."[83] This short sentence, which seems straight forward, is a good example of the difficulty of analyzing oral interviews. First, Boreima Sanou spoke to me and my friend Christophe Kaboré (who was helping me film and interview) in January of 2019, when the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima were being threatened with eviction, which likely informed the way he articulated the Gardens' importance. He also spoke to us in Dioula, a language I do not understand. With the help of friends, this interview was later translated into French, which I then translated into English. Therefore, there are many junctures at which Boreima Sanou's original meaning could be lost or altered in translation. Moreover, the French word *pays*, which means country, is sometimes used slightly differently in Burkina Faso than in France. *Pays* can refer to the country as in the political nation, in this case the country of Burkina Faso, but it can also refer to a more local sense of place, the nation as tied to cultural and regional affiliations. It is possible that Boreima Sanou was referring to the country of Burkina Faso, but it is also possible that he was referring to the country of the Madarè, or of Bolomakoté and Kuinima. In any case, he emphasized that the Gardens are tied to a larger sense of place and of identity that surpass economic need.

The women I spoke to who work in the gardens tended to articulate their importance along more practical lines. A woman I spoke to in the Gardens' internal wholesale market in 2019 explained that the Gardens provide crucial income for women like her who did finish their

[83] Boreima Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet and Christophe Kaboré, January 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 2:06, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

education.[84] Assetou Sanou, also a vendor in the internal market, explained that she takes care of nine people, some of whom are orphans, and that the Gardens are "how we feed our families."[85] Yenneba and Asati Sanou, two women I interviewed who cultivate their own garden plot, also articulated the importance of the Gardens in terms of feeding their families, and providing for the orphans of family members who have passed away.[86] Asati cares for her own six children, but also for the two children of her late sister.[87] Ali Watara, who interpreted my interview with Yenneba and Asati and who is also a gardener, explained that while he sells his produce to vendors, if someone from the community is struggling and comes to him asking for food, he will always offer his produce free of charge.[88] Thus, in a country in which there is little to no official safety net for people experiencing hardship and poverty, the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima sustain a system of community mutual aid which prevents orphaned and impoverished people from losing everything, and instead incorporates them into the community.

Nevertheless, most people looking for examples of development in Bobo Dioulasso will pass right by the urban gardens which pepper the city, and head straight for *La Maison de la Culture*, a cultural center built into a colossal round-about. In *The Bright Continent*, Dayo Olopade shines a light on the effervescence of innovative creativity bursting from the African continent, most of which passes unnoticed by Euro-centric radars which tend to neglect to scan for the informal, individual, and decentralized interactions that are often "the most vibrant,

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[84] Garden vendor (name unknown), interview by Wittika Chaplet and Christophe Kaboré, January 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 1:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

[85] Assetou Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet and Christophe Kaboré, January 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 1:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

[86] Yenneba Sanou and Asati Sanou, group interview by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.

[87] Asati Sanou, group interview with Yenneba Sanou, by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.

[88] Ali Watara, group interview with Yenneba Sanou and Asati, by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.

authentic, and economically significant."[89] Burkina Faso is littered with behemoth monuments to a developed future in the image of opulence, embodied in buildings, monuments, and sometimes even entire neighborhoods. In Ouagadougou, the neighborhood *Ouaga Deux Mille* was constructed on the outskirts of the city, complete with vast avenues and giant estates, most of which are empty. Meanwhile, in the city center, nearly every other block has a half-built building which stands abandoned, left to the elements when the money ran dry.

These monuments to development are really monuments to power. *La Maison de la Culture* stands in the middle of the road like a mammoth traffic conductor, shouting at all the passing motorcycles, cars, and cyclists about who holds power and why. Most countries have these kinds of monuments; outsized indicators of power. In Burkina Faso, they are an indication of the centuries of debate over development, and the best way to 'bring Africa into the future.' But, as Olopade illustrates, the future is already bursting from the continent, we just need to adjust our glasses.

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are intimately intertwined with the intersecting contestations over custom, power, and property. They also sit at the crux of Bobo Dioulasso's intersecting political and economic roles through their proximity to the military, their purpose in agricultural production for both local markets and export markets, and their entanglements in urbanization. The next chapters will delve deeper into these entanglements.

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[89] Dayo Olopade. *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa* (Boston: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014) 8.

Chapter 2: Dynamic Tradition on Contested Land

At five in the morning on February 4th, 2019, the residents of the informal neighborhood bordering Kuinima were awoken from their slumber by the arrival of bulldozers. Within minutes, the streets were flooded with rivers of families dragging 20 years of life[90] away from the machines which were now turning to rubble the homes they had built with their own hands. Some fled the scene immediately, others stuck around to watch, gripping their belongings a safe distance away from the national police, who periodically threw tear gas towards residents deemed too close to their own homes.

Threats of eviction of this neighborhood, as well as the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, had been circulating for some time, but there was broad uncertainty regarding the sincerity of these threats. On January 28th, 2019, eviction notices were issued to all the gardeners and the residents of the non-alloted neighborhood, with the demand that they desert their homes and livelihoods by the end of the month, a mere three days. But January ended, February began, and nothing happened. The gardeners shrugged and continued their work, unable to believe that generations of livelihood would be taken away so lightly. Even after the bulldozers crushed the houses on the southern edge of Kuinima, many gardeners were hopeful that the Gardens would be left alone. That morning, a group of activists and gardeners gathered in the house of Yssouf Sanou, an accountant and resident of Kuinima who had been helping to organize against the eviction threats. They discussed how they might still save the Gardens, planning marches, petitions, and meetings with city officials. But at 2 pm that same day, the bulldozers arrived in the Gardens, raking through three generations of labor, investment, and life.

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[90] The average time that residents have lived in the informal neighborhood bordering Kuinima is about 20 years, according to residents I spoke to in 2019. For the testimony of a resident and video footage of the forced eviction of this neighborhood, see *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 12:20-14:05, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

Forced evictions are not unique in Burkina Faso. As the population of its cities have ballooned over the past several decades, informal settlements have blossomed on the outskirts of its cities' limits. In their midst, corruption and land speculation have flourished as the demand for housing continues to grow. The previous chapter demonstrated how the gardeners of Bolomakoté-Kuinima were able to transform the market-gardening structure from a colonial tool based in forced labor into a tool for economic and cultural autonomy. This chapter will complicate that argument by discussing the thing that is both indispensable to the Gardens and an existential threat to them: land tenure. Contestation around land is one of the most salient issues in Bobo Dioulasso, as well as Ouagadougou, and many other West African cities whose populations have grown exponentially in the past several decades. The struggles over land on the eve of the French conquest of the Lobi region that I discussed in chapter one demonstrate that land was central to contestation and change in nineteenth century West Africa, from local disputes between neighbors, to wars of conquest and clashes between empires. The system of legal pluralism and multiplicity of claims on land then created by the French colonizers exacerbated these contestations, and manufactured new contentions and forms of debate over land and who does and does not have rights to it.[91] The history of land in Bobo Dioulasso reflects a much longer history of struggle over land across the African continent, reaching past the colonial period, to the Atlantic Slave Trade, and beyond.[92]

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[91] Antoine Dolcerocca, "State Property vs. Customary Ownership: A Comparative Framework in West Africa," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 49, no. 5 (July 29, 2022): 1066.

[92] For more on land conflict and contestation across the continent, especially before and during the Atlantic Slave Trade, see Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970). And Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). And Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington, US: Indiana University Press, 2007). And Caree A. Banton, *More Auspicious Shores: Barbadian Migration to Liberia, Blackness, and the Making of an African Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). And Mariana P.

The scholarship on land tenure in Africa, specifically as it relates to colonial history, is vast and rife with debate. These debates can have very real consequences, as they can inform the way that international organizations understand and build policy around land tenure in Africa. The debate has largely been fought along the fault lines of so-called "customary" versus "formal" land tenure systems, and the role of the state in titling, or not titling land. In the colonial and early post-colonial era, "customary" land law was seen as bad for development, and many scholars, along with international institutions, pushed to convert "customary" land tenure into individual freehold and leasehold titles.[93] Since the 1980s, the debate has gradually shifted towards more favorable understandings of customary land tenure; scholars emphasized its dynamism and flexibility, and debunked claims that it was unable to produce efficiently on a national level.[94] Recognition of "local land rights" became the focus of debate, and in the 1990s, an evolutionary view of land tenure was adopted, which theorized that market-based land property relations would naturally evolve due to demographic pressure.[95] In the past couple decades, the scholarly debate has managed to dramatically shift some of the positions of major international bodies like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations.[96] The previously dogmatic pursuit of land tenure formalization by these organizations largely failed to improve agricultural investments, and often displaced the very people it claimed

Candido, *Wealth, Land, and Property in Angola: A History of Dispossession, Slavery and Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[93] Sam Moyo, Dzodzi Tsikata, and Yakham Diop, *Land in the Struggles for Citizenship in Africa* (Cape Town, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2015) 7.

[94] Moyo et al., *Land in the Struggles for Citizenship*, 7.

[95] Moyo et al., *Land in the Struggles for Citizenship*, 7.

[96] Pauline E. Peters, "Inequality and Social Conflict Over Land in Africa," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 4, no. 3 (July 2004): 6.

to protect.[97] This shift in rhetoric, however, has not always reflected actual policy, as will be explored later.[98]

Ultimately, what is important to understand for the purposes of this paper, is that land in Africa is extremely dependent on the country, and even the region or locality. This is because — despite many efforts to dismantle it — lineage-based rural social organization has been remarkably resilient to attempts to reform and change it.[99] Colonizers, as well as post-independence governments and international organizations, did not and have not succeeded in fundamentally changing land systems; rather their efforts disrupted and complicated existing systems, leaving behind a complex and self-contradictory pluralism. Each country has dealt with these contradictions in different ways, often falling on different sides of the "customary" or "official" land debate, meaning that the evolution of Burkina Faso's system of land tenure is quite different from say, that of Senegal, or Mali. However, while it is true that lineage-based organization has proven resilient in rural areas, urban spaces were far more impacted by colonial legacies because they were originally seized or created by colonists, which did significantly change the relationships with urban land.[100] With this in mind, it is important to examine the particular history of land tenure in Burkina Faso, as well as in Bobo Dioulasso specifically.

Issues around land tenure in France's African colonies were an extension of the debates that arose out of the *respect des coutumes* policy, as the administration grappled with its conflicting interests, and local populations navigated how to negotiate and assert their competing interests within and without the colonial system. The French introduced land titling under the guise of securitizing landholding, when in reality it was an attempt to control and manage land

[97] Peters, "Inequality and Social Conflict," 6.
[98] Peters, "Inequality and Social Conflict," 8.
[99] Moyo et al., *Land in the Struggles for Citizenship*, 5.
[100] Moyo et al., *Land in the Struggles for Citizenship*, 6.

"in opposition to customary land rights."[101] A land registration procedure was introduced in the decree of July 24th, 1906 which refused to register land left "unused" for several years without proof of ownership.[102] This policy took advantage of the complexities of local land tenure and the agricultural practice of leaving fields fallow for several years.[103] The state also declared itself the owner of all "unregistered land," opening the door for more precarity in land tenure.[104] In a 1925 decree, the French colonial state encouraged individuals to register their land in a land register, or *livret foncier*.[105] But the emphasis on land titling failed to account for the communal nature of local land tenure, and many peasants saw no need to strengthen their claims to land that no one was actively challenging.[106] Policies shifted as the French administration tried to apply rules to overlapping and incongruent systems of land tenure which did not serve the local populations and were therefore ineffective. In 1955, the French state finally extended land rights to both individual and collective "customary" ownership.[107]

However, the implications of incorporating so-called "customary" ownership into the colonial legal framework were complex. Firstly, as many scholars have argued, "customary law" was not a reflection of real "traditions" or pre-colonial practices, it was itself a colonial creation.[108] Colonial authorities sought to replicate what they believed were long-established customs, rather than enforcing current opinion.[109] The legality of certain decisions were thus often judged according to common stereotypes of African customary land law rather than current

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[101] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[102] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[103] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[104] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[105] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[106] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[107] Dolcerocca, 1067.
[108] Elizabeth Colson. "The Impact of the Colonial Period on the Definition of Land Rights," in Victor Turner, ed., *Profiles of Change: African Society and Colonial Rule*, Vol. 3 of L. Gann and P. Duignan, eds., *Colonialism in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 196.
[109] Colson, "The impact of the colonial period," 196.

realities.[110] Martin Channock argues that "customary law" has been a tool to reinforce state hegemony under the auspices of universal entitlement but at the expense of ordinary Africans who are relegated "to a form of legal rightlessness in land."[111] Berry, on the other hand, argues that the practical reality is not so clear, and that land tenure has remained ambiguous and fluid, subject to continuous change and reinterpretation.[112] Pauline Peters makes the argument that customary law land tenure "need to be seen not as 'informal' or 'traditional' systems separate from and opposed to 'formal systems' of 'law' but as mutually imbricated with the latter, or as 'competing forms of institutionalization.'"[113]

Since independence, different nations have followed varying paths to deal with the mess of contradicting land rights left behind by the French. Burkina Faso initially cracked down on customary land ownership in the early years of independence, and under Sankara's revolutionary government, which tried to step away from both customary and colonial precedents for land rights.[114] But in the 2000s, with the onslaught of decentralization and structural adjustment, the World Bank imposed the creation of the land market, in which land possession was recognized and regulated by customary property rights.[115] Unlike Senegal, which emphasized state property after independence, Burkina Faso has broadly recognized customary property rights and implemented several laws to support and preserve these rights.[116] This also shifted power over land from the state to local authorities. Unfortunately, much of the research on the history of land

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[110] Colson, "The impact of the colonial period," 196.
[111] Martin Chanock, "Paradigms, Policies and Property: A Review of the Customary Law of Land Tenure." In K. Mann and R. Roberts, eds., *Law in colonial Africa*. (Portsmouth, N.H. and London: Heinemann and James Currey, 1991).
[112] Berry, *No Condition in Permanent*, 103.
[113] Peters, "Inequality and Social Conflict," 5.
[114] Dolcerocca, "State Property vs. Customary Ownership," 1073.
[115] Dolcerocca, "State Property vs. Customary Ownership," 1073.
[116] Dolcerocca, "State Property vs. Customary Ownership," 1068.

tenure in West Africa focuses on rural land, which is quite different from urban realities. As West African cities expand, urban land disputes, especially disputes with local government officials, are central to understanding urban poverty in West Africa.

The homes bulldozed on February 4th, 2019, were part of what is called a *non-loti*, or "non-alloted" neighborhood. People unable to find a place to live in the city, or whose family courtyards have gotten too crowded to accommodate them, head to these precarious neighborhoods, on land that no one has laid direct claims to, and build their own homes. These neighborhoods are called non-allotted because they are not yet officially included in the urban area and have not undergone "allotment" (*lotissement*),[117] a process by which informal neighborhoods are incorporated into the city. Allotment divides neighborhoods into parcels of land, linked by straight roads and much needed infrastructure like electricity and water networks. In theory, every permanent resident of a neighborhood undergoing allotment has the right to receive a plot once the process is finished. But often, not enough parcels are created to match the people with rights to them. Given the ever-increasing demand for land, these allotment projects are rife with corruption and speculation, and more often than not, residents wind up with nothing at all, and no choice but to build another house in another peripheral settlement.

Often, allotment is tied to the same interplay between customary and state land recognition that has characterized land tenure in the region since the colonial period. In Bendogho, a neighborhood in Ouagadougou that was undergoing allotment in 2000, land had been distributed according to the authority of the local chief.[118] Prospective residents could get a

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[117] Here I translate "allotment" directly from the french term *lotissement,* but Sten Hagberg calls this process "parcelling," which may be a clearer meaning for English speakers. Adama Belemviré calls non-alloted neighborhoods spontaneous neighborhoods or non-lot neighborhoods. The terminology in English varies, but I've tried to use words which mirror the language used by the people I spoke to in Bobo Dioulasso.

[118] Sten Hagberg, *Poverty in Burkina Faso: Representations and Realities*, Uppsala-Leuven Research in Cultural Anthropology (Uppsala: Uppsala Univ, 2001) 61-62.

plot of land by "giving a cock, cola-nuts and the local sorghum beer *dolo* for sacrifices."[119] In this case, allotment was a process of transitioning this customary ownership into the municipality.[120] The chief did not oppose this transition, namely due to the claim that it would bring "development," but likely also because he was one of the municipal advisors.[121] The Bendogho allotment was demanded and paid for by the residents of the neighborhood, according to a representative of the municipality.[122]

However, this cooperation between local officials and residents is not universal. In Sarfalao, another non-alloted neighborhood in Bobo Dioulasso, residents bemoan the lack of access to water and electricity, but they have also vehemently opposed allotment, claiming that the mayor has been using the process to create valuable urban parcels which he then sells or gives away to friends and patrons, creating wealth off the crumbled homes of the city's most impoverished communities. This kind of corruption is well documented by the government itself. A parliamentary report from 2016 documented the sale, commercial use, and parceling of land intended by city planners to be reserved for green space, as well as "irregularities" in the allocation of parcels, and corruption between officials administering the allotment process.[123]

The allotment process begins with a census of the population of the designated neighborhood, and every resident receives a receipt which categorizes the condition of their house, determining the priority of their right to a parcel, and the fee they must pay to have rights

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[119] Hagberg, *Poverty in Burkina Faso*, 62.
[120] Hagberg, 62.
[121] Hagberg, 62.
[122] Hagberg, 62.
[123] *Commission d'Enquete Parlementaire sur le Foncier Urbain au Burkina Faso: Rapport de Synthèse*, Burkina Faso National Assembly, IV Republic, Seventh Legislature (September 2016) 23-24, https://www.assembleenationale.bf/IMG/pdf/commission_d_enquete_parlementaire_sur_le_foncier_urbain_au_burkina_faso_rapport_de_synthese.pdf.

to it.[124] According to Sten Hagberg, the poorest residents often find themselves in the position of selling their receipts to merchants or government officials, losing their rights to their land.[125]

In general, the policy of incorporating these spontaneous neighborhoods into the city creates extremely complicated dynamics. Building a house in a non-alloted neighborhood is its own form of land speculation, because residents can hope that allotment will eventually grant them rights to desirable land and access to the infrastructure of the city. Residents are often willing to endure years, even decades, of no infrastructure, with women having to walk miles to access water, and children covering similar distances to get to school. Nevertheless, issues of corruption, upper-level speculation, and administrative inefficacies,[126] mean that this gamble is far from reliable. As expressed above, residents of Sarfalao were adamantly opposed to the way that the city was attempting to incorporate their neighborhood, even if they did want access to the city's infrastructure.

Bobo Dioulasso's many urban gardens have also been affected by similar kinds of urban land development schemes. According to my conversation with historian Bruno Doti Sanou, many of Bobo Dioulasso's urban gardens have fractured and shrunk over the past several years as land is appropriated or sold by government officials or investors.[127] The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, however, have largely avoided this kind of fracturing and speculation. This is because they sit on land technically within the perimeter of Bobo Dioulasso's military camp. In a strange way, this has protected them from the land speculation and the precarity of urban informal land claims. Until February 2019.

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[124] Hagberg, *Poverty in Burkina Faso*, 62.
[125] Hagberg, *Poverty in Burkina Faso*, 62.
[126] See *Commission d'Enquete Parlementaire sur le Foncier Urbain au Burkina Faso* cited above.
[127] Bruno Doti Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

Up until then, the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima had been able to not only remain intact, but significantly expand in the last several decades. I did not gather a lot of specific information about how land is managed in the Gardens during my interview, so my review of this system is incomplete. In general, it is evident that garden plots are inherited patrilineally, although this is somewhat flexible as different family members move in and out of the Gardens depending on their level of education and the availability of outside work. Daouda Sanou no longer works in the Gardens, and no longer really considers himself a gardener, but his two sons still cultivate his garden plot.[128] In the absence of sons, or as a result of unusual circumstances, women do sometimes inherit garden plots, although this is relatively rare. Yenneba and Asati Sanou are examples of two women who inherited their own garden plot from their brother after he left the Gardens following the forced eviction in 2019. For the most part, this system of inheritance means that the vast majority of gardeners are Madarè. Mamadou Séré, however, rents his plot from a friend, and therefore hails from outside of the Bolomakotè-Kuinima community. It is possible that the chief of Kuinima has a role in the management of land in the Gardens, but I did not interview him, nor did I ask many questions about him, so I cannot be sure of his role, although Freidberg's research in Sakaby in Dogona indicates that the chief there has a role in land allocation.[129]

Gardeners consistently describe the fostering of positive relationships with the military, many of whom live in or near Bolomakoté and Kuinima, and some of whom have family who work in the Gardens. Daouda Sanou is both a former gardener, and formerly served in the military camp. He explained that the relationship between the military and the gardeners has

[128] Daouda Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[129] Susanne E. Freidberg, "Gardening on the Edge: The Social Conditions of Unsustainability on an African Urban Periphery," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 2 (June 2001): 349.

always been amicable.[130] In fact, according to him, when the camp experienced water cuts, the military would come to the gardens to get water from the wells. This kind of cooperation is perhaps reminiscent of communal negotiation of property which does not fit neatly into 'modern' legal frameworks.

However, as insecurity has risen in Burkina Faso, and as increasing pressure is placed on its insufficient military resources, Bobo Dioulasso's military camp has decided to build a wall around its perimeter, destroying any illusions of communal land ownership. This is what led to the eviction of early 2019, which devastated much of the Gardens for nearly a year. But even though this eviction is different from the precarity faced by neighborhoods like Sarfalao, for example, it is important to understand the 2019 eviction in the context of land precarity in Burkina Faso more generally. In a group interview with elder gardener Ardjouma Sanou, vice president of the gardener's cooperative Karim Sanou, and gardener Abdoulaiye Sanou, they explained to me that allotment projects and land speculation had caused them to lose some of their fields on the outskirts of the city which they cultivate in the dry season. Ardjouma lost his field entirely, and now only cultivates in the Gardens, while Karim's and Abdoulaiye's fields have been reduced to much smaller plots.[131] Thus, even though the situation of the Gardens is quite particular, it fits into a broader context of land precarity which places Burkina Faso's most vulnerable populations in impossible situations.

The 2019 attempted eviction has, in many ways, defined the conversations I have engaged in with the gardeners. When I first worked with the Gardens in January and February of 2019, I was making a documentary about the eviction threats, and thus naturally my interviews revolved around this subject. But it became clear when I returned to Bobo Dioulasso in 2022,

[130] Daouda Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[131] Group interview with Karim Sanou, Ardjouma Sanou, and Abdoulaiye Sanou by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

that the events of February 2019 were a turning point which altered the fabric of the gardens, and what they mean to the people who rely on them.

The violence of February 4th is worth lingering on. The bulldozers, accompanied by the national police, arrived in the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima around 2pm, a mere couple of hours after uprooting the homes of the non-allotted neighborhood south of Kuinima. Gardeners and community members raced across the narrow paths over the ravine and into the Gardens to witness the scene. Given the size of the Gardens, there were nowhere near enough bulldozers to ravage everything.[132] Instead, the machines lowered their blades and raked broad slashes through the vegetable plots, mangling produce and trampling carefully dug beds. In the frenzy, gardeners raced to harvest what they could before their precious crops were crushed, filling their skirts and baskets with peppers, lettuce, and tomatoes. According to elder and former gardener Yaya Sanou, the national police threw vegetables down some of the wells, contaminating the gardeners' most crucial resource: clean water.[133] People who got too close to the police or the bulldozers were chased away with tear gas, which billowed up through the mango and citrus trees in ominous clouds. Wherever tear gas canisters were thrown, assembly lines of gardeners formed, refilling watering cans in the wells and passing them over to extinguish the smoke.

Daouda Sanou grew up working in the Gardens and inherited a plot from his grandfather, which he has now left to his children as he works on developing his own field outside the city.[134] Even though he no longer works in the Gardens, he — like many community members — continues to return to them as a social space. Daouda Sanou was having tea with friends in the

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[132] I cannot say for sure how many bulldozers were present, but I do not believe there were more than four.
[133] Yaya Sanou, interview #2 by Wittika Chaplet, in February 2019, *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 19:44, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.
[134] Daouda Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

Gardens when the bulldozers arrived. In the chaos that followed, he was shot in the back of his foot, breaking his tendon and permanently affecting his health. He was not the only one brutalized that day, as what began as an eviction operation morphed into a police crackdown.

As the bulldozers crisscrossed their way across the Gardens, a group of people — some of whom were likely gardeners, others who may not have been — attacked the house of the chief of Kuinima. I did not have the opportunity to interview any of the people involved in this attack, and I did not witness it myself. From what I understood through the information that spread through the neighborhood, this group was angry at the chief's inaction in halting the eviction. I do know from my interviews and personal experiences in 2019, that much of the organizing happening among the gardeners to negotiate with the military was hampered by the formalities which required everything to pass through the chief. What is important here is that this attack on the chief's house led to an immediate violent reaction from the national police. Several people, among them Daouda Sanou, were shot, and 25 people were jailed, four of them were middle schoolers. A neighborhood-wide curfew was instated, and the national police spent the evening roving up and down the main streets in their vehicles, enforcing this curfew.

In the words of gardener Mamadou Séré, "2019 paralyzed the neighborhood."[135] The biggest and most permanent change was the uprooting of the wholesale market which used to be inside the gardens, in a clearing which sat between the rows of peppers, tomatoes, and lettuce. Women, mostly the wives and daughters of gardeners, gathered their families' produce to sell every evening to vendors, neighbors, and even the occasional military officers who would stroll through the market on their way out of the military camp. Produce sold in the garden was cheaper and thus attracted vendors who resold the vegetables of Bolomakoté-Kuinima all across

[135] Mamadou Séré, "street" interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

the city. After 2019, many people from outside the neighborhood were too afraid to come inside the Gardens to buy produce. The market was forced to relocate to an intersection in Kuinima, further away from the Gardens and their trees which provided shade and comfort during long work days.

Moreover, many vendors harvest produce directly from the vegetable plots themselves in order to pay even lower prices. After 2019, these vendors have dwindled and the prices they are willing to pay have also dropped. Gardener Amidou told me that produce he once could sell for 1000 CFA he can now only sell for 700 CFA.[136] This is exacerbated by the fact that the military is now building the wall around the camp. They are leaving openings through which gardeners can pass, but the wall cuts through the middle of some parts of the gardens, hampering circulation. More importantly, the wall is a visual symbol of military presence and the precarity of the Gardens, and this precarity has further discouraged open commerce within the Gardens.[137]

Some gardeners abandoned their plots altogether after the events of 2019, either because they could not recover enough of their investments to continue, or out of fear of further repression. Yenneba and Asati Sanou are some of the few women who cultivate their own plot in the Gardens, but they only obtained their plot when their brother, Mamadou Sanou, left it to them when he abandoned his plot in 2019.[138] Nevertheless, the vast majority of gardeners did not leave. In fact, the day after the eviction, most of them went straight back to the Gardens to water what was left of their plots. Mamouni Sanou's garden was devastated by the bulldozers, which trampled straight through his carefully cultivated lettuce plants, leaving only strips of green leaves between mammoth tire marks. But a week later, Mamouni was still watering his garden,

[136] Amidou, "street" interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[137] Amidou, "street" interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[138] Yenneba Sanou and Asati Sanou, group interview by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.

making sure every plant was fed, even the few that survived in the strips between the tire marks.[139] "Even if there's only one plant left, I will water it!" he declared to me.[140] This formidable resilience is rooted in the long history of place-making and belonging that the gardeners worked to establish in the Gardens for generations.

Daouda Sanou referred to women who cultivate for themselves as "*femmes battantes*," which roughly translates to "fighting women."[141] His respect is well deserved. On top of her gardening work, Asati Sanou takes care of eight children, four of whom are her own, two of whom are the children of her sister who passed away.[142] On a typical day, Asati Sanou will wake up very early to prepare food for her family, then head to the Gardens where she hand-washes her laundry using the free water from the garden well. Once the laundry is strung up to dry above the tomato plants, she sets to watering them, filling two big watering cans and lugging them through the garden beds, back and forth until every plant has been fed. Then she harvests the produce that is ripe and heads to sell it in a neighborhood in zone 21 of Bobo Dioulasso, about 5 kilometers away from the Gardens. In the evening, she returns to water her plot once more and then heads home.[143] All of this is on top of the work Asati and Yenneba Sanou's husbands do in their own garden plots. Thus, even though access to their own plot gives Asati and Yenneba particular economic autonomy, it also represents twice as much labor for them as it does for men gardeners.

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[139] Mamouni Sanou, conversation with Wittika Chaplet, Heather MacKenzie-Chaplet, and Dramane Sanou, February 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 2:06, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.
[140] Mamouni Sanou, conversation with Wittika Chaplet, Heather MacKenzie-Chaplet, and Dramane Sanou, February 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 2:06, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.
[141] Daouda Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[142] Asati Sanou, group interview with Yenneba Sanou by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.
[143] Asati Sanou, group interview with Yenneba Sanou by Wittika Chaplet, interpreted by Ali Watara, June 2022.

Other than its lack of government oversight, land tenure in the Gardens is ultimately not all that different from notions of institutionalized land tenure. There is a sense of communal support and decision making, but ultimately each garden plot belongs to one family, and it is typically passed down from father to son. In the absence of a son, plots can go to other family members, as in the case of Asati and Yenneba Sanou, who inherited from their brother. In rare cases, plots are rented to outsiders, as in the case of Mamadou Séré, who rents his plot from a friend.[144] This system is not antithetical to private ownership, however, the lack of government oversight allows the gardeners flexibility and autonomy over how their land is managed, and in whose interest.

Burkina Faso's government is not yet strong enough to ensure that land reforms like allotment are not rife with corruption. Given the rising value of land in cities, land reform administrators have a lot to gain and little to lose by profiting off of allotment processes. Unofficial systems of land ownership and management in Burkina Faso's cities often have longer historical precedents, and are thus somewhat less vulnerable to corruption. This is not to say that inequality and dispossession do not happen in informal systems.[145] However, in the case of many of Bobo Dioulasso's neighborhoods, residents and cultivators have seen the way government land policies take advantage of poor communities. Top-down land reforms in Burkina Faso's cities do not empower, benefit, or protect vulnerable and poor communities. In fact, in many cases, the informal management of land is more regular and standardized than government-led land reforms, because corruption and abuse is far less common.

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[144] Mamadou Séré, "street" interview by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

[145] See Peters, "Inequality and Social Conflict," for a discussion of inequality in so-called "customary" land ownership.

Chapter 3: Planting Seeds in a Hurricane: Why Gardening Still Matters in the Midst of War

"As part of a new ecosecurity imaginary, "adaptation" acquires a very different ontological character — commandeering - consciousness to adopt a "clear" intelligibility that supplants the hard work of thinking alternative futures to a neoliberal paradigm."

- Robert P. Marzec, *Militarizing the Environment: Climate Change and the Security State*

"That is why we all must take from Tort's murder not only grief, but a commitment to continue what they were doing; to resist this world *and* build the next one at the same damn time."

- Gabriel Eisen, January 23, 2023, Vigil for Tortugita Teran

On June 30, 2022, the conference room of the École Nationale des Régies Financières in Ouagadougou was filled to bursting with eager students, faculty, and interested community members who jostled to find seats or standing room in the already packed room. The murmuring crowd had gathered to see Burkinabè economist Dr. Ra-Sablga Ouédraogo, founder of the Institut Free Afrik, speak on a topic that to some may appear deceptively dry: "Public Finances and the Fight Against Terrorism." The conference lasted several hours longer than its advertised duration, but most in attendance would likely agree that it was riveting nonetheless. For years, the words "security crisis" and "terrorism" have loomed like a specter over Burkina Faso. International media outlets seem to have already condemned the whole region to devastating conflict, casually sprawling reductive headlines whenever events are deemed shocking enough to be worth mentioning. Meanwhile, in Burkina Faso, rumors abound about what is or is not happening, whose fault it is, and what the military is or is not doing to stop it.

Dr. Ouédraogo got straight to the point: Burkina Faso is facing an existential crisis, and it must be addressed at every level of society. In his detailed presentation, Ouèdraogo presented data from independent research conducted by the Institut Free Afrik which illuminated the social and economic impacts of the violence spreading from the north of Burkina Faso. He identified historical and environmental inequalities which have driven Burkinabè citizens to join armed groups, and steps that can be taken now to mitigate these issues, as well as provide for the millions of people displaced and uprooted by the crisis. Central to his argument was the insistence that while the military certainly has a role to play in liberating large swaths of the country now out of the government's control, only a fraction of the security crisis relates to, and can be addressed by, the military. His firm acknowledgement of the gravity of the crisis only matched his determination that, with the right policies, Burkina Faso could survive it.

When I first began my research for this paper, I intended to stay as far away from the security crisis as possible. I was frustrated with the ways in which Burkina Faso was defined from the outside solely in terms of violence and poverty, and I was interested in focusing on the ingenuity and life that I felt was lacking in these external portrayals. Nevertheless, during my month-long stay in Bobo Dioulasso, the security crisis managed to squirm its way into nearly every conversation, but even as I became increasingly caught up in the debates that shifted with each new person I met, I resolved to steer clear of the topic in my writing. It was only on my last day in the country, a mere couple of hours before my flight out of Ouagadougou, that I attended Dr. Ouèdraogo's conference, and he finally changed my mind. His stance was simple yet decisive; there can be no conversation in Burkina Faso that does not deal with the security crisis. But more importantly, he demonstrated that this conversation does not have to be one of doom.

There are concrete steps that different people and government bodies can take to mitigate and abate the looming crisis, and this is a conversation I was much more interested in engaging with.

Environmentalism and militarism meet between the vegetable plots of Bolomakoté and Kuinima, and the Gardens can be viewed as a microcosm of this turbulent encounter. The security crisis escalating in Burkina Faso today is an ever-evolving and incredibly complex situation, which I do not hope to understand or explain in this paper. However, the convergence of violence and environmental calamity is not new in Burkina Faso's history, and exploring this context of crisis, resilience, and adaptation can greatly inform our understanding of the more recent crisis. I argue that a militaristic approach to the security crisis has led to a rhetoric that sees nearly every citizen, and especially poor and marginal citizens, as potential threats and potential sacrifices. These false equivalencies are incredibly dangerous, and taking the time to understand how communities have survived crises in the past is crucial to understanding how they might do it again.

In chapter one I briefly discussed the ways in which colonial conquest and administration used famine as a weapon against West Africans, both intentionally and unintentionally. Burkina Faso's soil is fragile, its climate unreliable, and the varied groups of people who have built lives in the region over different periods of time have had to navigate these difficulties, in tandem with periods of political and violent conflict, for centuries. Nevertheless, the security crisis poses an existential threat to life in Burkina Faso today as it dramatically exacerbates pre-existing environmental and social crises in the country. One need not look very far to see how similar conflicts quickly ballooned into devastating violence in nearby countries. The crisis is entangled in many overlapping issues of inequity, food distribution, economic stagnation, historical rifts, and a colonial history which refuses to become a part of the past.

France's refusal to leave its former African colonies, coupled with its simultaneous refusal to reckon with its colonial past and present, is coming to a head in West Africa today. But even as Burkina Faso and Mali have taken the momentous step to expel the French military from their countries, their military governments continue to view their nations' overlapping crises through a purely militaristic lens. This is dangerous both because militarism alone can never properly resolve conflicts that are also social and ecological in nature, but also because France has maintained defense accords with Burkina Faso's military since independence, which has prevented Burkina Faso to form a military well-trained and well-funded enough to adequately face the security crisis. A militaristic response will necessarily be an inadequate one, and more importantly, is likely to put at risk the very people it seeks to protect.

The moment has come once more in Burkina Faso's history to "liberate [its] creative genius." The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are an example, both of the crucial systems put at risk by militarism, as well as the systems which can maintain social, environmental, and nutritional security, even in the face of crisis. The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are a useful lens through which to explore the ways in which structures that have demonstrated historical resilience to crisis must be encouraged in times of precarity, rather than marginalized.

The Security Crisis

In the past several years, attacks by armed groups in the north of Burkina Faso have risen and spread dramatically, creating a national crisis of security, and unprecedented internal displacement. Armed conflict has been rising in the Sahel for many years now. Following the French invasion of Libya in 2011, weapons and militant groups have seeped through the Sahara desert and bolstered local rifts, rivalries, and illicit trading networks.[146] Until recently, Burkina

[146] Nicholas Marsh, "Brothers Came Back with Weapons: The Effects of Arms Proliferation from Libya," *PRISM* 6, no. 4 (2017): 78.

Faso had largely been spared the worst effects of conflicts which threatened its neighbors like Mali and Niger, but around 2015, attacks began to rise and the situation has only worsened since. The myriad dimensions of the rise in armed conflict in the West African Sahel is a subject on which several books could be and have been written; it is far outside the scope of this paper. I will only touch on the outlines of this issue in so far as they help us to understand the dynamics and significance of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima.[147]

According to Free Afrik,[148] a third of Burkina Faso's territory is now out of state control, and displacement has resulted in one out of seven Burkinabè citizens living food insecure and nearly 17% of the country's schools to shut down.[149] Major cities like Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso have been mostly spared from direct attacks — save for a few exceptions — but most people are linked in some way to towns and people directly affected by the crisis. Many families, especially in rural areas, are burdened with housing and feeding refugees who often do not speak their language. In the cities, it is becoming increasingly common to find people begging on the sides of the street, something that was extremely rare a couple years ago. Thus, even though there are still large swaths of the country that exist in relative safety from attack, a feeling of losing control and imminent danger has gripped even the safest regions. This specter of insecurity is exacerbated by the uncertainty generated by the near total lack of reliable and

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[147] I encourage anyone with interest in this subject to look into it further. The political dynamics of the conflicts in the Sahel have received far too little international attention, but this issue is of huge geopolitical significance, and in many ways it represents a reckoning with the legacies of colonialism and the ongoing neo-colonial presence of European actors, especially France, in West Africa. For an — admittedly non-academic — but thorough and accessible overview of the geopolitical implications of the security crisis in Burkina Faso, I highly recommend Seumboy Vrainom's video on his YouTube channel "Histoires Crépues": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW_d0WJKFXg&t=729s. Additionally, Rémi Carayol's new book *Le Mirage Sahélien: La France en Guerre en Afrique, Serval, Barkhane et Après?* (2023) discusses France's role in the related conflict in Mali.

[148] Free Afrik is an independent research organization founded by Dr. Ra-Sablga Ouédraogo and headquartered in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

[149] Ra-Sablga Ouédraogo, "Conférence Publique: Fiances Publique et Lutte Contre le Terrorisme," June 30, 2022 in the Salle de Conférence in the École Nationale des Regies Financieres.

unbiased news sources on which one might rely to understand exactly what is happening, and who is involved. Rumors abound, and most are left to make up their own minds about the nature of the violence, who is behind it, why it is happening, and how it should be addressed.

The role of French military involvement in West Africa is essential to understanding some of these tensions. During the colonial period, the French military trained African armies in the repression of internal insurrection in order to secure the French empire, but they did not train them for war with other territories.[150] In the 1960s, after independence, France continued to influence and manage defense in its former colonies, with the claim that it was training African defense forces.[151] However, this influence consisted primarily of "defense accords" which relied on scenarios in which the French military could be called upon to intervene and assist the Burkinabè military, which would serve merely as an auxiliary force.[152] This French tactic of perpetuating West African dependency on French military power has continued up until very recently.

In 2014, President François Hollande launched the operation "Barkhane" which would replace the earlier operation "Serval" with the goal of securing the sahel region against rising terrorism threats, at the time primarily in Mali.[153] Operation Barkhane was launched in cooperation with five countries, collectively referred to as the "G5 Sahel": Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. One of the stated goals of the operation was the reconstruction of the Malian army.[154] However, not only did this reconstruction not happen, it became clear over

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[150] Raphaël Granvaud, "De L'armée Coloniale à L'armée Néocoloniale (1830 - 1990)," *Survie*, October 9, 2009: 25.
[151] Granvaud, "De L'armée Coloniale," 44.
[152] Granvaud, "De L'armée Coloniale," 44.
[153] Aurélie Vittot, "Le Dispositif Militaire Français En Afrique: Entre Héritage Colonial et Transformations," *Diplomatie*, no. 116 (2022): 47.
[154] First paragraph, "la reconstruction des forces armées maliennes," in "Opération Barkhane," Ministère des Armées, February 14, 2022, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/bande-sahelo-saharienne/operation-barkhane.

time that the French forces had different interests than the Malian government. Operation Barkhane was ultimately unsuccessful in stamping out terrorism in the Sahel, contrary to the current claims on the French government's website,[155] and insecurity in the region has only risen since 2014. Thus, the conflict in the Sahel is tightly wound up in France's refusal to leave its former colonies after independence.

As this conflict has spread into Burkina Faso and been supplemented by Burkinabè groups,[156] a quadrilateral tension between independent armed groups, the Burkinabè government, the Burkinabè military, and the French state has grown increasingly fraught. On January 25th, 2022, the democratically elected former President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was overthrown in a military coup led by officer Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. Eight months later, on September 30th, 2022, Damiba was deposed by yet another military coup led by officer Ibrahim Traoré, who is — as of the writing of this paper — the interim leader of the country.[157] These two coups are part of a much longer history of military coups in Burkina Faso, which in many ways have defined the country's political history since independence. They are a result of ongoing tensions between the military and the civil government which have been exacerbated by the security crisis; both Damiba and Traoré took power with the claim that their predecessors were not doing enough to combat insecurity.

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[155] First paragraph, "Aux côtés de ses partenaires, la France a empêché l'effondrement du Mali, contribué à la reconstruction des forces armées maliennes et favorisé le développement et la stabilisation du pays." ("Alongside its partners, France prevented the collapse of Mali, contributed to the reconstructed of Mali's armed forces, and promoted the development and stabilization of the country.") in "Opération Barkhane," Ministère des Armées, February 14, 2022, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/bande-sahelo-saharienne/operation-barkhane.

[156] "Nord du Burkina Faso: Ce Que Cache le Jihad," Rapport Afrique (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, October 12, 2017).

[157] Thiam Ndiaga and Anne Mimault, "Burkina Faso Soldiers Announce Overthrow of Military Government," *Reuters*, September 30, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-burkina-faso-capital-reuters-witnesses-2022-09-30/.

In late January of 2023, a spokesman for Traoré's administration declared that the Burkinabè government was no longer interested in continuing the defense accord with France that allows French troops to be in Burkina Faso.[158] This declaration followed the recent deterioration of the relationship between Mali's military government and France, which resulted in France's announcement in February of 2022 that it was withdrawing all of its troops from Mali.[159] This rejection of French military power is a pivotal historical moment, which calls into question a long history of intervention and control that justified a continuation of a neo-colonial, paternalistic, and condescending political relationship.

The French government, and many international and national news outlets have voiced concerns that this rejection of the French military opens a vacuum for Russian intervention in West Africa. There is some validity to these concerns, since Burkina Faso's weakened military still needs resources, and in the absence of French aid, may indeed turn to other powers. However, these concerns are rarely voiced in good faith, but are rather used to ignore the very colonial nature of France's continued interventions in West Africa, not to mention its absolute incompetence in resolving conflict in the region. A reckoning with this neo-colonial relationship is long overdue, and it makes sense that these centuries-old tensions have resurfaced as mounting security concerns put strain on every level of Burkinabè society.

Three Years of Crisis: The Gardens of Bolomakoté

When Susanne Freidberg conducted her fieldwork on market gardening in Bobo Dioulasso in the 1990s, she wrote, "[t]he sheer abundance of garden produce initially jars with

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[158] Morgane Le Cam, Cyril Bensimon, and Elise Vincent, "Le Burkina Faso officialise sa demande de rupture de la présence militaire française dans le pays," *Le Monde*, January 24, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/01/24/le-burkina-faso-officialise-sa-demande-de-rupture-de-la-presence-militaire-francaise-dans-le-pays_6159024_3212.html.

[159] "Last French Troops Leave Mali, Ending Nine-Year Deployment," *Aljazeera*, accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/16/last-french-troops-leave-mali-ending-nine-year-deployment.

the accounts of the men and women who grow and sell it, and who describe their livelihoods in terms of scarcity and decline."[160] This sense of decline still very much permeates the Gardens of Bolomakoté- Kuinima today, and since 2019, it has been punctuated by crisis.

The attempted eviction of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima in 2019 was the first in a series of crises which have left the gardeners in situations of escalating hardship. Most gardeners lost a year of profits and investment in 2019, and the following year, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe, and Burkina Faso temporarily shut down transit between its major cities, cutting off supply lines on which the gardeners rely to export their produce.[161] Two years later, Russia invaded Ukraine, and the international market was thrown into disarray, causing gas and wheat prices to skyrocket. For the gardeners of Bolomakoté and Kuinima, the worst price hike has been that of fertilizers, which more than doubled in cost as a result of a major shortage which hit Burkina Faso particularly hard.[162] Meanwhile, profits have hardly risen, if at all. In fact, most gardeners expressed that they were selling produce for even less than usual, because the military threat looming over the gardens has made vendors hesitant to buy from Bolomakoté-Kuinima, and inflation has dramatically lowered the buying power of Burkinabè consumers.

These are the terms upon which the gardeners told me about their lives. Lists of fertilizer costs and tomato prices dominated our conversations. In 2019, I spoke to Dramane Sanou in his home, and he pulled out piles of unpaid electricity bills and school fees he could no longer afford

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[160] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 26.

[161] Sam Mednick, "Coronavirus in Crisis-Hit Burkina Faso: Healthcare Centres Close as Cases Rise," *The New Humanitarian*, March 30, 2020, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/03/30/burkina-faso-coronavirus-crisis.

[162] Sophie Douce, "In Burkina Faso, 'everyone Is Very Worried' as Fertilizer Shortages Threaten Crops and Food Security," *Le Monde*, August 21, 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2022/08/21/in-burkina-faso-everyone-is-very-worried-as-fertilizer-shortages-threaten-crops-and-food-security_5994248_124.html.

after his garden was bulldozed on February 4th.[163] This sense of despair hovered in the air around Bolomakoté and Kuinima after the attempted eviction, and it has not yet dissipated. The gardeners are back to work, the military does not seem to plan another eviction right away, but the whole neighborhood is holding its breath.

The attempted eviction of the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima is a perfect example of how militarism can destabilize and harm those who it claims to protect. The decision to build a wall around the military camp was understandable considering the mounting violence and the anxieties that Burkina Faso's already overstrained military is now facing. Fortifying the Bobo Dioulasso military camp became metaphorically synonymous with fortifying the country; destroying the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima was a small sacrifice in the face of such a goal. This kind of equivalency has percolated into every level of government, as "security" is prioritized over everything else. But such rhetoric creates a blindness to socio-economic factors that in fact accelerate instability and can lead to devastating results. Madou Sanou, a gardener I interviewed in 2019, said it best, "In my view, security is for the people. If [the military] wants to place the people in insecurity in order to secure themselves, I can see that this is wrong."[164]

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are not merely implicated in the security crisis because of their proximity to and tension with Bobo Dioulasso's military camp; they are also heavily implicated in the vast social and economic ramifications of the crisis. Two and half million people have been displaced by the security crisis in Burkina Faso, and one and half

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[163] Dramane Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, February 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 23:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

[164] Madou Sanou, interview by Wittika Chaplet, January 2019, in *Uprooted: A Documentary for the Urban Gardens of Bobo Dioulasso*, directed by Wittika Chaplet, April 19, 2019, 7:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1Pl79NSqhM.

million of those are internally displaced.[165] Since the regions most affected by attacks are primarily in rural areas, the people who are displaced are mostly farmers whose livelihoods depend on access to land. In the wake of displacement, fields lay abandoned and entire towns lose their access to food. According to Dr. Ouédraogo, one in every seven Burkinabè citizens is food insecure.[166] In the conversations I heard in Bobo Dioulasso, rumors circulated that many displaced northerners were forced to eat tree leaves and bark after losing their homes and livelihoods. The northern regions of Burkina Faso have long been vulnerable to drought and environmental precarity, but the north is nevertheless an agricultural region, and the loss of this alimentary production is devastating. The security crisis is as much a story of access to food, housing, and water, as it is a story of armed groups and military campaigns.

An Agriculture of Crisis and Adaptation

While agricultural work among Madarè people may be as "traditional" work, this does not mean that it is not dynamic.[167] Doti Bruno Sanou argues for a reframing of tradition and custom as organizing forces with the potential to protect the environment, rather than symbols of "backwardness."[168] He describes tradition as "a process by which the past … continues to render itself present and active," thus emphasizing tradition as a dynamic force, not a static one.[169] Customs, Sanou goes on, are based in repetition but adapt to changing circumstances and global contexts, evolving to fit shifting needs, but always rooted in the traditions which give them

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[165] Boris Cheshirkov, "L'insécurité pousse davantage de Burkinabés à l'exil, aggravant les tensions dans la fragile région du Sahel," UNHCR, February 4, 2022, https://www.unhcr.org/fr-fr/news/briefing/2022/2/61fd670da/linsecurite-pousse-davantage-burkinabes-lexil-aggravant-tensions-fragile.html.
[166] Ra-Sablga Ouédraogo, "Conférence Publique: Finances Publique et Lutte Contre le Terrorisme," June 30, 2022 in the Salle de Conférence in the École Nationale des Regies Financieres.
[167] Freidberg. "Making a Living," 52.
[168] Doti Bruno Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales: Traditions et Coutumes en Afrique Noire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014), 26-28.
[169] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 27. (my translation)

meaning.[170] He criticizes the arrogance of what he calls "development specialists," who reduce indigenous knowledge to terms like "*savoirs locaux*" ("local knowledge"), as if it is unscientific. Sanou points out the irony of discarding indigenous traditions in favor of a path to modernity which is simply the actualization of the traditions born elsewhere. He argues that tradition and customs are not barriers to progress, rather, if understood and respected, they can be powerful tools for long term environmental protection, especially in places where the rule of law is weak.

Indeed, the history of farming in Burkina Faso is one of constant adaptation and dynamism. Michael Mortimore and William Adams point out that ever since the 1972-1974 Sahel Drought, misconceptions about drought, famine, and agricultural practices have portrayed a situation of despair for the region's ability to provide for itself, especially as climate change exacerbates already dire conditions.[171] However, the Sahel is a *disequilibrial* ecosystem, meaning that it is driven by rainfall variability, rather than regularity, and this requires a different economic rationale which understands these systems as "unstable but resilient."[172] Mortimore and Adams identify several shifts in the way that Sahelian farming has been understood in the scholarship. One major shift is a re-evaluation of "indigenous technology," which reveals that, far from being mired in unchanging practices, farmers in drylands tend to be "selective, experimental, and adaptive" in dealing with new technologies, "whatever the origin."[173]

This analysis corresponds quite well to the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima. Of course, Bobo Dioulasso is not actually in the Sahelian climate zone, and the region is in fact known for

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[170] Sanou, *Politiques Environnementales*, 29.
[171] Michael J. Mortimore and William M. Adams, "Farmer Adaptation, Change and 'Crisis' in the Sahel," *Global Environmental Change*, The African Sahel, 11, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 49.
[172] Mortimore and Adams, "Farmer Adaptation," 51. The concept of "unstable but resilient" ecosystems was first characterized by C.S. Holling, "Resilience and stability of ecological systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics,* 4 (1973) 1-23.
[173] Mortimore and Adams, "Farmer Adaptation," 51.

its relatively favorable agricultural climate; however, it is still reliant on variable rainfall, and fragile soil. The city borders the Sudano-Sahelian zone, which is gradually moving south-west towards Bobo Dioulasso as the Sahara grows in the wake of climate change and deforestation.[174] Even as the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima have allowed their neighborhoods to maintain a cultural life with strong historical roots, this reality does not mean that this culture is one mired in the past, nor that the gardeners are resistant to changing technology. On the contrary, many gardeners describe their lives in terms of changing and improving technology.

Ardjouma Sanou told me the history of the Gardens in relation to its adaptability to a changing environmental and technological landscape.[175] According to him, the Gardens first emerged on the banks of the river Houet, which at the time was much more plentiful. As the river dried up, the gardeners dug wells. Ardjouma described the difficult labor of pulling buckets of water up from the wells with a simple rope; back bent, over and over, every day. Around 1979, Ardjouma Sanou says that gardeners began installing pulley systems to ease the strain of this labor. He installed his pulley system in 1984, and this upgrade dramatically changed his life.[176] More recently, some gardeners have installed electric pumps, which has both been very beneficial but also very costly, since the cost of electricity to run the pumps is continuous.[177] These changes may seem rudimentary, but given that most of the gardeners' lives are dedicated to watering their crops, the impact of reductions in the length and effort of this labor is profound.[178] Susanne Freidberg discusses how increases in the labor of watering urban gardens

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[174] Florence De Longueville et al., "Long-Term Analysis of Rainfall and Temperature Data in Burkina Faso (1950–2013)," *International Journal of Climatology* 36, no. 13 (2016): 4395.
[175] Ardjouma Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou, and Abdoulaiye Sanou by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[176] Ardjouma Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou, and Abdoulaiye Sanou by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[177] Adama Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou, Abdoulaiye Sanou, and Ali Watara, by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[178] Most gardeners water their crops at least twice a day, usually more in the dry season. The process takes at least an hour, and requires filling, carrying, and emptying heavy watering cans over and over, even for those who have

in Sakaby and Dogona significantly changed the gardeners' relation to their work, and their ability to retain labor.[179]

Other technological changes in Bolomakoté and Kuinima include the incorporation of fertilizers and compost, as well as the use of natural pesticides like neem oil. A study conducted in 2019 that evaluated the sustainability of urban agriculture in Bobo Dioulasso raised important concerns about pesticide and fertilizer use, especially as it relates to sanitary concerns so close to densely populated areas.[180] Several gardeners expressed to me a willingness to try out organic techniques that might reduce their reliance on fertilizers and pesticides, but many who express interest are hesitant to try these strategies in times of precarity, or in the absence of financial support that might otherwise mitigate the risk of lower yields. A few gardeners have implemented moderate changes to reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers in favor of more agro-ecological methods. One advantage of such a dense yet varied collection of vegetable plots means that varying agro-ecological strategies can be employed by gardeners who feel like they have the leeway to experiment, and then if these strategies succeed, they can quickly spread to other gardeners.

Thus, the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are situated in a long history of adaptability to environmental and social crises. This resilience is not unique to Bolomakoté and Kuinima, as farmers across the country and the broader Sahelian region have built dynamic systems of adaptability in the face of an unpredictable climate and varying rainfall. Nevertheless, in the face of compounding crises, farmers need additional support to survive escalating hardship.

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electric pumps. For those who do not, buckets must be pulled from the wells repeatedly until a nearby basin is full enough to fill the watering cans.

[179] Susanne E. Freidberg, "Gardening on the Edge: The Social Conditions of Unsustainability on an African Urban Periphery," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 2 (June 2001): 361.

[180] Rayangnéwendé Adèle Ouédraogo et al., "Caractériser la diversité des exploitations maraîchères de la région de Bobo-Dioulasso au Burkina Faso pour faciliter leur transition agroécologique," *Cahiers Agricultures* 28 (2019): 20.

The Value of Work and the Contradictions of Place-making

In his discussion of urban gardens in Côte d'Ivoire, Alfred Babo argues that the sustainability of agriculture should be linked to the ability of farmers and merchants to adapt to the "changing social conditions in which they produce vegetables" over long periods of time.[181] This view is part of a larger trend in the scholarship around sustainable development to redefine social sustainability in terms of the ability of social institutions to survive stresses and shocks.[182] The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima have proven an impressive ability to survive shock throughout their multigenerational history, including the significant adaptation in the 1970s that I discussed in chapter one. However, it is clear that without any support, weathering intensifying and multiplying shocks becomes less and less feasible for many gardeners.

Babo's analysis of the resilient adaptability of peri-urban gardens in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire during the 2002 socio-political crisis provides some interesting parallels and differences with the case of Bolomakoté and Kuinima. Before the 2002 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, 57 percent of urban producers in Abidjan were immigrants, many of them from Burkina Faso.[183] As violence and unrest rose in the city, many families left, the vast majority immigrating back to Burkina Faso.[184] Overall, the population in Abidjan dropped by 24 percent in 2002.[185] Often, heads of household stayed behind as their wives and children fled to safety.[186] Even as the workforce dwindled, the producers left behind demonstrated remarkable adaptability and resilience.

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[181] Alfred Babo, "Sociopolitical Crisis and the Reconstruction of Sustainable Periurban Agriculture in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire," *African Studies Review* 53, no. 3 (2010): 106.
[182] Babo, "Sociopolitical Crisis," 107.
[183] Babo, 106.
[184] Babo, 108.
[185] Babo, 108.
[186] Babo, 109.

Mounting military presence and interference, a proliferation of checkpoints restricting movement and demanding bribes, and the precarity of several urban production sites all resulted in an increasingly difficult production landscape.[187] Many producers were forced to change sites, or shuttle between several different cultivations around the city to support themselves.[188] Producers found themselves unable to water their crops as regularly as needed or to sell them before they perished.[189] So they began cultivating crops that were less water-needy, and less perishable, like tomatoes, cabbage, and spices.[190] This shift opened a market for perishable vegetables that producers on the periphery, who faced less repression, expanded to fill.[191]

To support these changing dynamics, producers in some regions began working together in informal associations or cooperatives.[192] This cooperation attracted the attention and financial aid of international organizations. The NGO Frère de Bethlehem was created — with the financial support of the United Nations Development Program — in an effort to promote a strong group of producers, employment for young people, and give value to agricultural work.[193] The municipality of Bingerville also recognized the value of urban agriculture and offered 93 hectares for vegetable agriculture, providing jobs for young people, enhanced food security in the municipality, and beautifying the city with usable greenspace.[194] Not all production sites received this kind of support; more precarious zones were unable to form working coalitions and

[187] Babo, 110-113.
[188] Babo, "Sociopolitical Crisis," 109.
[189] Babo, 111.
[190] Babo, 111.
[191] Babo, 113.
[192] Babo, 113.
[193] Babo, 113.
[194] Babo, 114.

therefore could not attract outside investment.[195] Nevertheless, the incredible resilience of Abidjan's urban producers in the face of a violent socio-political conflict is remarkable.

Babo's analysis of resilience offers some hope for the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima, although there are some key differences between the two cities. The military presence in 2002 Abidjan was far higher than the current militarism emerging in Bobo Dioulasso, however the role of the military in expelling certain vegetable production sites in Abidjan parallels the situation in Bobo Dioulasso to a certain extent, as does the producers' refusal to abandon their cultivations. The rising precarity and insecurity also parallel each other, although immigration out of Bobo Dioulasso is not on the rise, in fact, refugees migrating *into* the city is the problem in Bobo Dioulasso. Another essential difference is the fact that the cultivators in Abidjan were primarily migrants, whereas the vast majority of cultivators in Bobo Dioulasso have lived in their same neighborhoods for generations. In Abidjan, producers were able to cultivate several plots, or abandon certain sites altogether when necessary.[196] In Bolomakoté and Kuinima, the gardeners are very clear; they will not abandon the land of their grandfathers. While this attachment may mean that the gardeners of Bolomakoté and Kuinima are slightly less flexible when it comes to adapting to crisis, it is also a strength. The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are more than just a source of income, they are embedded in the meaning of life in these neighborhoods, in the maintenance of crucial relationships which form support networks and intra-generational exchanges of knowledge.

The gardeners in Bobo Dioulasso also articulate the importance of the particular land they have inherited in terms of sanitation and quality of nutrition. The use of well water to irrigate is safer than the use of water straight from the polluted and dwindling gully that many

[195] Babo, 114.
[196] Babo, "Sociopolitical Crisis," 109.

other market-gardeners in Sakaby and Dogona, and gardens further from the city use to water their crops.[197] Many vendors buy specifically from the Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima for this reason; they trust the quality of the produce more. Unlike Sakaby and Dogona, the other major urban gardens of Bobo Dioulasso, which have shrunk and fractured in the past several years, the Gardens of Bolomakoté- Kuinima have continued to expand. Abdoulaiye Sanou explained to me that the cleaner well water helps the produce last longer. In his words, "without the gardens, we are dead; the vegetables no longer last, they are more expensive, they have diseases. In quality, there is also health."[198] A deeper scientific analysis of the well water quality and its impact on produce quality would be necessary to confirm this concern, but Abdoulaiye's eloquent point reveals that many gardeners have observed that their work is valuable and worthwhile, and that it is tied to one particular place.

These resilient systems of place-making, cultural life, economic autonomy, and nutritional quality are crucial services, especially in the face of crisis. Sacrificing them in the name of security can only lead to more problems, and it is indicative of a global trend towards blind militarization. Since 2001, the specter of "terrorism" has come to haunt nearly every echelon of political life, ushering in an era of mass surveillance and endless wars, with little consideration of social, economic, and environmental issues and alternative solutions. Robert Marzec describes what he calls the "ecosecurity imaginary,"[199] writing that the ecosystem "has now entered the national and global security imaginary… and its protection and development — its governance — has become a central military concern."[200] In the face of global ecological

[197] Freidberg, "Gardening on the Edge," 361.
[198] Abdoulaiye Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou and Ardjouma Sanou, by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.
[199] Robert P. Marzec, *Militarizing the Environment: Climate Change and the Security State*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 2.
[200] Marzec, *Militarizing the Environment*, 4.

disaster, the people and governments who monopolize global economic power have pulled out their guns, in order to maintain a status quo that floods their pockets with money, leaving the vulnerable to deal with the resulting rising tides.

In Marianne Kamp's introduction to *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, she writes, "I am not convinced that the Soviet experiment was unique, either as a fulfillment of the ideology of Communism or as a totalitarian empire; rather, the Soviet Union was one of numerous twentieth century experiments in ruthless modernization."[201] The concept of "ruthless modernization" is useful in understanding the way that contemporary axes of power justify the denial of peoples' autonomy, right to self-determination, and cultural fulfillment, in favor of quantifiable measurements of "development" and modernization,[202] by any means necessary.

In *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott explores the many catastrophic failures of centralized states that tried to repress the "chaos" of informal systems in favor of top-down, streamlined and orderly systems. In his words, formal order "is always to some degree parasitic on informal processes, which the formal scheme does not recognize, without which it could not exist, and which it alone cannot create or maintain."[203] Scott uses the ancient Greek word *mētis*, which describes the broad variety of "practical skills and acquired intelligence" necessary and most efficient in responding to a "constantly changing natural and human environment."[204] The militarization of adaptation to the environment, and to human conflict, dangerously erases the informal and ever-changing nature of human adaptability. As climate change becomes an increasingly ubiquitous part of our lives, our ability to adapt to escalating and converging crises

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[201] Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle, USA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 4.
[202] Think GDP, literacy rates, income per capita, etc.
[203] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 310.
[204] Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 313.

will not rely on sweeping modernization, or militarization. Rather, it will depend on our mētis, our ability to build, maintain, and promote the informal and adaptable systems which are integral to both our survival, and our *épanouissement* (fulfillment).

Conclusion

It is difficult not to obsess over what I would do if I had more time with this project, or if I had only read such and such book *before* I had interviewed such and such person. This paper does not even scratch the surface of the well of history these Gardens draw from. Instead, it provides a seed, in the hope that if it is watered, it may one day grow into a tree. The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are but one example of millions of communities whose dynamism, resilience, and innovation can redefine the way we understand quality of life, growth, and sustainability in a world of crisis. I recognize that my stake in this research is perhaps more transparent than is customary in historical writing. I want to find hope in the Gardens. Partly because my parents live in Bolomakoté, and partly because in lending me their stories, I feel the gardeners have implicated me in their lives. This undoubtedly skews the way I have chosen to explore this history. My hope is that I have nevertheless ignited a curiosity in my readers about the groups of people whose ingenuity too often goes ignored when we construct narratives of the past, or discuss metaphors for the future.

The Senegalese academic Felwine Sarr writes that the very people who are most concerned with development in Africa "were not invited to the collective dream."[205] This paper is an attempt to expand that collective dream, and include in it the immense creativity, resilience, and dynamic adaptability of urban gardeners, who are a part of Burkina Faso's overwhelming majority of agricultural workers.[206] The solutions to the climate crisis, global food insecurity, and global displacement will not be found in American think tanks or in the offices of tech giants; they are already growing from seeds that have adapted to the crises of several generations. The

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[205] Felwine Sarr, *Afrotopia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), x.

[206] Eighty percent of Burkinabè citizens work in agriculture, according to USAID. "Agriculture and Food Security: Burkina Faso: U.S. Agency for International Development," March 3, 2022. https://www.usaid.gov/burkina-faso/agriculture-and-food-security.

Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are not a perfect dream; they are rife with precarity, scarcity, inequality, and struggle. But it is perhaps this very fact which lends them their import. As Sarr writes, "founding utopia is not at all a question of simply giving oneself over to sugar-coated reveries, but a matter of thinking spaces of the real to bring them into existence by way of both thought and action; it is about recognizing the signs and seeds of the present in order to better nourish them."[207]

The Gardens of Bolomakoté-Kuinima are seeds of both the present and the past, and they need to be nourished, rather than trampled. Abdoulaiye Sanou told me that I should address this paper to the government, that they "need to see Bolomakoté-Kuinima, and understand."[208] He was responding to my question regarding his hopes for the future, which he articulated around the ability to continue gardening, and a plea for help and support, such as subsidies for resources like fertilizers. I am not sure if I will be able to reach the people Abdoulaiye Sanou asked me to influence. Nevertheless, I hope that I have opened a window through which we all may see Bolomakoté and Kuinima a little more clearly, and understand that these neighborhoods are more than a pit stop to imported development projects. Rather, they are a path to a future which is rooted in the complex realities of Burkina Faso's history. The gardeners' collective dream is not a naive one; it is a dream rooted in resilience and struggle, but it is tirelessly dedicated to creating and recreating lives worth living, autonomously from the disruptive forces which have tried and will continue to try to wrestle the future away from those who will inherit it.

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[207] Sarr, *Afrotopia*, xiv.

[208] Abdoulaiye Sanou, group interview with Karim Sanou and Ardjouma Sanou, by Wittika Chaplet, June 2022.

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