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3

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# ‘Nothing will be as before!’

Anthropological perspectives on political practice  
and democratic culture in ‘a new Burkina Faso’

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

**ADF/RDA:** Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Fédération/Rassemblement Démocratique Africain  
**AEVF:** Association des Etudiants Voltaïques en France  
**ANEB:** Association Nationale des Etudiants Burkinabè  
**APDC:** Association pour la Promotion de la Démocratie et de la participation Citoyenne  
**CDEC:** Collectif Devenons Citoyens  
**CAR:** Collectif Anti Référendum, devenu Citoyens Africains pour la Renaissance  
**CCRP:** Conseil Consultatif sur les Réformes Politiques  
**CCVC:** Coalition Contre la Vie Chère, devenue Coalition nationale de lutte Contre la Vie Chère, la corruption, la fraude, l'impunité et pour les libertés  
**CDP:** Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès  
**CDR:** Comité de Défense de la Révolution  
**CENI:** Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante  
**CGCT:** Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales  
**CGD:** Centre pour la Gouvernance Démocratique  
**CGT-B:** Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina  
**CMRPN:** Comité Militaire de Redressement pour le Progrès National  
**CNR:** Conseil National de la Révolution.  
**CNRST:** Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique  
**CNT:** Conseil National de la Transition  
**CNTB:** Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Burkina  
**CODEL:** Convention des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation Domestique des Elections  
**CODER:** Coalition pour la Démocratie et la Réconciliation Nationale  
**COFEDEC:** Coalition des Femmes pour la Défense de la Constitution  
**CODMPP:** Collectif des Organisations Démocratiques de Masse et des Partis Politiques  
**CRS:** Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité  
**CSB:** Confédération Syndicale Burkinabè  
**CSV:** Confédération Syndicale Voltaïque  
**ECOWAS:** Economic Community of West African States  
**FEDAP/BC:** Fédération Associative pour la Paix et le progrès avec Blaise Compaoré  
**FO/UNSL:** Force Ouvrière/Union Nationale des Syndicats Libres  
**FOCAL:** Forum des Citoyens pour l'Alternance  
**FRC:** Front de Résistance Citoyenne  
**F-SYNTER:** Fédération des Syndicats des Travailleurs de l'Education et de la Recherche  
**HCRUN:** Haut Conseil pour la Réconciliation et l'Unité Nationale

**LIDEJEL:** Ligue pour la Défense de la Liberté et de la Justice  
**LIPAD/PAI:** Ligue Patriotique Africaine pour le Développement/Parti Africain de l'Indépendance  
**MBDHP:** Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples  
**MDA:** Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Afrique  
**MNL:** Mouvement National de Libération  
**MPP:** Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès  
**NAFA:** Nouvelle Alliance du Faso  
**NTD:** Nouveau Temps pour la Démocratie  
**OCI:** Organisation de la Coopération Islamique  
**ODJ:** Organisation Démocratique de la Jeunesse  
**ODP/MT:** Organisation pour la Démocratie Populaire/Mouvement du Travail  
**ODT:** Organisation pour la Démocratie et le Travail,  
**ONSL:** Organisation Nationale des Syndicats Libres  
**PCRv:** Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Voltaïque  
**PDC:** Parti pour le Développement et le Changement  
**PDS/Metba:** Parti pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme/Parti des Bâtisseurs  
**PNDES:** Plan National du Développement Économique et Social  
**PPRD:** Parti Pour le Rassemblement et la Démocratie  
**PTF:** Partenaire Technique et Financier  
**RADDHO:** Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme  
**RDS:** Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme  
**REN-LAC:** Réseau National de Lutte Anti-Corruption  
**RSP:** Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle  
**SCADD:** Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et de Développement Durable  
**SNEAHV:** Syndicat National des Enseignants Africains de Haute-Volta  
**SONABEL:** Société Nationale Burkinabè d'Electricité  
**SUVESS:** Syndicat Unique Voltaïque des Enseignants du Secondaire et du Supérieur  
**UAS:** Unité d'Action Syndicale  
**UBN:** Union pour un Burkina Nouveau  
**UÉMOA:** Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine  
**UGEB:** Union Générale des Etudiants Burkinabè  
**UNIR/PS:** Union Pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste  
**UPC:** Union pour le Progrès et le Changement  
**USTB:** Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Burkina

# Preface

This study is the result of collective fieldwork and joint analysis on recent social and political transformations in Burkina Faso. It aims to reflect upon a country undergoing profound change. Over the last few years Burkina Faso is seeking to break with its authoritarian past, at the same time as political continuities prevail. The democratically elected president in November 2015, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, was one of the architects of the regime of President Blaise Compaoré that was ousted from power in October 2014. The current ruling party, the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès, is, according to many Burkinabe, merely the carbon copy of former ruling party, the Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès. The least one can say is that in Burkina Faso rupture is operated with a certain continuity!

The study is a synthesis of our research on socio-political transformations in Burkina Faso 2014–2016. Our point of departure is that the democratic gains of the last few years cannot be consolidated if they are not appropriated from below and translated into political and socio-economic practices that contribute to positive change for citizens on a daily basis. In addition to fieldwork and bibliographic research, several workshops have been organized in order to validate the research findings.

The research on which this study is based was funded by Swedish Research Council and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Additional support was provided by the Embassy of Sweden in Ouagadougou, notably the organisation of the workshops in Léo in August 2016, and in Ouagadougou in December 2016. During the Ouagadougou workshop we received very important comments and substantial contributions for which we are deeply grateful. Moreover, the publication of the original French version led to a great interest and a public launching in Ouagadougou in October 2017.

The publication of this English version is an attempt to overcome the linguistic boundary between Francophone and Anglophone countries and scholarly traditions. We would like to make this grounded analysis of Burkinabe social and political transformations available to non-French readers. The translation from French into English was skillfully done by Elise Trogrlic.

We acknowledge the support from all the institutions that have funded this study. Our host institutions have also contributed substantially. For the completion of the study we are nevertheless particularly grateful to the following individuals (in alphabetical order): Mats Hårsmar, Firmin Nana, Aboudoulaye Sanou, Mahamdé Sawadogo, Jocelyn Vokouma and Victor Windinga.



# Chapter 1. Introduction

This study attempts to sum up our long-term anthropological research carried out in Burkina Faso, particularly ethnographic fieldwork investigating the country's social and political transformations in the last few years.<sup>1</sup> The study is based on the findings of a number of research projects examining political practices in Burkinabe municipalities. As a starting point, our research was interested in looking at the municipality as both a new local arena and an entryway to better understanding Burkina Faso's political life, political practices and, by extension, democratic culture. In order to identify where and how local political divisions are articulated, political parties, local associations, public services, and traditional chieftaincies were put into focus. The study initially aimed at examining politics from the perspective of municipalities in order to bring out, in a more concrete and tangible manner, the various spheres of socio-political opposition. Given that Burkina Faso was ruled by a regime that has been characterised as 'semi-authoritarian' (Ottaway 2003; Hilgers and Mazzocchi 2010), 'hybrid' (Diamond 2002; Morlino 2008), 'democrature' (Kolesnoro 2016) or 'démocratie à double façade' ['two-faced democracy'] (Hagberg 2010), we analysed the spheres of opposition and local political dynamics that could constitute the seeds of genuine democratic change.

Yet after the popular insurrection that led to Blaise Compaoré's fall from power in late October 2014, our research began to focus more on the dramatic socio-political transformations that Burkina Faso was going through. It no longer made sense to focus only on municipalities or on the 'local' when the entire country was boiling over. Furthermore, because municipal and regional councils were dissolved by presidential decree on 18 November 2014, the study of municipal politics was dramatically changed.<sup>2</sup> To bring in these social and political changes, our initial research questions had to be reformulated while remaining focussed on an approach 'from below', based on the perspectives of 'ordinary' citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> This involved collaborative research between the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology at Uppsala University in Sweden, and the Institut des Sciences des Sociétés (INSS) at the National Centre for Scientific and Technological Research (CNRST) in Burkina Faso.

<sup>2</sup> The military transition led by Lieutenant-colonel Isaac Yacouba Zida, who took over the functions of head of state from 1 to 18 November 2014, decided to dissolve the democratically elected municipal and regional councils and to replace them with special delegations led by prefects for municipalities and governors for regions.

Changing the research questions also brought about a change in the very research object. Starting off with a study based on the municipality and local socio-political opposition, we ended up interrogating notions of the nation, the state, and the Burkinabe people, and, in extension, even of Burkina Faso as a political and moral community. Hence, we deemed it necessary to focus more on the future prospects of the country following the 2014 popular insurrection, this October revolution *à la sauce burkinabè* (Hagberg et al. 2015). We therefore undertook fieldwork to understand how ordinary Burkinabe experienced these historic moments. It is nonetheless important to emphasise that, because the members of our research team remained permanently in touch with the field, our study preceded the outbreak of the popular insurrection in late October 2014.

This new orientation in our research was based on five different axes. The first concern was keeping up with Burkinabe public debate in order to analyse the events taking place during this historic period. The second axis concerned the collection and analysis of ‘narratives of the revolution’ in order to understand the views and experiences of the actors, particularly ordinary citizens, who had participated in the uprising in one way or another. The third axis focused on ‘popular narratives of the resistance’, especially narratives by citizens of how they experienced and perceived the coup d’état carried out by the Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP). The fourth axis, concerning the presidential and legislative elections in November 2015, involved an ethnographic analysis of electoral campaigns. The final axis, focussed on the May 2016 municipal elections, used a similar approach in order to complete the fieldwork on socio-political transformations and to study the return to normality.

The events at the heart of our research are a ‘concentrate’ of issues arising from democratization and development in Burkina Faso. By extension, the rich empirical corpus on which this research is based helps us to shed light on actions to be undertaken in the context of Sweden’s new development cooperation strategy in Burkina Faso.

## Objectives and methodology

The overall objective of this study is to synthesise our research on socio-political transformations in Burkina Faso from 2014 to 2016, with a focus on issues linked to democratic consolidation. Our point of departure is that the democratic gains of the past few years cannot be consolidated unless they are appropriated ‘from below’ in the daily political and socio-economic practices of ‘ordinary citizens’. Beyond these daily practices, political culture is also relevant – that is, the ways in which politics is practised and how political actors understand and interpret these practices (Hagberg 2009; Hagberg et al. 2018; see also Diamond 1993). More specifically, this study has three major aims: first, to review studies and analyses undertaken on the major socio-political events in Burkina Faso between 2014 and 2016; second, to synthesise our ethnographic material on

Burkinabe socio-political transformations; and third, to identify further lines of research and questions to explore relevant to the implementation of Sweden's development cooperation strategy in Burkina Faso.

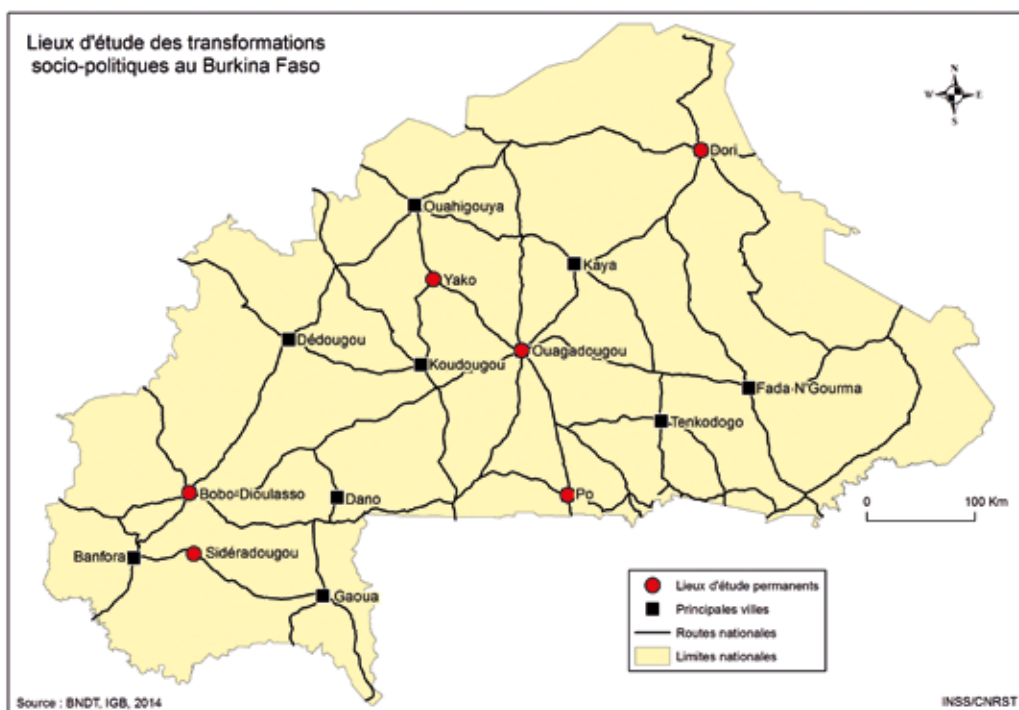
Beyond anthropological fieldwork, the study's methodology consisted of documentary research and a collective synthesis of our work. The major lines of the present study were discussed and written up at a workshop in Léo from 21 to 28 August 2016. This was one of the many ways in which our fieldwork was validated. A preliminary version of the present study was presented at a seminar in Ouagadougou on 14 December 2016.<sup>3</sup> The authors of this present study, a mix of anthropologists and sociologists with a solid experience of qualitative ethnographic research, undertook the fieldwork upon which the study is based. Sten Hagberg, Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Uppsala University, led the team with Ludovic Kibora, Senior Researcher (*Maître de recherche*) in Socio-anthropology at INSS/CNRST. Other team-members were: Sidi Barry, head of the department promoting good governance at the Ministry of the Civil Service and State Reform, holder of a master's degree in political science and a bachelor's degree in sociology, and affiliated with INSS/CNRST; Siaka Gnessi, research engineer at INSS/CNRST and doctoral candidate in anthropology at the Université de Franche-Comté in Besançon; and Adjara Konkobo, doctoral candidate in social sciences at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales at Marseilles and affiliated with INSS/CNRST.<sup>4</sup>

Our main concern was to represent the viewpoints of our interlocutors, who did not have access to the media and were not particularly influential or active on social media. Their narratives of these moments of intense socio-political transformation are genuine sources of reflection and knowledge. For example, there is the grandmother who stood by her doorstep on the side of the road to give fresh water to protestors during the October 2014 popular insurrection or the elderly from the neighbourhood who gave advice on how to rapidly construct barricades to prevent the movement of RSP soldiers undertaking a coup d'état in September 2015. These stories deserve special attention because they come from actors who were far from the negotiations with the international community or debates between political parties which took place at the five-star Hotel Laïco in the luxury district of Ouaga 2000. The main contribution of this study is the emphasis on representing the perspectives of ordinary Burkinabe citizens on the country's socio-political transformations since 2014.

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<sup>3</sup> The Embassy of Sweden in Ouagadougou financed the workshop in Léo and the seminar in Ouagadougou. Research conducted over the years were financed by our respective institutions as well as two research projects funded by the Swedish Research Council, *Expanding Spheres of Opposition?: Democratic Culture and Local Development in West African municipalities* (Swedish Research Council, Sida UFORSK) and *Party cultures, grassroots mobilizations and local development* (Swedish Research Council/Sida Swedish Research Links).

<sup>4</sup> On top the authors, Firmin Nana, *ingénieur de recherche* at INSS/CNRST, also took part in fieldwork on the coup d'état, and on the presidential and legislative elections.



*Burkina Faso, with the permanent sites of study indicated in red. Institut des Sciences des Sociétés du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique.*

## Conceptual remarks

Before getting to the heart of the matter, some conceptual remarks on democracy and democratic consolidation are necessary. The literature on democratisation in political science often looks at how non-democratic regimes transition to democracy. In the African context, democratic transitions have been studied since the 1990s (see Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Morlino 2001, 2008; Ottaway 2003; van de Walle 2004). But since these transitions have not always given rise to durable democratic regimes, the scholarly literature has developed terms to describe semi-authoritarian or hybrid regimes.

Democratic consolidation remains a pressing issue today. It denotes the process by which democratic structures and norms are established; it also refers to the relationship between the political regime and civil society (Morlino 2001). In this way, democratic consolidation refers to democratic culture, that is, the ways in which democracy is practiced and the values that actors attribute to democracy (Hagberg et al. 2018; Diamond 2002).

Our understanding of the concept of democracy is resolutely empirical and anthropological. Instead of seeing democracy as a normative ideal, we are seeking to understand the concrete practices of democracy and everyday discourse on the subject. In this vein, democracy is practised, constructed, claimed and

negotiated; at the same time, it is also a game of pretence, mimicry and illusion. This method requires a close study of the vernacularisation of democracy, because 'at the moment democracy enters a particular historical and socio-cultural setting it becomes vernacularized, and through vernacularization it produces new social relations and values which in turn shape political rhetoric and political culture' (Michelutti 2007:641). In semi-authoritarian or hybrid regimes like Burkina Faso under Blaise Compaoré (Hilgers and Mazzocchi 2010), it is useful to distinguish between the form and content of democracy, or even between 'formal democracy' and 'substantive democracy' (Rudebeck 2009). For example, while freedom of expression was guaranteed by the law and certain practices, the 'subservient judicial system' failed to shine light on the assassination of journalist Norbert Zongo and other violent crimes that looked very much like political assassinations (Hagberg 2002; Frère 2010; Fofana 2016). In the same way, although elections were regularly held, they were systematically won by the ruling party CDP. Burkina Faso under Compaoré was a 'démocratie à double façade' ['two-faced democracy'] construed out of exterior façades and illusory appearances (Hagberg 2010). Nevertheless, with the transformations brought about since the October 2014 popular insurrection, there is a potential for change. Citizens have an overriding desire for a genuine democracy, 'a new Burkina Faso' where 'nothing will be as before'.

This is why the representations and practices of ordinary citizens, who are not political analysts or well-known actors from the political scene, should be carefully recorded and analysed. Firstly, we have tried to understand practices and discourses expressed 'in the name of democracy', that is, thinking about how socio-political actors set out to work in a formal democratic system. Secondly, we have attempted to understand the substance of democracy, that is, its actual content, like the smooth running of public services, investment in infrastructure, and job creation. Thirdly, we have analysed all these practices, discourses, expectations and aspirations to identify the elements of an emergent democratic culture in Burkina Faso.

Another remark is necessary concerning our approach of democratic practices and discourses that are 'popular' or 'from below'. Research interested in the 'people', in 'popular' struggles or the point of view of 'ordinary' citizens runs the risk of falling into the trap of populism, that is, 'a certain kind of fascination (ideological, moral, scientific, political) that structures, symbolically at least, the relationship between intellectuals and "the people"' (Olivier de Sardan 2008:213). In Burkina Faso, references made to the 'people' and 'popular' struggles are inscribed within both new and old discourses: the popular uprising in 1966 and the Democratic and Popular Revolution from 1983 to 1987 are exemplary references in Burkinabe political culture. But the notion of the 'people' can also become an object of manipulation and demagoguery. In this study, we stand apart from an ideological populism which sees the point of view of our interlocutors as 'the voice of the people'. Our research, in contrast, takes up a methodological populism, because we believe, following Jean-Pierre Olivier

de Sardan, that the representations and practices of average citizens (the poor or the oppressed) deserve ‘the greatest attention from the part of the social sciences’ (2008:246). Besides, these citizens often express, with seemingly simple words and reasoning, ideas worthy of informed political analysts. Even if our approach remains firmly anthropological, our research is also inspired by political science studies of ‘politics from below’ (Bayart et al. 2008). For us, the most important thing is to provide an anthropological perspective on politics through an analysis of phenomena based on the local, where a majority of citizens live through and perceive everyday political practices (Hagberg 2009; Paley 2008; Olivier de Sardan 2015). The notion of ‘ordinary’ also deserves to be mentioned, because, as Clarke notes, referring to ordinary citizens can constitute a tool of depoliticisation: ‘Ordinary people are seen as a counterweight to the dangers and the “dirtiness” of politics’ (quoted in Carrel and Neveu 2014:23). To use the terms found in a recent anthropological study on the practices of citizens, our study of ‘ordinary citizens’ is concerned with ‘on the one hand normative and legal forms of citizenship and, on the other, the practices deployed in different spaces’ (Carrel et Neveu 2014:23–24).

## Limitations

As stated above, this research takes up a methodological populism in the sense that our fieldwork is based on a perspective ‘from below’, on the ‘people’ and with ‘ordinary citizens’, without resorting to a form of ideological populism which claims to represent ‘the voice of the people’. Our interlocutors included small vendors, workers, students, peasants, and the jobless, as well as election candidates, party activists, and members of civil society organisations. The salient features of this study are a solid empirical basis, regular follow-up of actors, and engagement in the field in the midst of political action. But this methodological approach also has a few limitations.

Firstly, popular narratives of the revolution and the resistance are often reflections of national and international political discourse in the media, broadcast by national and international press agencies, local radio stations or on social media. Thus in a context in which people are searching for information, lived experience is coloured by these mediators. To counteract this methodological problem, we have attempted to contextualise these narratives by open questions to interlocutors in well-known field sites during informal interviews.

Secondly, our aim is not to analyse all of the challenges faced by ‘a new Burkina Faso’, as it were, but rather to remain firmly attached to our empirical basis. Two general tendencies can be distinguished in texts published so far on the 2014 popular insurrection. A host of books and other texts on the fall from power of Blaise Compaoré were produced locally, often written by Burkinabe academics or journalists who were not necessarily specialists in the subject and whose work rested on a rather vague empirical basis (Kaboré 2016; Sanon 2015; Sandwidi n.d.; Banténga 2016; Siguiré 2015 and 2016; Tougouma 2016, etc.).



*“The end of the dictatorship”, Place de la révolution. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

There is also an international scholarly commentary often written quickly after the events (Chouli 2015; Engels 2015a; Frère and Englebert 2015; Hagberg 2015; Hagberg et al. 2015) and, of course, blogs and media articles written during the crisis.<sup>5</sup> Our study is based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken long before, as well as during the main events from 2014 to 2016.

Thirdly, with so many recent transformations and such a large number of pending cases in the political-judicial arena, it is not possible to fully study all of the aspects of our research subject. At times we are required to direct the reader not only to other studies but also to research that will be published in the future. This study should thus be thought of as an analysis stemming from existing data which aims to identify the activities to undertake in order to consolidate democracy.

## Organisation of the study

After this first chapter which sets out the context and motivation for the study, the second chapter is a chronicle, based upon our research, of two tumultuous years. The third chapter systematically analyses how different social categories

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<sup>5</sup> Sten Hagberg published numerous texts in the mass media and on blogs during moments of crisis and political upheaval.

responded to the crisis. The fourth chapter looks at the statements and interventions of actors from the international community who wanted elections to be held at all cost. The fifth chapter deepens the analysis of the Burkinabe state in all its contradictions. In chapter six we shift perspective and temporality as the popular struggle and political governance are described in a more expansive time-frame after independence. Further lines for research are presented in chapter seven, followed by the eight chapter in which we draw the conclusions of this study.

## Chapter 2. Two tumultuous years: chronicle of an anthropological study

In October–November 2014, Burkina Faso was at the heart of a popular uprising, a revolt or even an ‘October revolution *à la sauce burkinabè*’, which is today commonly called the ‘insurrection populaire’. The trigger to the insurrection was an attempt to change Article 37 of the Constitution, which, in practice, would have allowed Blaise Compaoré to remain president for life.<sup>6</sup> During protests held on 27, 28, and 29 October, the political opposition and civil society mobilised against the attempted change with signs reading ‘Go away, Blaise’ or ‘Blaise = Burkina’s Ebola’. On 30 October protestors stormed and then set fire to the National Assembly, setting off the insurrection. The next day, Compaoré resigned from office after twenty-seven years in power. This chapter chronicles two tumultuous years in Burkina Faso’s recent history in order to analyse how events were seen and experienced by ordinary Burkinabe citizens.

### The country before the popular insurrection

The 2014 popular insurrection has to be placed in the larger context of Burkinabe political history. It is in line with the uprising against President Maurice Yaméogo on 3 January 1966, followed by the Democratic and Popular Revolution led by President Thomas Sankara (1983–1987), the movements against unresolved legal cases following the assassination of journalist Norbert Zongo, and then the 2011 army mutinies (Hagberg et al. 2015). After the coup d’état on 15 October 1987 and the coming to power of the Popular Front (*Front populaire*), in 1990 Compaoré started a process of democratisation to end the long period of the state of emergency in Burkina Faso (Otayek et al. 1996). Compaoré was re-elected president in 1991, 1998, 2005, and 2010 – always receiving an overwhelming majority in the first round. The ruling party was described as *tuk guili* (‘that which wins everything’ in Mooré). Following the constitutional changes of 1997 and 2001, Compaoré was presented as ‘a new candidate’ in 2005 (Hilgers and Mazzocchi 2006). According to the provisions of the law, he was thus able to run for a new term, renewable one time. In 2010 he obtained more than

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<sup>6</sup> The proposed modification of Article 37 would have allowed Compaoré a new five years term, given that the president would be re-eligible two times. Despite the fact that, according to this modification, he would not have been allowed to run for the 2020 elections, most observers saw this as a move towards life presidency.



*The CDP won the 2012 elections and obtained 70 MPs in the National Assembly, including Banfora's strong men Léoncé Koné and Alain Edouard Traoré. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

80% of votes in the first round (although turnout was low). In various legislative elections, the Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (CDP), the ruling party stemming from the Organisation pour la Démocratie Populaire/Mouvement du Travail (ODP/MT) since 1996, always had high support as well. In the 2012 legislative elections, the CDP obtained 70 of the 127 seats in the National Assembly; Zéphirin Diabré's Union pour le Progrès et le Changement (UPC) obtained 19 seats and thus became leader of the political opposition, Chef de File de l'Opposition Politique (CFOP).<sup>7</sup>

In 2013, the UPC led the protests against the creation of a Senate, which it considered a means to modify Article 37 and thus maintain Compaoré in power.<sup>8</sup> With one-third of the Senators named directly by the President, the Senate

<sup>7</sup> The institution of the Chef de File de l'Opposition Politique was created by the National Assembly on 23 September 2009. The first CFOP was Bénéwendé Sankara (UNIR/PS).

<sup>8</sup> The National Assembly voted in the law for the creation of the Senate on 21 May 2013. The Senate was required, by law, to have 89 members, divided in the following manner: 29 members to be nominated by the president of Burkina Faso; 39 members for the territorial collectivities, with three Senators per region; 5 members for the Burkinabe diaspora; and 4 members for other categories (customary and traditional authorities, religious authorities, labour-union organisations, and organisations recognised by Burkinabe employers). Everything was geared to make it easy for the Head of State to modify the Constitution; article 15, paragraph 1, states that 'the Parliament is convened by the orders of the President of Burkina Faso in order to adopt the project of constitutional amendment without a referendum' (Lefaso.net, 21 May 2013).

would have opened the door for a presidency for life. There were also fears that the Senate might lead to a clan-based presidency: in the case of a temporary power vacuum, control of state functions would lie in the hands of the president of the Senate, and the person foreseen as the future president of the Senate was François Compaoré, the president's younger brother and a strong man of the regime. Therefore, the political opposition and civil society took to the streets, and protests were held in the country's major cities. They soon received support from the Catholic Church. In their Pastoral Letter of 15 July 2013, the Bishops of the Catholic Church spoke of the 'inadvisability of creating the Senate' (Kolesnare 2016:21). Faced with such opposition, Blaise Compaoré decided to suspend the creation of a Senate, holding off for a later date (Lefaso.net, 12 August 2013). As this set-up did not work, he would have to find another way to remain in power.

Yet after months of rumours and speculations, the real architects of Compaoré's power – Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, Salif Diallo and Simon Compaoré – resigned from the ruling party in January 2014, and many other CDP leaders followed. They created a new party, the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès (MPP). During the same period, it also became noticeable that civil society had been injected with young blood. Balai Citoyen, an association founded in 2013, played a central role alongside the Front de Résistance Citoyenne, the Collectif Anti-Référendum, the movement Ça suffit!, and other youth and women's movements. They were all very active on social media, with live updates on Facebook and Twitter. Confronted with such a broad protest movement, the CDP and its allies, like the Fédération Associative pour la Paix et le Progrès avec Blaise Compaoré (FEDAP/BC) and the parties close to the president, gathered into a Republican Front that aimed to modify the Constitution through a referendum.

On 21 October 2014, an extraordinary cabinet meeting decided to introduce a draft law into the National Assembly (Lefaso.net, 21 October 2014). In the spirit of Article 161 of the Constitution, the decision was taken to modify Article 37 by a vote of MPs or via a referendum if three-quarters of the votes were not attained. The presidential camp counted 81 MPs in favour of the change, but with the support of the 18 representatives from the Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Fédération/Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (ADF/RDA), the game would be changed. Civil society organisations spoke of a 'constitutional coup d'état' and called for 'civil disobedience'. There was a massive mobilisation in Ouagadougou. After the cabinet's decision on 21 October 2014 to go to the National Assembly with a 'rogue bill', the streets of Burkina Faso's capital were barricaded by members of civil society organisations and youths with no known political ties.

On 27 October the Collectif des Femmes pour la Défense de la Constitution (COFEDEC) organised a protest march against the constitutional change. To kick off the week of civil disobedience that the political opposition and civil society movements clamoured for, women went out onto the streets with spatulas

and broomsticks in their raised hands. This protest, which the mayor of Ouagadougou, Casimir Ilboudo, declared illegal, opened the final phase of the protests three days before the vote in the National Assembly. A record-high turnout for protests occurred the next day, on 28 October, as many individuals believed that protesting that day was a way to fulfil their duties as citizens. Hundreds of thousands of individuals went out into the streets to protest; certain observers even spoke of a million protestors. Zéphirin Diabré, the leader of the political opposition, declared: ‘Maintenant, ça passe ou ça casse!’ [‘Now, it’s make or break!’] (Hagberg et al. 2015). On 29 October, a number of associations and labour unions grouped together in the Coalition contre la vie chère (CCVC) expressed their disapproval at the change in Article 37. For the first time, political parties, civil society organisations, and labour unions were all united against Compaoré’s power. On the side of the ruling power, measures were taken to ensure that the law would be voted in. All the representatives from the majority, for instance, were put up in the Azalaï Hôtel Indépendance, located in an alley off the left entrance of the National Assembly.<sup>9</sup> But all of these strategies could not stop the insurgents from attaining their goal.

## The popular insurrection and the early days of the transition

On 30 October 2014, protesters took over the National Assembly, breaking through an impressive number of policemen, gendarmes and presidential security guards. Security barriers on all of the major streets had been erected anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 metres away from the building. At around 9:20 a.m., the crowd was at the doors of the National Assembly. Although the government quickly declared that it would withdraw the proposed law, it was too late. Just as quickly, a press release declared that the government was dissolved by President Compaoré. At that moment it became clear that the protests had gone beyond expectations (Hagberg et al. 2015). Protestors made their way to the studios of the national television station, which was vandalised, and then towards the Kosyam presidential palace in Ouaga 2000. There, security forces killed two protestors before negotiations between the two sides began. With the protest against the bill threatening to turn into a revolution, three representatives from the protestors met Compaoré. That very night, Compaoré made an appeal for calm and dialogue and promised to step down at the end of his presidential term.

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<sup>9</sup> Beyond direct testimonies and writings on these historic moments for Burkina Faso, there is also the film *Une révolution africaine: les dix jours qui ont fait chuter Blaise Compaoré* [An African Revolution: The Ten Days that Led to Blaise Compaoré’s Fall], by the Collectif Ciné Droit Libre TV, by directors Boubacar Sangaré and Gidéon Vink, and producer Abdoulaye Diallo.



*After the storm: The National Assembly vandalised and set on fire. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*



*The parking lot of the National Assembly. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*



*The MP roster trampled upon.  
Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

The next day protestors gathered on the Place de la Nation, henceforth re-named 'Place de la Révolution'.<sup>10</sup> Many people huddled together in front of the Chief of Defence Staff's headquarters (*État-Major des Armées*) a few metres away, while some bolder protestors were already making their way to the presidential palace to 'remove Blaise Compaoré' and 'free Kosyam', as the chanted slogans had it. The mass of protestors issued an ultimatum: 'at 12 noon, Blaise Compaoré must resign!' At that point, the political parties did not seem to have a common or an agreed-upon strategy in taking power. In the headquarters of the Chief of Defence Staff, there were negotiations between higher military officers and civil society leaders. Then Blaise Compaoré's resignation was announced on the radio. He had fled to Côte d'Ivoire with the help of French military units.

Lieutenant-colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, then second-in-command of the RSP, took power on the night of 31 October, declaring that he would take over the responsibilities of head of state. With this declaration he suspended the constitution and announced that a consensual transition committee would be set

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<sup>10</sup> This square in downtown Ouagadougou, the former site of the city's central market and facing a military base, was called *Place de l'Armée* and then *Place de la Nation* until the Sankarist revolution, when it was renamed *Place de la Révolution*. Under Compaoré this square was renamed *Place de la Nation*. At the time Ouagadougou's mayor was Simon Compaoré. After the popular insurrection, the previous name *Place de la Révolution* was taken up by the protestors.



*The convoy of the head of state of the military transition, Lieutenant-colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, leaving its ad hoc headquarters, the Economic and Social Council, in November 2014.*

*Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

up. Zida's action opposed General Honoré Nabéré Traoré, Chief of Defence Staff, who had also made a claim to power after the resignation and flight of Compaoré earlier that the day. On 1 November, the army issued a press release which pledged its support to Zida as head of state during the transition. General Honoré Nabéré Traoré was among the signatories of the declaration, which confirmed that he had renounced any claims to power. At the same time, organisations like Balai Citoyen were accused of having 'sold out the revolution' to the army because of a supposed closeness to the faction of the army led by Lieutenant-colonel Yacouba Issac Zida. The CCVC, close to leftist labour unions, spoke of 'yet another military coup d'état' (Lefaso.net, 2 November 2014; Engels 2015a). The Burkinabe paradox of combining revolt and responsibility was made clear that day when people were called out to clean up the city, a civic operation led by the ex-mayor of Ouagadougou, Simon Compaoré (Hagberg et al. 2015).

On 2 November, the opposition parties issued a statement asking people to gather at the Place de la Révolution and keep the protests going. The situation was very unclear, with heated confrontations on national television between protestors and RSP soldiers. That evening, however, the Zida-led junta met representatives from the political parties to try to find a solution to the crisis. This moment marked the beginning of the transition. Starting on 3 November, high-ranking individuals dispatched by the international community (the



*A Balai Citoyen press conference with Guy Hervé Kam and Fatoumata Souratié. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

UN, the AU, and the ECOWAS) arrived in Ouagadougou. Pressure from the street, in conjunction with pressure from the international community, forced the hands of the negotiators. The major players agreed to a transitional charter which stipulated that the president of the transition would be ineligible to run in the presidential elections that would be organised in 2015; this stipulation also applied to other members of the transitional government (Le Pays, 14 November 2014).

On 16 November, a special body of specially appointed members named Michel Kafando, the former Foreign Affairs Minister (1982–1983) and Ambassador to the United Nations (1998–2011), President of the Transition. The army had nominated Kafando, who in turn named Lieutenant-colonel Zida prime minister. The Burkinabe army showed once again its ability to dominate national politics. A week later, Zida announced the composition of his new government. The transitional parliament, the Conseil National de la Transition (CNT), held its first session on 27 November, naming as its president Chériff Sy, the director of the weekly magazine *Bendré*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Burkina Faso underwent two transitions: the first led by Zida (1 to 18 November 2014) and the second one led by Kafando (18 November 2014 to 28 December 2015).



*President Kafando arrives to celebrate the national holiday of 11 December 2014 in Dédougou. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

## Narratives of the revolution

We began fieldwork on narratives of the revolution in late October 2014 and systematically continued this fieldwork after the fall of the Compaoré regime. The objective was to collect the points of view and perspectives of Ouagadougou residents who had taken part in the protests against the fallen government. We sought to capture the lived experiences of citizens who had taken part in the insurrection.<sup>12</sup> Here are a few excerpts from our interviews:

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the first estimates of an *ad hoc* committee, 19 people were killed in the popular insurrection and 625 people were wounded, while 260 private buildings and 14 public buildings were vandalised. On 30 October five prisoners died during an attempted escape from the notorious prison, la Maison d'Arrêt et de Correction de Ouagadougou (MACO). The material damage was estimated to be more than 7.2 billion CFA francs (*Burkina24*, 25 November 2014). Yet later on the Coordination des structures pour l'assistance et le secours populaire (CAASP) modified the previous estimate of the death toll to 33 deaths (*Sidwaya*, 3 December 2014).

*What really struck me was the determination of the Burkinabe people; the fear that was there before no longer existed – fear of being persecuted by the regime, of being kidnapped, of being victims of all the regrettable actions of the past [...] even the police and the army: some people even defied the police and the army.*

*Yes, we were afraid, just see, when tear gas was thrown at us, we ran every which way to find water to relieve our eyes and nose, but the whole thing had become a sort of challenge that we all had to take up, even at the cost of our lives. But from then on, me at least I knew that in spite of my pain – because I have a medical condition and I knew tear gas was not good for me – well I stayed put, I didn't want to go home anymore, I just wanted to fight until the end and our end-goal was the National Assembly.*

*I have to say that these two dates [30 and 31 October] really brought on a bonus in my life, because I wake up every morning with joy in my heart.*

*Yes, I saw old men, old women, handicapped people and even children march for change on October 30. First I walked to the ex-Place de la Nation, which is now called Place de la Révolution. Then I set off towards the National Assembly, around Airtel to be precise. We fought against the police and we were protecting our skin with shea butter; some people were providing water to protect us from the teargas that the police was spraying us with, and we reached the National Assembly. There we started a fire. Once that was done, I joined the ranks of those who were heading towards the CDP's headquarters and we started a fire there too.*

Family imperatives were used as a pretext to keep individuals who wished to protest at home. A young woman explained what happened before she stepped outside:

*And on the 30th [...] Well, it has to be said that starting on the 27th we had already begun to prepare for the 30th, because the leaders of Balai Citoyen had already started to raise awareness in different neighbourhoods. Well, from that moment on, I told myself: OK, this is a movement that claims to be a civic movement, not a political one, but they are still fighting for change. I think it was the right time and the right way to do something and starting on the 29th, I had already gone to my family to put my child in a safe place and also to be able to go out, which is a little complicated for me, because I live with a gendarme, and I can't really say in front of him that I'm going out to demonstrate. I just can't. So I took shelter with my family while he was in Bobo. I told him, that, well, since the situation was volatile, I was going to stay with my family. And there too, pressure was high. I wanted to step outside, I'm getting calls from Bobo, I'm getting calls from my older sister who lives in France to tell me to not step outside, to not take any risks, and she called me very hour to make sure I hadn't gone out. Well at first I was listening to them and clenching my fists but then I said, no, I can't sit at home doing nothing and letting this go. I thought it was something that I had to experience, as a young person hoping for change, so sitting at home and just waiting was not an option. And I stepped outside...*

The moment when people heard about Blaise Compaoré's resignation was commented upon by this protestor:



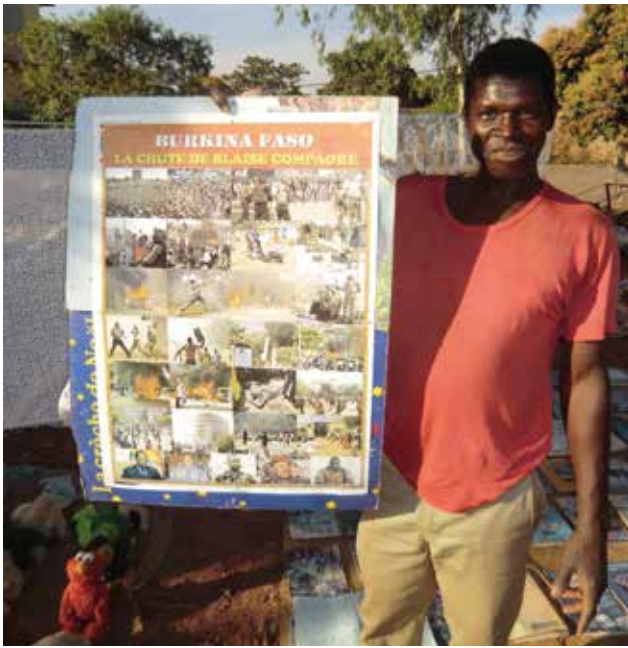
*Graffiti inside the city hall of Bobo-Dioulasso. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

*Aaaaaah, waow! It was the happiest day of my life. I'd never been happier. When we were at the Army's headquarters and Omega FM Radio announced that he was spotted leaving the country, that was a sight for sore eyes. The joy! Everyone was screaming with joy, everyone was chanting "Our Fatherland or death"<sup>13</sup>. These moments were something special. If you haven't lived these moments, what's the point? It was a moment of extreme joy.*

These interviews were conducted in the weeks following the insurrection. One already felt that a revolutionary fervour had seized the country and that a certain number of changes in political practices would come about.

Firstly, the *ruecratie* or the power of the street, generally defined as the propensity of street protests to demand political change, was quickly made into a political practice. This is why Adama Sagnon, who had been appointed minister of culture, was forced to resign two days after his appointment because of his involvement as a judge in the legal proceedings of the case of Norbert Zongo, the journalist who was assassinated in December 1998. Likewise, the minister

<sup>13</sup> 'La Patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons' ['the Fatherland or death, we will win'] is the revolutionary slogan of the Sankarist revolution in the 1980s. The Burkinabe National Anthem Ditanyè ends with 'La patrie ou la mort, nous vaincrons!'. For protesters, the slogan was imbued with new meaning in the popular insurrection, a war cry for the youth opposing the Compaoré regime.



*The fall of Blaise Compaoré as a business opportunity. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

of infrastructure, housing and transportation, Moumouni Diéguimdé, was also forced to resign in January 2015 due to outstanding judicial issues in the USA. People wanted men and women who were clean and unimpeachable, even if, paradoxically, they tolerated those who had collaborated for more than twenty years with the deposed president but who had ‘changed camps in time’. The protestors from this moment were firmer on the need to settle unresolved cases, like those of the assassinations of Thomas Sankara and Norbert Zongo, as well as other violent crimes that until then had remained unpunished.

Secondly, the public had great expectations, as the slogan ‘Nothing will be as before!’ shows. Not only were there heavy demands when it came to jobs and basic social services, but there were also expectations of a new manner of political behaviour. A discourse based on morality and integrity was quickly adopted. For a good number of Burkinabe, the ‘country of the upright people’ [‘le Pays des Hommes Intègres’] had gotten back on track.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, problems linked to the management of the RSP – an ‘army within the army’ – quickly rose to the surface because Prime Minister Zida detached himself from his brothers in arms. During a 13 December 2014 meeting on the Place de la Révolution (which we attended as well), Zida promised that the RSP would be dissolved and that those who had died ‘under the murderous bullets of Blaise Compaoré’ would receive justice. On 30 December, there was turmoil

<sup>14</sup> On a commercial level, it should be noted that the brand ‘Burkindi’ (which means ‘upright person’ in Mooré) was launched by Burkinabe promoters just after the insurrection (ArtistesBF, 26 December 2014).

between Zida and RSP, which was followed by an attempt on 4 February 2015 to take the cabinet hostage. In June 2015 another attempt to arrest Zida was foiled. Finally on 16 September 2015, the RSP coup d'état took place.

Fourthly, the electoral code which barred former officials from coming back into power after the transition shook up the old political class. In April 2015 the transition parliament CNT adopted a new electoral code in April 2015. Article 166 of this new code, which clarified what could make a candidate ineligible, was at the centre of many debates. The code indicated that ineligibility applied to

*all those persons who had supported an anti-constitutional change which sought to damage the principle of democratic change, notably the principle of limiting the number of presidential mandates that led to an insurrection or to any other form of uprising.<sup>15</sup>*

The representatives who had supported the change in Article 37 were thus 'excluded' from the forthcoming elections. While the insurrection had brought about Compaoré's fall from power, there was indeed a large risk that Compaoré's cronies would return to power after the year of transition was up. CDP activists spoke out against the 'exclusion' of their candidates. Yet the electoral code was seen as necessary to re-establish the political responsibility of individuals; it sought to prevent those who had attempted to modify Article 37 from coming back into power in the forthcoming elections. But it was also felt to be a political manoeuvre orchestrated by the leaders of the MPP to politically block their former comrades from the CDP.

The transition regime ended up with a mixed record. There were two fundamentally contradictory expectations from the transitional government ruled by Kafando and Zida. On the one hand, elections had to be organised to install democratically elected leaders; on the other hand, the ways in which politics was conducted had to be changed, no matter the cost, to avoid the crisis that had led to the insurrection from being repeated. The CNT voted on laws and reforms and the government initiated programmes. At the same time, the judiciary reopened certain unresolved cases, notably those of Sankara and Zongo.

At the end of the transition, there were nonetheless cases of mismanagement of public money and affairs on the part of certain leaders, including Prime Minister Zida. In April 2016, the Autorité Supérieure de Contrôle d'État et de Lutte contre la Corruption (ASCE-LC) published an audit report which detailed mismanagement during the transition, such as the questionable resorting to exceptional procedures in the awarding of public contracts (ASCE-LC April 2016).

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<sup>15</sup> Article 166, Law 005-2015/CNT, 7 April 2015.



*A tribute for victims of the coup d'état on Place de la Révolution. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

## The coup d'état and resistance

During a cabinet meeting on 16 September 2015, RSP soldiers took President Kafando, Prime Minister Zida and other ministers hostage. The news was quickly spread by radio, social media and mobile phone calls. People quickly gathered at the Place de la Révolution before heading to the Kosyam presidential palace where the president, prime minister and two other ministers were held by the RSP. Soldiers shot live rounds on the protestors as they approached the district of Ouaga 2000. In the face of the violence of the coupists, civil society leaders exhorted the protestors to go home and wait for further instructions.

Early the next morning, an RSP spokesperson declared on national television that a Conseil National pour la Démocratie led by General Gilbert Diendéré, had dissolved the government, the CNT, and relieved President Kafando of his functions. This was a takeover of power by military force. The reaction of the Burkinabe population was one of anger, indignation, and resistance.

After a week of terror, pain, and death, the resistance and the determination of the people paid off as the coup d'état failed.<sup>16</sup> On 23 September, President

<sup>16</sup> According to official figures, the coup d'état resulted in 14 deaths and 251 wounded (Newsaouaga, 7 October 2015). For a detailed analysis of the failed coup and the popular resistance, see Hagberg (2015).

Kafando was reinstated as President of the Transition. Over a period of seven days, the country had gone through a political crisis, a coup d'état, popular resistance, and a return to a civil regime. The key element in stopping the coup d'état was popular resistance, which had immediately responded to the takeover by military force. The resistance was emboldened by the struggle for 'the country of upright people' (Hagberg 2015).

Ideas of revolution and resistance are of great significance in Burkinabe political culture, which understands and approves of organised protests and civil disobedience (Hagberg 2015, 2016). These notions are morally charged, promoting decent political practices, unlike the immoral means of 'doing politics' which include embezzlement, nepotism, and corruption. The international community's condemnation of the coup d'état reinforced popular resistance. The resistance to the coup also brought together intrinsically contradictory socio-political positions; there was almost total agreement among traditional opposition actors. This was also a moment to bring the people and the republican army closer together (Hagberg 2015; Sawadogo 2016).

## Narratives of the resistance

Our research aimed to collect stories of the popular resistance to understand how the week was experienced by residents of Ouagadougou and, to a certain degree, by those of Bobo-Dioulasso. Just like the fieldwork carried out on the insurrection, our research sought to collect the points of view and perspectives of ordinary citizens rather than individuals who had access to the media and public debate.

*On September 16 I was just sitting in my office, working, when one of my colleagues came to give me the news that the R.SP had yet again confused the country, and worse, that they were holding President Michel Kafando and Prime Minister Isaac Zida hostage.*

*On Wednesday the 16th I was with friends when suddenly we got the message from another friend. I wasn't quite sure about the coup until I noticed that the shops and the market were closed, around 4 p.m. That was when I received confirmation about the Cabinet being held hostage by members of the R.SP. I immediately condemned the coup with my friends, who were debating vividly.*

*I turned on my radio while saying that it was the occasion to end the events of the October 30 and 31, 2014. There was no news available online. People were calling left and right for information. Every time we'd ask for God's help.*

These excerpts show how our interviewees' initial surprise turned into a desire to do something:

*As I said we took action together, with my friends and people from the neighbourhood. In our neighbourhood if we did something, just us, it would have had no visibility. So this is what we could do: close down the neighbourhood shops. Together we walked the streets to tell people to*

*close down the shops and to put business on hold. You can't sell stuff under such conditions. This way, we were all going to know what was going on. Later we left together to the asphalt road to go burn tyres and block the National 1 [National Road 1] and start hissing and screaming. I participated in all this because I didn't agree with what was going on. We're young and we won't let these people ruin our future.*

In Bobo-Dioulasso and other Burkinabe cities, people also reacted to the coup d'état. Protestors gathered on Place Tiefo Amoro at the railway station in Bobo to express their discontent towards the RSP. To make sure that things did not get out of hand, a coordinating committee was set up and led by Balai Citoyen. The curfew declared by the RSP was not respected as people camped out on Place Tiefo Amoro to show that their resistance remained strong. During these days, Bobo-Dioulasso became the capital of the resistance. Protestors went back and forth from Place Tiefo Amoro to the military camp Ouezzin Coulibaly to ask the republican army to intercede against the RSP. On 21 September, military officers left Bobo-Dioulasso to put an end to the RSP coup while the residents of the city applauded, shouting out slogans of support and encouragement.

## The elections and the return to constitutional order

Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected president in the November 2015 presidential elections. As former president of the National Assembly and former prime minister of Compaoré's regime, Kaboré had founded the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès (MPP) in January 2014. He won the presidential elections with 53.49% of the votes cast, with Zéphirin Diabré coming in second place (29.65%). In the legislative elections, the MPP won 55 seats, followed by the CDP with 18 seats, the UNIR/PS with five, the ADF/RDA with three, the NTD three, the PRN two, NAFA two, and six parties (Le Faso Autrement, ODT, PDS/Metba, UBN and MDA) winning a single seat each.

Our fieldwork on the joint presidential and legislative elections took place in three cities: Bobo-Dioulasso, Pô, and Dori.<sup>17</sup> Our aim was to map out an ethnographic study of the elections to better understand how political stakes were articulated in different Burkinabe cities. One aspect of this research sought out the points of view of voters, like this man interviewed in Bobo-Dioulasso:

*I voted for Roch in the presidential elections and for UPC in the legislative elections. Roch because he is going to be on the side of the people. Sure, people say he belongs to the old regime but the MPP people know very well that they'll reach power because of the people. I'm thinking that if Roch gets in power, he'll have no other choice but to take the people into account. And I'm also thinking that it could calm down the CDP activists. Some say that the CDP members don't like the MPP but others also say that Roch is a carbon copy of Blaise. Blaise is the original CDP and Roch is the carbon copy. UPC I voted for because Diabré has good ideas. If he can manage*

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<sup>17</sup> Because most of the authors of this study lived in Ouagadougou, the city was more or less covered – even if this coverage was not entirely systematic.



UPC's Zéphirin Diabré was second in the presidential elections in November 2015. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.

*the Assembly, he'll make things change. Roch will have no choice but to do with him. That's why I voted UPC in the legislative elections.*

In the same way, a local party leader in Dori explained the difference between these elections and preceding ones:

*Many parties lead a proximity campaign because they lack financial means. This year the law prohibits distributing tee-shirts, loincloths and gadgets, which gives the campaign a very particular atmosphere.*

In Pô, where the UPC and the MPP split the two parliament seats, a party activist declared:

*At any rate, the campaign is going fine here. There are no conflicts among us. Each person follows his or her own party. Security decided to better secure the campaign, so for now everything is going fine. We haven't heard of instances of conflict anywhere in the area. Besides, we don't want conflicts anymore. It was when Blaise was around that it was weird, with risks of conflict in the campaign, but since he left, it's OK! We're together, there are no problems.*



*MPP's Roch Marc Christian Kaboré who won the presidential elections in the first round campaigned as the response to the country's problems. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

President Kaboré was inaugurated on 29 December 2015. In early January he named Paul Kaba Thiéba, who could be described as a ‘technocrat’, as prime minister. The government was installed by decree on 12 January 2016. Everything seemed to be running smoothly.

But then, on 15 January 2016, the country was struck by a terrorist attack at the Cappuccino Restaurant and the Splendid Hotel on Avenue Kwame N'Krumah in Ouagadougou. Three heavily-armed terrorists killed thirty people and wounded seventy others before Burkinabe security forces, helped by French and American troops, neutralised them. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for these attacks. The Burkinabe people reacted with anger and despair, but they also remained mobilised to show the terrorists that they could not attack democracy (Hagberg 2016). Because the attacks took place in the heart of the Burkinabe capital, issues of security came to the fore in public debate.

Municipal elections were held in May 2016. The MPP obtained 11,208 councillors in 363 municipalities, the UPC 3,094 councillors in 289 municipalities, the CDP 2,145 councillors in 241 municipalities, and the NAFA 454 councillors in 96 municipalities. Our fieldwork, undertaken in Bobo-Dioulasso, Sédaradougou, Pô, Yako and Dori, aimed to understand how local and national political issues were related. The municipal elections marked a return to constitutional order after the 2014 insurrection. A number of our interviewees did not see the need for these elections because, as one of them put it, ‘We voted for Roch

and his programme. He just has to get to work and then in five years, we'll see what he's been able to do'. Others deemed the local elections important while acknowledging that the stakes were not the same: 'They're only local elections, it's not the same as for the legislative or the presidential elections'.

The MPP did everything it could to win these elections. The voting strategy of the party was to convince voters to cast their ballots for the president's party because the MPP held power in the country. 'Voting for another party is voting for the wind' was the slogan repeated at numerous meetings that we attended. The underlying idea was that only the MPP had the power to rise up to the challenges facing the country, as was expressed during a meeting in Yégueresso, near Bobo-Dioulasso:

*The CDP leader is in Côte d'Ivoire. The NAFA leader is in prison. The Lion's [UPC] people were with us but the people chose MPP.<sup>18</sup>*

The MPP thus emerged from the municipal elections as the leading party and as a kind of new mega-party. At the same time, the installation of municipal councils gave rise to a number of coalitions, so sometimes the MPP nominee was pushed out by the other parties when it came to designating the mayor. In certain cases these coalitions resulted in violence. Balai Citoyen published a list of a dozen cities where violence broke out after the mayor was designated (Burkina24, 22 June 2016). Here are a few examples: in Pénì, opposition candidates were assaulted by MPP councillors, with two wounded; in Kantchari, the mayoral election led to armed violence between MPP activists, with at least one dead and several severely wounded; and in Karangasso Vigué, the elected mayor was severely wounded in the violence following his election and two other people lost their lives.

## Conclusion

The years 2014–2016 were rich in socio-political events for Burkina Faso. The desire for justice and liberty reached its apex, and the experience of democracy brought about new challenges. A great deal can be learned from the popular insurrection of 30–31 October 2014 and the 2014–2015 transition. The resistance to the September 2015 coup d'état galvanised the Burkinabe. Many people who had only known Blaise Compaoré as president of Burkina Faso experienced a totally different political situation, often as first-hand actors. Even if many challenges remain on many fronts, it must be acknowledged that the insurrection and the transition eventually led to a new beginning. The slogan 'nothing will

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<sup>18</sup> This statement alludes to Blaise Compaoré, Djibril Bassolé and Zéphirin Diabré respectively. Without mentioning their names, the audience understood the message: the MPP is the only alternative.

be as before' remains valid despite accusations against Prime Minister Zida, who has been heavily criticised in the media and who now lives in exile in Canada.<sup>19</sup>

The initial revolutionary fervour from 2014, because its demands were so high, has given way to grievances, protests and deception. But when the gains of the popular insurrection were threatened, notably during the RSP coup d'état, the commitment and bravery of the Burkinabe were revitalised. The oft-celebrated determination of the Burkinabe people will be analysed in the following chapter.

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<sup>19</sup> Zida was dismissed from the army in December 2016 for desertion during peacetime. The decision was taken by President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, who at the time was still Minister of Defence in addition to being President.

## Chapter 3. Social categories and the crisis

In this chapter, we aim to show how different social categories have been affected by socio-political transformations in Burkina Faso. In the country (and certainly elsewhere), reference is often made to ‘women’ and to ‘youth’ in a rather general manner, without any real precision as to who or what is being discussed. The political co-optation of these social categories was multiplied by the Compaoré regime for decades. At the same time, the ‘insurgents’, a label used to define those who actively and physically opposed the change to Article 37, are often considered to be ‘youth’ and ‘women’. Traditional and religious authorities also have this double connotation in relation to power-holders; they may both be linked to political manipulation, and to social opposition. This is also the case for civil society, a ‘catch-all’ category which is debated, criticised, supported and idealised by observers of Burkinabe politics. Our aim is to deconstruct these social categories to better discern how different actors reacted to the crisis.

### Women and politics

Up to now, the political sphere offered few real opportunities to women, despite Article 12 of the Constitution: ‘All the Burkinabe without any distinction, have the right to participate in the conduct of the affairs of the State and of society. In this capacity, they are electors and eligible within the conditions specified by the law.’

A diachronic analysis of popular protests against different regimes allows us to see how women have been involved and were, in fact, the first ones out onto the streets to protest. In 1966, women rallying around Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo were the first ones to protest the unpopular rule of Maurice Yaméogo. In the same way, women opened the final battle against Compaoré’s power with the ‘spatula march’ on 27 October 2014 (Hagberg et al. 2015). In 2008 women were also seen in the streets with their sauce pans and empty plates protesting against the high prices of everyday items (Engels 2015b). After the assassination of Norbert Zongo in 1998, women participated in the movement against the regime. The participation of women in national politics was also important for the Sankarist revolution, which changed the image of women by adopting several measures aiming to promote women emancipation.

Yet women remain underrepresented at all levels of decision-making. This situation persists when it comes to the number of women in executive positions from 1957 to the present day. Starting in 2008 there were up to eight

female ministers of the twenty-nine government ministers. In the transitional government of 2014–2015, the figure was reduced to four female ministers out of twenty-six. In Kaboré’s first government with Paul Thiéba Kaba as prime minister, seven of thirty-one were women. Table 1 does not present a brilliant picture of the number of positions that women have occupied in the National Assembly over time.

Table 1: Female representation in the National Assembly<sup>20</sup>

Parliament term	Total number of seats	Male MPs	Female MPs	Percentage of female MPs
1959–65	74	73	1	1,37%
1965–66*	50	48	2	4 %
1970–74	57	57	0	0 %
1977–1980	57	56	1	1,8 %
1992–97	111	107	4	3,7 %
1997–2002	111	101	9	8,1 %
2002–07	111	98	13	11,7 %
2007–2012	111	94	17	15,31 %
2012–2014	127	103	24	18,90 %
2015–	127	115	12	9,44 %

\* II It should be noted that the National Assembly for 1965–1966 was barely in session. Elected in November 1965, the fall of President Maurice Yaméogo on 3 January 1966 led to its dissolution.

The low political representation of women is not a phenomenon unique to Burkina Faso. In the country, our interviewees have given different reasons to explain this state of affairs. Some argue that its roots date back to the country’s colonial past. Others evoke psychological or economic factors, the electoral system, the habits of political parties, poverty, illiteracy, and the heavy domestic workload that weighs down women. There are also social and cultural reasons. Women are weighed down under the yoke of male oppression and find it hard to free themselves from the gendered division of roles and labour. This results in a lack of self-confidence, so that they do not believe in their abilities to succeed in politics. The words of a young female student demonstrate this well:

*No, no, women aren’t too involved in politics but if you want my opinion, it’s because of their husbands. They don’t accept it. But there are others too, their husbands accept it but they say I can’t be a woman and stand here in front of men and speak. They’re afraid of the public, they’re afraid of criticism...*

The hope raised by Compaoré’s fall was very high among women, who thought like other Burkinabe that ‘nothing will be as before’. But election results, and

<sup>20</sup> Data for this table come from Rouamba 2011, Palm and Hien 2009, and Hagberg and Koné 2014

even before that, the composition of the transitional government, resulted in a step back in the number of posts held by women when compared to the Sankarist revolution or the Compaoré era.

Municipal elections in the northern region are a good example of the political marginalisation of women despite measures taken to raise their political representation (see also Hagberg 2013; Hagberg and Koné 2014). During the communal campaign, political parties stated that they tried to respect the gender quota requiring that one of three candidates for district/village councillors be female. This requirement was generally respected in the urban municipality of Yako and the rural one of Gomponsom. During the campaign itself, there were always female candidates for municipal council. Yet during the process of installing the leaders, these women were ‘forgotten’ when posts were distributed. For example, in the northern region, out of 31 mayors, only one, that of the urban municipality of Gourcy, is a woman. In Yako men took control of every post of high responsibility and power. Out of 95 councillor positions, only 11 are held by women, and there are no women in the municipal executive board. Certain isolated cases contradict this general tendency. In Gomponsom, 9 of the 30 councillor’s positions are held by women. In the municipal executive board, the second deputy to the mayor is female and another woman leads the important financial commission. This case gives a sliver of hope and shows that, contrary to received wisdom, rural women can, at least in this specific case, have a larger room for manoeuvre in politics than women in cities.

Despite significant efforts like quotas and the education of young girls, the fight for a better place for women in politics should be supported further while taking into account the judicial, customary and religious contexts. It is important to promote the educational mobility of girls and to prevent young women from dropping out of school. Yet it is also necessary to re-evaluate the image of women politicians and to give young girls a taste for political commitment and for playing an active role in civil society. The struggle for greater involvement of women in political decision-making is a long-term struggle in a context in which sociocultural barriers confine women to traditional social roles of childbearing, household work, and the raising of children. Thus, when women get involved in politics, it is usually with support from family and friends. Consider the words of a female candidate in the municipal elections:

*I was afraid at the time; it was my brother-in-law who told me to give my ID, and I said, come on, don't put me in trouble. I said I was afraid. Another day, he came to take my ID with my daughter to go and write down my name and I became the women's representative and they said I also had to go after the position in the council.*

The references made to ‘women’ in Burkinabe political discourse are not translated into daily political practices. The impression that we received during our research is that women are the most loyal voters. When they decide to mobilise and vote for a candidate, they seem to be more resolute than male voters (see

Hagberg and Koné 2014). Male politicians often take advantage of this fact. Despite many strategies at the national level to promote women, power is still often a male prerogative in Burkina Faso.

## Youth

Youth have been instrumental in launching a number of popular movements of Burkina Faso, from the independence struggle to political fights and demands for justice and better living standards. This was particularly the case since the 1990s in the large mobilisation of students in a number of cases involving crimes and social injustices. Youth were especially mobilised against the change in Article 37 which triggered the popular insurrection in 2014. One of the key arguments then was the need for a change in political power – the majority of protestors said that they had only lived under the Compaoré regime, which leads us to believe that they were not older than 27 years of age. In truth, youth paid the heaviest price for their involvement in the popular insurrection and in the resistance to the coup d'état.

In the case of the 30–31 October 2014 protests, the key factor in defining 'youth' was not so much age as political opposition to a regime that seemed to persist forever but that was incapable of resolving the many problems plaguing Burkinabe society. On the one hand, a new political class was pitted against an older one. On the other hand, it was a new way of being involved in politics, radically different from the old habits. Through organisations like Balai Citoyen, student associations, young businesses, the CAR, the M21, the Mouvement 'Ça Suffit!', the Front de Résistance Citoyenne, etc., youth mobilised against the proposed change of Article 37. They set aside political and ideological differences and focussed on fighting for the common good together.

After Compaoré's fall from power, youth found itself enlarged, proud, confident, and more aware of its own strengths. The central preoccupation of youth was work and employment. Another major issue was improving the educational system: the system was judged to be broken, with too many students dropping out and too many graduates unable to find work. Many youth felt excluded from the civil service because posts were given as personal favours, leading to opportunism, careerism, and poor governance. There are numerous challenges still to be confronted, as the following interview excerpt reveals:

*We want for the Burkinabe youth to be able to express themselves, we want to be given a space in which to express ourselves, that is, to use our skills to serve the nation, more precisely by giving more responsibilities to young people in administration, in politics, in society, as long as young people are excluded, if I'm not mistaken statistics show that young people make up more than half the population in Burkina Faso. Why not focus on youth and women since they too make up more than half the general population?*

The category of 'youth' is used in many contexts. But the views of youth are as diverse as those of their elders. In Burkina Faso, the celebration of youth is also

linked to the important role student movements has played in Burkinabe political history, as we shall see later.

## Traditional and religious authorities

In Burkina Faso, party politics has an ambiguous relationship with traditional chieftaincy (Hagberg 2007b; Kibora 2011a, 2013). On the one hand, the chieftaincy is considered an authority above national politics and political debates because the chief is the representative of an entire community. On the other hand, traditional chiefs have been deeply involved in politics since they are considered 'big electors'. A chief who gets involved in politics is likely to have a major influence on the electoral choices of a large part of his constituency.

While chiefs were considered obsolete or reactionary forces under the Sankara regime, they were tacitly rehabilitated by Compaoré's regime, which provided them material and financial advantages in exchange for their support of the CDP (Somé 2003:242). In 2000–2001, some traditional chiefs were implicated in cases of political violence, and their names were used to legitimate major crimes against the rule of law, like the assassination of political adversaries (Hagberg 2007b; Kibora 2011a).

In the municipalities where we undertook our field research, traditional chiefs play an important political role. Every political party tries to meet the chief in order to get his support. The MPP campaign was particularly mobilised in this respect because Larlé Naaba, minister of customs of the Moose king Mogho Naaba's cabinet and simultaneously an ex-CDP MP, had organised a parallel campaign where he met with the Moose in every town.<sup>21</sup> In Pô, where the power of the chief is more limited than it is for the Moose due to the lineage structure of power (Kibora 1997, 2011b; Liberski-Bagnoud 2002; Gomgnimbou 2004), the Pô-Pê (the chief of Pô) is nonetheless recognised as a power broker thanks to his influence over part of the electorate.

From the Collège des Sages in 1999 to the present day, religious authorities, notably from the Catholic clergy (Kolesnore 2016) but also Pentecostals (Laurent 2009), have been more and more involved in state affairs.<sup>22</sup> Muslim leaders have historically had lower visibility, but that has started to change in the past few years (Saint Lary 2009; Kaag and Saint Lary 2011). The socio-political transformations have demonstrated the importance of traditional and religious authorities, with visible interventions by chiefs and religious leaders. One can

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<sup>21</sup> In academic writings and everyday speech, the term used is Mossi. We use the more exact terms *Moaga* (singular) and *Moose* (plural), that are gaining in usage, even in French.

<sup>22</sup> After the assassination of Norbert Zongo, Compaoré's ruling powers were constrained by socio-political movements which made the regime put in place a *Collège de sages* in order to propose a way out of the crisis. This college included not only social leaders but also religious dignitaries. It was led by Monseigneur Anselme Titiamia Sanon, currently the emeritus bishop of Bobo-Dioulasso (Hagberg 2002).

even say that their actions during the insurrection and resistance allowed them to gain a new respectability in Burkina Faso. The case of Mogho Naaba is particularly striking. In the midst of the insurrection, while trying to scale the walls of Mogho Naaba's compound, General Kouamé Lougué broke his legs – at the time the public was crying out for him to be president of the transition and he was being hunted by Zida's men. Under the transitional regime, Prime Minister Zida himself sought refuge with Mogho Naaba to escape from his fellow military officers on 4 February 2015. During the failed RSP coup d'état, the accord between the RSP and loyalist army forces was signed in Mogho Naaba's palace (Hagberg 2015).

*They did stay until the agreement with the Mogho Naaba. I told myself, yes, that's fine but [...] they shouldn't stay in the palace because the palace is not an institution of the Republic. [...] He is the emperor of the Moose but he is not the emperor of all the Burkinabe.*

On several occasions, religious authorities have played an important role in commemorations of martyrs (of the insurrection, resistance to the coup d'état, and terrorist attacks): they prayed in the Place de la Révolution, for instance, during the ceremony on 9 October 2015 for the victims of the resistance. This involvement has a long history in Burkina Faso. Beyond invocations and prayers, religious leaders have in recent years not shied away from taking positions in favour of the people. In 2013, the Catholic bishops diagnosed the democratic society as sick, subject to social infections like impunity, corruption, and growing inequality (Kolesnore 2016:33).

Our interlocutors also spoke of the importance of prayers to save Burkina Faso, as this florist from Ouagadougou put it: 'I kept on praying for God to solve this problem. Only God could solve this problem'. A female student put it this way: 'Really, there's nothing left to say, you know, except for begging the Almighty for Him to cast His merciful eye on us, on the Nation of Burkina Faso'.

Traditional and religious authorities have been very involved in Burkina Faso's socio-political transformations, mainly on the side of 'the people'. Having long been associated with the ruling power, this has led to a sort of renaissance for them.

## Civil society organisations

Many civil society organisations took an active role in the fight against the constitutional change. Between 2013 and 2014, new associations and networks aiming to bring an end to the Compaoré regime were created. The most visible associations in this period were Balai Citoyen, the Collectif anti-référendum (CAR), the Centre pour la Gouvernance Démocratique (CGD), the Mouvement M21, the Organisation Démocratique de la Jeunesse (ODJ), the Front de Résistance Citoyenne (FRC), the Coalition des Femmes pour la Défense de la Constitution (COFEDEC), the Rencontre Africaine des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO),

the Forum des Citoyens pour l'Alternance (FOCAL), the Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP), the Réseau National de Lutte Anti-Corruption (REN-LAC), the Coalition Contre la Vie Chère (CCVC), the Association pour la Promotion de la Démocratie et de la Participation Citoyenne (APDC), the Collectif Devenons Citoyens (CDEC) and the Ligue pour la Défense de la Liberté et de la Justice (LIDEJEL). These organisations have regularly spoken out to the ruling powers and citizens about the abuses of the regime and the need to respect the constitution. While organisations like MBDHP, CCVC and REN-LAC have a long-standing record of involvement in the human rights struggle, others were newcomers (Balai Citoyen, FRC, CAR) representing a rejuvenated civil society (Hagberg et al. 2015).

After the insurrection, some civil society organisations were integrated into organs of the transition (the transitional government, the CNT, and the Commission de réconciliation nationale et des réformes) while others, like Balai Citoyen, continued to play their role as citizen watchdogs. Civil society organisations called out the ruling powers and citizens on current affairs and initiated protests, as happened during the untimely cutting off of electricity by the national electricity company, the Société Nationale Burkinabè d'Electricité (SONABEL). They asked for the reopening of neglected judicial cases, the dismantlement of the RSP, and the implementation of Article 135 of the electoral code, which barred individuals who had supported changing Article 37 of the constitution under the Compaoré regime from running for office.

As soon as the coup d'état was announced in September 2015, people voiced their disapproval throughout the country, alongside civil society organisations and labour unions who called for resistance in all the cities, neighbourhoods and villages of the country. The monthly president of the Unité d'Action Syndicale, Bassolma Bazié of the CGT-B, announced an open-ended general strike throughout the country (Babilown 20/9/2015).<sup>23</sup> Many protests were organised in Ouagadougou and other major cities (Banfora, Bobo Dioulasso, Koudougou, Gaoua, Ouahigouya, Dédougou, etc.). In Ouagadougou, roadblocks were erected in certain neighbourhoods upon the instigation of civil society organisations, labour unions, and political parties. A member of Balai Citoyen recalls:

*I was told about the hostage situation around 2:50 p.m on September 16. With the national board of the Balai Citoyen, we immediately decided to urgently meet at the Maison du Peuple. From there we decided to call all our local units [clubs cibals] in the country to tell them to gather on public squares. In Ouagadougou, it was on Place de la Révolution that people started gathering at 5 p.m. Around 6 p.m., a decision was made to go to the Kosyam presidential palace to free the officials who were being held hostage. The following days we coordinated the deployment of our members in the city's neighbourhood to organise the resistance.*

<sup>23</sup> The Unité d'Action Syndicale has coordinated the actions of the main labour unions since 1999. Its presidency rotates monthly between different unions.

The mobilisation of civil society was a critical reason for the failure of the coup d'état. Civil society, which was strengthened after the insurrection and during the transition, has at times made controversial decisions. The part played by certain civil society organisations has led to debate on their neutrality and real or supposed politicisation. Accusations of collusion between certain civil society organisations and leaders of the transition have undermined public support for civil society organisations caught between attacks from labour unions and other activists from the traditional left and partisans or sympathisers of the Compaoré regime. To say the least, some civil society organisations were not left unscathed by the events from 2014 to 2016.

## Conclusion

The events of these past two years have allowed us to see how different social categories have been used in Burkinabe politics. This intense period did not lead to the creation of new political actors at the national level, but it revealed the importance of these categories in political struggles. During this period their real strengths, beyond any partisan discourse, were confirmed.

The active participation of youth and women in the socio-political life of the country was confirmed, in contrast to received wisdom that emphasises the supposed power of elders or the submission of women. On the one hand, these categories of youth and women are part of a widespread popular political discourse. On the other hand, these categories have a specific content and their struggles also aim to emancipate themselves from the ruling class by taking their destiny in their hands when the stakes are very high. The ambiguous positions of traditional and religious authorities were also made clear these past few years, notably in the case of Mogho Naaba in Ouagadougou and the Catholic clergy. These years were also an occasion, contrary to what the country's political history had shown up to now, to see actors from civil society other than labour unions bring about socio-political transformations in Burkina Faso. Yet it is still unclear whether these emerging civil society forces will resist or even survive attacks from the outside as well as their own internal conflicts. Interestingly, the unions prefer to call themselves 'social partners' to distinguish themselves from the 'catch-all' category of civil society.

## Chapter 4. ‘Elections at all cost’: the role of the international community in Burkinabe politics

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the role played by elections. We consider elections not only as instruments of democratic legitimacy but also as the international community’s *sine qua non* demand towards the Burkinabe transition. Even if there was agreement that elections had to be organised as soon as possible, there was also a concern with laying the foundations of ‘a new Burkina Faso’ in order to avoid yet another crisis.

### Peaceful elections and democratic consolidation

Returning to a normal constitutional way of affairs was a major challenge for the transitional government, political parties, civil society organizations, and the international community. The joint presidential and legislative elections on 29 November 2015 (initially scheduled for 11 October but disrupted by the coup d’état) were absolutely essential to end the period of political and social instability. The international community conditioned the return of development assistance to the speedy organisation of elections, even though some national actors felt that some major preconditions had not been met, such as restructuring the electoral administration, national reconciliation, and putting on trial the presumed perpetrators of crimes during the popular insurrection and the coup d’état.

The Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) was the cornerstone of the elections. It worked to ensure that the electoral calendar was respected, that the electoral roll was up to date, and that those of voting age had their biometric details taken. The CENI was, in short, in charge of assuring the transparency and credibility of the elections. To do so, the Burkinabe state alongside international donors and foreign embassies known under the umbrella term ‘Partenaires techniques et financiers’ (PTFs) made an effort to provide the CENI the necessary technical, logistical and financial means.<sup>24</sup>

The new electoral code had introduced such new procedures as independent candidates, financial support to party delegates in polling stations, the prohibi-

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<sup>24</sup> We use the term ‘international community’ to include financial and technical partners (PTFs), embassies (of mainly Western countries), and international organisations. While there are important nuances and distinctions to be made, the term ‘international community’ is often used in Burkina Faso.

tion of gadgets during electoral campaigns, and a lottery in cases where candidates had the same number of votes and were the same age.

Almost one hundred political parties ran in the November 2015 elections, the most well-known being the MPP, the UPC, and the CDP.<sup>25</sup> The MPP, which sought out the vote of the people for the first time, reconfigured the political spectrum with its ‘massive co-optation’ of former CDP officials and opposition parties. ‘Political transhumance’ occurred in a good number of places as officials and members of one political party sought out better personal political fortunes by joining another political party. Changing party allegiances was often justified by the humiliations and frustrations experienced in the party, the lack of transparency in how the party was run, and the former party’s poor electoral position.

The electoral campaign began on 8 November 2015. The leaders of the political parties had adopted and signed a code of good electoral conduct, which led to the campaign starting off in relative calm. This code was a pedagogic and philosophical effort to preserve social peace and avoid contestation of the electoral results. The good running of the elections was the result of action undertaken by civil society organisations, national and international observers (CODEL, the EU, ECOWAS), and the media. ‘Domestic observation’ of the elections was undertaken by a number of national organisations. Balai Citoyen, for example, set up a national caravan to make citizens aware of the stakes of the elections with such slogans as ‘After your revolt, your vote!’ and ‘I vote and I stay!’

Candidates did everything they could – from meetings to general assemblies to knocking on doors – to win over voters. The parties placed a great deal of emphasis on national reconciliation, socio-economic development, the empowerment of women, and youth unemployment. The MPP prioritized youth and stressed the experience of prominent party leaders who held higher offices under Compaoré.<sup>26</sup> Yet a large number of political parties did not run on a larger social programme and lacked an economic and social development programme.

The two heavyweights of Burkinabe politics, the MPP and the UPC, expended major financial, material and logistical resources in the campaign. Political parties were primarily funded by contributions from party members and sympathisers, businesses, and state subsidies. Yet the financing of the elections, in truth, was in many ways assured by the PTFs. There were fourteen candidates for the presidency, with two female candidates: the late Françoise Toé, an independent candidate who had been a former MNL activist for Joseph Ki-Zerbo,

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<sup>25</sup> The total number of parties (79), political formations (2), and independent groups (18) were 99 ; see CENI 2015.

<sup>26</sup> The president of the MPP, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, had been prime minister and president of the National Assembly. The 1st vice-president of the MPP, Salifou Diallo, had been Secretary of State to the Presidency before being promoted to Minister of Agriculture. Simon Compaoré, 2nd vice-president of MPP, had been mayor of Ouagadougou from 1995 to 2012.

and the PDC's Saran Sérémé-Séré.<sup>27</sup> As one of the organisers of the women's protest march on 27 October 2014, Sérémé-Séré had had a major role in Compaoré's fall from power.

If, as reports by national and international observers accredited by the CENI stated, the elections proceeded without incident, the new electoral code had excluded a number of candidates from running for office because they had supported changing Article 37. In enforcing this rule, the Constitutional Court barred several prominent politicians, like Eddie Comboïgo (CDP) and Djibril Bassolé (NAFA), from running for office. An appeals process against the ineligibility of a number of candidates was also introduced. The candidacy of the MPP candidate, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, was contested by the president of Le Faso Autrement, Ablassé Ouédraogo, on the basis that when Kaboré had been president of the National Assembly he once had said of Article 37 that 'limiting terms is in principle anti-democratic. It goes against the right of the citizen to vote for whom he or she wants' (Lefaso.net 8/2/2010). The Conseil constitutionnel refused to find Kaboré ineligible for office because of this statement.

In the presidential elections, Kaboré received 53.49% of the vote, with Diabré receiving 29.65%. Out of a total of 5,517,015 individuals on the electoral rolls, there were 3,309,988 votes cast, or a 60% participation rate. For the legislative elections, the MPP became the leading political party in the country with 55 MPs. The UPC and CDP had 33 and 18 MPs, respectively.

The municipal elections on 22 May 2016 allowed the MPP and the UPC to gauge their political standing. Many observers considered these elections as lacking energy, partly because the electoral code banned the use of gadgets like painted cloths and T-shirts. Candidates regularly complained about the lack of resources to mobilise the voters. This is what a candidate for a councillor position in Dori had to say:

*I am campaigning with my own means because the party gave only FCEA 50,000 [76€] per village or neighbourhood, which is not enough to lead a good election campaign. I have already contributed FCEA 160,000 [244€] from my own pocket.*

This situation led parties to privilege door-to-door campaigning, which in turn brought about some measure of electoral corruption. For many candidates, door-to-door campaigning often obliged them, in conformity with 'African values', to make gifts of banknotes to heads of families. Even if there was electoral corruption during the campaign, it was discreetly done; save for the declarations of 'accusatory victims', who were often electoral losers, there was little direct proof of corruption.

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<sup>27</sup> Toé died on 9 October 2016 after a car accident.



*A polling station during the May 2016 municipal elections. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

*Parties don't give much, while contrary to what you might think, door-to-door campaigning is very costly too. This is why everybody is mobilised to campaign five or six days before election day.*

*They say that gadgets are banned, but if you're in a village and you give the team a football because they're your brothers [...] and even at home, even if there's no election campaign, when you return to the village you have to pay your respects to people with a little something, so imagine when it's during the elections.*

The May 2016 municipal elections in 368 districts permitted the MPP to come away with 11,208 councillor seats, followed by the UPC (3,094 seats) and the CDP (2,145 seats). A total of 2,699,164 votes were cast, meaning a turnout of 48.93% (compared to 75.3% in 2012). After the elections, the Conseil de l'État nevertheless received around 500 appeals.

In some districts the introduction of municipal executives gave rise to conflicts and clashes. In Karangasso-Vigué, skirmishes between NAFA and MPP activists led to two deaths and many wounded and displaced. There were also skirmishes and scuffles between activists from opposing political parties in

Kantchari, Gomboro and Sabcé. The candidate for mayor in Gomboro, in the province of Sourou, was beaten up by angry demonstrators:

*After the designation procedure was started, Moussa Diallo ran for mayor for the MPP and was elected. Demonstrators keeping watch outside heard of his election, invaded the hall and interrupted the voting. They wrecked and burned several motorcycles, one of which belonged to the Defence and Security Forces. The flames engulfed part of the building. A gendarme was injured by the demonstrators' rocks. The 'newly elected' candidate had a miserable time in the hands of demonstrators who beat him up heartily. Suffering a major head injury, he was evacuated to a hospital in Tougan, then the University Hospital in Bobo-Dionlasso, where he is now receiving treatment. A medical source confirms that his life is no longer in danger. (Lefaso.net 22/6/2016)*

In short, while the elections took place in relative calm, post-electoral violence reached an unprecedented level when it came time to designate mayors. This situation contributed to sowing the seeds of division and violence on what were often ethnic questions.

## Ethnic and religious voting

In principle, candidates oriented their campaigns to socioeconomic problems. Voters justified their choices, officially at least, on the proposed solutions to their existential needs and the perceived capability of parties and candidates to rise to these existing challenges.

Yet one should not lose sight of the fact that voters also had hidden motivations, like the ethnicity and religion of candidates. The Constitution and the electoral code prohibit the creation or existence of political parties based on ethnicity or religion. Nonetheless, political actors elaborated strategies during the campaign to instrumentalise ethnicity and religion.

During the presidential and legislative elections, ethnic voting was a genuine phenomenon, especially when it came to numerous activists who opposed Kaboré, the MPP candidate of Moaga ethnicity from the central plateau, in favour of Diabré, the UPC candidate of Bissa ethnicity originally from the province of Boulgou in the centre-east of the country. The Bissa have historically been discriminated against by the Moose, who consider them 'traitors', 'segregationists', 'infidels', and 'dishonest'. With reference to tradition and ancestral beliefs, these cultural prejudices have been implanted throughout time.

The hierarchisation of Moaga society also needs to be taken into account when it comes to ethnic voting, as it is a way to put Moose chiefdoms into power. Every decision made by a traditional Moaga chief follows a hierarchical path in both space and time and has to be executed. Throughout these elections, it was evident that the MPP mobilised the Moose through Larlé Naaba Tigré, minister of Mogho Naaba's cabinet and a former MP (CDP) under Compaoré, and other traditional chiefs. It turned out that Larlé Naaba – whose real name is Victor Tiéndrebéogo – ran a parallel campaign to persuade traditional chiefs to

support the MPP. Even if he did not officially intervene in the name of Mogho Naaba, the fact that he was culturally its spokesperson created a degree of confusion that benefited his party (see Kibora 2013).

In one way or other, politicians instrumentalised ethnicity to influence voters. A teacher of Moaga ethnicity in Bobo-Dioulasso declared during an interview in November 2015:

*Nobody is ever going to vote for the Bissa here. Bissa? Absolutely not! Don't you know about the Bissas? 'Boussang pa ton zan tinga dèb' ['A Bissa can not manage the country']. Let's leave aside the fact that I'm a Mossi. 'Boussang pa tar poung yé' ['You can't trust a Bissa']. If you look at the history of the settlement of all the peoples, you realise that the Mossi have managed to accept the other ethnic groups. For example, the Fulbe come from far away but the Mossi have managed to integrate them to the point that there is an ethnic group that is called the Silmimoose. But if you look at the Bissa, you'll see that they don't accept the other groups that easily; They have a tendency to revolve exclusively around themselves. They are supportive of each other even when they do bad things. That is what's dangerous.*

This voter is referring to Zéphirin Diabré and his ethnicity. There were many Burkinabe citizens who thought like him because of cultural prejudices. This is a kind of 'social rejection', the stigmatisation of an ethnicity by another, which complicates the project of living together and puts into danger the socio-political future of the country, even more so since a number of other ethnic groups also suffer from cultural prejudices.

Another hidden factor that influenced voting was religion. A number of voters openly admitted to this, and candidates in the presidential election used religion as well. This was true for Ablassé Ouédraogo of Le Faso Autrement:

*I am a Moagha from the central plateau, and the Mossi are a strong population component in Burkina Faso. I am also a Muslim, which means something in a country where 70 percent of people are too. (Interview with Jeune Afrique 8/6/2015)*

This statement elicited strong reactions condemning the 'excesses' of the candidate. Ablassé Ouédraogo stated that he regretted the way in which his words were 'used' and understood (Lefaso.net, 11 June 2015). In response to this denial, *Jeune Afrique* wrote: 'We did not in any way distort his words relating his conviction that being Mossi and Muslim were "advantages" in the upcoming presidential election' (12 June 2015). It appears that Ouédraogo's declaration hurt his campaign.

Djibril Bassolé also tried to use religion for electoral purposes. Even if he did not make public declarations to this end, the last minister for foreign affairs under Blaise Compaoré mobilised Muslim community associations on the basis of his religious faith. Named a mediator by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) some time before Compaoré's fall, Bassolé played up this image to get closer to Muslim voters. Nonetheless, his ineligibility and then his alleged involvement in the coup d'état meant that Bassolé was barred from running.

The following statement, taken during an interview in Bobo-Dioulasso, comes from an underemployed citizen with a post-primary diploma (BEPC) who makes do with small jobs in a Franco-Arab school while waiting to pass an exam to enter the civil service:

*If I had to go vote, I would vote for a Muslim because there are many Muslims but they have many problems. If you notice: for a long time only Christians have led the country, so that the Muslims' problems like the pilgrimage and the Franco-Arab schools have not been solved.*

Ethnic and religious voting should be considered major factors in the elections, although not so far as to undermine the image of Burkina Faso as a tolerant and diverse country. The strong reactions against every attempt to instrumentalise ethnicity or religion have, in fact, protected the country from the excesses of identity politics.

## The international community

The interference of international donors, commonly referred to as *Partenaires techniques et financiers* (PTFs), in Burkina Faso's socio-political transformation since 2014 has fed numerous debates and given rise to contesting opinions. In the controversy over changing Article 37, people were keen to find out which PTFs were on the side of the ruling power and which sided with the people.<sup>28</sup> On top of organisations like the ECOWAS and the AU, much attention and interest was paid to France and the USA, France because of the strength of the relationship it traditionally had with Burkina Faso and the USA because of its global power and the strong personality of its ambassador, Tulinabo Mushingui. Ambassador Mushingui gave a new face to US policies in Burkina Faso by being very active on the ground in the period preceding the popular insurrection in October 2014, often in partnership with civil society and opposition party leaders. Mushingui's leanings towards these actors could have certainly helped the protestors. When it comes to France, despite its exfiltration of Blaise Compaoré to Côte d'Ivoire, there was no anti-French reaction most probably because of the position taken (even if very late) by President François Hollande, who made it clear that he would not support any changes in the Constitution.<sup>29</sup> For many ordinary citizens, certain partners, like the EU, took rather disappointing and underwhelming stances on the constitutional question, while the most important reactions to national events came from African organisations (AU, ECOWAS) and countries like France and the USA.

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<sup>28</sup> The dichotomy between power and the people has entered everyday language since 2014. Yet, as noted in the introduction, the commonly used notion of the 'people' has a long history in Burkina Faso.

<sup>29</sup> In a letter dated 7 October 2014, French President François Hollande warned President Compaoré that Burkina Faso could 'be an example' if it avoided 'the risks of a non-consensual amendment of the Constitution' (*Jeune Afrique*, 30 October 2014).

The aftermath of the transition placed the PTFs and the ‘international community’, depending on the terms used, at the heart of Burkinabe politics. On the whole, they appeared patronising and exceedingly demanding: ‘Elections are everything, they must be held as soon as possible’. Many social actors were frustrated with this position, which they thought allowed national political leaders to shirk their responsibilities, as they would have to comply with the international community’s demands in order to receive the funds they needed to manage the country’s public affairs.

The new electoral code provoked irritation from the ECOWAS and a number of PTFs. They appealed for ‘open elections that give everyone the same chance’, a phrase that did not fully mask their disappointment at seeing part of the political class being excluded, even if the excluded members hailed from the former regime. Organising credible, transparent and timely elections was non-negotiable for the PTFs. This pressure was maintained even after the failed coup d’état in September 2015. Western diplomats intervened on many occasions to push the transitional government so that legislative and presidential elections could be organised only two months after the return to order.

The failed coup spotlighted the attitudes of the international community. The AU played a leading role from the start by labeling the leaders of the coup to ‘terrorists’. The individuals we spoke to indicated that they sensed some hesitation from the international community during the coup d’état, especially from the ECOWAS, which was accused of having a positive view of the coupists, unlike the AU, which was firmly opposed to the coup d’état from the very beginning. This is what a thirty-year-old woman had to say:

*Personally, we didn’t try to do much. It’s only listening to what the ECOWAS is going to say, because they said that the presidents of the neighbouring states came here to see Gilbert [Diendéré]. We were just waiting to see what they want to tell us. But in the meantime, I noticed that even the presidents, even the ECOWAS guys, were not too clean. Because how can you come to a country to have a dialogue but you come see the ‘putschiste’ [coup general Diendéré], as we nicknamed him, without the president’s authorisation, and not meeting the prime minister? You sit down to talk. No, that’s not normal!*

A forty-seven-year-old man also declared:

*But we took this as an occasion to learn some lessons. We saw how the brothers behaved in the region, especially the ECOWAS’s attitude regarding this crisis. It’s disgusting, really. It’s not encouraging at all that heads of state behave this way. Really, they should change their position. It doesn’t make us progress, it doesn’t make Africa progress.*

A civil society leader stated:

*It showed us the real face of those who were supporting us abroad. Some were too tolerant with the coupists, because it seemed that only the coupists could end the crisis.*

The reaction and activities of the international community were seen in many different lights. The international community was often used by political leaders and local associations to solve socio-political problems from the insurrection to the transition, yet its hesitation was quickly denounced by individuals with a deep understanding of international relations. This is why, even though they considered the PTFs' prudence and distrust towards the transitional government appropriate, our interlocutors considered the PTFs' actions as too managerial, in the sense that everything came back to the issue of holding elections as soon as possible. This attitude could be seen as infantilising Burkinabe political actors. The large number of international observers at the joint presidential and legislative elections confirmed the PTFs' desire to hold 'elections at all cost!'

## Conclusion

One of the essential elements of good democratic practices is the organisation of credible and transparent elections. This was also the case for post-insurrection Burkina Faso. Despite the suspicion of corruption and post-electoral conflicts (especially when it came to municipal elections), it was an achievement to hold these elections given the context of high expectations from citizens and pressure from the PTFs. While some individuals note with some bitterness that nothing much has changed at the central state level, it should be noted that this period resulted in the entry of a great number of 'new faces' into the National Assembly, municipal councils and the government. There are thus real signs of change, even if this change seems to be taking place in a certain continuity.



## Chapter 5. The institutions of a weakened state

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the Burkinabe state, especially the diversity of its public institutions. Although in the last few years the Burkinabe state has certainly been weakened, it should not be considered a ‘weak state’. In our view, the Burkinabe state is not lacking in legitimacy, but the weak capacities of its institutions and its actors justify the term ‘weakened state’.

### Security and democracy

The consolidation of a new Burkinabe democracy is confronted with a security challenge. The question of national security lies at multiple levels – international terrorism, domestic security, military security, and human security more generally. In fact, the country is at the heart of security problems in West Africa. For many years Burkina Faso was considered a host country for political opponents from a number of African countries. It was accused of serving as a rear-guard base for Ivorian rebels fighting President Laurent Gbagbo, and the country was a place of shelter for a number of Tuareg movements from north Mali. Burkina Faso’s central position meant that socio-political crises in Mali or Côte d’Ivoire could only be resolved with the help of Ouagadougou. Blaise Compaoré used this role as a mediator to raise his international profile. According to our interviewees, Compaoré’s fall from power seemed to put an end to a kind of ‘tacit accord between Burkina Faso and different rebel movements’. The first attacks by armed groups were observed in October 2015 in Samorogouan in the west of the country. This was followed in the northwest and the north of the country with the killing of policemen and gendarmes and the kidnapping of an Australian couple in the province of Soum (Djibo). The high point of insecurity was the terrorist attack at the Splendid Hotel and the Cappuccino Restaurant on Avenue Kwame Nkrumah in centre of Ouagadougou on 15 January 2016. After these attacks, repeated incursions of armed groups into Burkinabe territory have been a recurrent phenomenon, raising questions about border security. Curbing these threats requires coordinated actions with other countries from the region and international actors, for the question is closely linked to international terrorism.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), led by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, claimed responsibility for the 15 January 2016 terrorist attacks. The attacks had a heavy symbolic value by attacking places of entertainment and nightlife for Burkinabe and foreigners. As numerous people we spoke to indicated, the attacks deeply struck the public imagination and installed a cli-



*'I am African' – Cappuccino Restaurant two months after the 15 January 2016 attacks.  
Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

mate of fear in the population. There was serious doubt about the state's ability to adequately respond to terrorism. The state took measures to increase security within large cities and at the borders, but many interlocutors doubted the state's genuine ability to confront this new security threat. These doubts were reinforced in October 2016 following incidents with ex-RSP soldiers and another terrorist attack in the north, for which the Islamic State took responsibility. Balai Citoyen asked the state to seriously tackle security issues by placing 'the men that are needed where they are needed' (Lefaso.net, 17 October 2016). In the meantime, the province of Soum, not far from neighbouring Mali, was the site of several armed attacks, the deadliest of which (in Nassoumbou on 16 December 2016) led to the death of twelve Burkinabe soldiers. Since then, the government has seemingly decided to change direction. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Zagr , was fired in December 2016 and replaced by Major-Colonel Oumarou Sadou. After his nomination, Sadou was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General on 1 January 2017 and officially installed as Chief of Defence Staff on 4 January. A cabinet reshuffle in February 2017 saw Simon Compaor  placed in charge of security and Jean-Claude Bouda replacing the president of Burkina Faso as minister of defence and veterans (Burkina24, 20 February

2017). On the night of 22 March 2017, the Burkinabe army organised a raid against terrorists in the north of the country, leading to one death and the arrest of 18 suspected terrorists (Burkina24, 23 March 2017). And at the end of April 2017, the French Barkhane Forces took part in a joint operation that killed close to twenty terrorists close to the Mali-Burkina Faso border. On 13 August 2017, Ouagadougou was once again attacked by terrorists, when two gunmen entered Café Istanbul Aziz on Avenue Kwame Nkrumah and killed 19 people.

Running parallel to the problem of terrorism is insecurity linked to organised crime, which has risen to disturbing levels in the past few years. Some claim that this rise is due to weapons seized from military garrisons following the mutinies in 2011 (Chouli 2012) or to weapons coming into the national territory to prop up rebellions in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali or Niger. The difficulty in covering the whole national territory means that insecurity persists in the cities and above all in the countryside, where armed gangs regularly mount raids to seize the goods of peaceful peasants. As a result, local populations have decided to take matters into their own hands, leading to the rapid emergence of the Koglweogo.

The word 'Koglweogo', which comes from the Mooré *kogle* ('to protect') and *weogo* ('bush land'), applies to all members of the group Koglweogo. The term 'Koglweogo' has come to designate the totality of measures or strategies implemented to increase the security of the people in a village or given area.<sup>30</sup> This security operation requires the participation of all the members of a community to protect people, animals and natural resources – in short, the village itself. The Koglweogo have been around for a number of years in the north of the country, which is where the phenomenon started. But the escalation of domestic insecurity has contributed to the rising visibility of these 'self-defence groups' and their spread to a number of regions in Burkina Faso. In a very short space of time, the Koglweogo have risen to an important role in the non-conventional national security system and to a prominent place in larger public debates. The effectiveness of the Koglweogo is linked to their intimate knowledge of the countryside:

*Those who steal from us and kill us, they are our children, members of the community, and only shame and punishment can lead them to change. (Koglweogo leader in Mutations, March 2016)*

Their actions take place in a context where social norms are more important than the law (cf. Saint Lary 2009) and the state has difficulties fulfilling its sovereign duties. The role of the Koglweogo has provoked some public controversy.<sup>31</sup> A number of commentators consider it as a nascent militia; others have accused the Koglweogo of serious human rights violations. Others ap-

<sup>30</sup> In the 1990s, movements of traditional hunters (Dozos) played a similar role in the western part of Burkina Faso and in Côte d'Ivoire (Hagberg 2004; Hagberg and Ouattara 2010).

<sup>31</sup> The film *Koglweogo Land*, produced by Ciné droit libre and SemFilms, had its premiere in Ouagadougou on 6 October 2017 in the presence of filmmakers Ismaël Compaoré and Luc Damiba.

plaud the considerable role the Koglweogo have played in reducing insecurity in Burkinabe regions where armed gangs impede ordinary people's peaceful socio-economic activities. Numerous observers have raised the fear that these groups have perhaps other ends than security: sub-regional insecurity, jihadism, and the risk of instrumentalizing these local self-defence organisations are indeed genuine threats.<sup>32</sup> The actions of the Koglweogo may indeed displace the security question to such a point that it becomes 'obsessive and a threat to democracy' (Agamben 2014).

Burkina Faso's tumultuous history since 2014 has placed a spotlight on the army. The RSP was practically the only military corps that opposed the popular insurrection of 30–31 October 2014. While the RSP managed to hold onto power through its representative Zida, it began to pose a serious security problem to the transitional regime once Zida proclaimed his desire to be independent of his former RSP comrades. After an initial disturbance of a cabinet meeting on 30 December 2014, for alleged questions of back payments owed them, the RSP forced Prime Minister Zida to seek refuge at the palace of Mogho Naaba in February 2015. A third attempt to destabilise power occurred in June 2015. At the heart of the Burkinabe army the tension was palpable, with higher military authorities finding themselves powerless against 'RSP havoc'. These tensions exploded with the failed putsch in mid-September 2015.

The failed coup d'état resulted in the dismantlement of the RSP. But on 22 January 2016, ex-RSP officers attempted to take over the powder keg of Yimdi (Lefaso.net, 22 January 2016). At the same time, there were rumours that higher officers in the army were involved in, or at least passive towards, the coup d'état, which makes one think that the problem with the army is deep. To all this must be added the forced exile in Canada of former prime minister Zida (who became major general before leaving power). Two other generals, Diendéré and Bassolé, are in prison awaiting trial. All these higher officers have supporters in the army, on top of a group of ex-RSP members who remain faithful to the Compaoré family. Should one fear an implosion in the future? Nothing is certain. It remains the case that, despite the pact that the republican army made with the people to defeat the RSP coup d'état (Hagberg 2015), a certain malaise subsists within the army. In private, military officers continue to denounce favouritism along family or religious lines but complain about insufficient material and human resources – all these elements could indeed breed frustration and anger.

Security is an important question for Burkinabe democracy and should be treated as a priority for socio-economic development. Increased security not only allows the population to peacefully work for the country's socio-economic development, it also facilitates foreign investment and tourism. Insecurity can

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<sup>32</sup> The decree adopted by the Council of Ministers on 5 October 2016 stated that the police of proximity was created in order to 'organise local security initiatives and assure the continuation of their activities by councils made up of collectivities, administrative authorities, and security forces' (*Burkina24*, 5 October 2016).

also lead to implementing rigid surveillance systems that limit the freedom of citizens and undermine the consolidation of democracy.

## Justice

Justice was a prominent issue throughout the twenty-seven years of Blaise Compaoré's reign. On top of international discourse about democracy and social and political freedoms, questions related to justice took on a special dimension because of the number of violent and economic crimes that went unpunished in Burkina Faso. Even though the popular tribunals of the Sankarist revolution did not resemble what an independent judiciary should look like under the rule of law – the accused, for instance, had to prove their innocence rather than relying upon a presumption of innocence – questions of justice have for a long time been integral to Burkinabe political culture.

A public voice to calls for justice came about in 1989 through the creation of the Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP) presided by Halidou Ouédraogo. The MBDHP fought against the impunity of criminals and human rights violations, campaigned for greater attention to the disappearance of student Dabo Boukary and professor Guillaume Sessouma, and pushed for greater accountability about the assassination of professor Oumarou Clément Ouédraogo and a number of other cases. The president of the MBDHP became the president of the Collectif des Organisations Démocratiques de Masse et des Partis Politiques (CODMPP), a structure created in the aftermath of the assassination of Norbert Zongo in December 1998. During these struggles Halidou Ouédraogo was called 'the president of the real country'. Labour unions and human rights organisations often joined together in the fight against impunity (Hagberg 2002; Engels 2015a, 2015b). The Réseau National de Lutte Anti-Corruption (REN-LAC) also played a key role in denouncing embezzlement and corruption over the years, not the least in publishing yearly accounts on the state of the art of corruption in Burkina Faso (see Luning 2010).

Alongside these demands, there is a tradition of political legalism, which is to say that in Burkina Faso the law is often instrumentalised for political ends. This helped facilitate the consolidation of military power under Compaoré. While the construction of a state based on the rule of law was based on the creation of republican institutions, at the same time everything was put in place to protect the power of President Compaoré (Hagberg 2010; Hagberg et al. 2015; Hilgers and Mazzocchi 2006, 2010).

Impunity was one of the major issues that the pro-democracy movement focussed on. Expectations concerning justice were thus very high, as Prime Minister Zida stated during a commemorative march on the 16th anniversary of the death of Norbert Zongo held in the Place de la Révolution on 13 December 2014:



*Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida giving a speech on the Place de la Révolution on 13 December 2014. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

*I came this morning to hear what the people want. The message is very clear: people want justice. I can assure you that justice will be made for our comrade Norbert Zongo. Justice will be made for all those who fell under the murderous bullets of Blaise Compaoré. We'll work on it.*

Several interlocutors expressed their desire for justice in the following manner in December 2014:

*We are hoping for better conditions for all Burkinabe and we are hoping that the doors of employment will be open to all. We hope that there will be a real fight against impunity and corruption in this country.*

*We knew that in the former regime there was corruption and there was impunity. That is why we wanted political change in Burkina. If you look around, there is gold everywhere in the country and yet things are not better. Life is still expensive.*

For the Burkinabe, impunity is not limited to assassinations, violence or economic crimes. It also concerns the expectations of the ordinary citizen for transparent and fair legal treatment. For over a quarter of a century state power was associated not only with corruption and mismanagement but also injustice and impunity. Thus the demand for genuine justice, as opposed to 'two-tiered' justice, is central.

In March 2015 the transitional government organised the États généraux de la justice, which led to a national pact for judicial reform (Burkina24, 28 March 2015). The major challenge remains the independence of the judiciary from politics. In conformity with popular expectations for justice, the transitional government proceeded to reopen the cases of Norbert Zongo, Thomas Sankara and Ousmane Guiro.

This desire for justice is nonetheless held back by the fact that the stakes are very high and that MPP leaders had, until very recently, also led the CDP. Pending judicial cases could implicate current party leaders, which is why resolving these questions is also a genuine test for ‘the new Burkina Faso’.

## Municipal management

Questions related to municipal management also illustrate the weakened Burkinabe state. The country undertook a process of decentralisation in 1995, a dynamic that was further deepened by the adoption of four strategic framework laws in August 1998 and then the law on the General Local Authorities Code of 21 December 2004.<sup>33</sup> Municipal councils are tasked with overseeing the development of the municipalities they are managing in order to respond to the needs of the people (Sebahara 2000).

Until 2014, most municipalities were run by locally elected councillors from the CDP. There were management problems concerning urban planning, human and financial resources, the municipal estate, and public cleanliness, etc. Frequent public protests at this mismanagement led Compaoré’s last minister of territorial administration and decentralisation, Jérôme Bougouma, to strip certain mayors of their office; this happened to the mayor of Boulmiougou district (*arrondissement*) in the city of Ouagadougou and the mayor of the city of Koudougou.

The violence that broke out during the insurrection targeted a number of municipal councillors and damaged municipal infrastructures. Bobo-Dioulasso’s city hall was set on fire as was the residence of the central mayor and the residences of mayors of certain districts. These acts of vandalism targeting local governments show that the management of municipal affairs was highly controversial.

One of the key measures taken by the military transition led by Zida, at the time head of state, was the dissolution of municipal and regional councils on 18 November 2014. These were replaced by special delegations (Burkina24, 18 November 2014). Some mayors were arrested, placed in custody, or put under house arrest for crimes related to poor municipal management. To mention only a few cases, this was the fate of Salia Sanou and Karim Barro of Bobo-Dioulasso; Ad-

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<sup>33</sup> Law 040/98/AN (Orientation de la décentralisation au Burkina Faso) ; Law 041/98/AN (Organisation de l’Administration du territoire au Burkina Faso); Law 042/98/AN (Organisation et fonctionnement des collectivités territoriales); and Law 043/98/AN (Programmation de la mise en œuvre de la décentralisation).

ama Zongo from the municipality of Tanghin Dassouri; and Joanny Ouédraogo, Pascal Tiga Ouédraogo and Marin Casimir Ilboudo from Ouagadougou. Most of them were accused of embezzlement and misappropriation from land zoning operations (*lotissement*), in the granting of land plots or the awarding of public contracts, etc.

There was a strong focus on municipal management during the campaigns of the 22 May 2016 municipal elections. Several citizens brought up the problems of poor management from municipal councils. In Bobo-Dioulasso, the leader of the Parti Pour le Rassemblement et la Démocratie (PPRD), Youssouf Kassamba declared in a large public meeting organised in front of the main city hall:

*They have destroyed Bobo the way that Syria was destroyed, whereas there's not even a war in the city. The CDP has no shame, coming back here to go after city hall. In our tradition, when you're kicked out, you must go. When a man repudiates his wife, does she come back on her own initiative?*

An official from the organisation of garage owners, who supported ADF/RDA, stressed the following:

*The ADF/RDA wants to fight discriminations between citizens and promised to keep the city from falling further behind. The party promised to be in the field and to not do like former CDP mayors who spent all their time in the office embezzling money. Everyone here was disappointed with the former municipal council that was headed by Ibrahim Sanou. That is why we decided to support ADF/RDA and I mobilised the garage owners to that end.*

An unemployed graduate MPP activist denounced the poor management of the municipality under the former regime:

*In our district, when your street votes for CDP, they'll come and install the street lamps. But when things got heated last year, the municipal councillors understood that the stealing and embezzling that they used to do could backfire at them. We still need a new generation of councillors who will draw the lessons from what happened and work differently.*

The same theme was taken up in the municipality of Yako by an MPP official:

*City hall has been managed by proxy for a long, long time and no decision is taken without the agreement of the general and his wife [Gilbert and Fatou Diendéré]. The former mayors were like, if you excuse my French, string puppets that the couple was manipulating as they pleased. City hall was like their private property, and municipal workers were like their house staff.*

In order to bring about local development through municipalities, decentralisation had foreseen the transfer of competences and resources. But in the former regime, very little money was transferred, with one estimate stating that only 4% of total state revenues were transferred to municipalities (SCADD 2016). This underscores why the capacities of municipalities were hindered when it came to management, the reinforcement of competence, and governance.

As we can see, municipal management is at the centre of public debate and social mobilisation. The insurrection raised the issue of poor governance in the country's municipalities. This makes it, among other major challenges, an important challenge to resolve.

## Economic challenges

Post-insurrection Burkina Faso has been confronted with major economic challenges related to raising the population's standard of living. There are major demands when it comes to youth employment and accessibility to foodstuffs and basic social services. Indeed, the insurrection was not simply a fight against changing Article 37 of the Constitution; it was also the expression of a desire to improve the population's standard of living. One criticism made against Blaise Compaoré's regime was that the rich became richer and the poor poorer, with business done by people close to power. A number of people interviewed for this study noted that the transitional government was not able to satisfy a number of economic demands. The economic changes people expected did not concern macroeconomic indicators but rather the satisfaction of certain basic needs that would improve the population's quality of life. A food vendor in Bobo-Dioulasso had this to say:

*I went to the polling station this morning and I voted for Roch. I voted for Roch because as business owners, we want many foreign partners to enter the country to buy our products. The Chinese and the Indians are the ones who buy a lot of cashew nuts and sesame. Last year they didn't come because of the crisis. Diendéré's coup ruined everything. When I vote for Roch, I know that he has contacts everywhere in the world and that he'll be able to make foreigners come in and our products will sell. I voted for Roch because he can make our business thrive.*

The university crisis and the high cost of living have resulted in a great number of young graduates looking for jobs in either the public or private sector. During the insurrection, a great number of young graduates believed that Compaoré practiced a 'clan-based' management of power, which meant that competence and skills would not be enough to obtain a decent job. So long as he remained in power, one had to be in the regime's inner circle or connected to its chieftains. One of our interviewees explained:

*Unemployment is visible, it is visible. Many people have a university degree. Many sell sap-sap units.<sup>34</sup> Others are launderers – I know a lot of people with a law or an economics degree ... As for me I have a Master's degree in education and do I have a job? I knocked on all the doors – tired. I even went to the ministry, I wrote a book ... I have made several requests for an interview with the minister. Never. They didn't even call me once to ask me to come and talk about my book project. Never. Which means that youth is not even on their agenda, there's no planning, there are no projects for young people.*

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<sup>34</sup> The sap-sap is a way of transferring credits from one mobile phone to another.



*The Plan national du développement économique et social (PNDES) was a major political issue during the national celebration of 11 December 2016. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

Expectations remained high after Compaoré's fall from power. This is one of the reasons why the transitional government launched a special emergency programme focussed on young people's self-employment. After the presidential and legislative elections, a great number of youth expected their struggles to be resolved; they were convinced that the government and its partners had waited as well for the end of the transition to address these fundamental problems.

In rural areas, the buying up of land by large investors means that many young farmers find it difficult to find cultivable land. These young farmers thus join the ranks of the educated and uneducated unemployed. In the context of economic fragility where youth self-employment is a difficult proposition, the question can be raised as to whether the national education and training system

can adequately meet the country's socio-economic development objectives. In any case, the growing number of unemployed youth is a threat to the consolidation of democracy.

Recurrent protests against the high cost of living punctuated the final years of the Compaoré regime (Engels 2015b). The volatility in prices of basic foodstuffs led to food riots in major cities in 2008. Despite urgent measures taken by the government at the time, the problem was not solved. After the popular insurrection on 30 and 31 October 2014, a number of insurgents targeted large grocery stores in order to, as a number of commentators said at the time, 'take back the food stolen from the people'. The sight of mothers carrying sacks of rice and canisters of oil on their heads and babies on their backs spoke volumes. Even if all of the looters were not moved by the same intentions, the difficulty that people had in feeding themselves was a point often raised by our interlocutors. The issue of the 'high cost of living' was raised by many, with almost everyone believing that it is the state's responsibility to make basic foodstuffs accessible and available (Kibora 2015).

Another refrain concerns the economic difficulties of having access to basic social services: 'Everything is expensive'. At the heart of many public debates are such fundamental issues as access to drinking water, medical services and education. The government seems to have understood the message and seems to be taking the problem seriously by granting free health care for children under five years of age as well as the programme *Zéro corvée d'eau pour les femmes* ('Zero carrying water for women') – even if several months after they were put in place, the programmes have not had an overwhelming success.

The economic issues should thus be understood in terms of the government's ability to satisfy the basic needs of the people by targeting priority sectors like youth employment and the autonomy of women, as well as the population's access to foodstuffs and basic social services.

## Bad governance: corruption, embezzlement and nepotism

Governance remains one of the key concepts for understanding the socio-political transformations of Burkina Faso. The bad governance of leaders was frequently denounced by our interlocutors in different interviews, and bad governance is regularly denounced and debated, interrogated and critiqued in *grins*<sup>35</sup> and newspapers and in families and at meetings.

There are high expectations when it comes to governance. The insurgents believe that in a new Burkina Faso corruption, embezzlement and nepotism can

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<sup>35</sup> *Grins* are an urban phenomenon, consisting of groups of friends (mainly men) who meet to drink tea and discuss current events. *Grins* are very common in Mali and western Burkina Faso. For some time now, *grins* have also started taking place in Burkina Faso's central plateau.

no longer remain unpunished. One of our interlocutors said the following on the issue of impunity:

*The people did not take to the streets to protest against Article 37 only; Article 37 was just the straw that broke the camel's back. Injustice, corruption and the high cost of living were there. Whether Blaise left or not, the country does not belong to Blaise. The country need money now.*

Another interviewee said the following on bad governance:

*We have lived this for 27 years. If I subtract 27 years from my age, there's nothing left. That is why we said that even if we get 'a black plastic bag as president, we still want him'. The black plastic bag is something you don't need after you've used it. The expression 'black plastic bag' expresses a feeling of being fed up with a system that has stolen too much from the people. The black plastic bag is used when you buy bread, and then you throw it away. The point came when the Burkinabe preferred a black plastic bag over Blaise Compaoré.*

Yet while there were great hopes of putting an end to bad governance, the transitional government undertook measures that raised some questions. Former prime minister Zida is attacked from every angle nowadays for the bad governance during the transition. The most strident attacks on Zida's record come from former powerholders and bigwigs from the CDP, a party in which bad governance (corruption, embezzlement and nepotism) was widespread. At the same time, attacks from MPP proponents against the transition serve the interests of those who had been the architects of Compaoré's power. They fuel the accusations of those who believed that the transitional government was taking advantage of the situation to stuff its pockets.

## Conclusion

The concept of a weakened state raises the issue of return to order in daily life after a period of crisis. Because its legitimacy is not questioned *per se*, the Burkinabe state is not entirely weak, but definitely weakened. Furthermore, the popular insurrection was a defence of the law against those who wished to hijack it to their own ends (Hagberg et al. 2015). Likewise, the resistance against the coup d'état in September 2015 was justified by the right to civil disobedience enshrined in Article 167 of the Constitution, which stipulates that in the case of a coup d'état or a putsch, the right to civil disobedience applies to all citizens (Hagberg 2015).

This chapter has shown how the Burkinabe state is confronted with multiple challenges concerning security, justice, municipal management, the economy, and bad governance. These challenges raise in an acute manner the legitimacy of institutions when they are unable to satisfy the needs and demands of citizens.

## Chapter 6. Popular struggles and political governance

This chapter takes a step back in order to better situate the history of popular struggles and political governance in Burkina Faso. Beyond the insights derived from our fieldwork, it is necessary to analyse the 2014 insurrection from a Burkinabe postcolonial perspective in which labour unions and student associations play a leading role. A historical perspective is also required when it comes to understanding current political parties and their local roots. The chapter ends with a general reflection on democratic culture and the consolidation of the democratic gains in Burkina Faso.

### Popular struggles between exceptional and republican regimes

The analysis of popular struggles in Burkina Faso is intimately linked to the history of student and labour union movements. In the past two decades, both student and labour union movements have collaborated closely with human rights organisations.

One of the characteristics of the student movement has been its close ties with labour unions and political parties. Created in France in the 1950s, the Association des Étudiants Voltaïques en France (AEVF) has from the start been akin to revolutionary syndicalism: on the one hand, it fought for the material and moral values of students and, on the other, it worked to support the people's rights and emancipation. The student movement was at the forefront of the political combat, claiming to be the avant-garde of social and political struggles (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008). On 3 January 1966, students mobilised alongside workers to bring about the fall of the First Republic. With the founding of the University of Ouagadougou in 1974, the first students' association was formed on the campus, intensifying its protest actions. At the end of the 1970s, students were even expelled from the university for going on strike. The student movement had an ambivalent relationship with President Thomas Sankara's so-called Democratic and Popular Revolution in 1983. While the first committees defending the revolution (Comité de Défense de la Révolution or CDR) were created from a group of activist students, these committees were unable to persuade the leaders of the Association des Étudiants Voltaïques à Ouagadougou (AEVO), which became the Association Nationale des Étudiants Burkinabè (ANEB) (Bianchini

and Korbéogo 2008:43). In 1990, Dabo Boukary, a seventh-year medical student, paid for his political militancy with his life. Following the assassination of Norbert Zongo in 1998, the student movement, through the Union Générale des Étudiants Burkinabè (UGEB), became a founding member of the Collectif des Organisations Démocratiques de Masse et des Partis Politiques (CODMPP). The student movement's participation in various ways (strikes, marches, sit-ins, walkouts, meetings) in the struggles of the 'Collectif' was so decisive that the ruling powers had to make concessions to accommodate some demands, setting up an independent investigation committee and the Collège des Sages, among other measures (Hagberg 2002). In 2011, following the case of Justin Zongo, a student who was beaten to death while being held in custody at a police station in Koudougou, students spearheaded a vast protest movement which brought about a social and political crisis that resulted in the mutiny of soldiers from different garrisons across the country (Chouli 2012). This situation forced the Compaoré regime to undertake political reforms. The involvement of students in the popular insurrection of 30–31 October 2014 is thus embedded in several decades of activity.

*I started demonstrating on the evening of October 29 when the security forces were deployed in the field. We were already in the street when the security forces dispersed us. We had received the information to camp outside on the street through Facebook. About the day of October 30, we gathered in the morning at the Hôtel Indépendance and then we split up and a group walked towards the CDP headquarters – I was part of that group, and another one walked towards the National Assembly. After that we received phone calls telling us that the National Assembly was already burning and that was our motivation to set fire to the CDP headquarters. Seeing how enthusiastic the crowd was, the CRS [mobile police force] responded with force and we managed to put our hands on some people who were attacking us with clubs and we beat them up. Must be said that all materials goods were gathered in a pile and we set fire to them and no one could go home with looted goods. That was the main order for everyone: 'We don't take anything but we burn everything'.*

Successive ruling powers in Burkina Faso have always been wary of the student movement and ready to intervene to curb student protests. Following a policy of divide-and-rule, the Compaoré regime endorsed the creation of alternative student associations to compete with the ANEB, such as the Union nationale des étudiants du Faso (UNEF) or the Mouvement des étudiants du Faso (MEFA) in 2000. The radical student movement calls them 'puppet' associations due to their close ties with the regime and states that these associations aim to demobilise students, 'break up strikes' or 'sell out the struggle'.

Labour and trade unions have been closely linked to the student movement, especially when it comes to political struggles. There are six major labour unions: the Confédération Générale du Travail du Burkina (CGT-B), the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Burkina (CNTB), the Confédération Syndicale Burkinabè (CSB), Force Ouvrière/Union Nationale des Syndicats Libres (FO/UNSL), the Organisation Nationale des Syndicats Libres (ONSL) and the Union



*Labour unions are historically strong in the country. First of May is celebrated across the country, as here in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2012. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*

Syndicale des Travailleurs du Burkina (USTB). On top of this, there are also a number of autonomous unions. In 1999, the major labour unions created the Unité d'Action Syndicale (UAS) in order to present a united front in negotiations with the government. The UAS has implemented a rotating monthly presidency. The CGT-B, founded in 1988 when twelve national unions and seventy professional labour unions came together, is firmly on the political left. For a long time the CGT-B has been a thorn in the side of many governments. It has always been suspected of having close ties with the Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Voltaïque (PCR-V), a clandestine party founded in 1978. Labour unions in Burkina Faso have historically had positions and behaviours of collusion or opposition to different regimes. A crisis at the heart of the teachers' union, the Syndicat Unique Voltaïque des Enseignants du Secondaire et du Supérieur (SUVES), for example, led to the exclusion of around twenty activists during its August 1980 Congress. The following November, the Confédération Syndicale Voltaïque (CSV), which included, among its members, labour teachers' unions like SUVES and the Syndicat National des Enseignants Africains de Haute Volta (SNEAHV), supported the coup d'état led by Colonel Saye Zerbo. Three years later, though, the SNEAHV's twenty-seventh annual Congress in Bobo-Dioulasso condemned the 4 August 1983 rise to power of the regime led by Thomas Sankara, the Conseil National de la Révolution (CNR). Strong links

were shown to exist between this labour union and Joseph Ki-Zerbo's Front Progressiste Voltaïque (Kabeya-Muase 1989a, 1989b).

From the very start, Sankara's revolutionary movement received support from the CSV, which had clear ties to the Ligue Patriotique pour le Développement/Parti Africain de l'Indépendance (LIPAD/PAI), a member of the ruling Conseil National de la Révolution (CNR). After that, there was a complete paradigm shift in the form of a sacred union of sorts between labour and trade unions (regardless of their original ideology) against the revolutionary power, which became the main target of both liberal and conservative unions. In response, the regime did not hesitate to send its CDRs against those that it dubbed 'anarcho-syndicalists'. There was even a decree to limit union activities; one of its key components was repressive measures against union leaders. These repressive measures were continued in the Fourth Republic starting in 1991, with attempts to divide and buy off activists in order to weaken popular movements.

Labour unions have historically been at forefront of the struggle of the Burkinabe people, as one union leader explained to us: 'Unions have only accompanied the struggle and the victory of the people'. Yet the unions distanced themselves from protests organised by other civil society associations at the very end of Compaoré's rule, which relegated them to an inferior role in the popular insurrection. Unions were nonetheless pivotal in setting in motion the resistance to the September 2015 coup d'état by calling for a general strike and active resistance. According to a board member of F-SYNTER:

*The transition is the lesser of two evils compared with a reactionary coup d'état perpetrated, to top it all, by army officers loyal to Blaise Compaoré, who was kicked out by the people.*

Besides, a number of union leaders believed that the level of political awareness of Burkinabe people, which led them to resist all forms of injustice, was rooted in the different struggles that the unions had always been engaged in. One F-SYNTER leader declared:

*The resistance was not spontaneous and mechanical like some people think. There was an organisation that comes from the experience accumulated over several years of struggle.*

Another union member added:

*Today the level of awareness of the people, which has built up with various political struggles, is such that it could only lead to resistance against the coup.*

The student and labour union movements have been very important to Burkinabe political culture (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008; Engels 2015b) by integrating a global view of widespread social problems into the defence of their corporatist interests. At the same time, it should be noted that these movements concern a well-educated, French-speaking minority. While this does not take

*MBDHP's Chrysogone Zongmoré speaks at the seventeenth anniversary of the assassination of Norbert Zongo, Place de la Révolution, on 13 December 2015. Photograph by Sten Hagberg.*



away from their importance, it does illustrate the dilemmas that student and labour unions have to confront.

To these two historic movements of the popular struggle one must add the human rights movement, such as MBDHP, REN-LAC (Luning 2010), as well as coalitions like COPMPP (Hagberg 2002) and CCVC (Engels 2015b). These have played important roles, often in collusion with labour unions and student movements, in social and political struggles against authoritarianism.

## Local roots of party politics and the stakes of development

In order to deepen the discussion of popular struggles and political governance, it is important to consider the local roots of political parties. The capability of a party to anchor itself locally depends on a process of local political mobilisation. This, in turn, requires understanding the ways in which parties establish roots and interact with other actors and institutions. Every locality has its own history when it comes to the origins of different political parties. The person who brought the party into the village often becomes a reference point. Even if traditional parties, like the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), are involved within national politics and policies (Palm 2011), they too depend on local roots. This is why even the CDP, which was recognised as intimately linked to Compaoré's regime, had to choose viable and dynamic representatives in every locality to hold on to power (Hagberg 2013).

Most political parties operate in more difficult circumstances than the ruling party. Many are created by a strong and charismatic leader who lead the individual movement in a region or a province. Other parties reflect the traditional opposition in a constituency to the ruling powers. There are also leftist parties coming from the student and labour union movements. At any rate, though, every party needs to be anchored locally, which is what this section examines.

In Burkinabe municipalities, there is an interdependence between the leader and the party. The leader needs a national party, and the party needs a local leader. While this appears self-evident, its consequences are nonetheless striking. More often than not, a leader builds up power and popularity through a network of alliances and relationships rather than through a programme or an ideology: this is why party affiliation can change overnight. Before elections, in fact, the political situation can change radically and suddenly when a leader leaves one party for another, bringing to the new party his or her network of alliances. This change in party affiliation is sometimes called ‘political transhumance’, an apt term because a leader can leave one party but return to it later. Political transhumance is often motivated by monetary, material, administrative, or political rewards. One concrete example of political transhumance concerns a non-zoned neighbourhood at the outskirts of Bobo-Dioulasso. In October 2015, we met three MPP leaders from the area, who explained how and why they quit the CDP to join the MPP. In May 2016, though, as the list of candidates for the municipal elections was being established, the trio split up again: one entered the Nouveau Temps pour la Démocratie (NTD), the other re-joined the CDP, and the third entered la Nouvelle Alliance du Faso (NAFA). This example illustrates a more general tendency: political transhumance is more often linked to dissatisfaction over a politician’s position on the party’s electoral list rather than disagreement with the party’s political programme.

The local roots of political parties also depend on the traditional divisions and conflicts of a given locality. Traditional holders of power are often from the same end of the political spectrum, supported by the parties in power (the CDP yesterday, the MPP today). In certain places, the family of the village chief supports one party while the family of the earth priest supports another. This reflects the traditional division of power in the West African savanna between ‘people of power’ (*naaba* in Mooré, *dugutigi* in Jula) and ‘people of the earth’ (*tengsoaba* in Mooré, *dugukolotigi* in Jula). Mayoral elections in different municipalities have revealed these divisions. In Péni in the Houet province, there was violence between the MPP and UPC/NAFA candidates; even though all the candidates were of Tiefo ethnicity, the MPP supporters were upset that the alliance between the UPC and NAFA barred their candidate from office. Ethnic tensions have also frequently erupted. In Karangasso-Vigué in the Houet province, one person died after violence between groups of Tiefo and Vigué opposed the mayoral choice of Moose groups. On the surface, this seemed to concern disagreements between NAFA and MPP candidates. On 12 May 2016, NTD and MPP activists squared off violently in Béguédo, leading to many wounded. Due to continuing tension between activists from opposing parties, municipal elections could not be held in Béguédo and Zogoré in the centre-east and Bouroum-Bouroum in the south-west of the country, with the CENI scheduling these elections for 28 May 2017. If these few examples paint a rather dark picture of municipal politics (Burkina24, 22 June 2016), it is precisely in the process of local anchoring that the true obstacles for the consolidation of democracy are made apparent.

Party politics is also associated with diverse development projects and initiatives. Public services and development activities constitute ‘the substance of democracy’. Beyond elections and political positions, advantages and programmes, the interface between democracy and development should be explored to better showcase local anchoring. The smooth running of public services and the carrying out of infrastructure investments are constitutive, in some way, of the content of democracy; the notion of ‘democratic substance’ comes from debates over the difference between substantive democracy and formal democracy (Rudebeck 2009). The important relationship between politicians and local development is the result of the continuous search for financing sources for development projects, road construction, infrastructure, public services, and twinning projects. It sometimes appears that the mayor’s address book is more important than the economic viability of the municipality itself!

## Democratic culture and consolidating democratic gains

At the beginning of this study we highlighted that our use of the concept of democracy is non-normative. The concept of democratic culture thus needs to be clarified as it relates to the understanding of democracy held by our interlocutors. Is there a national view of democracy which is distinct from the universally shared norm? For many, democracy exists to protect the individual against state oppression and to liberate people. Democracy in this sense is a synonym for emancipation. At the same time, democratic practices take place in a context in which local cultural practices, like traditional chieftaincy, ethnic and religious relations, and norms of kinship and alliance, are omnipresent. Our analysis of the Burkinabe socio-political transformations shows that there are clearly observable elements of democratic practice and culture. In the following, we propose to focus on four aspects which could indicate the emergence of a genuine democratic culture.

Firstly, since 1991 the electoral process has received more and more legitimacy and credibility in Burkina Faso. The Burkinabe are now used to elections and electoral campaigns. The major change since 2014 is that the political arena is more and more open. While the MPP dominates now, the situation is a far cry from the total dominance of the CDP or its predecessor, the ODP/MT. If changes in power appeared to be impossible in a semi-authoritarian regime (Hilgers and Mazzocchi 2006, 2010), since 2012 there has been change in the air, and with the fall from power of Compaoré ‘nothing will be as before’. Different parties coexist within a rather diverse and pluralist National Assembly. The MPP holds 55 of 127 seats, compared to the absolute majority the CDP had with its 73 seats in 2007–2012 and 70 seats in 2012–2014. There has also been a major political reshuffling with the MPP and its government majority (PDS/Metba, PAREN, UNIR/PS, NTD), the UPC as the leader of the political opposition (CFOP), and the Coalition pour la Démocratie et le Réconciliation Nationale (CODER), which is made up of parties which held power under

Compaoré: the ADF/RDA, the CDP, L'AUTRE Burkina/PSR, Les Républicains, NAFA, RSR, UNDD, and Le Faso Autrement (Lefaso.net, 16 October 2016).<sup>36</sup> This reshuffle will certainly not be the last one in Burkinabe politics, but it shows that the National Assembly has three distinct political forces. The opposition meeting on 29 April 2017 confirmed the emergence of a new and ever-more clearly articulated political opposition.

At the municipal level, the major challenge is to bring about greater autonomy in the municipal management to counteract the inherent centralisation of the postcolonial state as well as the policies of bilateral donors (PTFs). Very few programmes or projects are directly run by municipalities without supervision from ministries in the capital. Thus decentralisation in name only needs to be solidified with more genuine activity at the municipal and regional level. A final issue of party politics is the internal democracy of political parties. The majority of parties are run from the top-down, with very little possibility for members to weigh in on the party programme. The frequent struggles for positioning within Burkinabe political parties are not matched by debates within these parties about their political programme. This is partly what explains political defections from one party to another, as a candidate who holds a low position on the electoral list of one party can quickly find him-/herself on the list of another party.

Secondly, civil society organisations are also undergoing a major renewal in this socio-political context. The issue for them is to find a role as a citizen's watchdog given that the regime now has electoral legitimacy. The term 'civil society' appears to be a catch-all category. We believe that it is important to think about organisations that are capable of continuing the fight for a new Burkina Faso. Civil society organisations like Balai Citoyen and other movements are clearly well-positioned to play the role of citizen's watchdog and to raise social and political issues in public debates.

Student and labour union movements are rarely cited in the category of civil society despite the fact that these movements have historically played a decisive role in Burkinabe popular struggles. Being associated with the extreme left and a radicalism inherited from the clandestine PCRV means that these movements are not considered civil society organisations which can receive external support. Yet student and labour union movements are important in the fight against any authoritarian attempt to abuse power. Given their social and historical developments, Burkinabe labour unions prefer to be described as 'social partners' rather than civil society organisations. Being placed in the latter category, in the view of the unions, reduces or even negates their traditional role in fighting for the satisfaction of the basic needs of workers and the larger population.

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<sup>36</sup> Le Faso Autrement's leader, Ablassé Ouédraogo, was very active in the opposition to the Compaoré regime in the days before the regime fell, but he was refused entry into the CFOP due to the party's ambiguous declarations and positions. The failure in the presidential and legislative elections led to a kind of despair which led Le Faso Autrement to found this coalition between former CDP allies that it had abandoned to create their own party.

Thirdly, freedom of the press and freedom of opinion matter immensely in Burkina Faso. These rights are fundamental to thinking about and constructing a new Burkina Faso: the absence of any fear of repression is the base upon which all other acquired democratic rights stand. A certain freedom of expression has existed for a long time, as Dubuch (1985) has noted that this was the case even in the middle of the Sankarist revolution. It is evident that jokes and satire are still part of Burkinabe political culture today. The CDP has for long been called the *Congrès pour la distribution des postes* ('Congress for distributing posts'), and the MPP is popularly meant to signify *Mouvement des postes perdus* ('Movement of lost posts'). Furthermore, joking relationships (*senankuya* in Jula, *rakiire* in Mooré) also play a major role in undermining the self-importance of political leaders.<sup>37</sup>

Freedom of the press in Burkina Faso is increasingly recognised at the international level, especially when it comes to the investigative journalism promoted by the Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo and other institutions. In its 2017 ranking of press freedom, released in April 2017, Reporters Without Borders placed Burkina Faso 42nd in the world; the country was the fifth-highest in Africa and the highest-ranked country from Francophone Africa (Lefaso.net, 27 April 2017).

Fourthly, the culture of tolerance and diversity so much appreciated in Burkina Faso has taken a hit in the past few years. Yet what can be called the Burkinabe paradox remains intact. Our analysis shows that despite some tendencies for ethnic and religious divisions, Burkinabe public opinion roundly rejects the instrumentalisation of ethnic and religious differences. The co-optation of ethnic votes by certain political leaders, as well as the mobilisation of traditional chiefs, raise concerns about democratic practices under the rule of law, but the situation is far from being worrisome, especially since every political party has its traditional chiefs.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to clarify the history of popular struggles and democratic gains in order to better understand Burkina Faso's socio-political transformations. Central have been student and labour union movements, as well as human rights organisations. It is also the case that the manner in which political parties are rooted at the local level seems pertinent to the analysis, as there is a kind of 'match-making' between the party and local leaders. In the final part of the chapter we have presented some thoughts about the emerging democratic

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion on the origin of joking relationship in Burkinabe political culture, see Hagberg (2006).

<sup>38</sup> For a long time, the Dima of Boussouma, one of the five major kings of the Moose, was seated in the National Assembly representing an opposition party. The same was true for Kupendieli of Fada N'Gourma. Ministers of Mogho Naaba's cabinet are often members of opposing parties (Larlé Naaba, CDP then MPP; Poé Naaba, UPC).

culture in Burkina Faso. This analysis appears relevant to understanding the underlying processes of the country's socio-political transformations. This is even more the case because in Burkina Faso 'everything is a priority'.

These socio-political transformations have also brought about calls for a new political morality. For instance, during election campaigns many candidates stated that they were not there 'for political talks' (*politiki kuma* in Jula) but to demand change.

## Chapter 7. Further lines of research

In order to lay the foundations for future analyses of the problems that ‘a new Burkina Faso’ must face, in this chapter we identify further lines of research.

### Army and politics

The army has always been very vocal in Burkinabe political life. The interaction between the Defence and Security Forces, on the one hand, and civil actors and institutions, on the other, is quasi-structural in its notorious recurrence at major stages of Burkina Faso’s political evolution. It is worth recalling that the first popular insurrection, which deposed President Yaméogo’s regime in January 1966, was led by labour union organisations. President Yaméogo handed in his resignation to the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sangoulé Lamizana. The insurgents were satisfied with this solution. Workers later even accepted the implementation of the very drastic economic measures that had brought about Yaméogo’s fall in the first place. The minister of finance at the time was a high-ranking army officer. After the Second Republic in 1970, the army came back to power in 1974. The return to normal life under the constitution in 1978 only lasted for two years. The army again interfered with politics to ‘put an end to the waste and corruption of the leaders of the Third Republic’. Since 25 November 1980, military officers have succeeded each other in power. The Sankarist Revolution in 1983, which brought young progressive officers to power, was an important stage in the politicisation of the Burkinabe army. As Thomas Sankara declared, ‘A soldier without any political or ideological training is a potential criminal’. What came next requires little commentary. In the twenty-seven years of Compaoré’s reign, power was predicated upon the manipulation of the army.

The interference of the army in politics is linked to the fact that the army is equated with force (*panga* in Mooré) in the cultural imaginary, which is indispensable to the exercise of power (*naam* in Mooré). Furthermore, the army symbolises order and discipline. Every time the country appears to be on the brink of social or political unrest, the army’s intervention in politics is welcomed. This proved true during the October 2014 insurrection and the failed RSP coup d’état in September 2015. Following the October 2014 insurrection, the insurgents almost sought out military officers to establish order ‘when power was in the streets’ (Hagberg et al. 2015). Certain interviewees argued that the army is the guardian of republican order, even of democracy. Some of those who had lived

through the 14-year reign of General Lamizana did not hesitate in calling it ‘the most democratic period in Burkina Faso’s history’.

The relationship between army and politics, especially the politicisation of the army, is a line of research worth pursuing. It would also be important to investigate questions that are still considered taboo, such as the military budget, the role of the army in security operations, and intelligence.

## Impunity, reparation and reconciliation

A large number of political crimes were committed in Burkina Faso, especially during the rule of Compaoré. Most of them remain either unpunished or have received only the most cursory judicial examination. The October 2014 insurrection, the failed military coup d’état in September 2015 and the mayoral elections in June 2016 created more victims of political violence, as a number of people lost their lives and others were seriously wounded or disabled for life. Support for victims was given by state agencies, charities and institutions. The Haut Conseil pour la Réconciliation et l’Unité Nationale (HCRUN), created for this end by a decree adopted by the government and under the supervision of the Presidency of Faso, has looked into the question. HCRUN’s mission is to ‘deal with the painful past in order to build a fraternal present’ and to allow Burkina Faso ‘to no longer drag, like a ball and chain, feelings of resentment that had been buried for too long and economic and violent crimes that had remained unspoken and unpunished for too long’ (Présidence du Faso, 22 March 2016). HCRUN’s mission will have to settle the remaining cases – there are about 5,000 of them.

The issue of reconciliation confronts all the problems associated with transitional justice, that is, judicial and non-judicial measures which alleviate the heavy past of human rights abuses. Justice must be promoted, victims recognised, and past abuses commemorated. There are four fundamental elements to transitional justice: recognition, trust, the rule of law, and reconciliation. In Burkina Faso, there have been many debates about national reconciliation in order to find the ways and means to allegedly reconcile the Burkinabe people. At the same time, the question of national reconciliation is mainly raised by political actors close to the fallen Compaoré regime, especially the new political coalition CODER. Should reconciliation amount to a general amnesty for past crimes?

Impunity remains a major challenge for the new Burkina Faso because it is the key issue by which ordinary citizens – whether ‘insurgents’, the ‘wounded’, ‘widows’ or ‘orphans’ – will judge whether the new regime is sincere or not. There is a long history of instrumentalising forgiveness in Burkina Faso (Hagberg 2007a; Kolesnore 2016). Thus it seems relevant to monitor, in detail and systematically, the process by which reparations are brought into place. It is important to explore all of the possible solutions for bringing about genuine social peace, including those in line with local cultures (Kibora 2009, 2011b). In particular, it is important that transitional justice concerns itself with ‘the messi-

ness of global and transnational involvements and the local, on-the-ground realities with which they intersect' (Hilton 2012:1). Indeed, how justice is perceived, lived, conceptualised and produced in different localities (villages and neighbourhoods) by NGOs and tribunals of national and international judicial bodies is another line of further research, because slogans such as 'Truth and Justice' concern both citizens and Burkinabe authorities.

## Women, power and decision-making

In these past two tumultuous years, women have taken an active part in the struggle for the return of democracy to Burkina Faso. But this participation has not necessarily brought about socio-political gains for women. Power as the authority, capacity or faculty to decide or lead remains linked to the masculine sphere. Women remain quasi-invisible in the spheres of decision-making in Burkina Faso.

The reasons for this invisibility are well known. Every attempt by women to enter politics is perceived as a deviance from or a challenge to masculine domination (Hagberg and Koné 2014). Yet the promotion of women's leadership is an important alternative for the emancipation of Burkinabe women. Thus, what kind of individual and collective actions can change these perceptions? It may be relevant to rethink the very essence of the political because, as Derville and Pionchon (2005) have argued, its rules, practices, culture and language are founded upon and institutionalised by and for men.

Socialisation through the patriarchal system urges individuals, consciously or not, to respect the traditional gender division of labour and the hierarchy of the genders. But given that Burkina Faso has undertaken strong measures to promote women, it would be useful to examine how women can emancipate themselves from these sexist and macho representations in order to take their place in decision-making and political bodies. This line of research could examine different aspects of the participation of women and girls in the popular struggle, political commitment, and decision-making. Furthermore, programmes to promote women, including those undertaken by the ministry in charge of promoting women's rights, should be analysed.

## Religious movements and actors in politics

An increasing number of religious movements are now involved in politics. The long involvement of the Catholic clergy was reinforced during the transition (Kolesnare 2016). The archbishop of Bobo-Dioulasso, Paul Ouédraogo, was among the list of names that circulated during the political transition as a possible president. The Collège des Sages in 1999 included some religious actors (Hagberg 2002). Pentecostals have been heavily involved in politics (Laurent 2009), and Muslim movements now have an increasing public presence in political debates (Kaag and Saint Lary 2011).

The proliferation of radical Islamist movements has raised questions in neighbouring countries and also in Burkina Faso. Even if diversity and religious tolerance are strong Burkinabe values, it is important to better understand the political involvement of different religious movements. According to the International Crisis Group (6 September 2016), ‘the rise in religiosity does not mean a higher risk of violence – a distinction rarely made in the current debate on violent extremism and religious radicalization’. That being said, many Muslims are frustrated at their relatively low level of political representation, especially since Islam is the religion practiced by the majority of Burkinabe (between 60 and 70 per cent are Muslims). One line of further research would be to study the political goals of religious movements and leaders, more precisely how religious elites are involved in politics.

## Civil society organisations, labour unions and political parties in a new landscape

Civil society has become a catch-all term in Burkina Faso. Sometimes people refer to civil society organisations, into which NGOs are included. Sometimes labour unions and student movements are included into civil society. There is a civil society that is partisan by virtue of being linked to political parties; there is another civil society that looks for support from parties and organisations. Even the clandestine PCRV is suspected of having ties with civil society organisations, notably among labour unions and student associations.

Accounts on the links between civil society and political parties should be considered with caution, because accusing civil society of political bias is an effective way to discredit these organisations. Stories of these supposed links also have a long history in Burkina Faso. The ruling power has always sought out the support of organisations (of women, youth, war veterans, workers). The most telling example of a civil society organisation that is fundamentally political is, of course, *Fédération Associative pour la Paix et le Progrès avec Blaise Compaoré* (FEDAP/BC). This organisation was dissolved by the transitional government in May 2015 following an investigation conducted by sworn officials on its actions: ‘The investigation reveals that, contrary to the requirements of its status as an apolitical association, the FEDAP-BC took political positions that contributed to deteriorating public order on 30 and 31 October 2014’ (Fasozine, 13 May 2015). Furthermore, one should not obscure that fact that, at the time, any claim against the regime could be accused of being ‘communist’ or ‘orchestrated by the opposition’ (Hagberg 2010; Hilgers and Mazzocchetti 2010). Already in the 1980s, the power tussle between Thomas Sankara’s CNR and the labour unions led the ruling powers to calling union leaders ‘enemies of the people’, ‘anarcho-syndicalists’ and ‘counter-revolutionaries’ (Kabeya-Muase 1989a, 1989b).

One line of research would be to analyse the relationship between civil society and political parties through a long-term ethnographic field study. Indeed, the

supposed links of the close ties between civil society and political parties raise more questions than answers. That is why a political and institutional analysis, supplemented with an ethnographic study, can better elucidate these relationships.

## Social mobilisation and the power of the street

Taking into account the 2014 insurrection and the 2015 resistance, the Burkinabe case is relevant when thinking about further research on social mobilisation and the power of the street. The power of the street, which some called *ruecratie* ('street power') in the hot, revolutionary period, raises questions when it comes to respecting institutions of the republic and, more generally, public affairs. Buildings and homes vandalised and burned down during the insurrection were certainly considered 'collateral damage', as several of our interlocutors put it. These were unavoidable sacrifices to removing Blaise Compaoré from power, but such destruction is inconceivable in normal times. Likewise, the popular resistance to the coup d'état, with the Burkinabe people taking to the streets, showed the determination against this abuse of power (Hagberg 2015).

Social mobilisation and the power of the street are for this reason a line of further research which would aim to analyse the foundations explaining why 'the glue holds' in the precise context of Burkina Faso. This line of research also puts Burkinabe political legalism into perspective, wherein the October revolution *à la sauce burkinabè* was undertaken to defend the constitution against leaders who wished to change it. This Burkinabe legalism would nonetheless be challenged and put to the test if the power of the street creates uncivic behaviour or devolves into anarchy.



## Chapter 8. Conclusion

Since 2014 Burkina Faso has made the headlines of African and even, from time to time, international news because of its turbulent socio-political situation. After the popular insurrection which put an end to President Blaise Compaoré's twenty-seven-year reign, the country went through a year of transition, which was marked by a failed coup d'état fomented by ex-president's security forces (RSP) attempting to reinstate the old order. After this major event in national political life, Burkina Faso organised peaceful legislative and presidential elections and then municipal elections.

This study has focused on these different moments in Burkinabe political life in order to pinpoint the individual and collective logics underpinning the ongoing social and political transformation of the country and to analyse the consolidation of democratic gains. This study analyses a country during a precise and limited period in its public life. Paradoxically, this study also constitutes an attempt to contribute to Burkina Faso's political history, because our analysis stresses the importance of a Burkinabe political culture rooted in its postcolonial history. What was initially a study of politics from the viewpoint of the municipality and spheres of socio-political opposition was reoriented in order to conduct anthropological fieldwork on the perceptions and perspectives of citizens on Compaoré's fall from power and the political transition that followed.

The study is based on research about politics such as it was seen and experienced by ordinary citizens in Burkina Faso. The study is thus a 'concentrate' of problems linked to discourses and practices, hoping to lead to a more general understanding and reflection about democratic culture in 'a new Burkina Faso'. It is worth recalling that the objective was to synthesise our research by placing a particular focus on democratic consolidation. Beyond anthropological fieldwork, our methodology included documentary research and a collective work of synthesising research data in order to represent the different points of view of our interlocutors, who for the most part do not have access to the media and are not particularly active or influential on social media.

As a conclusion, we would like to make several final remarks on the different problems studied, followed by a larger reflection on democratic culture.

A first remark is that the Burkinabe state remains heavily centralised despite the decentralisation effort undertaken nearly twenty years ago and the complete municipalisation implemented over a decade ago. Everything happens as if the centralisation continues to prevail in all public services and also at the level of donors (PTFs). More generally, a lot of business and affairs are still managed

in Ouagadougou! While there is rhetorical support for decentralisation, that does not necessarily translate into a transfer of competencies and resources to regional and communal levels (Hagberg 2009). But it is in municipalities, in the municipal council and through associations, that democracy is constructed and articulated in daily life. In municipalities claims to rights and freedoms are made concrete – whether these concern housing, health services and education, access to water or waste management. Thus, as articulated in daily practice, there remains a gap between democracy as a form and democracy as a substance.

Secondly, we believe that civil society has to be rethought when it comes to the actions and strategies of post-insurrection Burkina Faso. The main question is how to reinforce civil society without simply privileging some civil society organisations that benefit from public aid provided by PTFs. For example, student associations and labour unions have been left out of many internationally funded development projects.

Thirdly, it must be admitted that despite the major ambitions to promote women in politics, the number of elected female politicians is decreasing. At the time of the mega-party CDP, the 2009 law on quotas led to certain gains, with 19% women MPs in the National Assembly in the period 2012–2014. Since 2015, the National Assembly has become more diverse with large parties having numerous seats, but at the same time there has been a significant decrease in female representation, with only 9.44% women MPs. The same state of affairs holds true in municipal and regional councils. Thus, despite the quota law requiring that one-third of candidates to female and support for female participation in politics, the strategies of intervention to increase women in power must be rethought. Furthermore, even though the two female presidential candidates were described as ‘fighters’ and ‘courageous’, they were not able to garner much support. To put it bluntly, their share of the vote was paltry. Saran Sérémé-Séré received 1.73% of the votes, which put her in sixth place, and she was not even elected as an MP for her party, the Parti pour le développement et le changement (PDC). The independent candidate Françoise Toé received 0.26% of the total votes, putting her in the last place for the presidential election (fourteenth).

Fourthly, the democratic governance of political parties is a key issue in Burkina Faso. With 99 political parties, political formations, and independent coalitions participating in the 2015 elections, the question of the internal democracy of parties raises the problem of their institutionalisation and how their programmes (if they have one) are made. There are two tendencies within Burkina-be political parties. On the one hand, the large parties need to reinforce internal democracy so that decision-making is rooted in the wishes of the electoral base rather than being seen as impositions from high party leaders. This concerns parties that have ruled or were close to the ruling powers. On the other hand, the small parties identify themselves in the person of their leader, making them a ‘one-man show’, in which the leader leans upon his or her base to better negotiate coalitions or promising deals. Furthermore, local parties, like the Parti Pour le Rassemblement et la Démocratie in Bobo-Dioulasso (PPRD), are often

associated with a family, a neighbourhood, or a cause. The recent development of three political formations at the National Assembly is an interesting element in all this. The National Assembly currently has, firstly, the MPP and parties of the presidential movement (PDS/Metba, PAREN, UNIR/PS); secondly, the UPC as the leader of the opposition; and the CODER with brings together the CDP and its allies (the ADF/RDA, L'AUTRE Burkina/PSR, Le Faso Autrement, Les Républicains, the NAFA, the RSR and the UNDD). At the same time, the CODER parties remain to this day part of the political opposition led by Zéphirin Diabré. This new development raises the issue of political support from the party base because alliances made in the National Assembly tend to remain there.

Fifthly, security questions are particularly acute in Burkina Faso and in the whole West Africa. A fundamental problem is that democratic and civic rights can, over time and through a process of normalisation, be sacrificed in the name of security. It is importance to reinforce the human security of citizens. Rather than being guided by the logic of armed military security, human security opens up interesting and vital perspectives. Human security, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has four essential characteristics: it is a universal concern; its components are interdependent; it is easier to ensure through prevention; and human security is people-centred (UNDP 1994, 23–24; see also Hagberg et al. 2017). Human security has at its core a concern with the individual and the community rather than the state. This is why civil society should not be brought in as an isolated partner but an integral part of security measures. Focussing exclusively on military security will not resolve the problem. It is from this perspective that the self-defence movement of the Koglweogo raises the problem of how to bring security to Burkinabe cities and villages without violating civic and human rights, most notably the presumption of innocence and the treatment of presumed criminals and other suspected individuals.

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Burkina Faso – the country of upright people – went through dramatic socio-political transformations before, during, and after the fall of Blaise Compaoré's regime. These transformations have had an impact on the conduct of politics and the meanings given to political practices. In the collective fervour that followed the October revolution *à la sauce burkinabè*, popular expectations of a new Burkina Faso where 'nothing will be as before' were immense, even unrealistic. At the same time, many Burkinabe citizens argue that the 'same faces' and the 'same practices' are recurring after the presidential, legislative and municipal elections. One could say that rupture seems to be taking place through a certain kind of continuity.

Beyond these specific points, some general remarks should be made about our approach to represent perspectives and views of the people, about citizens

‘from below’, and the democratic culture of post-insurrection Burkina Faso. The analysis of the representations and practices of ordinary citizens aims to shed light on received wisdom and conceptualisations from above about political change in order to lead to a strongly empirical analysis on what is ‘seen and experienced’ by ordinary citizens. Referring to ‘ordinary citizens’ or the ‘people’ is, of course, problematic if one hopes to represent a specific ‘voice of the people’. To counteract the depoliticisation of ‘ordinary citizens’, where citizens are seen as counterweights to dirty politics (cf. Clarke, quoted in Carrel and Neveu 2014:23–24), we have sought to present the discourse of our interlocutors with an analysis of the context in which their statements were articulated. Thus our approach takes the point of view of Burkinabe citizens very seriously without giving in to ideological populism (cf. Olivier de Sardan 2008).

In Burkinabe political history notions of the ‘people’ and the ‘popular’ are so rooted in daily language that one might have the impression that these notions were born of manipulation and demagoguery. It is clearly the case that so-called popular demands are at times orchestrated by the men in power since everything is possible ‘in the name of the people’. But it is also the case that these same notions were used to mobilise against changing Article 37 and the RSP’s failed coup d’état. So-called popular grievances, demands and actions have allowed the people of Burkina Faso at crucial moments in the country’s history to ensure that the limits of the unacceptable are not transgressed. Despite abuses, there always remains a sense of responsibility and morality in Burkina Faso. Up to this point, this sense of responsibility and morality has allowed the Burkinabe to avoid the worst-case scenario when their country was on the brink of a catastrophe. On top of the democratic gains and the political stakes that we have analysed in this study, it is in this sense of citizen responsibility and political morality that the seeds of a new Burkina Faso can be imagined and take root so that a genuine democratic culture *à la sauce burkinabè* can prosper.

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