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An Evaluation of Shortfalls in Managing Public Urban Lands in Developing Countries: A study of Burundi

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Abstract

Public urban land management has been a challenge in developing countries despite efforts engaged by governments and development partners. Taking Burundi's case study, this paper identified shortfalls observed in public urban land management for developing countries. A qualitative research approach in data collection and analysis was applied. The desk review of different reports and policy documents was used and interviews with local leaders and influential people were conducted in the case study to collect participants' views and perceptions. Furthermore, a Key Informants Interview (KII) with high-rank authorities was prepared to confirm the interview and desk review findings. Then, data were analysed through the content analysis technique. The findings revealed that four shortfalls in public urban lands management include the legacies of colonialism in ownership of and access to land and politicisation of land management; the existence of a hidden hand in all land deals; laissez-faire in land management by top leaders to create a chaotic situation in land management; and lack of partnership between public and private partners in land management. The paper recommends that the Government of Burundi collaborate with stakeholders to afford the application of new approaches and technologies in public urban lands management.

Keywords: Burundi; Developing countries; Land; Land management; Public urban lands

1. Introduction

Effective land management is recognised as the only way to overcome some land-related challenges in developing countries. Enemark (2006, p.13) defines land management as ‘the process whereby land resources are put to good effect’. ‘Good effects’ in achieving sustainable development (Barry, 2018; Dawidowicz & Żróbek, 2017); improving community well-being (Fligg & Robinson, 2020); and attaining sustainable urban development (Adigeh & Dagne, 2020; Bondarev et al., 2019). These are some of the positive sides of effective land management for the country if land management projects are implemented. But what is mostly observed in some developing countries are systems that seem to manage land for the public interests but with a kind of hidden agenda

The land sector in developing countries has been among the corrupted sectors and a conflict borne coupled with the interference of politics and elitism (Olima, 1998). The emergence of new

approaches that came to establish effective land administration systems such as the Participatory approach in land administration (Salter et al., 2010), pro-poor land administration (UN-Habitat, 200; and Hendriks et al., 2019), and the famous Fit-For-Purpose (FFP) approach that is being sensitized to be implemented in most of developing countries (Musinguzi & Enemark, 2019; Sudarman et al., 2019) are piloted or tested, but no positive results are observed in the land sector. Furthermore, land management has known new technologies, and Digital Applications for land-related problems are addressed (World Bank, 2017; Chukwuma, 2021). However, how far some developing countries like Burundi have used these approaches and technologies to manage public urban lands is not documented. Therefore, this paper documents the shortfall affecting ineffective public urban lands management in the highly urbanising city of Bujumbura despite the existence of institutional legal frameworks coupled with the application of new technologies and digital applications in land management. A desk review complemented with a Key Informant Interview is applied to generate information used to achieve the aforementioned objective. The purpose is to identify these shortfalls and communicate them to decision-makers in land-related sectors to work on them to establish effective land management in their countries.

2. The conceptual framework of public urban lands management

The concept of land management, in general, emerged from the proper use of land so that land degradation and land resource depletion can be addressed. Whereas in rural areas the concept of land management is well known for addressing problems related to hunger, nutrition, and land degradation (Radstake, 2017); in urban areas, land management has the objective of effectively administering land for housing improvement (Jenkins, 2015); combat urban poverty by availing land to the poor (Olima, 1998); attain planned urban growth and development in all aspects (Hansson et al., 2019; Vargas-Hernández & Zdunek-Wielgołaska, 2019); and afford a sustainable built environment landscape (Olima, 1998). More than another thing, land management in urban areas is needed especially for public urban lands.

Land management is a process of achieving proper land use that can lead to sustainable development (Enemark, 2006). Argued by experts in the land sector that land administration is put in front of all other initiatives to operationalise land management and effective land administration leads to proper land management is conditional on establishing strong legal and institutional frameworks (Burns, 2007; Enemark, Bell, et al., 2014). However, these legal frameworks that are

in one way or another formulated and adopted by politicians and powerful people are still doubtful in achieving sustainable land management. Some authors have shown how the interference of politically and economically powerful people in land management has used this legal and institutional framework in grabbing and swapping in their case studies (Batterbury & Ndi, 2018; Bae, 2019). Foreigners who came to invest in Africa have even considered African land as ‘for sale’, seeing it as cheap or even free, and land as empty (Hall, 2011). This conception has encouraged foreigners and local powerful people to participate in massive land acquisitions under the umbrella of local investment.

In Kenya, Olima (1998) has for decades pointed out how land acquisition by powerful people (local elites and foreigners) is informally and or formally accessing land despite the land policy and other regulations that prohibit large land acquisition in public holdings. The same in Ethiopia and Ghana, the rush for land is observed and done by economically and politically powerful people (Rafiee & Stenberg, 2018). Local communities and civil societies (where exist) have vividly contested the practice without success (Ndi, 2017). The way land is managed is as if there are no policies and institutions that are in place to effectively manage land. However, legal and institutional frameworks are there and sometimes contribute largely to worsening the situation (Awuah & Abdulai, 2022) . The observed results in Burundi for example show that the existence of legal and institutional frameworks does not respond to challenges related to land management, but rather, creates further challenges to land rights and gender equality in land access and acquisition. However, there a cases where the existing institutional framework causes problems that include power overlap and chaos in land management (Clement & Amezaga, 2013; Obaikol, 2014). This is contrary to developed countries. The existence of a legal and institutional framework supports the decentralisation of services in the land sector; used to win the battle against corruption up to zero cases of corruption and nepotism in the land sector; and afford to equip and train local land officers in land management (Williamson, et al., 2010). Strong legal and institutional frameworks are cited to be the foundations of acceptable transformations and orientations in land deals (UNECE, 2005). The idea is that these frameworks smoothen the introduction of new approaches and technologies applied in revolutionising land administration systems to achieve effective land management.

The pro-poor approach was appreciated as a tool that is a locally practicable, integrative, implementable, and scalable alternative approach to participatory in promoting land rights and improving access to land (Hendriks, et al., 2019). With its definition by UN-Habitat (2007) to be an approach that considers widely the poor people's needs, in urban areas, the approach was recommended as a tool that will help to tackle the informal settlement by providing safer lands and avoiding eviction as well as shanty resettlement (UN-Habitat, 2004). The approach is built on involving local leaders and landowners in the process of land management and is coordinated to solve recurrent problems that involve the majority of society. However, the results were not as envisaged. In urban areas, accessing land legally, including and integrating poor people in the planning process is important, but not easy to afford. The approach works easily with conventional land administration systems, allowing experiences and best practices to be integrated into the approach (Hendriks et al., 2013). The authors noticed that the approach involves civil societies and researchers as well as working in customary, informal, and post-crisis settings. However, it is not easy to apply in all countries. The existing land administration system is still weak and poor in managing land, especially public urban lands that everyone needs to access. UN-Habitat (2007) disclosed that political and technical issues affect negatively results and need a thorough analysis in some contexts. Still, considering the aforementioned critics, we suggest that the approach cannot be taken as a blueprint tool in land management. Yet, we can maintain the important part of it and be associated with other approaches. Further, fit-for-purpose which is people, process, and technology-centered was developed to cater to the needs of countries to achieve effective land management.

The fit-for-purpose approach is applied in many countries that want to embark on systematic land registration programs. The approach was appreciated to meet the needs of people, especially the poor and vulnerable group of people who are challenged with enjoying the bundle of rights. Supporting land tenure security for tenure for all and managing land use and natural resources sustainably, Enemark et al. (2014) mentioned these attributes as the positive characteristics of the FFP approach. The FFP is considered a 'game-changer' in land management since it is affordable and sustainable. Specifically, the approach is built on flexibility in the process, inclusivity in participants, participation at all levels, affordability in cost, reliability in results, attainability in time, and upgradability in technology (Barry, 2018; Sudarman et al., 2019).

Countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana are referred to as best practice cases in revising their legal and institutional frameworks as well as spatial frameworks before embarking on the fit-for-purpose approach. For example, Ali et al. (2010) showed how the Government of Rwanda systematically started by formulating a new policy and other land-related regulations, followed by establishing land governance institutions; then developing strategies and testing them, and finally implementing these strategies at the national level to reach exemplary Rwanda's land reform. The process was almost the same in the other countries above-cited except that the results are different due to the country's context. Recently, Mozambique and Uganda cases have reportedly affirmed and confirmed the effectiveness of this approach in massive land registration. It is pointed out by Balas et al. (2021) that 5 million parcels were registered and 4000 communities delimited within a short time and low cost. In Uganda, the approach envisages registering properties through unconventional approaches that are time and cost-saving (Musinguzi & Enemark, 2019). The approach is attributed to determining general boundaries rather than fixed ones. To achieve these, aerial imageries are preferred against cumbersome field surveys. It is learned that accuracy is related to the purpose rather than to the technical standards; and allows the opportunities to update, upgrade, and improve after the process (Enemark, et al., 2014; Sudarman et al., 2019). Furthermore, those who used this approach agree that it fits within many developing countries' contexts given that they use affordable technologies in building spatial infrastructure and apply a participatory approach in the whole process.

The FFP is known to apply affordable technologies in constructing the spatial framework and data gathering and processing. But we do not share the same opinion. Some countries cannot afford the so-called 'affordable technology'. For example, the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) also known as drones considered 'a viable technology' useful to acquire aerial images (Chukwuma, 2021; Stöcker et al., 2022); application of mobiles phones to support the delivery of land administration services (Stokke, 2019) and other technologies are not easy to stock up by most of developing countries. Even the list of technologies suggested by the World Bank (World Bank, 2017) is not easy to afford for some developing countries. Therefore, governments in developing countries find themselves forced to depend on foreign aid, NGOs, and CBOs which in some cases land management is not their area of intervention.

In general, the empirical data show that the approach is successfully implemented in countries that are politically, economically, and socially stable and see systematic land registration as a way of catching up with developed countries. Land administration is also subscribed to the implementation of Global Agenda and politics such as Sustainable Development Goals and New Urban Agenda consecutively. Figure 1 summarises the conceptual framework on components that should constitute active land management in a holistic way and public urban lands in particular. The figure shows that effective land management should be operationalised through legal and institutional frameworks.

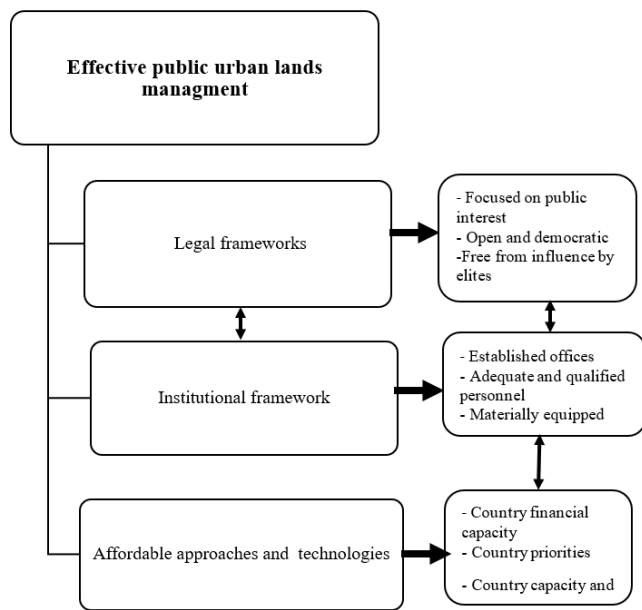


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of effective public urban lands management

Source: Author's construct based on the literature review (2022)

3. Research Material and methods

This research applied a qualitative research approach with a case study method. Applying qualitative research is known as the best way to understand, interpret, and in some cases contextualise the perspectives of actions (Macdonald & Headlam, 2008); and the use of case study comes to harness the arguments since it is subscribed to qualitative methodology (Rebolj, 2013). Other authors like Sturman (1997) and Simons (2009) showed at different times how the case study approach helps to comprehensively and thoroughly describe the case and analyse it. The paper described the management of public urban lands in Bujumbura as a highly urbanising city.

To successfully undertake the research, qualitative data were required and collected by using different data collection methods and tools. Information on legal and institutional frameworks, as well as private actors involved in public urban management, are collected through a desk review. In this research, this technique helped to identify and summarise some articles of legal texts that support the management of public urban lands. Further, the so-far achievements and ongoing activities performed by responsible institutions in land management are shown. This consisted of a thorough reading of recent annual reports for 2015-2021 provided by the land Management office, cadastre office, Urban Planning office NGOs, and Local Associations. Also, government policy documents such as the Land Code of 2011; Land Policy of 2010, Urbanism, Housing and Construction Code, Bujumbura Master Plan 2018 -2043, and Burundi National Plan 2018-2027 have been consulted to gather information about legal frameworks.

Moreover, this paper used the interview technique to gather information from key informants, local leaders, and civil community leaders in Bujumbura City. For key informants' participants, an unstructured interview was applied. Participants were selected through simple purposive sampling procedures. This technique is described by Bryman (2012) to be a strategic technique for selecting useful participants who can deliver needed information about the research objective or question. Therefore, 12 participants were selected purposely and included two officers from the Land Management Office, two from the Urban Planning and Management Office, two from the office of OBUHA¹, four from LADEC, GIZ, and ZOA, and two from the office of Cadastre, and Land Title. These participants helped to map the institutions that are in place to manage land in Bujumbura; and to cite and describe the approaches and technologies used to manage public urban lands. The unstructured interview was also used by local leaders and community leaders to confirm the results from the officers at the city council level. The two techniques helped to collect data that covered the legal and institutional framework, approaches, and technologies used to manage public urban lands. The data were analysed through content analysis. Bryman (2012,p. 289) defined content analysis as 'an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and a systematic and replicable manner. The author attributes content analysis to be transparent, permitting longitudinal analysis, unobstructed, with less level of ethical scrutiny, high level of flexibility, and allows the generation of information

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from social settings more easily than other methods. It has to be noted that the content analysis can be done in a descriptive approach, inferential, predictive, and psychometric (Neuendorf, 2002). All these types of content analysis are valid but, the descriptive approach is selected for this research. It allows the researcher to make conclusions from many texts recorded or read from documents. The information is presented in text and table format to assure readability and presentability.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Pre-colonial Era and land management in Burundi

The existing literature does not give details on written policies or decrees formulated in the pre-colonial era, but some books acknowledge that traditional arrangements in land management existed. The King and its notables were the custodians of the land for the Burundian people. Access and other rights were reserved for the individual whereas communal holding remained the center of the land tenure system.

4.2 Colonial Era and land management in Burundi

The colonial era is subdivided into two periods according to occupations and world supremacy. Burundi was first colonised by Germans from 1890 -1916 when it was defeated in the First World War, and by Belgium from 1916-1962. The land issues were handled differently.

- **Burundi under German Occupation:** During the occupation, Germans were not significantly involved in changing the land tenure system. However, it has the power to transfer land to missionaries through selling, allocation, and land gratis. The missionaries were the most beneficial of land transfer by Germans.
- **Burundi under Belgium occupation:** In 1916-1962, Burundi was annexed to Congo-Belgium colonies to properly control and exploit the Congo's natural resources. Burundi and Rwanda had the potential for human resources to be mobilised in eastern mining site exploitation. During Belgium's occupation, many decrees and land laws were imposed on the Ruanda-Urundi land tenure system to properly grab and swap land from natives. Normally, no new laws and decrees were adopted for Ruanda-Urundi, but the execution of

previous land laws was formulated for Congo-Belgium. Despite the human resource that was targeted when Belgium requested Ruanda-Urundi to be annexed to its colony, land has been the second target in Burundi due to its fertility and location (along Tanganyika Lake). In a few words, the colonial period had nothing to boast about in land management for Burundians except that land was taken from natives and attributed to missionaries. The actual situation shows that the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican, and Pentecost churches hold larger lands in urban and rural areas than other Government institutions.

4.3 Burundi and land management from 1962 to 2000

The post-independence period was characterised by many civil wars based on ethnic and regional supremacy. Many Burundians specifically Hutus had fled the country at different times. Their land was nationalised or acquired in fraudulent arrangements by individuals. Therefore, legal texts adopted during this period were to legalise these types of land acquisitions to discourage those who fled not to think about coming back. If returned, they could not reclaim their properties.

4.4 Legal texts for land management from the Arusha Peace Agreement of 2000 up to date

The 2000s period marked the process of ending the decade of civil war through negotiations. The Arusha Accord² signed in 2000 is a starting point of other legal texts that were adopted to deal with political, social, and economic problems in Burundi. The formulated and amended land-related legal texts took reference and orientations in this document (Government of the Republic of Burundi, 2000). These legal texts include the Constitution of Burundi of 2005 amended in 2018. As mother-law in management of public affairs in Burundi, Art.36 & 69 are concerned with property ownership and property rights land as a fundamental right to Burundians; and all Burundians are obliged to protect publicly owned properties (Government of Republic of Burundi, 2018). Other legal texts related to land management followed include the National Land Policy of Burundi of 2008, the Land Code of 2011, the National Forestry Policy of Burundi (2012), the Forest Code of Burundi of 2016, the Mining Burundi Code of 2013, the Burundi Water Code of 2012, Burundi Environment Code of 2000 (modified in 2021), Code of Urban Planning, Housing

² The protocol IV on Reconstruction and Development, Chap. I, Art.8 deals with issues related to land and other properties.

and Construction in Burundi of 2016, and law N0.1/10 of May 2011 on the creation and management of protected areas in Burundi are all related in one way or another on Land management. The following chart summarises the legal land-related frameworks adopted to manage land in Burundi from the colonial era up to this date.

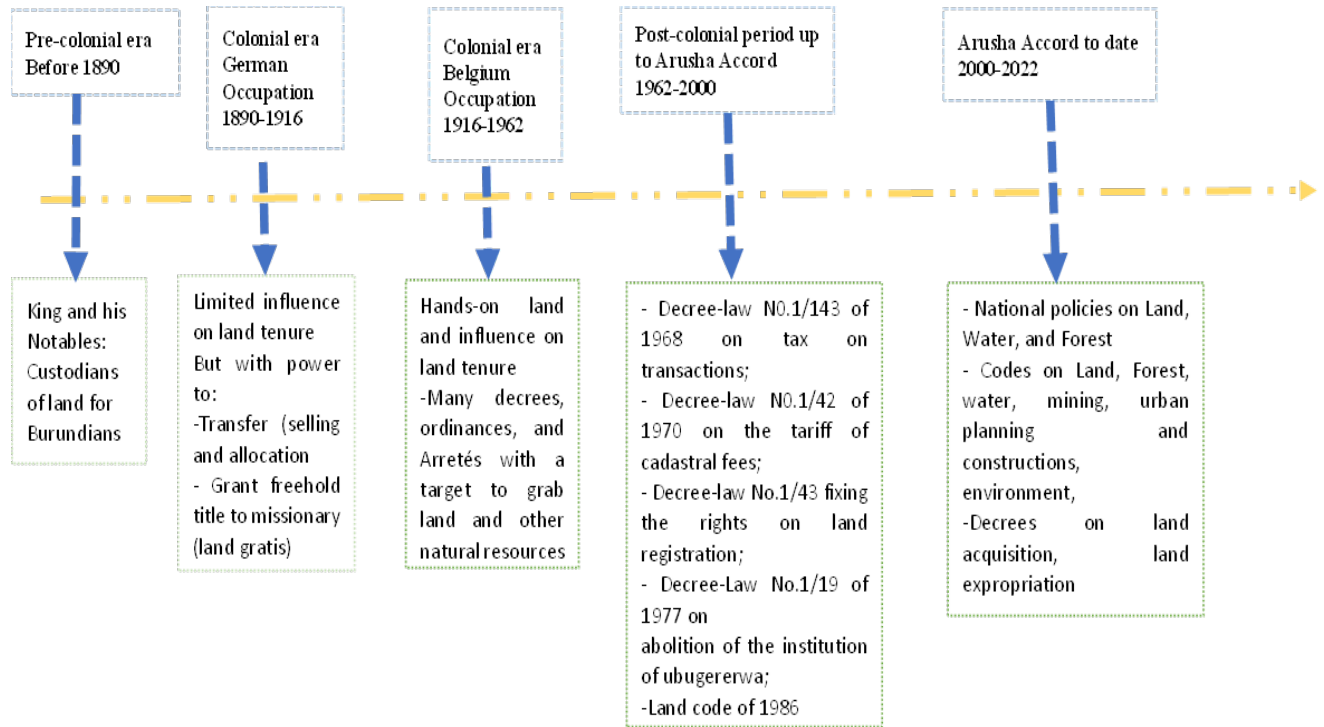


Fig. 1: Summary of Burundi land-related legal texts from the Pre-colonial era to 2022

Source: Author's compilation from desk review (2022)

However, the existence of all these land-related legal texts does not respond to the recurrent land-related problems that include the encroachment of public urban lands in urban and rural areas; land-related disputes between neighbours on boundaries; illegal change of land uses, and informal settlement in hazardous areas; and illegal as well informal transfer of public urban lands and protected areas. However, they have assisted in clarifying the boundaries of state land and some public urban lands in rural areas. However, they have not protected these lands against land grabbers and encroachers by elites and other powerful people in the country.

The KII and interviews with local leaders agree that legal texts are there, but lack implementation and enforcement. They outline three issues that pertain to the enforcement of legal texts that include (i) laissez-faire by policymakers and other influential people to protect public urban lands;

(ii) nepotism, favouritism, and corruption in executing some laws for their interests or of their relatives; and the politicization of land matters rather than implementation and enforcement of existing laws and regulations related to land management. These factors have been given by Bae (2019), Batterbury and Ndi (2018), and Rafiee and Stenberg (2018) on how elites use their power and influence to grab land. In Burundi, the public urban lands are grabbed by powerful people in the army, police, politics, and businesses. The existing legal frameworks are violated, and no one can question them since the court and land officers stay muted word in front of these persons.

4.1 Institutions Involved in public urban lands management

The existence of legal texts from pre-colonial to date marked also the existence of institutions that were responsible for implementing these texts. During the pre-colonial period, there were Kings, notables, and Bashingantahe³ who were exercising their power in land matters. In the colonial era, an appointed representative of colonisers confiscated the King's power in land dealing. Furthermore, the colonial era marked the start of modern land management institutions crafted by Europeans. The written certificate of occupancy was first delivered by Germans to missionaries. The large land held by the notables and King's descendants was taken from them during the colonial era, specifically during Belgium's occupation. All undeveloped land and public urban lands were nationalised during the Belgium colonisation to allow new allocation. In urban areas, prime land was given to white people, economically strategic land was given to Asians, and marginal land to Africans. The 2000-2022 mark an evolution of having institutions from the local level to central government as Fig. (2) shows. This structure emanated from the Madagascar Meeting with land experts. Step by step, Burundi restructured and decentralised the land administration system from the village level up to the national level.

³ Local elders at village level who were in charge of conflict resolution of all kind, land disputes included. It is a low-level traditional institution that remained from the precolonial up to date.

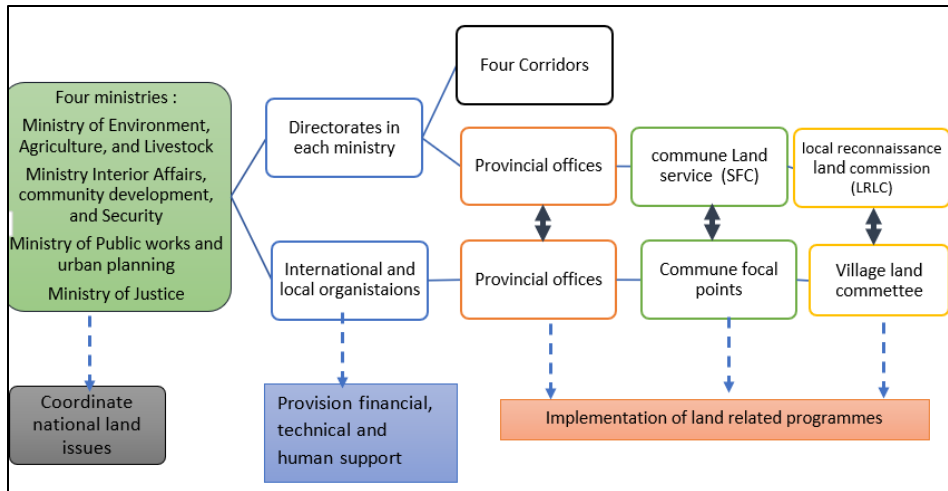


Figure 2: Institutional framework of land management in Burundi

Source: Author’s constructs based on findings (2022)

4.2.1 Public institutions involved in land management

The desk review results show that land management in Burundi is handled in four ministries. These include:

- Ministry of Interior, Community Development, and Public Security that is related to public administration from the provincial up to the village level. The main responsibilities related to land management include the coordination and mainstreaming of land administration issues that are under the commune-level level such as the land service at the commune level (SFC) and local reconnaissance land commission (LRLC). The NGOs and CBOs that are involved in land management activities are coordinated and monitored by this ministry at all levels accordingly.
- Ministry of Environment, Agriculture, and Livestock is concerned with land that is requested for agricultural use. The minister and his advisors are involved in analysing or proposing any land allocation for agricultural use.
- Ministry of Justice which has the responsibility to legalise all transactions, surveying, certifying, and titling land. This ministry assists in conflict resolution through court judgments.
- Ministry of Public Works and urban planning involved in urban land use planning and urban development control.

The decentralisation observed in land management was supposed to respond to land management challenges at all levels as appeared. However, the findings revealed the opposite. Issues related to certification, surveying, protection, and conflict resolution are still about the land sector in Burundi. Also, the political and elitism interference is pointed out as a hidden challenge, but with big impacts. They point out how cases in courts are decided by politically or economically powerful persons who became *Amicus Curiae brief*. Bae, (2019), Batterbury & and Ndi (2018), Rafiee and Stenberg (2018), and Olima (1998) disclosed the challenge of political and economic powerful people in land management. The same results manifest in Burundi, especially in managing public urban lands. Public urban lands are solely acquired by powerful politicians and investors (local and foreign) carefree. The existing institutions are overwhelmed and cannot make any decision without consulting them. Public urban lands are mismanaged in the eyes of these institutions despite their existence from the central to the local level.

4.2.2 Private Institutions in land management

Also, the involvement of private stakeholders is accounted to have been introduced in the past decade when International Organisations and local organisations/ Associations worked in the land sector to improve the land administration system. Private sectors and NGOs involved in land administration focus on reducing land-related conflict through land certification, clarifying boundaries, recording transactions systematically, and adopting new approaches to resolving land conflicts. The NGOs and Local Associations involved in land administration mostly came to assist returnees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to access the land that was taken after fleeing. Others came to assist the government in clarifying boundaries of public urban lands like National Parks and Forest Reserves to halt encroachment. In a few words, these NGOs came under the umbrella of post-conflict reconstruction and most of the projects were planned in ad-hoc and with fewer preparations technologically and technically.

Table 1: Private institutions involved in land management in Burundi

NGO or local association	Communes covered 129	Year of intervention	Area of focus	Achievements
HCR&CO	116	2001	Resolving land conflicts	614 cases
CNTB	116	2009	Resolving land conflicts and boundary clarification	3413 cases
PABG	14	2011-2014	Land certification	1782 certificates
DDC	6	2011-2015	Boundary clarification	875 inventoried 519 beacons fixed
ZOA	2	2014-2016	Certification + Land conflict resolution	
GIZ		2015-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public urban lands registration and boundary clarification - Land-related conflict resolution of public urban lands -Support land registration systems at the local and national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% of Public urban lands registration and boundary clarification - 60% of Land related to conflict resolution of public urban lands - 75% Support land registration systems at the local and national level
LADEC	2	2021-2022	Boundary clarification and land certification of private properties	Ongoing project

Source: Turimubumwe (2022)

Several NGOs and Local associations are supported by development partners involved in land management. However, most actors have been focused in rural areas and less concern is observed in public urban lands.

4.3 Approaches and technologies applied in managing public urban lands

The successful implementation of land management intervention requires the application of operational approaches. In Burundi, the dominant approach used in public urban lands urban management by the government is the Top-Down approach. Being a classical land management approach that involves much technocracy, the land managers at different levels of the country do

not involve local people in the process. The KII with local leaders asserted that they are ignored in the public urban lands management process. They mentioned that they are only given orders to respect the plans and other laws that are formulated and adopted without their input. “That is why you have seen peaceful or dreadful demonstrations on expropriations and evictions in this country. People and local leaders are not consulted during public urban lands management”. If consulted, their views are not included. As mentioned by (Becker et al. (2003); and Salter et al., 2019) on participation, the non-inclusion of local people and NGOs has affected the implementation of land management strategies in Burundi. Also, some locals disclosed that involving non-supporters of the ruling party should not be possible. These are among the shortfalls that Bussu, et al. (2022) mentioned in handicap participation in developing countries.

Other approaches like FFP and others are considered costly or difficult to implement in the existing land administration system and infrastructure of Burundi. The respondents in KII converged on the same idea that other approaches are strict and costly, especially in their preparations, logistics, and contexts.

The use of modern technologies is also identified in this research as the challenge of adequately managing public urban lands. The interview results with government officers revealed that they are still using a mechanical theodolite, low-precision Global Positioning System (GPS), low-resolution satellite images, QGIS programme, tape measures, and other classic measuring tools. Some calculations are sometimes handled by simple calculators in the field. However, NGOs that are involved in land management are using some modern technologies and adapted software in data handling. The interview and desk review results disclosed that NGOs like PAGGF, GIZ, and LADEc have used technologies in spatial data collection, manipulation, and processing. However, they lament that they cannot afford the advanced technologies applied in developed countries. Chukwuma (2021), Stöcker et al.(2022), and World Bank (2017) mentioned how developing countries meet challenges of using UAVs, Advanced ArcGIS and other software, and high-resolution satellite imageries in land management and how to affect the proper land management. We add that the financial, technical, and human resource challenges may be a source of this failure to afford the new and advanced technology.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

Identifying the shortfall in managing public urban lands in developing countries is required to make sure interventions are mobilised to effectively manage these lands. Governments and development partners have been investing much effort in addressing land issues in developing countries by providing what was deemed to be necessary to curb land-related challenges, but the challenges persist and become a hindrance to achieving sustainable development. The paper tried to identify some of the shortfalls that hinder effective public urban land management in Burundi. The findings show that four major shortfalls include (i) the legacies of colonialism means that ownership of land is extremely contested by the poor and powerless and access to land is politicised; (ii) hidden agenda and hidden hand in all land deals; (iii) laissez-faire in land management to maintain the status quo of the chaotic situation in land management; and (iv) lack of partnership between public and private partners in land management to mobilise financial, technical and human resources so that new approaches and technologies in land management can be implemented in Burundi. The paper recommends that the Government of Burundi should collaborate with international and national partners to restructure the legal and institutional frameworks to afford the application of new approaches and technologies in public urban lands management.

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Declaration of Interest statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Notes on Contributors

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