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Governance deficits in urban mobility systems: Institutional coordination, capacity gaps and planning challenges in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)

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Abstract

Rapid urbanisation in African cities has intensified pressures on urban mobility systems. In Ouagadougou, sustained population growth, urban sprawl, and rising travel demand continue to challenge the efficiency of urban transport despite ongoing investments in infrastructure and services. This study examines the institutional, organisational, and regulatory factors affecting urban mobility governance in the city. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining documentary review, questionnaire surveys administered to 300 stakeholders, semi-structured interviews, field observations, and SWOT analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, while qualitative information was subjected to content analysis. The findings reveal that although multiple actors are involved in urban mobility governance, coordination remains weak. Most respondents considered existing coordination mechanisms inadequate, while limited technical expertise, overlapping institutional mandates, insufficient stakeholder consultation, weaknesses in the regulatory framework, and poor integration of urban planning and mobility policies were identified as major constraints. The absence of an operational urban mobility planning instrument further undermines governance effectiveness. The study concludes that strengthening institutional capacities, clarifying stakeholder responsibilities, improving policy integration, and establishing permanent coordination mechanisms are essential for enhancing the efficiency, sustainability, and resilience of Ouagadougou's urban mobility system. The development of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan is recommended to support the city's long-term development.

Keywords: Urban Mobility; Governance; Urban Transport; Institutional Coordination; Urbanisation; Ouagadougou; Burkina Faso.

1. Introduction

Urban mobility has become one of the major challenges of sustainable development in African cities. Rapid urbanisation, demographic growth and the spatial expansion of urban areas are generating increasingly complex travel demands, placing transport systems at the centre of contemporary urban policies (UN-Habitat, 2022; SSATP, 2021).

Globally, more than 56% of the population now resides in urban areas, compared with only 30% in 1950. Projections indicate that this proportion will reach nearly 68% by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). Sub-Saharan Africa is among the regions experiencing the fastest rates of urban growth. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Sahel and West Africa Club (OECD/SWAC, 2020), African cities are expected to accommodate nearly one billion additional inhabitants by the middle of the century.

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This urban transformation is accompanied by profound changes in mobility systems. Growing daily travel needs place considerable pressure on transport infrastructure, urban services and governance mechanisms. As highlighted by Cissé (2016) and Stucki (2016), weaknesses in governance constitute one of the principal factors explaining the dysfunctions observed in African urban transport systems.

In Burkina Faso, the city of Ouagadougou provides a particularly illustrative example of these transformations. As the political and economic capital of the country, it accommodates nearly half of the national urban population and continues to expand spatially at a sustained pace (INSD, 2022). This growth has been accompanied by a significant increase in the movement of people and goods, generating new challenges related to accessibility, road safety, congestion and the institutional organisation of the transport sector.

Despite considerable investments in road infrastructure and public transport services over recent years, outcomes remain below public expectations. Several studies demonstrate that the performance of urban transport systems depends not only on the quality of infrastructure but also on the effectiveness of the governance mechanisms that regulate and coordinate them (Cervero, 2013; Stucki, 2016; SSATP, 2021).

According to Stucki (2016), cities that achieve the highest levels of urban mobility performance are generally characterised by strong institutions, effective coordination mechanisms and an integrated vision of urban development. Conversely, cities affected by significant institutional fragmentation often encounter persistent difficulties in implementing mobility policies.

In Ouagadougou, urban mobility involves a wide range of public, private and community actors. While this institutional diversity may represent a valuable asset for the sector, it may also generate overlapping mandates, jurisdictional conflicts and coordination difficulties (Gouëset, 2009; Ngom, 2021).

Against this background, the present study aims to analyse the institutional foundations of urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou through an examination of stakeholder mapping, coordination mechanisms, organisational capacities and the major governance challenges affecting the sector. The objective is to identify the factors that could contribute to improving urban mobility management in a rapidly urbanising Sahelian metropolis.

2. Literature review

2.1. Urban governance and mobility: Theoretical foundations

The concept of urban governance has gained increasing prominence since the 1990s in research on urban planning and public policy. According to Cavallier (1998), urban governance refers to the capacity of public and private actors to collectively design and implement territorial development projects through mechanisms of cooperation and consultation.

According to the United Nations (2015), urban governance encompasses the institutions, processes and mechanisms that enable cities to function effectively and respond to the needs of their populations. It involves citizen participation, transparency in decision-making, accountability among stakeholders and coordination of public interventions.

Masset and Dauge (2009) emphasise that urban governance also constitutes a process of collective learning that promotes institutional strengthening and the emergence of local democratic mechanisms. From this perspective, urban mobility issues cannot be reduced to purely technical concerns; they also involve institutional, political and organisational dimensions.

2.2. Governance challenges in urban mobility systems

Urban mobility systems are characterised by a high degree of complexity. They involve a diverse range of actors operating across several sectors, including transport, urban planning, infrastructure development, road safety, environmental management and economic development (Banister, 2008; Stucki, 2016).

According to Thomas (2008), urban mobility should be analysed as a system in which infrastructure, services, users and institutions interact simultaneously. This interdependence explains why mobility-related difficulties often result from governance failures rather than from a simple lack of infrastructure.

In several African metropolitan areas, researchers have identified recurring challenges associated with institutional fragmentation. In Dakar, for example, Ngom (2021) observed that the proliferation of organisations involved in urban transport generates coordination difficulties and uncertainties regarding the allocation of responsibilities. Similar findings have been reported in Abidjan, Lagos and Nairobi (SSATP, 2019).

Christie et al. (2013) argue that a clear delineation of institutional responsibilities is essential for ensuring coherent mobility planning. The absence of a well-defined distribution of mandates frequently constitutes a major obstacle to the effectiveness of public policies.

2.3. Urban mobility governance in african cities

The literature on African cities highlights a number of governance challenges that are specific to urban transport systems. Rapid urbanisation, limited financial resources, the predominance of the informal sector and weak institutional capacities contribute to the complexity of mobility management (Cissé, 2016; SSATP, 2021).

According to Chenal et al. (2009), African urban transport systems often evolve in contexts characterised by rapid demographic growth and limited planning capacity. This situation encourages the emergence of informal solutions that respond to immediate mobility needs but complicate sectoral regulation and governance.

Stucki (2016) demonstrates that the most successful African cities in terms of urban mobility are generally those with stable institutional frameworks, clearly identified transport authorities and permanent mechanisms for stakeholder consultation.

Similarly, Gouëset (2009) emphasises that the decentralisation of urban transport responsibilities remains incomplete in several African countries. This situation maintains ambiguities regarding the respective roles of central government and local authorities, thereby weakening governance effectiveness.

3. Conceptual framework and analytical approach

This study adopts a systemic perspective on urban mobility. The systems approach considers transport as a set of interdependent components comprising infrastructure, transport modes, institutions, users and public policies (Labouidya et al., 2014; Thomas, 2008).

According to this perspective, the performance of mobility systems results from the interactions between transport supply, travel demand, available infrastructure and governance mechanisms. Consequently, the dysfunctions observed within the sector can only be fully understood through an analysis of the relationships among these different components.

In addition, the study employs the SWOT framework (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to identify the factors that characterise the institutional environment of urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou (Benazet, 2021; Ballester, 2022).

The combination of the systems approach and SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of governance challenges while highlighting the interactions among stakeholders, institutions and urban dynamics that influence mobility patterns within the Burkinabè capital.

The data collected were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were processed through content analysis, while quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in order to assess stakeholders' perceptions and identify major governance trends.

This analytical framework enables the identification of both internal and external factors affecting the governance of urban mobility and facilitates the formulation of strategic recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of mobility policies in Ouagadougou.

4. Materials and methods

4.1. Study area

This research was conducted in the municipality of Ouagadougou, the political and administrative capital of Burkina Faso. Located in the central part of the country, the city constitutes the nation's principal demographic, economic, administrative and logistical hub. It hosts the major public institutions, administrative functions, key economic infrastructures and most of the country's strategic public facilities (INSD, 2022).

The city occupies a strategic position within the national territorial structure (Figure 1). It also serves as a major regional crossroads connecting Burkina Faso to several coastal West African countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin. This geographical position enhances its attractiveness and continuously increases the flows of people and goods converging upon the city on a daily basis (SSATP, 2021).

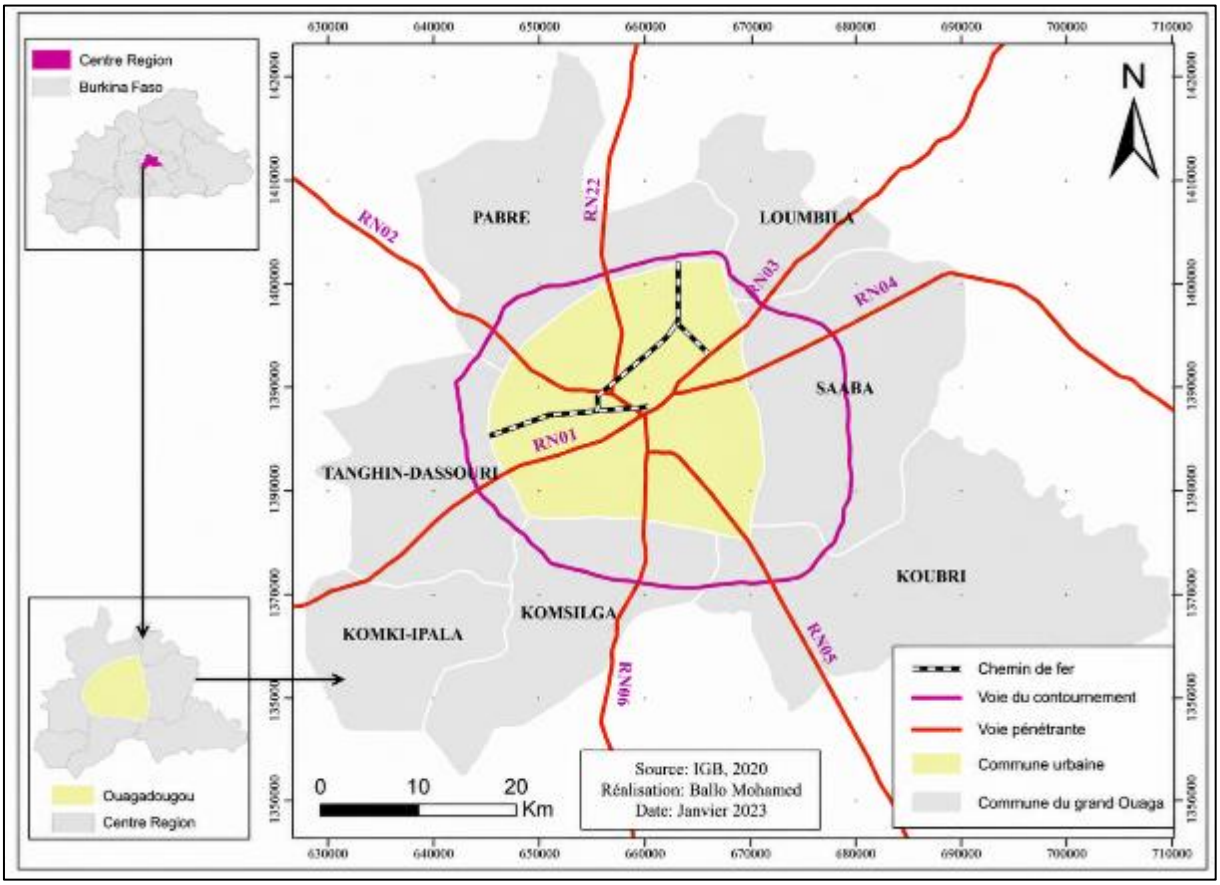


Figure 1 Location and spatial organisation of the municipality of Ouagadougou

Ouagadougou has experienced remarkable demographic growth over recent decades. Its population has increased from approximately one million inhabitants in the mid-1980s to more than 2.4 million today (INSD, 2022). This growth has been accompanied by significant urban sprawl, profoundly transforming mobility patterns and increasing pressure on transport infrastructure (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Alongside this urban expansion, travel demand has intensified considerably. Commuting trips, school-related journeys and movements associated with economic activities generate substantial daily traffic flows whose management constitutes a major challenge for public authorities. In this context, urban mobility governance emerges as a critical determinant of sustainable urban development.

4.2. Methodological approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques. This methodological choice is justified by the complexity of governance-related phenomena, which require both an understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and an objective assessment of institutional mechanisms (Creswell, 2014; Thomas, 2008).

Data collection relied on a combination of complementary techniques. First, an extensive documentary review was undertaken, covering legislative texts, regulatory instruments and strategic policy documents related to urban mobility. This phase enabled the identification of the institutional, legal and organisational framework governing the sector.

In addition, questionnaires were administered to stakeholders involved in the urban mobility sub-sector in order to collect information regarding their roles, perceptions of governance mechanisms and the principal constraints encountered in the execution of their responsibilities.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with representatives of public institutions, local authorities, transport operators and technical and financial partners. These interviews provided deeper insights into institutional dynamics, coordination mechanisms and the challenges associated with urban mobility management.

Furthermore, direct field observations were undertaken to assess the actual functioning of the urban mobility system and to compare reported information with observed practices.

Finally, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was applied to the institutional and organisational framework governing urban mobility in order to evaluate governance performance and identify key areas for improvement.

The systems approach served as the overarching analytical framework. It enabled urban mobility to be examined as a complex system involving interactions among infrastructure, transport services, institutional stakeholders, users and public policies (Labouidya et al., 2014; Thomas, 2008).

The SWOT framework was employed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting the operation of the urban mobility governance system. This method is particularly suitable for the strategic analysis of public organisations and complex systems (Benazet, 2021; Ballester, 2022).

The data collected were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were processed through content analysis, while quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in order to assess stakeholders' perceptions and identify major governance trends.

4.3. Sampling, data collection and analysis procedures

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select stakeholders directly involved in urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou. This non-probability sampling method was considered appropriate because it enabled the identification of key informants possessing relevant knowledge and practical experience regarding urban mobility planning, management and governance.

A total of 300 stakeholders were surveyed. The sample included representatives of government ministries, local authorities, technical agencies, transport operators, professional organisations, technical and financial partners, civil society organisations and urban mobility experts. This diversity of respondents ensured a comprehensive understanding of the institutional and operational challenges affecting urban mobility governance in the city.

Data collection was conducted over a twelve-month period, from January to December 2025. The process combined documentary review, questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews and direct field observations. This methodological triangulation enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings by allowing the comparison and cross-verification of information obtained from different sources.

Quantitative data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations, were employed to analyse stakeholders' perceptions and identify major governance trends. Qualitative data obtained through interviews and

observations were analysed using content analysis techniques, enabling the identification of recurring themes, institutional dynamics and governance challenges affecting urban mobility management in Ouagadougou.

5. Results

5.1. Governance characterised by a high diversity of stakeholders

The analysis of the urban mobility system in Ouagadougou reveals the involvement of a large number of stakeholders operating at strategic, institutional and operational levels (Table 1). This diversity reflects the cross-sectoral nature of urban mobility, which simultaneously mobilises competencies related to transport, urban planning, infrastructure development, road safety, environmental management and territorial development.

The findings reveal the existence of a governance system involving a broad range of stakeholders with sometimes divergent responsibilities and interests. Sectoral ministries are responsible for defining policy orientations and regulatory frameworks, while the Municipality of Ouagadougou plays a central role in urban planning and service management. Decentralised technical services contribute to policy implementation and ensure compliance with regulatory provisions.

The urban mobility sub-sector also involves transport operators responsible for providing mobility services, as well as professional organisations representing the interests of various transport-related professions. Technical and financial partners contribute to project financing and provide technical support for reforms and investment programmes.

Civil society organisations are actively engaged in awareness-raising activities, advocacy and the representation of citizens' concerns. Consultancy firms and research institutions provide expertise in the preparation of studies, planning processes and technical support for mobility projects. Finally, users occupy a central position within the urban mobility system, as their needs, behaviours and expectations constitute the ultimate purpose of transport policies and services.

While this diversity of stakeholders demonstrates the strategic importance of urban mobility within the functioning of the capital city, it also creates significant challenges in terms of institutional coordination. Interviews conducted during the study revealed that many stakeholders themselves acknowledged the difficulty of clearly identifying the responsibilities assigned to each institution. Several respondents highlighted that interventions remain largely sector-specific and insufficiently coordinated, with each organisation tending to pursue its own priorities.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Stucki (2016) and Ngom (2021), who argue that African urban mobility systems are frequently characterised by institutional fragmentation that limits the effectiveness of public policies.

Table 1 Main stakeholders involved in urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou and their respective roles

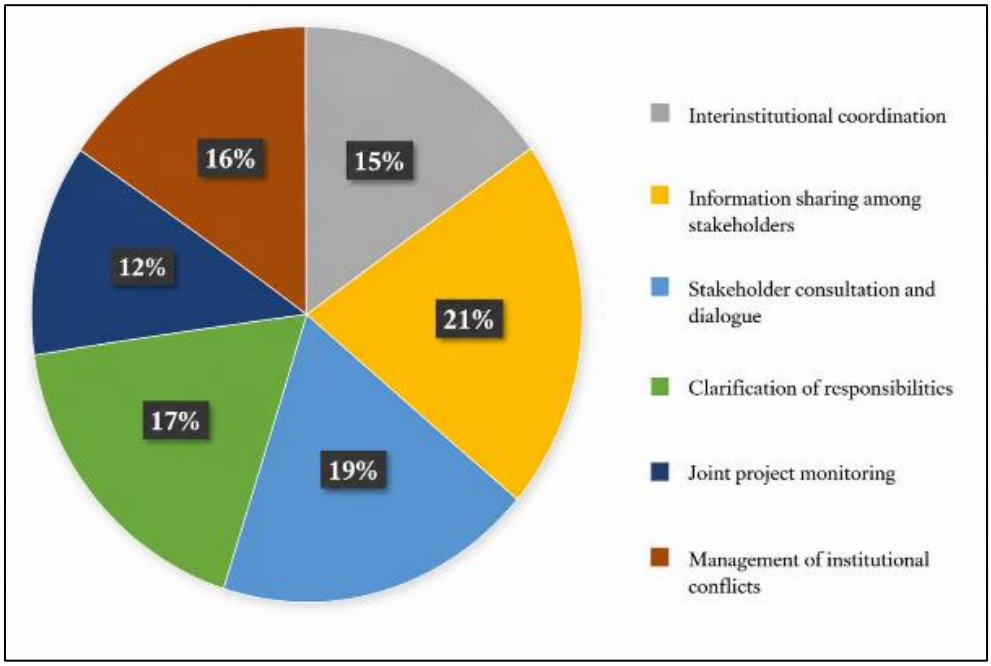
Category of Stakeholders	Main Institutions/Organisations	Roles in Urban Mobility
Central Government	Ministry responsible for Transport and Urban Mobility; Ministry of Urban Development; Ministry of Infrastructure	Formulation of public policies, regulatory oversight, strategic planning, and infrastructure financing
Local Authority	Ouagadougou Municipality	Local road management, urban planning, municipal policing, and territorial coordination
Technical Agencies and Institutions	Technical departments and implementing agencies	Project implementation, technical monitoring, and operational supervision
Transport Operators	SOTRACO, private transport operators, and taxi services	Provision of urban transport services
Professional Organisations	Transport unions and professional associations	Representation of professional interests and sectoral consultation

Technical and Financial Partners	World Bank, AFD, BOAD, UEMOA, and AfDB	Project financing and technical assistance
Civil Society	User associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Awareness raising, advocacy, and citizen participation
Consultancy Firms and Research Offices	National and international consultants	Technical studies, project preparation, and technical advisory services

Source: Mohamed Ibrahim BALLO, Houd KANAZOE & Joseph YAMEOGO, field data, December 2025

5.2. A Pronounced deficit in institutional coordination

One of the most significant findings of this study relates to the weakness of coordination mechanisms among stakeholders involved in urban mobility governance (see Figure 2).



Source: Mohamed Ibrahim BALLO, Houd KANAZOE & Joseph YAMEOGO, field data, December 2025

Figure 2 Stakeholders' assessment of interinstitutional coordination mechanisms in urban mobility management in Ouagadougou

The results reveal that the existing coordination mechanisms among institutions responsible for urban mobility in Ouagadougou are insufficient. This situation reflects the governance shortcomings currently affecting the sector (see Table 2).

Table 2 SWOT analysis of the institutional and organisational framework for urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Existence of public institutions responsible for managing the urban mobility sub-sector. Establishment of a Directorate General responsible for Urban Mobility. Presence of a public urban transport company.	Predominance of informal transport operators. Absence of dedicated consultation and coordination platforms. Insufficient coordination among stakeholders. Overlapping mandates and conflicts of competence among institutions and stakeholders.

	Inadequate financial and material resources to ensure the effective functioning of responsible institutions. Limited capacity and skills of human resources. Leadership conflicts within trade unions representing urban transport operators, particularly taxi drivers.
Opportunities	Threats
Presence of international organisations willing to share experience and best practices in urban mobility management. Availability of technical and financial partners supporting the professionalisation of the urban mobility sub-sector. Bilateral and multilateral agreements between Burkina Faso and other countries in the field of urban mobility. Increasing availability of training programmes related to urban mobility and associated fields.	Security challenges associated with the ongoing security crisis. Diplomatic crises affecting international cooperation. Institutional instability regarding the governance and administrative anchoring of urban mobility. Declining financial support from development partners.

Source: Mohamed Ibrahim BALLO, Houd KANAZOE & Joseph YAMEOGO, field data, December 2025

The qualitative analysis of the interview data highlighted several factors that help explain these findings.

5.2.1. Absence of permanent consultation frameworks

Despite the existence of legal provisions supporting the establishment of consultative structures within the land transport sector, several of these mechanisms remain non-operational. Stakeholders interviewed during the study expressed concern regarding the absence of institutional platforms that would facilitate regular dialogue and collaboration among the various organisations involved.

This situation encourages a fragmented and sectoral approach to mobility-related issues and limits opportunities for developing a shared vision of urban transport development.

5.2.2. Overlapping institutional responsibilities

The findings also reveal the existence of overlapping mandates among several institutions.

Respondents reported situations in which different organisations simultaneously claim similar responsibilities in areas such as planning, regulation and mobility infrastructure management. Such overlaps often generate confusion regarding accountability and reduce the effectiveness of public interventions.

According to Christie et al. (2013), the absence of clearly defined responsibilities constitutes one of the major obstacles to effective urban mobility policy implementation in developing countries.

5.2.3. Latent institutional conflicts

Weak coordination mechanisms also contribute to the emergence of institutional tensions that may delay project implementation.

The SWOT analysis conducted as part of this research identifies conflicts of interest among institutions as one of the principal threats affecting the development of the urban mobility sub-sector in Ouagadougou.

These tensions are reflected in delays in decision-making processes, difficulties in inter-institutional collaboration and occasional inconsistencies in strategic orientations pursued by different stakeholders.

5.3. Human capital constraints in urban mobility governance

The findings reveal another major weakness affecting the urban mobility governance system in Ouagadougou: the shortage of specialised human resources.

Data collected during the survey indicate that only 7% of stakeholders involved in the sector possess academic or professional qualifications directly related to urban mobility (Figure 3).

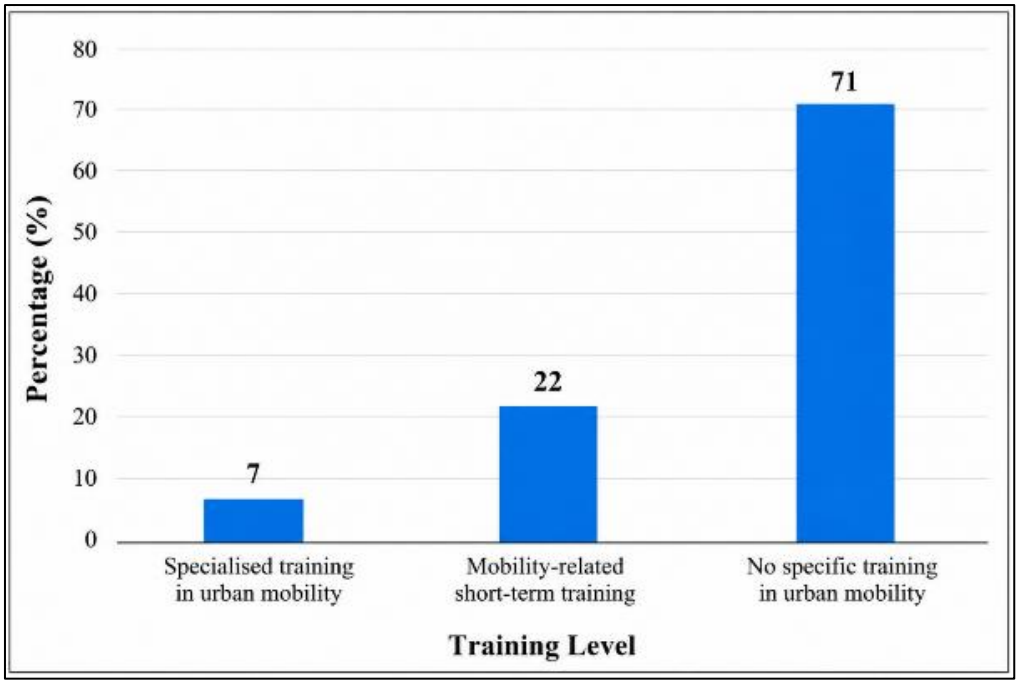
Conversely, 71% of respondents reported that they had never received any specific training in transport, urban mobility, road safety or traffic engineering. The remaining 22% were not specialists in the field but had participated in at least one short-term training programme related to mobility issues.

This situation considerably limits the technical capacities of institutions responsible for urban mobility management.

The investigation further revealed the absence of specialised consultancy firms and technical offices dedicated to areas such as traffic engineering, travel demand modelling and road safety auditing. Existing local expertise remains largely concentrated in civil engineering, urban planning and architecture.

According to Debizet (2004), urban mobility constitutes a multidisciplinary field requiring specialised competencies that combine geography, urban planning, engineering, transport economics and social sciences.

The shortage of technical expertise therefore appears to be a significant constraint on the ability of institutions to anticipate future mobility trends and design strategies capable of responding to the rapid transformations occurring within the city.



Source: Mohamed Ibrahim BALLO, Houd KANAZOE & Joseph YAMEOGO, field data, December 2025

Figure 3 Professional Training Levels in Urban Mobility among Surveyed Stakeholders

5.4. Weaknesses in the legal and regulatory framework

The analysis of the legal and regulatory framework governing urban mobility in Ouagadougou reveals the existence of several legislative, regulatory and strategic instruments intended to guide the transport and urban mobility sector. However, the findings indicate that the mere existence of such instruments does not guarantee their effective implementation.

Interviews conducted with institutional stakeholders revealed uneven levels of knowledge regarding the legal texts governing the urban mobility sub-sector. Several respondents acknowledged limited familiarity with the legal instruments applicable to their respective areas of intervention. This situation restricts their capacity to ensure coherent implementation of public policies.

The results also highlight a limited appropriation of regulatory instruments by certain operational structures. In many cases, the coordination mechanisms formally established to facilitate collaboration among institutions remain insufficiently implemented or entirely inactive.

Furthermore, the study reveals ambiguities concerning the allocation of responsibilities between central government and local authorities. These challenges are particularly evident in the management of mobility infrastructure, the regulation of specific transport modes and the planning of urban travel systems.

These findings support the observations of Gouëset (2009), who argues that decentralisation processes relating to urban governance in many African countries remain incomplete. They also corroborate the conclusions of Ngom (2021), who identifies institutional uncertainty as a major constraint affecting the effectiveness of urban transport policies.

5.5. Limitations of urban mobility planning

The findings indicate that one of the most significant governance challenges facing Ouagadougou lies in the absence of an operational planning document specifically dedicated to urban mobility.

All stakeholders interviewed unanimously confirmed that the city currently lacks an Urban Mobility Plan or an equivalent operational planning instrument capable of guiding interventions within the urban mobility sector.

Although several strategic initiatives exist, including the National Urban Mobility Strategy, these documents operate at the national level and do not directly address the specific operational requirements of mobility planning within the metropolitan area of Ouagadougou.

The absence of an integrated planning framework contributes to fragmented interventions and limits the capacity of stakeholders to anticipate the impacts of rapid urban growth on travel demand and transport infrastructure requirements.

The findings also reveal a significant disconnect between urban planning policies and mobility policies. According to survey data, 97% of respondents consider that urban development operations and mobility-related interventions continue to evolve in an insufficiently coordinated manner.

This situation contributes to urban expansion that is not systematically accompanied by adequate transport infrastructure planning. Newly urbanised areas frequently emerge before the provision of the transport facilities and services required to ensure their accessibility.

Consequently, urban growth tends to generate additional mobility challenges, including longer travel distances, increased transport costs and growing pressure on already constrained transport infrastructure.

The results suggest that strengthening the integration between urban planning and mobility planning should constitute a strategic priority for improving the sustainability and efficiency of the urban mobility system in Ouagadougou.

6. Discussion

6.1. Fragmented governance in a context of rapid urban growth

The findings of this study reveal that urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou is characterised by significant institutional fragmentation, reflected in the coexistence of numerous public institutions, private operators, community organisations and technical and financial partners operating at different levels of decision-making and implementation. While such diversity could theoretically promote complementarity among stakeholders and enrich decision-making processes, it produces the opposite effect in practice due to the weakness of existing coordination mechanisms.

This finding is consistent with a challenge widely documented in rapidly growing African cities. According to the Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP, 2021), weak institutional coordination constitutes one of the major obstacles to the sustainable improvement of urban mobility systems across the continent. In many African metropolitan areas, responsibilities relating to transport, urban planning, road infrastructure and territorial management remain dispersed among multiple institutions whose interventions are rarely harmonised.

The results obtained in Ouagadougou support the findings of Mitullah and Vanderschuren (2017) in Nairobi, who demonstrate that the absence of strong coordinating authorities generally leads to limited policy coherence and duplication of public interventions. Similarly, Klopp and Cavoli (2019) argue that institutional fragmentation significantly constrains the ability of public authorities to respond effectively to the rapid growth in mobility demand associated with urbanisation.

The fact that 83% of surveyed stakeholders identified coordination deficiencies as a major concern highlights the existence of a governance deficit extending far beyond administrative challenges. It represents a structural constraint capable of directly affecting transport system performance, service quality and the efficiency of public investments. As emphasised by Marsden and Reardon (2017), governance has become as important as infrastructure itself in determining the effectiveness of urban mobility systems.

Furthermore, the specific context of Ouagadougou exacerbates these governance challenges. Rapid population growth, continuous urban expansion and increasing travel demand significantly increase the complexity of decision-making processes. According to UN-Habitat (2022), African cities that fail to develop integrated mobility governance mechanisms risk experiencing intensified congestion, spatial exclusion and inefficient public investment. Consequently, the difficulties observed in Ouagadougou should be viewed not as isolated dysfunctions but rather as manifestations of a structural governance deficit within a rapidly transforming urban environment.

6.2. Human capital deficits as a major constraint on sector modernisation

One of the most significant findings of this research concerns the shortage of specialised expertise in the field of urban mobility. The fact that more than 70% of respondents have never received formal training in transport or urban mobility highlights a structural weakness within the governance system.

This situation is particularly concerning in a context where mobility policies are becoming increasingly complex and require multidisciplinary competencies. Contemporary urban mobility challenges extend far beyond the construction of transport infrastructure. They now involve travel behaviour analysis, climate change considerations, mobility data management, road safety, social accessibility and multimodal planning (Banister, 2008; OECD/SWAC, 2020).

These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Pojani and Stead (2015), who argue that cities in developing countries often suffer from a shortage of technical expertise, limiting their capacity to design and implement sustainable mobility policies. Likewise, the World Bank (2023) identifies institutional capacity-building as one of the primary priorities for improving urban transport governance in Africa.

The shortage of specialised expertise observed in Ouagadougou may also reduce the capacity of institutions to mobilise international funding effectively. Several studies indicate that development partners increasingly favour projects supported by robust technical analyses, efficient monitoring and evaluation systems and demonstrated institutional capacities (UN-Habitat, 2022; AfDB, 2023).

In addition, the absence of consultancy firms specialising in transport engineering, travel demand modelling and road safety auditing reflects the weakness of the national knowledge-production ecosystem in the mobility sector. This situation risks increasing dependence on external expertise and limiting local ownership of proposed solutions.

The results therefore confirm that human capital constitutes a central determinant of urban governance quality, as previously demonstrated by Healey (2006) and Hull (2011).

6.3. The urgent need for integrated governance based on strategic planning

The absence of a dedicated operational planning instrument for urban mobility emerges as another major weakness highlighted by this study. The findings indicate that current interventions remain largely sector-specific and reactive, despite urban dynamics that increasingly require integrated and forward-looking approaches.

This situation contrasts sharply with international recommendations that regard mobility planning as a fundamental instrument of urban governance. According to the European Commission (2019), Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) represent one of the most effective tools for integrating transport, urban planning, environmental management and economic development within a coherent long-term vision.

The findings obtained in Ouagadougou support the conclusions of Hull (2008) and May (2015), who demonstrate that the absence of integrated planning generally leads to a disconnect between transport policies and urbanisation processes. Such conditions encourage the emergence of poorly served peripheral neighbourhoods, increased travel distances and growing inequalities in access to urban services.

The fact that 97% of respondents believe that urban planning policies and mobility policies remain insufficiently coordinated perfectly illustrates this phenomenon. This disconnect currently represents one of the major challenges facing rapidly expanding African cities. According to Cervero (2013) and Suzuki et al. (2015), the integration of urban planning and transport planning is a fundamental prerequisite for promoting more sustainable urban forms and reducing dependence on private motorised transport.

In the case of Ouagadougou, the development of an Urban Mobility Plan (UMP) or, preferably, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) appears to be a strategic instrument capable of strengthening policy coherence, improving stakeholder coordination and anticipating the future impacts of urban growth. Beyond improving the transport system itself, such an instrument could contribute to strengthening metropolitan governance and supporting sustainable development objectives, particularly those associated with Sustainable Development Goal 11 relating to sustainable cities and communities.

7. From institutional fragmentation to integrated governance: Pathways for transformation

The findings of this study demonstrate that the mobility challenges observed in Ouagadougou cannot be attributed solely to deficiencies in transport infrastructure or service provision. They also stem from limitations within the governance framework that regulates the sector. The multiplicity of stakeholders, weak coordination mechanisms, shortages of specialised expertise and the absence of integrated planning all contribute to reducing the effectiveness of public interventions. In this context, several strategic priorities emerge as essential for supporting the transformation of the urban mobility system in the Burkinabè capital.

7.1. Clarifying institutional responsibilities and strengthening sectoral leadership

The study highlights the existence of overlapping mandates and ambiguities in the allocation of responsibilities among institutions involved in urban mobility governance. This situation generates jurisdictional conflicts, delays decision-making processes and undermines the effectiveness of public policies.

Institutional reform aimed at clarifying stakeholder responsibilities therefore appears essential. Such reform could involve a revision of the regulatory framework in order to define more clearly the respective roles of central government, local authorities and technical agencies involved in urban mobility management.

Furthermore, the reform process should identify a lead institution responsible for providing strategic leadership, monitoring mobility policies and ensuring effective coordination among sectoral stakeholders.

7.2. Establishing a permanent multi-stakeholder consultation mechanism

The findings indicate that the absence of permanent consultation frameworks constitutes one of the principal weaknesses of the current governance system. In a sector as cross-cutting and complex as urban mobility, coordination cannot rely solely on occasional interactions among institutions.

The establishment of a permanent consultation platform bringing together public administrations, the Municipality of Ouagadougou, transport operators, professional organisations, technical and financial partners, universities and user representatives would significantly enhance the coherence of interventions and facilitate the development of a shared vision for urban mobility development.

Such a mechanism could also serve as a forum for resolving institutional conflicts, monitoring sectoral reforms and strengthening collaboration among stakeholders.

7.3. Investing sustainably in technical capacity-building

The shortage of specialised expertise identified by this study represents a major strategic challenge. Contemporary urban mobility governance requires increasingly diverse competencies in transport planning, travel demand modelling, data analysis, road safety, sustainable mobility and public policy evaluation.

In this regard, it is essential to implement a structured capacity-building programme targeting central government institutions, local authorities and technical agencies. Such a programme could combine continuous professional training, knowledge exchange with other African cities, academic partnerships and technical assistance initiatives.

At the same time, the development of specialised national training programmes in urban mobility, transport planning and traffic engineering would gradually reduce dependence on external expertise and strengthen local capacities.

7.4. Building a national ecosystem of expertise and innovation in urban mobility

The findings also reveal the limited availability of national expertise in specialised urban mobility fields. This situation restricts the country's ability to generate context-specific knowledge and support evidence-based decision-making processes.

The establishment of research centres, urban mobility observatories and centres of excellence involving universities, consultancy firms, local authorities and transport stakeholders would therefore be highly beneficial. Such institutions could contribute to the production of reliable mobility data, the monitoring of mobility indicators and the evaluation of public policies.

Moreover, they would foster innovation and support the development of solutions tailored to the specific realities of Burkina Faso.

7.5. Developing an urban mobility plan at metropolitan scale

The absence of an operational planning document dedicated specifically to urban mobility represents one of the most significant shortcomings identified by this research. In a context characterised by rapid demographic growth and continuous urban expansion, isolated interventions are no longer sufficient to address increasing mobility needs.

The preparation of an Urban Mobility Plan (UMP) or, preferably, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) should therefore be considered a strategic priority. Such an instrument would provide a long-term vision for the urban mobility system, identify priority investments, improve stakeholder coordination and promote more sustainable, accessible and inclusive transport solutions.

The planning process should be based on a participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure both ownership and effective implementation.

7.6. Strengthening the integration of urban planning and mobility policies

The study reveals a substantial disconnect between urban development policies and mobility policies. This situation contributes to the emergence of new urban districts that are insufficiently served by transport infrastructure and services, thereby increasing dependence on motorised travel.

A stronger integration between urban planning and transport planning is therefore essential for supporting the sustainable development of Ouagadougou. Future urban development projects should systematically incorporate mobility considerations from the earliest stages of planning, particularly with regard to accessibility, public transport provision, active mobility and road safety.

Such an approach would promote a more compact, inclusive and resilient urban form, consistent with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

7.7. Towards a metropolitan urban mobility authority

In the longer term, the findings of this study support the establishment of a dedicated Urban Mobility Authority at the scale of the Greater Ouagadougou metropolitan area.

Such an institution would centralise key functions related to planning, coordination, regulation and monitoring of the urban mobility sector. Experience from several African and international metropolitan areas demonstrates that the existence of a specialised mobility authority is a decisive factor in improving policy coherence and increasing the effectiveness of public investment.

In the context of Ouagadougou, the creation of such an authority could represent one of the fundamental conditions for achieving integrated, efficient and sustainable urban mobility governance.

8. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the institutional foundations of urban mobility governance in Ouagadougou within a context characterised by rapid urbanisation, increasing travel demand and profound transformations in urban dynamics. Through a mixed-methods approach combining documentary review, field surveys, semi-structured interviews, direct observations and SWOT analysis, the research identified the principal institutional, organisational and strategic factors influencing the functioning of the urban mobility system in the Burkinabè capital.

The findings reveal that urban mobility in Ouagadougou is managed by a diverse range of institutional, technical and operational stakeholders whose interventions remain insufficiently coordinated. The study highlights a significant deficit in institutional coordination, overlapping mandates among several organisations, the absence of permanent consultation mechanisms, limited specialisation of human resources and weak integration between urban planning policies and mobility policies. Furthermore, the absence of an operational planning instrument dedicated specifically to urban mobility emerges as a major constraint limiting both the coherence of public interventions and the capacity of stakeholders to anticipate the impacts of urban growth.

Beyond the specific case of Ouagadougou, the findings confirm several conclusions highlighted in the international literature on African cities. They demonstrate that urban mobility challenges cannot be explained solely by deficiencies in infrastructure or transport services. Rather, they are also shaped by the quality of governance arrangements that regulate planning, coordination and sectoral management. This study therefore contributes to scholarly debates on urban mobility governance in developing countries by demonstrating that institutional fragmentation constitutes a critical determinant of policy effectiveness.

From an operational perspective, the study highlights the necessity of promoting a gradual transition towards a more integrated model of urban mobility governance. Such a transition requires, among other measures, the clarification of institutional responsibilities, the strengthening of stakeholder consultation mechanisms, the development of technical capacities, improved integration between urban planning and transport planning, and the establishment of planning instruments adapted to local realities. In this regard, the preparation of a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) and, in the longer term, the creation of a Metropolitan Urban Mobility Authority could serve as powerful instruments for improving the coherence and effectiveness of public action.

Nevertheless, this study presents certain limitations. The analysis relies primarily on the perceptions of institutional stakeholders involved in urban mobility governance and focuses exclusively on the case of Ouagadougou. Future research could broaden the analytical perspective by incorporating users' experiences, integrating quantitative mobility-flow data and conducting comparative studies involving other African metropolitan areas facing similar challenges. Such investigations would contribute to a deeper understanding of the conditions required for implementing integrated urban mobility governance in contexts of rapid urban growth.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the sustainable improvement of urban mobility in Ouagadougou depends not only on the modernisation of transport infrastructure but also on the capacity of institutions to establish coherent, collaborative and forward-looking governance arrangements. In a context where African cities are experiencing unprecedented transformations, strengthening governance emerges as a fundamental prerequisite for promoting urban mobility systems that are more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Statement of ethical approval

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing social science research. Participation in the surveys and interviews was voluntary, and all information was collected and analysed anonymously. No procedures involving human experimentation were undertaken.

Statement of informed consent

This study involved surveys and interviews with stakeholders. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymised. No personal identifying information is reported in this article.

Author contributions

Mohamed Ibrahim BALLO conceived the study, designed the methodology, conducted the field surveys, analysed the data and prepared the original manuscript draft. Houd KANAZOE contributed to the conceptual framework, data interpretation and critical revision of the manuscript. Joseph YAMEOGO contributed to the literature review, methodological refinement and final review of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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