

The issues of intercommunity conflicts around the delimitation of the village territories of Kodougou and Nèguèla (Northwest, Ivory Coast)

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Abstract: In the context of the delimitation of village territories, the peaceful social relations between Kodougou and Nèguèla, based on common origin and the exchange of various goods, are taking on increasingly conflicting forms and creating obstacles to their deployment. This situation justifies this study, whose aim is to analyze the issues at stake in this divergent definition of village boundaries. So, if village boundaries are not contested outside the formalization procedure, what justifies people's opposition to the delimitation of village territories?

The production of field data was guided by an investigative framework organized around the symbolic, socio-political and economic issues at stake in the delimitation process. The main actors concerned by the study are all those involved in the process of delimiting village territories. We opted for the network or snowball sampling technique to constitute our sample. We interviewed a total of 21 actors. The data analysis follows an approach centered on the analysis of the interweaving of social logics, which enables us to take into account the entanglement of relationships between stakeholders. The analysis reveals that stakeholders develop arguments to rationalize their position, associating with each issue a problem to be solved and actors to be taken into account. It highlights the unexpected effects of boundary delimitation and the various constraints to be taken into account to achieve consensual deployment of the delimitation process.

Keywords: Delimitation of village territories, intercommunity conflicts, political issues, local economy, symbolic issues, social history, Kodougou, Nèguèla

Résumé: Dans le cadre de la délimitation des territoires villageois, les rapports sociaux paisibles entre Kodougou et Nèguèla, fondés sur la commune origine et les échanges de biens divers, prennent des formes de plus en plus conflictuelles et créent des obstacles à son déploiement. Cette situation justifie cette étude dont l'objectif est d'analyser les enjeux de cette définition divergente des bornes des villages. Si donc les bornes des villages ne sont pas contestées en dehors de la procédure de la formalisation, qu'est-ce qui justifie l'opposition des populations à la délimitation des territoires villageois ?

La production des données de terrain a été orientée par un canevas d'investigation organisé autour des enjeux symboliques, socio-politiques et économiques du processus de délimitation. Les principaux acteurs concernés par l'étude sont l'ensemble des acteurs dans le processus de la délimitation des territoires de village. Nous avons opté pour la technique d'échantillonnage par réseaux ou boule de neige pour constituer notre échantillon. Nous avons interrogé au total 21 acteurs. L'analyse des données suit une approche centrée sur l'analyse de l'imbrication des logiques sociales qui permet de prendre en compte l'enchevêtrement des relations entre les parties prenantes. L'analyse révèle que les acteurs développent des arguments pour rationaliser leur position et associent à chaque enjeu un problème à résoudre et des acteurs à prendre en compte. Elle met en lumière les effets inattendus de la délimitation des limites et les différentes contraintes à prendre en compte pour parvenir au déploiement consensuel du processus de délimitation.

Mots clés: Délimitation des Territoires Villageois, Conflits intercommunautaires, enjeux politiques, économie locale, enjeux symboliques, histoire sociale, Kodougou, Nèguèla

Introduction

Since the 1990s, Côte d'Ivoire has been engaged in a process of institutional reform of its rural land domain. Initiated in 1990, the Rural Land Plan (PFR), the first stage of this process, resulted in the adoption of Law No. 98-750 of December 23, 1998 relating to rural land. Taking into account the socio-political issues thereof and the constraints linked to its application, it was modified by laws n°. 2004-412 of August 14, 2004 amending law 1998 and n°2013-655 of September 13 2013 relating to the deadline granted for the establishment of customary rights on land in the customary domain and amending article 6 of Law n°. 98-750 of December 23,

1998 relating to rural land. Beyond a simple formalization of land rights, the reform aims to clarify land rights, secure agricultural investments through titles and the market valuation of rural land.

With a view to implementing this land reform, the government has issued various decrees defining the stages of the land security process and the various executive institutions. To support the implementation of the rural land policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Program for the Management of Rural Land and Facilities (PNGTER) has been created. In the CNO zones¹, its "Support for land security" component was devoted to information and awareness-raising on the Land Law, to the strengthening of the institutional system of application, through the creation in each village, of a Village Committee of Rural Land Management. He also renewed the test operation to demarcate village territories, interrupted by the irruption of the military into the national political arena. Created by Decree No. 2016-590 of August 3, 2016, the Rural Land Agency (AFOR) is the government body implementing land reform. It is a continuation of activities initiated within the framework of previous programs. All these legal and institutional provisions are part of the State's desire to establish an institutional framework capable of resolving land conflicts with an objective delimitation of territories.

In the Odienné region, in the northwest of Côte d'Ivoire, the process of demarcating village territories is met with hostility from the populations. We note, on the one hand, the opposition of the populations to the work of the Authorized Technical Operator, and on the other hand, conflicts between the populations of neighboring villages. The situation that interests us here concerns the villages Kodougou and Nèguèla, in the department of Odienné. Originally, these two villages, founded by two brothers, maintained ordinary peaceful social relations. But, within the framework of the delimitation of their territory, peaceful social relations, based on the common origin and the exchange of various goods, take increasingly conflicting forms and create obstacles to its deployment. The founding boundaries of the villages, marked by consensual traditional landmarks, are being called into question by the authorities and the populations of the two localities. If this inter-village hostility does not lead to bloody clashes, it constitutes a source of blockage to the implementation of land reform. It is therefore this situation which justifies this study, the objective of which is to analyze the challenges of this divergent definition of village boundaries. If therefore the boundaries of the villages are not contested outside the formalization procedure, what justifies the opposition of the populations to the delimitation and the village territories? What is fundamentally going on in the process of formalizing limits? In other words, how can we explain intercommunity conflicts in the context of demarcation of village territories between Nèguèla and Kodougou? It is to these questions that our reflection aims to answer. Before presenting the results of our research, we present our theoretical and methodological positioning in the following lines.

Theoretical and methodological positioning

The legitimacy and relevance of land reform are based on legal, political and economic arguments. Since the adoption of the law and, particularly, in the context of its subsidized implementation in certain regions, the trajectory of its implementation or implementation has not been truly satisfactory. The literature sufficiently shows us that in many rural areas there are quite considerable gaps between the intentions of land reform and the results obtained (Kouamé 2016). Therefore, it is time to decenter the approach to reform implementation. Beyond highlighting the obstacles to its implementation, we need to think more about the changes caused by public action in the localities of implementation, by questioning the changes introduced in rural communities by public policy. At what level are these changes occurring? What are the impacts of the implementation of the law on village organizations and the social formations in which it is introduced?

Our angle of reading the implementation of land reform can, perhaps, inspire a shift towards a deconstructionist approach, by indicting the developmentalist configuration or towards a populist approach, based strictly on the valorization of customary land knowledge. In reality, we are part of an approach centered on the analysis of the overlapping of social logics. This allows us to take into account the tangle of relationships between stakeholders. Such a theoretical positioning has the advantage of moving us away from an analysis focused exclusively on the representations, constraints and socio-political and economic issues, implicit or explicit, which underlie land reform. By distancing ourselves from the economic and political issues of the reform, we want to look at the consequences, voluntary or not, of the implementation of the land law. This approach invites us to be more vigilant in relation to the culture of development, to be closer to various logics and constraints, to take into account the knowledge of stakeholders in the implementation of public action.

To do this, we must collect the points of view of the village actors concerned, observe their interactions in situ, identify and analyze the levels of tensions, the strategic positioning of the actors involved. Such a methodological position justifies the choice of the qualitative approach, specifically of the ethnographic type. The ethnographic survey requires the immersion of the researcher on the survey sites, in ordinary situations of

¹The Central-North-West (CNO) zones correspond to the areas occupied by the rebels during the war started on September 19, 2002.

the respondents to produce data from observation and interviews in the ordinary contexts of the villages where the process of delimitation of the village territories. Taking these ordinary situations into account, as a framework for investigation, makes it possible, for example, to understand the contextual variabilities of the frameworks for deploying the law, to observe the circumvention strategies and the strategic positioning of the actors. Overall, the production of field data was guided by collaborative work between the authors, by the production of investigative frameworks organized around the symbolic, socio-political and economic issues of the delimitation process. The field data production policy was built around one of the authors, due to the duration of the survey, his inclusion in local sociability networks and his occasional participation in the ordinary life of the respondents. The team work sessions made it possible to redirect, when necessary, the lines of investigation.

The main actors concerned by the study are all the actors in the process of demarcating village territories. We opted for the network or snowball sampling technique to constitute our sample. We interviewed a total of 21 actors including the sub-prefect, the delegated mediator (01), the regional director of agriculture of Kabadougou (01), one (01) representative of the cantonal chief, one (01) technicians from the ministry of agriculture, the chiefdom of Odienné (01), one (01) AFOR agent, one (01) investigating commissioner, one (01) approved technical operator, two (02) presidents of the CVGFR and their secretaries, two (02) village chiefs and their secretaries, the two (02) youth and women presidents of the two villages, five (05) other actors with knowledge of the history of the villages as well as their limits. This number meets the characteristics of the study. It is obtained by the principle of saturation because the same answers recur regularly. The methodological choice made allowed us to produce the results that we present in the following section.

1. Results

1.1. Intercommunity conflicts: between accountability and demand for autonomy

From our discussions with local elders, we remember that Magna Bori, the founder of the village Nèguèla, was a warrior from Nèrèbrinon, a territory of Guinea (Conakry). He was an ally of Vakaba Touré, a Malinké warlord, in his conquest of Kabadougou (Odienné region). In recognition of Magna Bori, for his warrior support, Vakaba Touré authorized him to settle on the current site which he named Nèguèla, to carry out his activities there. Nèguèla means, in Malinké, *where iron is extracted*. Following him, he brought other brothers from the original village and also settled other families. In this village, three lineages live: the lineage of Magna Bori (Doumbia), the lineage of Vafidougou (Soumahoro) and the lineage of Nassoumori (Doumbia) as well. According to our informants, Nèguèla was established as an official village after independence, precisely in 1961. It has worship sites such as the *Toukounou*, a forest located to the east of the village, the *Koronba* which is a course of water located to the north of it and the *Barandjê* which is a cheese maker located to the west of the village. Nèguèla and Kodougou are separated by a river called *lègbèniand* and a tree called *Linguè*.

As for Kodougou, it was founded by Doumbia Meman, blacksmith and trader, brother of the founder of Nèguèla. He leaves the village founded by his elder due to a conflict between them. He ended his migratory journey on the current lands of Kodougou where he was settled by the Touré of Odienné. The initial name of the village *Noumousso* which means village of blacksmiths, in reference to its main activity. But with the installation of other families and the diversification of the villagers' activities, the village changed its name. The name Kodougou is adopted in reference to the two backwaters separated by a hole called *dougou*, meaning the hole of the backwaters. The village of Kodougou has sites of worship which are: a backwater called *Sourounou*, to the west of the village, and a large stone called *N' gorokoumala* meaning *genius* to the east of the village.

The socio-political organization of these two villages is structured around the chiefdom. Since their creation, the chiefs have come from the founder's family. Thus, in Kodougou as in Nèguèla, the chief is always from the Doumbia family. If land management is controlled by the village chief in Kodougou, it is not the same in the other village. In Nèguèla, the village chief does not hold the title of land chief. This chief has no authority over village lands. When a resident works on a plot or if he develops a lowland, this portion becomes his property. Land ownership is therefore acquired through work. The different families settled and exploiting the land therefore enjoy land ownership. Whereas in Kodougou, the chief has all the powers over all the lands. He is the owner of the land and he alone grants or withdraws a plot from a family who only have a right of exploitation.

From this brief local political history, we remember that Nèguèla was created before Kodougou. As a result, we note in the political imagination of current customary authorities, and of the villagers of Nèguèla, as a whole, a duty of accountability of Kodougou towards them. For them, the chiefdom of Kodougou should request authorization from that of Nèguèla before the families settle and operate on the land. But this has never been the case. The chiefdom of Kodougou claims its autonomy and expresses no sign of allegiance to its elder of Nèguèla. In practice, the Kodougou chiefdom enjoys relative political autonomy because it manages its land without reference to the guardian of Odienné, which is not the case for the eldest who does not have direct

ownership of the land. of his village. It is therefore in this atmosphere of sovereignty conflict that the process of demarcating village territories takes place. However, the political conflict had a symbolic dimension because there was no open opposition between the two villages. The original commune, the various forms of community collaboration (marriage, commerce, funerals, loan of land, etc.) promote the construction of a peaceful social environment.

1.2. The intensification of community conflicts between Kodougou and Nèguéla

Terrabo is the land operator selected by the Rural Land Agency (AFOR) in the Odienné region as part of its rural land support program (PAFR). This program, which extends over twenty-seven administrative regions, aims to train rural land stakeholders, raise awareness among populations and demarcate 3,916 village territories. Decree No. 2013 -296 of May 2, 2013 defines the procedure for demarcating village territories . This operation allows the administrative and social recognition of the limits of sub-prefectures, municipalities, and other local authorities . Indeed , the delimitation of village territories is an operation which makes it possible to determine in a contradictory manner the limits of the villages and to establish their cartography, thereby resolving disputes. Ultimately, it secures agricultural investments by private and institutional actors by opening procedures for formalizing acquired land rights.

The delimitation process was launched in 2019 in the sub-prefecture of Odienné in order to alleviate land conflicts through the consensual delimitation of villages. The boundaries of the villages which were known traditionally, will be formalized geometrically by their physical materialization. Ultimately, this will make it possible to curb expansionist desires and the phagocytosis of villages by large cities. In short, it will allow us to know the surface area of each village.

Our field surveys on the delimitation project reveal a low level of knowledge of the political-legal framework of the DTV, its objectives and the methods of implementation by the populations of Kodougou and Nèguéla. This lack of knowledge of the law or its partial knowledge contributes to generating within communities, and between other stakeholders, a plurality of interpretations and understandings, sometimes contradictory, of this process.

While the administrative authorities (Prefects and Sub-Prefects) view delimitation as a means of increasing social cohesion and development in the areas to be delimited, for the technicians in charge of implementation (AFOR agents, expert surveyors, investigating commissioners, CVGFR), the delimitation of territories is reduced to its technical vocation of materializing limits or borders. Contrary to these, within the communities, the operation is perceived as a political action freezing land use rights, negatively affecting local land governance structures and profoundly modifying social relations of obligation and reciprocity which have always organized, regulated and calmed the local land game. In fact, the territorial delimitation operation is perceived by a large segment of the population as an initiative likely to modify the social order and the endogenous modalities of land governance at the local level. Under these conditions, the delimitation operation would aim to transform the status of the land and the scope of the transactions it induces between actors. Much more than an economic good, land is in fact a link between individuals and communities, a vector of social ties. As a result, the populations criticize the DTV for calling into question pre-existing land compromises between villages, by canceling old contracts, concessions, arrangements and verbal agreements around land. Even before the start of the work to demarcate village territories, the operators were boycotting the operation. “ *In any case if we have to put a limit between the villages, it must pass through the old limits that our parents defined at the time by scraping the tracks. If we don't take this into account, there will be no delimitation*” warns this resident of Kodougou (DN, 09/20/21).

It should also be emphasized that the awareness phase experienced numerous weaknesses. In the opinion of the villagers, certain investigating agents made the population believe that once the demarcation is completed, the limits are impassable. It becomes impossible for a farmer to live in one village and have his farms in the other village. In this case, he must change villages or abandon his operators on the territory of the neighboring village. FT, a land farmer from Nèguéla testifies: “ *we are told that after the demarcation of the villages, if your land is in the other village, you can no longer go and cultivate there. In this case, those whose lands will be on the other side will do what they do.*”

Others, on the other hand, have understood the project, but they have difficulty adopting it. In fact, the historical collection which aimed to facilitate the delimitation of villages was not based on objectivity, on the true history of the local population. The populations did not apparently expose to the investigators the objective political foundations, the order of installation and the social boundaries which structure the power relations between the different villages . This explains the non-adherence of the populations to the operations of delimitation of village territories, which ultimately do not reflect the social and political borders between the villages. Evaluating the progress of the program, a land agent says: “ *As you can see, it has been more than two (02) years since the operation was launched and even the 20% of the targeted villages have not been reached in*

the region. It is painful. But I think that This low rate of involvement is due to the ignorance, dishonesty and bad faith of certain customary authorities because very often they veil the truth . (MK, 09/13/21, investigating commissioner).

1.3. Various issues to take into account:

1.3.1. The land issue

The delimitation is supposed to formalize the old boundaries, following a review of local political history and community meetings. The boundaries of these two villages were defined using natural elements such as: plateaus, trees, backwaters, tracks, etc. However, today, the determination of limits gives rise to numerous disputes. At the time, the boundaries were defined by the re-profiling of the tracks by the inhabitants of neighboring villages and the meeting point marked the limit between the villages. After the creation of these villages, the limits were not really an obstacle to social and land exchanges. The two villages recognized their limit with the help of a tree called “*Linguê*”² which was at the edge of the slopes.



Photo 1 “*Linguê*” tree indicating the old boundary between Kodougou and Nèguèla , COULIBALY (2021)

A customary authority tells us that “*at the time we were scraping the tracks and the meeting point represented the limit between us. However, if a village is larger, it is the one that scrapes most of the road and the smaller one does not have enough space*” (T. M, 11/10/21). Even if during the maintenance of the tracks, one village overlapped the space of the other, there was no dispute. But within the framework of DTV, the neighboring space has become a competitive space. Not only is the traditional boundary being called into question, but actors are trying to push back the boundaries of their property to the detriment of neighbors.

The operation to demarcate village territories raises a land issue since the villages want to take advantage of the project to appropriate plots of land that are not theirs. For SL, a land operator, from Kodougou “*this delimitation of villages is at the origin of conflicts in the sense that villages want to take advantage of this opportunity to obtain plots of land because of scarcity. By wanting to be big, they show false limits.*” He continues by noting that “*this unreliable and untruthful information becomes a source of conflict*” (09/20/21) . In fact, the development of villages leads the population to take advantage of the delimitation project to expand their village by showing false boundaries. However, the boundaries between these villages were already known in a traditional way. In the opinion of those protesting the boundaries, people who know the old boundaries between villages are not playing fair. They are developing inclinations to manipulate traditional boundaries for

²Tree whose lifespan is very long which is similar to varieties such as Cedar, Cypress which is a symbol of greatness and longevity.

individual or community interests. They also benefit from the support of younger generations who see in this game of limits, an opportunity to benefit from new community or individual land spaces.

1.3.2. Political sovereignty at stake

The introduction of the project to demarcate the territories of the villages gives rise to political misunderstandings between the two villages. The border between the two villages, not questioned since the creation of the villages, becomes a subject of disagreement. For the inhabitants of Nèguèla, their brothers from the other village want to move the traditional boundaries for their benefit. They want to take over land that does not belong to them. This land operator from Nèguèla informs us that “ *each village knows its limit and the limits of its land, but because of the delimitation of the villages, everyone wants to have more land* ” SA (09/20/21). Due to their common social origin, the exploitation of land has not always obeyed the administrative boundaries of the villages. Depending on land exchanges between farmers, they can work on the plots without taking into account the administrative boundaries of the villages. Thus, it is common to find farmers from a village having their farm on the land of the neighboring village. This did not cause a problem. The delimitation of village territories is a source of disagreement between villages because residents do not want to see their property slip away from them for the benefit of other people.

Furthermore, for the inhabitants of Nèguèla, it is inconceivable that their “little brothers” of Kodougou enjoy political autonomy conferred by their detachment from the original village. “ *The people of Kodougou want to define the boundaries of the land with us, forgetting that their source is in Nèguèla. They forgot that the one who created Kodougou comes from Nèguèla. They must remember that we are their big brothers and they owe us respect.* ” SU (09/21/21). This implies that the founder of Kodougou is from Nèguèla, therefore, the little brother's village always remains under the political authority of that of the big brother. However, this claim of political allegiance is not accepted by the inhabitants of Kodougou who only recognize the Touré of Odienné as their legitimate guardian. They have no accountability towards the village of Nèguèla. In this regard, D. B, a notable from Kodougou states: “ *the Touré of Odienné are the ones who installed us and it is they who we recognize as guardian and not anyone else. They are the ones who can tell us what to do. Apart from them, we are our own guardians.* ” (03/09/21). Like this notable, the inhabitants of Kodougou do not reject Nèguèla as their village of origin. However, in political matters, they do not recognize themselves under the authority of their brothers, because they did not install them. Therefore, they are not under their political authority. Each village is autonomous and owes its installation to the guardians of Odienné. In this regard SB, a land operator from Kodougou says: “ *as we take the people of Nèguèla as our big brothers, they want to walk all over us. It's not possible because we're not going to let it happen. We have our dignity within us and everyone will fight for their village.* ”

Disagreements surrounding the project to demarcate village territories therefore smolder a struggle for sovereignty or subjection. In reality, the limit of the two villages is not only a physical, geographical limit. It hides a political border which is not yet precise. To this end, we can say that the claim for legitimacy and accountability is one of the challenges of intercommunity conflicts in the context of the delimitation of village territories. However, this political issue alone does not explain the disagreements surrounding the definition of village boundaries. The economic dimension must be taken into consideration.

1.3.3. The cashew nut at the heart of territorial delimitation conflicts

The cashew nut was promoted in the 1950s by agricultural services for its resistance to drought. Until the beginning of the 1990s, this speculation was of little interest to farmers. Following prospecting missions from Asian buyers in the north of Côte d'Ivoire, from the second half of the 1990s, farmers began to show increasing interest in this tree (Basset, 2000). Thus, numerous cashew plantations, of varying sizes, were created between 2001 and 2013. Due to the political crisis which led to the partition of the country, farmers experienced difficulties marketing their production. At the same time, the situation of cotton cultivation, another speculation in the agricultural economy of northern Ivory Coast, is not rosy either. It is marked by a long period of stagnation in the price of seed cotton. With the reunification of the country, and especially with the redeployment of the administration and technical structures for supervising producers, we are witnessing a boom in cashew production on a national scale.

However, when the plantations were created, the customary land managers and the various operators did not take the time to set the various limits of the impassable plots. Between Nèguèla and Kodougou, land loans or other forms of land exchanges between farmers are frequent, due to the common origin of the populations. During these exchanges, they did not establish close links between the use of the plot and property rights. Thus, in many situations, the limits of cultivable land in the villages were not observed by producers, to the extent that the issue did not reside in the appropriation of the land, but in its use. Today, cashew is the most widely grown cash crop in these localities. Consequently, this culture is of very vital economic interest for land operators. It

allows them to improve their living conditions and satisfy the needs of the family. This desire to make capital through cashew nut fields leads them to exploit vast areas, which results in the scarcity of arable land. This scarcity leads villagers to want to acquire new spaces in order to meet their needs and those of the future generation. A member of the canton chieftaincy states: *“each village needs sufficient space for its development and to ensure the future of the next generation”* (T. M, 11/10/21) . To this end, the peasants' thirst to acquire more space and the desire to develop through the cashew crop provoke the contestation of the limits during the delimitation between the village of Kodougou and Nèguèla . Before, space which was perceived by the population as a means of survival, has today become a means of enrichment because individuals fight for space to enrich themselves. *“Before there was no limit between villages, but today things have become complicated because of the development of cashew nuts among farmers,”* notes TM, one of the deputies of the Canton chief . Some operators, having developed cashew nut fields on plots that do not belong to them, claim ownership of the exploited areas, against the opinion of the holders of customary land rights or over community areas. In fact, taking into account the common social origin of the farmers of the two villages, the holders of customary land rights did not find any inconvenience in ceding or lending plots of land to their cousins in the other village. And to the extent that the delimitation of village territories is understood as a process fixing the borders of villages, and above all anticipating that of the individualization of land rights, the question of the appropriation of agricultural property, held on the plot of land. Another is an unintentional economic issue of DTV to consider in identifying the constraints of the process.

1.3.4. The symbolic issues

In the localities of Kodougou and Nèguèla, the land is called *Dougoukolo* in Malinké. The populations define it as a sacred and divine good which serves as a material support of life and the production of food in order to satisfy the needs of human beings. By this definition, it should be noted that the land represents an identity trait of the peasant because it is included in his life. To justify this idea, a religious guide from Nèguèla states in these terms: *“the earth characterizes our existence. It is on the earth that we do everything, we walk on the earth, we find food on the earth and even we die, we are buried in the earth, seriously the earth is sacred and without it we cannot not live and we owe him respect”* SA, (09/20/2, Nèguèla). Which means that it is of crucial value for the life of the farmer since it is the support of life. In a word, land represents a source of life for the rural population.

As for the DTV, it was set up with the aim of knowing the surface area of the villages and their limits in order to facilitate investment. It aims to empower each village as well as to mitigate conflicts between them. At the time there were limits but not like those today. These boundaries existed informally and traditionally. To this end, populations would refer to natural objects to designate the limits between them. *“The delimitation itself did not exist in the logic of the populations since they all consider themselves to be brothers and sisters of the same ancestors”* (TL 11/10/2021, Odienné). Indeed, in the logic of the populations of Kodougou and Nèguèla , there are limits between them in a traditional way, but not a rupture or barrier through the physical materialization of the limits by the terminals as for the DTV. The delimitation process is thus seen as an operation which, by fixing the boundaries of the village, creates an “imaginary wall” which prevents anyone outside that village from exercising rights over land within the village boundaries. Far from considering it as the solution to existing land conflicts or as a means of conflict prevention, DTV ends up being considered as a source of land and intercommunity conflicts. Worse still, even though the law does not provide for it, in the imaginations of villagers, the land of a demarcated village is considered to be their “property”. To this end, FT (09/21/21, Nèguèla) attests : *“we are told that after the delimitation of the villages, if your land is in the other village, you can no longer go and cultivate there. In this case, those whose lands will be on the other side will do what they do .”* Other gray areas also remain around the stages and implementation of the DTV process, maintained by unequal access to information and an application considered hasty and not very concerted by technical operators by the populations.

The information and awareness phase did not take into account all the actors (the guardians of the two villages, the delegated mediator, etc.), who are nevertheless responsible for the smooth running of the process and are heavily involved when tensions appear. These actors are therefore not in a position to advise AFOR on which villages are best prepared to be demarcated first to give others time to become aware of the issue: *“In this story of delimitation, not everyone has not been associated since the actors targeted during the awareness raising are the cantonal chiefs, the Kabla chiefs , the village chiefs etc. The latter were supposed to pass on the information if not report to others. However, we Odiennéka are not used to reports quite simply because it is not part of our habits .* (Delegated mediator).

It should be remembered that the lower the level of knowledge about the law and the more differentiated the understandings, the more community participation and local ownership of the DTV process decreases. To

this end, rather than obeying its initial vocation of conflict prevention and resolution, the DTV paradoxically becomes an element of tension

2. Discussion

The main objective of this study is to analyze the issues of intercommunity conflicts in the context of village delimitation. Indeed, determining the socio-land logic of the villages in this situation and finally seeking to understand the perception that the actors have of the delimitation of village territories are of capital importance in this study.

The issues assigned to the process of delimitation of village territories are the reduction of poverty in rural areas, the maintenance of cohesion through the resolution of land conflicts, the promotion of economic and social development and above all the sustainable management of natural resources. They are part of a global approach to so-called sustainable development. Land having become an economic issue for rural stakeholders, the competition for access to it gives rise to a lot of disagreement. However, there is only development in tranquility and peace. Opposition to the project to demarcate village territories results from the confrontation of the diversity of interests at stake in relations to land. They are the framework for expressing antagonistic strategies in terms of monopolizing space or appropriation of resources (Olivier Barrière, 1997, Laurent Goetschel and Didier Péclard, 2006, Roland Pourtier, 2012). These conflicts, whether they affect water, land or trees, reveal the contradictory objectives that can be pursued by the different actors present in the management of natural resources. They come from the coexistence of different representations of resource governance and reveal problematic relationships between individuals themselves, between groups and between individuals and groups regarding natural resources. They are therefore significant of the functioning of a global system of land and resource management in general and of the internal disputes that they give rise to, as well as the implications of the different actors. In the rural communes of the Odienné region, conflicts are generally centered around village boundaries because the delimitation is not technically done in a way to reduce the risk of conflict. Apart from property conflicts, which are obviously very rare due to the weight of tradition, conflicts very often arise between farmers, following problems of division between neighboring villages, between communities, regarding the conservation of specialized areas. and also pastoralism. This reality is reflected in the forms of conflict observed around the boundary between Kodougou and Nèguèla . Conflicts focused on the one hand on legitimacy. Our results corroborate those of Bachelet and Richard (2009) and Moullé (2013) who affirm that the establishment of a border within or between States is intertwined with contestations of the legitimacy of the populations in place. The disagreements caused by the development of a demarcation line can also hide economic issues linked to the financial income generated by cashew nut cultivation or even the development of rice fields. The phenomenon is well known by Lavigne-Delville *et al.* (2000) who provide an instructive analysis of the development of the lowlands. On the other hand, no author consulted mentions the implication of the advent of the cashew nut in the conflicts emanating from the delimitation. No doubt because they were not confronted with this data in their study areas. Even if the conflicts seem quite similar, we always observe variables which establish their singularity.

Conclusion

For several years, Côte d'Ivoire has introduced reforms, tools and diversified programs whose objective is to resolve or alleviate land conflicts and intercommunity conflicts with a view to promoting social cohesion and peace and consolidating social ties between populations in rural areas while promoting the development of villages by implementing projects in their favor. The number of social services, support NGOs, associations and agencies working in favor of rural land is constantly increasing. Despite these initiatives, problems persist. People continue to highlight land difficulties and conflicts that arise between communities, and it would seem that the tools put in place are not yet sufficiently effective and/or are not adapted to the land needs of rural populations.

The present study, which aims to analyze the issues surrounding the delimitation conflicts between the villages of Kodougou and Nèguèla , made it possible to understand the perception of the delimitation operation by the populations of this locality. The results reveal that several factors are at the origin of intercommunity conflicts in the process of delimitation of village territories. These factors are historical, socio-economic and cultural. The analysis of the overlapping of social logics allows us to approach the process of implementing the delimitation of boundaries between the villages of Kodougou and Nèguèla through the description of the practices and positions of the actors. Considering the activities of state and village configurations, it allows us to observe in practice, the actions and means deployed in the process in order to better appreciate the conditions for the emergence and maintenance of success or failure. Overall, we note that the actors develop arguments to rationalize their position and associate each issue with a problem to solve and actors to take into account. As a

result, the analysis highlights the unexpected effects of the delimitation of limits and the different constraints to take into account to achieve the consensual deployment of the delimitation process.

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