Dynamics of Conflict

in Participatory Forest Management in Benin

A Framing Perspective

Latifou Idrissou Aboubacary

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Dynamics of Conflict in Participatory Forest Management in Benin

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Latifou Idrissou Aboubacary

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To Fayçal Cees, Ella and late Rachidatou

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General Introduction

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1.1 Conflict in protected area management in Benin

Benin and Togo are two West African countries situated in a dry corridor called the Dahomean Gap. This corridor is characterized by specific environmental conditions that make these two countries drier than the other countries of coastal West Africa and consequently the rainforest belt from Guinea to Cameroon skipped Benin and Togo (Siebert and Elwert 2004). To protect the very limited vegetation in these countries, protected areas were established by the colonial administration to avoid the complete depletion of the ecosystems.

Most of Benin's protected areas were created during the colonial period between 1940 and 1960. During this period, about 59 such areas were created covering an area of 2,179,418 ha, representing about 20% of the country's total area. The colonial administration established them by confiscating rural land and putting it under government control without the consent of the local communities, who considered that their land had been expropriated. From the time that they were created until the early 1990s (El-Hadj Issa 2001; Tchiwanou 2001; Zoundoh 2001; Arouna 2006), these protected areas were managed solely by government officials. Local communities were considered as undesirable in the management of these resources and were kept away from them by force and repression. Forests rangers (FRs) who received military training were deployed around these protected areas and were charged with preventing any human activity from taking place on these lands. Thus, many conflicts set the FRs and local communities in opposition to each other in relation to access to, and use of, the resources in the protected areas. This management system also proved to be inefficient in terms of conservation of these protected areas, where degradation increased over time (El-Hadj Issa 2001; Tchiwanou 2001; Arouna 2006).

In 1993, participatory management of protected areas was enacted in Benin. This was motivated by the country's political and economic liberalization in 1990 and the Rio de Janeiro Summit held in 1992, which recognized the importance of environmental degradation and local communities' involvement in natural resources management. The government issued the new forest law No 93-009 on 2 July 1993, which opened the management of the protected areas to the local communities (Djohossou 2000). With the support of donors, efforts have been made since then by the government and national and international NGOs to implement several participatory protected area management projects, and some are still in progress. The aim is to make the interventions in protected area management more effective by fostering the participation of local communities in forest resource management. This will, as a result, enable

the local communities to continue the activities developed under the projects after the projects themselves have ceased. However, despite many efforts of government and non-government agencies to stimulate local community participation in sustainable forest management projects, the results are not satisfactory (El-Hadj Issa 2001; Tchiwanou 2001; Zoundoh 2001). Several studies revealed that the lack of success of the forestry reforms of the early 1990s was mainly due to the failure to implement a participatory approach in the management of the protected areas (MDR and PGFTR 1999; Siebert and Elwert 2004). Timber resources are still illegally logged for the timber market and charcoal production, farmers continue to expand their farms deeper into the protected areas, and the pastoralists are still using the forests as areas for grazing, with little respect for the regulations, violating the agreements set during the project implementation phase. Even the people involved in the management of the projects engage in some practices that run counter to the sustainability of the natural resources (Tchiwanou 2001; Arouna 2006).

Some deficiencies have been noted in the participatory projects implemented, such as the limited interest of local communities in project activities during project implementation, and, moreover, just after the end of the projects, local communities and the other stakeholders reverted to their old 'bad' forest resources exploitation in the project areas (Tchiwanou 2001). Local organizations which were supposed to continue the tasks carried out by the projects have broken down, and the agreements reached between the stakeholders during the project implementation phase have been called into question (Tchiwanou 2001). Moreover, conflicts have re-emerged between the FRs and local communities and even among stakeholder groups within local communities involved in the management of these protected areas (Tchiwanou 2001; Zoundoh 2001; Arouna 2006; Mongbo 2008). After nearly two decades of struggling with participatory management of protected areas in Benin, how and why the process evolved to the current situation had to be investigated.

Thus, this thesis investigated the emergence of cooperation and conflict in the participatory management of natural resources in Benin. The study has both societal and scientific relevance. Its societal relevance stems from the fact that it aims to contribute to the improvement of participatory processes by providing a better understanding of the interactions among the stakeholders involved, especially how and why cooperation and conflict have emerged. In some cases, participation has led to cooperation among the stakeholders, and in others its implementation is characterized by conflicts or the continuous alternation of cooperation and conflict. Unravelling the reasons for such differences in out-

comes will enable a better implementation of participatory processes and as a consequence the sustainable management of the natural resources, to which this study also aims to contribute.

The scientific relevance of this thesis derives from its aim of contributing to knowledge generation in the field of framing and conflict in collaborative governance settings. More specifically, a framing perspective was used to investigate the participatory management of natural resources processes to better understand the emergence and co-construction of cooperation and conflict. Framing plays an important role in the creation, evolution, and perpetuation of environmental conflict (Gray 2003). Generating knowledge on how framing groups people together and how different frames play against each other in interaction can provide insights to better understand negotiation processes, especially processes relating to the participatory management of natural resources (Agne 2007; Brummans et al. 2008).

1.2 Participation and conflict in natural resources management

A top-down approach to managing natural resources was advocated for many decades throughout the twentieth century. Natural resources were managed through rigorous law enforcement and human exclusion (Stoll-Kleemann et al. 2010). The resources belonged to the state, which used power and repression to draw the boundaries of protected areas and defend them from people. However, because local communities depended on forest resources for their livelihoods, this approach had catastrophic effects on their living conditions and was not effective in terms of conservation (Kerkhof 2000; Masozera et al. 2006). The involvement of local communities in natural resources management has therefore been recognized as critical for its success for more than two decades (Torquebiau and Taylor 2009; Rodriguez-Izquierdo et al. 2010). Public participation is seen as a necessary tool for the sustainable management of natural resources (Leskinen 2004).

Participatory management of natural resources refers to processes and mechanisms that enable those people who have a direct stake in resources to be part of the decision making about their management at different levels, from managing resources to formulating and implementing institutional frameworks (Schreckenberg et al. 2006). Almost every country in the world is currently experimenting with some form of participatory resources management

by devolving power to the community to use and manage the resources located within the area occupied or used by the community (Edmonds 2002). Several arguments are evoked in favour of the use of a participatory approach in the management of natural resources. They can be summarized in four main categories: pragmatic arguments, ideological and normative arguments, political arguments, and accountability arguments (Leeuwis 2004; Vandenabeele and Goorden 2007).

Pragmatic arguments, also called substantive arguments by Fiorino (1990), stress that participation is needed in order to be effective as it results in a greater legitimacy of policy and thus enhances the effectiveness of governance (Leeuwis 2004; Vandenabeele and Goorden 2007; Coenen 2009). Participation enables access to all sorts of relevant knowledge, insights, experiences, and/or creativity regarding the history of the management of natural resources, the problems that emerge, and their possible solutions (Leeuwis 2004). It facilitates contacts with relevant networks of stakeholders, resources, and people that may support the initiatives and thus it lessens the chance of policies being subsequently contested (Vandenabeele and Goorden 2007). The breadth and depth of the information underlying decision making and the quality of the decisions made are enhanced (Stirling 2006). Participation also creates the degree of mental, emotional, and/or physical involvement necessary for people to feel concerned about the policy (Leeuwis 2004). From such problem ownership, people may feel responsible for contributing to the implementation of the solution.

Normative arguments of participation advocators are based on the idea that citizens have a wish, a moral right, and/or a duty to be actively involved in the policies that shape their own future (Leeuwis 2004). Normative arguments are supported by the belief that citizens are ready to participate and share their political agendas with bureaucrats as long as they are offered appropriate opportunities and as long as bureaucrats are willing to listen and respond (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). According to these arguments, the management of natural resources is everybody's business because their conservation and development is essential for our common future (Vandenabeele and Goorden 2007). The involvement of the public in decision-making processes for natural resources management will increase awareness and ultimately result in behavioural change by the participants (Coenen 2009). Participation is used as an instrument to mobilize public commitment, support, and trust for policy in the management of natural resources (Stirling 2006).

Participatory management is also justified with *political* arguments. As the management of natural resources concerns all the stakeholders, participation can help to emancipate and empower local communities in the management of these resources (Leeuwis 2004). Through their involvement in management, local communities can build upon the skills, insights, and resources necessary to manage natural resources. They will learn of the environmental problems that society faces, and they will network, advocate, negotiate, and persuade government representatives (Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Coenen 2009).

Participation is also advocated in the management of natural resources to enhance the *accountability* of those in charge of the implementation of the conservation project vis-à-vis the stakeholders involved. Thus, the stakeholders have a certain amount of control over the budget and activities, rendering the interventions not only more effective but also more legitimate from an ethical perspective (Leeuwis 2004). Participation is likely to be effective when the constituents come to exercise accountability as a countervailing power (Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Ribot 2001).

Although the involvement of local communities in the management of natural resources is seen as important in light of the above arguments, it varies widely in different contexts from protectionist conservation mechanisms implemented by government representatives to programmes driven by local communities (see Leeuwis 2004; Torquebiau and Taylor 2009; Rodriguez-Izquierdo et al. 2010). The empirical outcomes of such devolution of the use and management of resources are also mixed, and the reasons for differences in performances and outcomes are still not fully understood. In many cases, conflicts have emerged between the stakeholders involved (Hellström 2001; Yasmi 2003; Hares 2009; Yasmi et al. 2009). Thus, the academic debate about participation is moving away from questions about different types of participation and ways to organize them towards the actual effects of participation in practice in order to understand how and why participation leads sometimes to unintended consequences such as conflicts (Turnhout et al. 2010). This is the starting point of our study.

In natural resources management, conflicts are considered as inevitable, ubiquitous, and persisting for the foreseeable future (Buckles and Rusnak 1999; Castro and Nielson 2003; Hares 2009; Mola-Yudego and Gritten 2010). In the participatory management of natural resources, several factors are mentioned as the basis for the development of conflicts in the involvement of stakeholders. Most of them pertain to the issue of power. Critics of participation often fo-

cus on power relations between the stakeholders (see among others Chambers 1997; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Hickey and Mohan 2004; Parfitt 2004; Williams 2004; Aarts and Leeuwis 2010; Rodriguez-Izquierdo et al. 2010; Turnhout et al. 2010). According to Aarts and Leeuwis (2010), many of the problems and dilemmas relating to participatory policymaking and citizens' participation can be traced back to lack of clarity about the role of government and power in the context of participatory policymaking. They argue that we have to accept that differences in power, displays of power, power struggles, and the use of all kind of empowering strategies are phenomena that are found structurally wherever people organize themselves and work together. From Chambers' perspective, power is seen as a negative influence, a force that those who have the advantage use to repress those who are less advantaged (Parfitt 2004). In order to correct this, power must be eliminated or reversed, and this is often a source of conflict. With regard to power relations, participatory management is considered to be exclusive because it creates different categories of citizens (Turnhout et al. 2010). Turnhout et al. (2010) have pointed out that participation will always be exclusive in some way because it restricts the scope of negotiation and who should be involved, and it defines the assumptions about the issue at stake, the expectations about the outcome of the participatory process, what the participants should do, and how they should behave. However, the analysis of community participation in the management of natural resources must move beyond just an analysis of power-sharing arrangements to understand the roles of the relevant stakeholders and the interactional context (Carlsson and Berkes 2005; Rodriguez-Izquierdo et al. 2010). Participation should then be considered as context-specific interactions between participatory initiatives and the expectations of the stakeholders on the one hand, and participants and the needs, identities, and views that they articulate on the other (Turnhout et al. 2010). The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the current debate and provide new knowledge about, and insights into, the nature and the course of participatory processes in forest management. Thus, the objective of this thesis is:

> *To understand why and how conflicts emerge and evolve in negotiation among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin.*

Conflicts arise and develop on the basis of the meaning and interpretation people attach to events and on-going actions in which they are involved (Pinxten and Verstraete 1998). People's construction of meanings and their interpretation of events and actions are associated with framing (Entman 1993; Gray 2003; Dewulf 2005; Aarts and van Woerkum 2006; Dewulf et al. 2009). In this

study, the framing perspective is used to investigate the emergence and evolution of conflicts in protected area management in Benin.

1.3 Theoretical approach: the art of framing

In this study, we start from the idea that institutions as well as organizations are socially constructed realities that exist in the process of conversations and discourses that constitute them (see Ford 1999; Ford et al. 2002). People construct social realities through language by interpreting, constructing, enacting, and maintaining realities they know (Ford 1999). To create a new reality, they deconstruct and reconstruct existing realities through discourses in interaction (Ford 1999). Thus, social processes such as participation and negotiation exist in the discourses and conversations co-constructed by the stakeholders in interaction.

In line with this thinking, participation in natural resources management is a constructed reality involving stakeholders with different interests, backgrounds, and perspectives about the natural resources (Cornwall 2004). Since stakeholders involved in natural resources management have diverse backgrounds, interests, opportunities, and activities linked to these resources, their conceptions of the threats to these resources and the necessary solutions are different as well (see Aarts and van Woerkum 2002). Stakeholders enter the process with fields of vision or frames of reference that help them construct meanings or make sense of the situation (Putnam and Holmer 1992). These frames of the stakeholders are deconstructed and reconstructed in interaction through discourses (Ford 1999). The frames they construct from the various possible frames influence how they understand and evaluate problems and their necessary solutions (Nabi 2003). Frames and framing play an important role in negotiation and conflict management involving multiple actors (Gray 2003; Dewulf et al. 2005; Aarts and van Woerkum 2006; Dewulf et al. 2009).

The concepts of frame, framing, and reframing have been used in various research domains such as decision making, conflict management, social management, innovation and change, policy making, and negotiation (Dewulf *et al*. 2005). However, the definition, use, and operationalization of these concepts have generated considerable divergences among researchers and practitioners. Goffman (1974:10), one of the most cited scholars in the framing movement, stated to define the concept of frame:

> *I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events [...] and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify.*

According to this definition, frames are cognitive devices that govern our characterization of a situation. Frames are what govern our perception and representation of the situation in which we are acting. In Goffman's view, a frame is a schema of interpretation that enables individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label phenomena. Frames help us to organize our knowledge and find out and interpret the meaning of new information (Tannen 1993). They are also 'structures of expectations' 'that is, that, on the basis of one's experience of the world in a given culture (or combination of cultures), one organizes knowledge about the world and uses this knowledge to predict interpretations and relationships regarding new information, events, and experiences' (Tannen 1993:16). The frames adopted are not immune to real world events as they can change with the context and the situation. This is well emphasized by Gitlin (1980:6) who argued that 'frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters'. This is also corroborated by Entman (1993:52) who stated:

> *To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.*

Although this definition still considers frames as cognitive devices, it shows the shift towards a principle of selection and salience and the notion of context in framing. In other words, the frames people construct in interaction show aspects of context as far as the speaker considers these relevant. Thus, in negotiation or interaction processes, the choice of a frame also depends on the signals one receives from the others in the process (Gray 2003).

Other scholars in framing research focus rather on frames as constructed and negotiated in interactions according to the context. In this case, frames are defined as communication devices used by individuals or groups to negotiate how to interpret and understand the on-going interaction (Dewulf *et al*. 2009). Frames are not devices readily available beforehand that people only select and use in interaction; rather, they are co-constructed and legitimized in interaction by linking text to context (Chenail 1995; Aarts and van Woerkum 2006).

Although scholars differ in the exact definition of frame, framing, and reframing, they agree that framing refers to what we use to make sense, to construct meaning, or to understand the world around us, whereas the frame represents the issues; in others words, how we understand and interpret the world around us (Gray 2003; Aarts and van Woerkum 2006; Dewulf 2006). The framing process is connected with a person's specific sets of values, norms, objectives, interests, convictions, and knowledge at a particular time in a particular situation that enable and/or stimulate him to give meaning according to these factors (Aarts and van Woerkum 2006). It is the way an individual formulates a problem according to his norms, habit, interests, and personal characteristics (Putnam and Holmer 1992). Framing works to shape and alter audience members' interpretations and preferences by raising the salience of the apparent importance of certain ideas, and by activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in particular way (Entman 2007).

Different frames are mobilized for diverse purposes in different contexts. In environmental conflicts for example, frames are used to define issues, shape what action should be taken and by whom, protect oneself, justify a stance being taken on an issue, and mobilize people to take or refrain from action on issues (Gray 2003). In environmental conflicts, some frames that stakeholders construct in interactions have been identified (see Lewicki et al. 2003).

When people realize that they interpret the issues differently than other people, because they have different backgrounds, histories, interests, perspectives, etc., then they are able to change their frame in order to get a broader picture to connect with the others. Reframing is a step towards a new way of framing; this means that people begin to realize that they have a different understanding or meaning of their situation, interests, and actions, and that they should broaden their view in order to become connected to others (Aarts and van Woerkum 2006). Reframing has been also recognized as a possible way of linking and turning different kinds of frame (Dewulf *et al*. 2005). Thus, a common problem initially framed differently by stakeholders can be reframed by making a connection between the frames of the stakeholders to make them compatible or integrative for all of them. Reframing appears in this context as a deliberate method to arrive at an integrated solution to a problem. Reframing occurs through frame alignment in interaction. Frame alignment refers to the linkage of different frames of people or groups through interactive and communicative processes such that their individual interests, values, and beliefs become congruent and complementary (Snow *et al*. 1986). Frame alignment is possible through frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame trans-

formation (see Snow *et al*. 1986). Frame bridging refers to the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem; frame amplification means the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem, or set of events; through frame extension, individual frames are taken into account in defining and formulating the frame of the group for a particular issue or problem; and frame transformation means the redefinition of activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful from a standpoint of some primary framework, in terms of another framework, such that they are now seen by the people concerned as something quite else (Snow et al. 1986).

In a process of negotiation or conflict management among stakeholders, the act of framing and reframing is decisive, and understanding the process from a framing perspective may give relevant insight into the nature and course of the process. To understand the local dynamics of participatory management of natural resources, analysing the framing of the stakeholders involved in different interaction settings is thus important. Frame analysis enables the sorting out of underlying logics, situating frames in contexts, and bringing to the surface politics, subjugated voices, ideologies, and contradictions (Creed et al. 2002). It investigates the way the negotiators understand and interpret the situation according to their background, norms, interests, and perspective (Putnam and Holmer 1992), as well as the consequences for further developments.

The main research question of this thesis is then to understand:

> *What frames do stakeholders construct and mobilize in participatory natural resources management, how do these frames change in interaction, and how do they affect the process and outcome of negotiation and conflict management?*

The specific frames people construct in interaction integrate their past experiences, future expectations and goals, and the present context in which the interaction is taking place (Aarts and van Woerkum 2006). Thus, the study of the frames that the stakeholders co-construct and mobilize in the participatory management of protected areas will enable us to uncover and understand their past experiences, expectations, and interests with regard to the process, the content and the relationships insofar as people consider these as relevant, and the evolution of the cooperation and conflict that emerge in each case.

1.4 Methodology: the interpretive approach

Organizations, institutions, norms, cooperation, conflict, and other social actions, and their analysis, are human activities that are not the mirror of nature (Rorty 1979) but an interpretation of it (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). According to Bernstein (1978:145) cited by Yanow (2006:13):

> *A human actor is constantly interpreting his (her) own acts and those of others. To understand human action we must not take the position of an outside observer who 'sees' only the physical manifestations of these acts; rather we must develop categories for understanding what the actor - from his (or her) own point of view - 'means' in his (or her) actions.... (I)n focusing on action, we can and must speak of its subjective meaning.*

For social constructionism theorists, what is most important about human behaviour and interaction is the meaning or communicative intent of the participants (Rizzo et al. 1992). They also believe that the assignment of meaning to action (i.e. the sign-meaning relationship) is not simple or direct, but constructed and negotiated interpersonally (Rizzo et al. 1992). Thus, to understand human social activities, we must investigate the meaning making of people in interaction. From the perspective of the people involved, the interpretive approach invites the use of methods for understanding human behaviours and activities from the perspective of the actors themselves (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). The interpretive approach assumes that we live in a world that people can understand in different ways (Van Bommel 2008).

The philosophical basis of the interpretive approach has its roots in phenomenology and hermeneutics, which take as their point of departure the fact that the generation of knowledge is shaped by the researcher and that the way to study human actors is through *verstehen* - understanding (Yanow 2006). The interpretive approach draws from phenomenology the fact that meaning making takes place in the life world of the individual, characterized by multiple realities and multiple interpretations that may be constructed differently by different people. With hermeneutics, the interpretive approach shares the fact that meaning is not expressed directly. Rather, it is embedded in (or projected onto) artefacts by their creators, and it can be known through interpreting these artefacts. Thus, in the process of meaning making through the interpretive approach, both the researcher and the researched interpret the social reality, thus influencing the knowledge generated. Interpretive researchers focus then on

the meaning making of the members of the situation and on that of the researcher. Interpretive researchers are required to act as translator-storytellers, that is, to engage in learning about the meaning of the events to the people being studied and translate these into a rich empirical and conceptual story (Van Bommel and Van der Zouwen 2010). In this research, the interpretive approach is used because we aim to use framing theory to understand the interactional processes in the management of the protected areas.

The interpretive approach provides a variety of methods for data collection and interpretive data analysis, such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis, frame analysis, interaction analysis.... (see Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Several such methods were selected and used to fit the specific research question at issue (for details see chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 of this thesis).

1.5 Research strategy: the case-study approach

The choice of philosophical assumptions underlying a particular research should justify the choice of research methodologies (Johari 2009). The philosophical basis of this research is interpretivism. Thus, the research strategy adopted in this thesis is derived from interpretivism. Klein and Myers (1999) identified seven principles for conducting interpretive research: the fundamental principle of hermeneutic circle; the principle of contextualization; the principle of interaction between researcher and subjects; the principle of abstraction and generalization; the principle of dialogical reasoning; the principle of multiple interpretations; and the principle of suspicion (Srivastava and Teo 2005). The fundamental principle of hermeneutic circle states that human beings understand a complex whole from the meanings of its parts and their interrelationships. As for the principle of contextualization, it implies that in interpretive research, the context of the research setting plays a very important role in attributing meaning to a particular action. Thus, the social and historical background is important to understand how the current situation has emerged. The principle of interaction between researcher and subjects reiterates the importance of interaction between researchers and subjects during the interpretive research and that research data produced are socially constructed.

The research approach tradition that allow such contextual analysis of human (inter)action is a case-study approach, and particularly what Van Velsen (1967) calls 'the extended-case method' or 'situational analysis' (Leeuwis 2004). According to Yin (2002 and 1994), case studies should be undertaken in situa-

tion when the researcher is interested in studying how processes unfold. 'Case studies focus on understanding the dynamics present within single settings' (Eisenhardt 1989: 534). They are indicated when it is necessary to explore in-depth, the relations between individuals and institutions, to understand, describe, explain and interpret behaviours, attitudes (Mettrick 1994). A case study is a good approach as Yin (1994) states, to seek answers to 'how' and 'why' questions, the type of questions asked in this research.

Three cases were selected and studied in-depth after a preparatory study (Figure 1). A preparatory study phase to start a research project plays a crucial role as it enables to establish the importance of the context for the relevance of the project (Nederlof *et al*. 2004). It also leads to the transparent selection with respect to cases to be studied in-depth and the sites and the stakeholders to be involved. Two cases (the Agoua forest restoration case and the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* forests management case) of the three cases were chosen because they were characterized by open conflict among the stakeholders. The third case (the management of the Pendjari national park) was chosen because no open conflict was noticeable in the management of this protected area, which is often cited as Benin's relatively better managed protected area.

1.6 Thesis outline

In this thesis, the interpretive approach is used to investigate three cases of participatory management of protected areas in Benin in which conflicts have emerged. The aim is to understand why and how conflicts emerge and evolve in negotiation among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin. Thus, in each case studied, the evolution of the participatory management of the protected area was researched, paying attention to cooperation and conflict that emerged. How the participatory management of the protected areas evolved and led to the emergence and escalation of conflicts was the focus.

Chapter 2 presents the case of the participatory restoration of the Agoua forest. Discourse analysis methods were used to analyse the evolution of the frames of the stakeholders involved in the process. The aim was to understand how conflicts emerge, evolve, and either end in resolution or persist in intractable conflict, in order to enhance our capability to handle such conflicts in the sustainable management of natural resources. This case study revealed that the conflict was constructed and evolved mainly in the stakeholders' discourses. It

shows the relevance and agency of discourse in conflict and the importance of the framing perspective for understanding participatory management and conflict dynamics. The study resulted in new questions that form the basis for the following studies. In chapter 3, a framing perspective was used to investigate the evolution of social cohesion among the stakeholders involved in the community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) of the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) forests, including the extent to which it has contributed to the explanation of the collapse of the process. This case study shows that the social cohesion between the stakeholders involved was built at the beginning of the process but then disappeared and was followed by distrust and conflict. The stakeholders involved gradually transformed the formal institutions into informal institutions. The neglect of these informal rules in the course of the process in favour of the formal rules resulted in conflict and distrust. It is concluded that it is necessary to accept and use these informal rules and relationships - which determine the success of the process - rather than the formal institutions as declared at the start of the process.

In chapter 4, the role of trust as social capital in the participatory management of natural resources was further investigated. The aim of the study was to investigate the dynamics of trust in the relationships and interactions among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of the Pendjari National Park (PNP). This study shows that trust was built at the beginning of the process and enabled relationships and collaboration among the stakeholders involved in the conservation process, with a consequent increase in wildlife in the park. However, this trust disappeared and led to distrust among the stakeholders, which evolved and hindered the process.

The analyses of the emergence and escalation of conflict as presented in chapters 2, 3, and 4 all show the impact of social identity dynamics. Chapter 5 then presents a study on the role of social identity in the emergence and escalation of conflicts in the participatory management of the three protected areas, Agoua forest, OSN forests, and PNP. The study shows that conflict emerges when the differences in stakeholders' identities become salient and escalates when the decisions and actions undertaken during the management of the conflict are framed by the stakeholders as threatening their identities.

Finally, in chapter 6 the main findings of the empirical studies are discussed with regard to the overall aim of the study. The chapter ends with the main conclusions and discusses important implications for policy implementation in the participatory management of natural resources.

Figure 1.1: Study areas location

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2

The Discursive Construction of Conflict in Participatory Forest Management: The Case of *Agoua Forest* Restoration in Benin

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Abstract

Agoua Forest in Benin was declared a protected area in 1953 and subsequently managed by means of a coercion system, which, however, did not prevent its deforestation. In 2002, a participatory management process was designed to restore this forest. Although the project managers and local communities agreed a plan at the start of the process, the plan was not implemented because conflict arose in the course of the process. In this paper, an interactional framing approach was used to analyse the emergence of this conflict, which ended in an impasse. Our study showed that the conflict was constructed and evolved mainly in stakeholders' discourses even without changes in actual forest management and use. Moreover, it became clear that stakeholders constructed different frames in different conversation contexts: stakeholders, who share a set of perceptions, norms and expectations as constructed and expressed in their talks (we-groups) constructed stereotypes and stigmas, blaming the other party and presenting themselves as innocent victims. In conversations involving all stakeholders, people did not reveal their real thoughts, either about each other or about the proposals for conflict resolution. This study shows the relevance and agency of discourse in conflict, and the importance of the interactional framing approach in understanding participatory management and conflict dynamics. It reveals how, by means of discourses, farmers in Agoua forest succeeded in handling the conflict with the effect that little has been done in the project's decision to implement the plan.

2.1 Introduction

The establishment and preservation of nature reserves and protected areas are constrained by a significant challenge, i.e., the distribution of costs and benefits related to such an enterprise (Krueger 2009). Although the wider community may benefit from these protected areas because they are considered as global or national goods, the costs are borne by individuals or groups who live in or around them. In many cases, conservation actions have led to the physical and economic displacement of millions of people who formerly lived, hunted, fished, and farmed in areas now protected for wildlife, watersheds, reefs, forests, or rare ecosystems (Brockington and Igoe 2006; Agrawal and Redford 2009). The implementation of such decisions often raises resistance and conflicts between local communities and the organizations in charge of it (Connor 2005).

In 2002, the Benin government initiated the restoration of three forest massifs (Agoua, Wari-Maro and Monts Kouffè) because of their importance in Benin's ecosystem and their high level of degradation due to severe anthropogenic influences such as poaching, logging, grazing and agricultural activities. In the case of Agoua's restoration, a conflict arose between the local communities settled in the forests and the Management Project for the Wari-Waro, Monts Kouffè and Agoua Forest Massifs (PAMF: *Projet d'Aménagement des Massifs Forestiers d'Agoua, des Monts Kouffè et de Wari-Waro*) charged with the restoration of these forests. Negotiations between the stakeholders involved ended in an impasse, although formal agreements were signed, and tension still remained after the ending of the project in June 2008.

Since the creation of Benin's protected areas in the colonial period between 1940 and 1960, and subsequently until the beginning of the 1990s, the State managed the forests using force and repression. Communities living adjacent to these forests were kept at a distance as they were considered to be a threat to these natural resources. However, this management system did little to stop or slow down the degradation of these forests. It rather encouraged corruption and illegal logging, creating conflicts between the forest rangers and the local communities whose livelihoods depended, at least partly, on the forests (Siebert and Elwert 2004). The objective of the sustainable management of natural resources was not reached as there were too few rangers to control its implementation. After the Rio de Janeiro Summit of 1992, forestry reforms were undertaken in Benin. A new forest law was established in 1993. The main reform was the commitment of Benin to participatory management of its natu-

ral resources. Since then, many projects have been initiated to stimulate local communities' participation in the sustainable management of forests and parks. However, despite many efforts, the results of these interventions are still questionable (El-Hadj Issa 2001; Tchiwanou 2001; Zoundoh 2001). Several studies have revealed that the forestry reforms of the early 1990s have not been successful due to the failure of participatory management (MDR and PGFTR 1999; Siebert and Elwert 2004). In many cases, conflicts have arisen between the stakeholders involved in these projects. These conflicts resulted from opposition between forest department representatives and villagers due to corruption in collecting and sharing forest management revenues and illegal logging (Siebert and Elwert 2004), and among the forest department, farmers and herders because of the restriction on access to forest lands for farming and grazing (Arouna 2006).

Elsewhere too, studies have revealed conflicts related to natural resource management (Hares 2009; Hellström 2001; Yasmi 2003). Conflicts arise because the stakeholders involved have competing interests, perceptions and ideas about how natural resources should be managed (Buckles 1999; Castro and Nielson 2003; Yasmi et al. 2006). With the realisation that the traditional top-down forest management was not efficient in terms of conservation and had more often than not led to conflicts, efforts have been made to involve local people in forest management during the last two decades (Kassa et al. 2009). However, in Benin, conflicts re-emerged between forest administrations and local communities despite many efforts to involve local communities in forest management (Arouna 2006). In this paper, we aim to improve our understanding of how conflicts emerge, evolve and either end in resolution or persist in intractable conflict in the context of participatory management in order to enhance our capability to handle such conflicts and thereby contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources.

To this end, we analysed the conflict that arose in relation to the participatory restoration of Agoua forest by PAMF. Because we wanted to study the manifestation of this conflict over time, we used a framing perspective (Aarts *et al* Forthcoming). According to Kretsedemas (2000: 639), 'frame analysis has been used to examine the ways in which movement groups articulate their goals, recruit participants, and respond to the counterframes of their opponents'. Frame analysis is therefore useful in conflict situations to investigate how frames emerge and their applications after they have been developed (Kretsedemas 2000).

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Research approach

Frame and framing concepts are particularly relevant for researchers studying conflict, negotiation and inter-group interactions (Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2003). The notion of frame is rooted in cognitive psychology (Bartlett 1932) and anthropology (Bateson 1954). It is often associated with Erwing Goffman because of the book he published in 1974 *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. In this book, he described how to use the concept of frame to understand human thought and interactions. Since then, the concept of frame has evolved. Current research on framing distinguishes two main approaches: the cognitive approach and the interactional approach (Dewulf et al. 2009).

The cognitive approach in framing research was explicitly formulated by Minsky (1975) in the field of artificial intelligence. This research tradition has its roots in Bartlett's (1932) schema theory of memory. The cognitive approach focuses on cognitive frames or mental structures that help us to organise and interpret incoming perceptual information by fitting it into pre-existing categories about reality (Dewulf et al. 2009; Minsky 1975). In research using the cognitive framing approach, frames are considered as stocks of knowledge used by individuals to assess new information. The definitions of frame by Goffman and Gitlin fit in this framing approach. Goffman (1974) defined frames as schemas of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label phenomena. In the same way, Gitlin (1980: 6) said that 'frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters'. They are knowledge schemas or structures of expectations about people, objects, events and settings (Dewulf et al. 2009; Tannen and Wallat 1987).

The interactional approach to framing research is linked to the early work of Bateson (1954) on meta-communication in which framing is defined as exchanging cues that indicate how ongoing interaction should be understood (Dewulf et al. 2009). In this approach, the definition of framing corresponds to what Entman (1993: 52) said: 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and to make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation'. Frames are alignments or co-constructions produced and negotiated in interactions (Dewulf et al. 2009). Interactional frames are thus communication devices used by participants in

interaction to negotiate meanings and alignments. The interactional approach to framing thus enables us to understand how participants in a conflict co-construct meanings and negotiate alignments while interacting.

Both framing research traditions are useful to gain insight into conflict dynamics, but each gives a different kind of understanding of how and why frames change. The cognitive approach notes that stakeholders hold multiple frames as knowledge schemas and shift from one to other when they get new information (Minsky 1975). The interactional approach links frame shifting by stakeholders to what is going on during interaction (Dewulf et al. 2009). In this research, we opted for the interactional approach to get more insight on how and why stakeholders' frames evolve in conflict situations. In the interactional approach, frames are considered as agency used to act on the world (Benford and Snow 2000; Marullo et al. 1996; Pellow 1999). People use frames to perform actions. For example, in social movements such as peace, civil rights, environment, women's movements etc. where groups of people engage in collective action, frames are used to activate and motivate the greatest number of potential adherents (Marullo et al. 1996). Social movement actors are signifying agents who actively engage in producing and maintaining frames for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders and observers (Benford and Snow 2000). In efforts to change policy, policy makers use frames to gain broader support by linking the preferred issue framing of a group to the core values of an external group (Marichal 2009). According to Gray (2003: 15), 'frames are used to (1) define issues, (2) shape what action should be taken and by whom, (3) protect oneself, (4) justify the stand we are taking on an issue, and (5) mobilize people to take or refrain from action on issues'. Thus, frames are constructed in interaction and used strategically to persuade others to our point of view, gain advantage in negotiations and rally like-minded people to our causes (Shmueli et al. 2006). Thus, in the interactional framing approach, people co-construct social realities in conversations (Dewulf et al. 2009; Ford et al. 2002; Pearce and Cronen 1980). Since constructed realities provide the context in which people act and interact, the nature of these realities establishes the opportunities for action, how people see the world, what actions to take, etc. (Ford et al. 2002). Frames are then iterative; this means they are constructed in a particular reality and influence this reality as well (Aarts et al. Forthcoming; Aarts and van Woerkum 2006; Ford 1999). In this framing perspective, a conflict is neither a state of the world nor a state of mind, but a reality that resides in the social interaction among disputants (Dewulf *et al*. 2009; Ford et al. 2002). So, conflicts arise only because of how people co-construct issues, relationships and interactions (Dewulf et al. 2009).

To understand the dynamic of the conflict between the PAMF staff members and the farmers in relation to Agoua's restoration, we investigated how these stakeholders framed the problem, both their own and the other stakeholders' role in the process and the participatory process that was designed to manage the forest. We analysed the frames that stakeholders brought to the fore in different conversation contexts over time (see Aarts et al. Forthcoming; Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2003).

Issue or *problem frames* deal with what the conflict is about. Disputants often start talking about the conflict by giving a brief summary of what they believe the conflict is about. Gray (2003) called this 'whole story frames'. These frames shed light on which aspects of the conflict are important to each party. Issue frames also include cause and solution frames as the disputants, by describing the issue, tend to highlight their meanings of the causes and their desired solutions.

Relationship frames include identity, characterisation and power frames. *Identity frames* refer to how stakeholders involved in a conflict present themselves. Parties in conflict view themselves as having a particular identity in a specific conflict situation (Kaufman et al. 2003). Identity frames are the different answers to the question: Who am I? (Gray 2003; Hoare 1994). Answers to that question may vary from one stakeholder to another depending on their demographic characteristics (e.g., race, gender and ethnicity), location (e.g., their work place, where they are living and their origin), their role (e.g., as a farmer or a facilitator), the institution with which they work (e.g., a project staff member or a government officer) or their interests (e.g., whether or not they agree with the legislation) (Gray 2003). *Characterisation frames* are the mirror of identity frames as they concern how a group of actors present the others involved in a conflict. They are the answer to the question: Who are they? (Gray 2003). In conflicts, parties tend to stereotype and portray opponents negatively or positively. They construct characterisation frames that are often different from the identity frames of the other parties. In this case, such characterisations often undermine the others' legitimacy, cast doubt on their motivations or exploit their sensitivity (Kaufman et al. 2003). Characterisation frames are also used by parties in conflict to strengthen their own identity and justify their actions towards the others. Parties in conflict describe their relation with each other using *power frames*. Power frames are related to power resources as they are the way actors involved in a conflict evaluate their own resources and those of the others to influence each other (Marfo 2006). Disputants use power frames to characterise not only the forms of power that are legitimised in the conflict

but also the forms of power that are preferred to comfort their own position (Kaufman et al. 2003).

Process management frames refer to the way parties judge the implementation of the process and their preferred management process (Gray 2003; Kaufman et al. 2003). When the process concerns a conflict, we talk about conflict management frames. Depending on parties' identity frames, their characterisation frames and their interests, they may hope for or prefer a particular type of management process. Conflict management frames in environment conflict studies may vary from avoidance or passivity to struggle, sabotage or violence (Gray 2003).

Identity frames, characterization frames, and power frames are important for understanding conflict, as conflict almost inevitably arises when people feel their identities been threatened (Aarts et al. Forthcoming; Blok 2001). These frames also influence people's feelings of whether or not there is a problem and the way they define the issue at stake (Gray 2003). People are always negotiating identities and the problem at stake in the presence of others in interaction. Thus, the above frames have been investigated and analysed in different interaction contexts, varying both over time and in the composition of the stakeholders involved in the conversations.

2.2.2 Research methodology

The interpretive approach was used to investigate how the conflict in Agoua's restoration emerged, evolved and was managed (see Bommel 2008 and Yanow 2000). This approach suggests that we live in a world that is variously understood. It is based on the assumption that there are multiple possible interpretations of a social situation (Yanow 2000). We observed what the stakeholders involved in the conflict were saying and doing and the contexts in which these talks and actions took place (Silverman 2001).

Data were collected from February 2007 to October 2008, a timeframe that coincided with the negotiation period between the PAMF and the local communities. They were gathered through semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with the stakeholders, participatory observation of meetings held in the framework of the management of the project and the conflict, and analysis of documents concerning the project and the conflict. The semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders were scheduled and carried out on the basis of

a topic list, whereas informal conversations were held in informal discussions with the stakeholders in the research area. In total, nineteen farmers with farms in the forest, six members of restoration committees, seven staff members of the PAMF, six staff members of the municipality, and the director of the centre for agriculture promotion of Bantè municipality (CeCPA: *Centre Communal de Promotion Agricole*) were interviewed. The individual interviews were supplemented by six focus group discussions with the farmers. These focus group discussions were held with all kinds of farmers who responded to our invitation to talk about the conflict. Two negotiation meetings held during the conflict management process between the stakeholders involved in the conflict were attended and data were recorded.

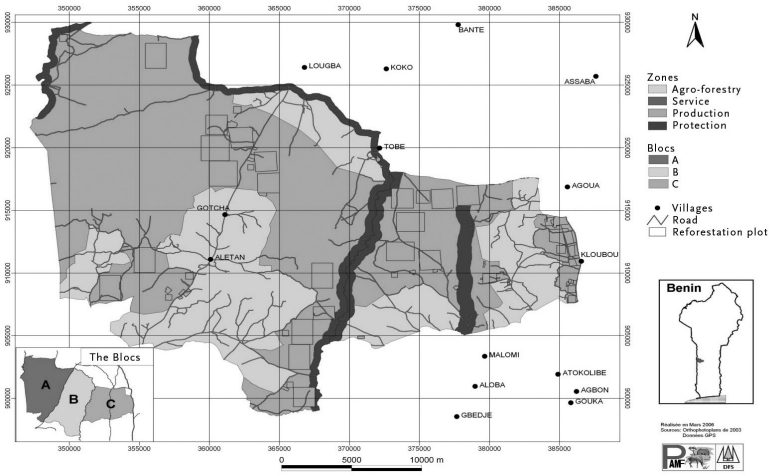
The interviews and conversations were tape-recorded, transcribed and coded. We analysed the transcribed texts and documents using notions and techniques from discourse analysis methods. Discourse analysis focuses attention on the way language is used, what it is used for and the social context in which it is used, including its effects (Punch 2005). Another reason for this choice was that discourse analysis studies use not only transcripts of talks like conversation analysis, but also other sources based on transcripts of open-ended interviews, or on documents of some kind (Silverman 2001; Wooffitt 2005). Through discourse analysis, we investigated how conflict emerged, evolved and was managed during the participatory restoration of Agoua forest.

2.2.3 Research setting

This research focuses on the Agoua forest conflict in Benin. The Agoua forest is a State forest, which was declared a protected area by Decree No. 8 104 SE of 4 November 1953. At that time, the forest covered 75,300 ha (Akpado 1996). In 2002, it was reduced to 68,848.43 ha (PAMF 2006). The forest is located in the centre-west of Benin and entirely in Bantè Municipality (see Figure 1).

Before its classification as State owned, Agoua forest was managed by local communities whose traditional authorities had taken care of the conservation of this ecosystem for many centuries (PAMF 2006). This traditional institution was steered by the king and his court, who are still present today.

Figure 2.1: Agoua forest and its different zones



Source: PAMF 2006

After the conversion of Agoua forest into public domain, its management was confided to the forest administration, which adopted a coercion and repression approach but had only a few forest rangers to enforce implementation. Local communities, who were consequently removed from the management and use of the forest, adopted a rebel attitude towards the natural resources on which their livelihood depended. During the 1960s and 1970s, Agoua forest was illegally occupied by these local communities in search of land for agriculture. According to the 2002 census, the local populations consisted of about 58,594 persons or 8,194 households living in and around the forest of Agoua (RGPH 2003). Most of them depended on the forest for their livelihood. Agriculture, the main source of livelihood, was practiced by about 80 per cent of the villagers, followed by hunting and fishing (PAMF 2006). The introduction of cashew plantations increased demand for land in the region and pushed the farmers to settle in the forest. PAMF estimated that 5,889 ha of the forest were occupied by local communities' farms, plantations and fallows, and 50 ha occupied by houses scattered in the forest. Most of the farmers settled in the forest had migrated from other regions of Benin and abroad in search of land and were installed in the forest by the local traditional authorities who managed the land tenure system. To the present day, in each village, there is a spiritual chief who is the keeper of all the lands inherited from the ancestors. These lands are divided and each part belongs to a collectivity that shares it among its members. Until the end of the 1980s land was lent to the newcomers without any compensation. Since the beginning of the 1990s the local traditional authorities have

been receiving money or drinks before giving land to any migrant because of the growing scarcity (PAMF 2006).

According to PAMF (2006), the main causes of Agoua's degradation were illegal and excessive logging and poaching, weak control system in the forest, the slash and burn technique in agriculture resulting in excessive and inefficient use of land in the forest, late bush fires provoking wildfire and herders' actions with their cattle. Illegal logging was organized by small-scale entrepreneurs and loggers on the local and regional levels. They used other loggers and unskilled labour recruited in the villages closer to the forests and they were often in complicity with local authorities and/or local forest administration representatives (Siebert and Elwert 2004). The PAMF project was initiated in 2002 to start the restoration of Agoua forest. PAMF was a five-year project implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation to restore and design the management plan of Agoua, Wari-Maro, and Monts Kouffè forest massifs.

2.3 Case Study

2.3.1 The participatory management plan for Agoua forest

In Benin, participatory forest management is carried out through the establishment and implementation of the participatory management plan (PMP: *Plan d'Aménagement Participatif*) for the forests. The PMP for a forest is a document that aims to incorporate the knowledge and needs of the local communities and forest administration in a sustainable forest management plan (PAMF 2006). It is elaborated by the stakeholders, such as the project team, local communities, NGOs, socio-political authorities, forest experts, etc. The PMP describes the resources available in the forest and how they should be managed in a sustainable way for a period of time (ten years in the case of Agoua forest). PAMF began the establishment of the Agoua forest PMP with awareness raising campaigns among local communities on the importance of natural resource conservation, and the objectives and activities to be carried out by the project. At the same time, the zoning of the forest was undertaken by PAMF staff members and discussed with farmers' representatives. For the zoning process, aerial photos were taken to sort out the different levels of occupation and degradation of the forest. In fact, during the repressive management regime (in force from the time the forest was put under state protection in 1953 until participatory management was introduced in 1993), despite Agoua forest being supervised by forests rangers, farmers settled there, and thirteen

villages and hamlets had been created in the forest (PAMF 2006). Agoua forest was eventually divided into four zones: service zones, protection zones, agro-forestry zones and production zones.

Service zones consisted of roads that enabled travellers to reach villages located inside the forest. Protection zones represented ecosystems that bordered the three main rivers in the forest: Zou, Ogou and Otio. They were integrally conserved and protected from any human intrusion. Agro-forestry zones concerned parts of the forest mainly occupied by farms, fallows, private plantations of more than 1 ha in size and the villages. According to PAMF (2006), the lands reserved for agro-forestry were three times larger than the lands initially occupied by the farmers in the forest, covering an area of 21,831.09 ha to take account of growth in the local populations and the required expansion of farms in the future. The agro-forestry zones were dedicated to the cultivation of food crops. However, cashew plantations of more than 1 ha were to be preserved. Also, farmers installed on these lands should pay an annual fee for occupying the State's land. For land in the agro-forestry zone occupied before the zoning, the annual fee was to be 10,000 FCFA [1] per ha per year, and for new land occupation, 20,000 FCFA per ha per year. Cashew plantation owners were to pay 20,000 FCFA per ha every year to continue harvesting their plantations. The remainder of the forest was designated as a production zone, comprised of those parts of the forest intended for reforestation and for exploitation by forest users under contracts with the forest management team during the implementation phase of the PMP.

Because forest protection and production zones had been subject to significant human influences (logging, hunting, grazing, agriculture...) their level of degradation was high and they needed to be restored. Their reforestation with fast growing forest trees was entrusted to local communities. Contracts were signed with local communities' committees for forest restoration that produced and planted trees in the degraded parts of the forest. They were to take care of these trees for four years after planting them before leaving them to grow naturally. The local hunters were transformed into forest guards to assist forest rangers in preventing illegal logging, hunting, grazing and fishing in the forest. The project also built infrastructures in the villages adjacent to the forest such as roads, wells, pumps and warehouses to help farmers store their agricultural produce. Income-generating activities (grasscutter [greater cane rat: *Thryonomys swinderianus*] and rabbit breeding, beekeeping for honey and butter

1 € 1 = 655.957 FCFA.

production by women) were initiated and financed by the project to reduce local communities' poverty level and thus their dependence and pressure on the forest. These project activities mobilised a significant number of people from the local villages and provided them with substantial income. When referring to this period, local communities used the following kind of utterances:

> *When the PAMF came we were happy as we heard that it would fight bush fires and then our cashew plantations would not burn. We also believed that it would bring jobs to our region.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bantè's farmers, March 2007

And:

> *At the start, we were happy with the PAMF as it built infrastructures in our villages and enabled many villagers to earn money by working with the restoration and hunting committees. We thanked the government for choosing our region for the implementation of this project.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bantè's farmers, March 2007

In these interview excerpts, local communities presented the project and its activities positively during the elaboration of the PMP. The mayor of the municipality described local communities' initial feeling about the project's activities as follows:

> *Local communities accepted this project with enthusiasm, because of its vision and policy of forest conservation and restoration, while simultaneously improving livelihoods and reducing the level of poverty.*
>
> Source: Bantè's Mayor, November 2007

These utterances indicate that, at the start of the project, local communities agreed with its objectives and activities. In their discourse, they praised the presence of the project in their region. They used positive frames to characterise the project and its activities. No conflict or clash was perceptible in the discourse of the local communities until after the planning stage of the PMP, prior to its proposed implementation in 2006.

2.3.2 Explosion of a conflict

In 2006, PAMF announced the beginning of the implementation of the PMP and this implied the execution of the Zoning Plan. The project management staff then decided to repossess forest lands occupied by farmers in the protection and production zones. Instead of throwing all the farmers out of the forest, PAMF asked them to move into the agro-forestry zones dedicated to farming. PAMF planned to destroy all the farms and plantations in the production and protection zones in order to replace them with forest trees. This was contested by the farmers. Farmers agreed to abandon their food-crop farms but not their cashew tree plantations because they considered the latter part and parcel of the forest. Farmers installed in agro-forestry zones refused to pay the stipulated fees for land occupation. According to the farmers, PAMF wanted to chase them from their lands, and they were struggling to resist PAMF's attempt to extort their farms from them. The following interview excerpts highlight their thoughts:

> *We were living here in peace and working on our farms when PAMF came and created the conflict. If somebody has his possessions and another wants to extort him, it means creating a conflict*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, November 2007

Another farmer added:

> *We don't agree with the way PAMF manages our forests because they want us to leave our farms.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, November 2007

In these testimonies, farmers presented the PAMF people as the troublemakers. Taking a closer look allows us to find identity and characterisation frames that contributed to the start of the problem. The phrase *We were living here in peace and working on our farms…* suggests that the farmers considered themselves as quiet, hardworking and peaceful beings, whereas the PAMF staff members were characterised as distorting their peaceful lives (*…when PAMF came and created the conflict,* and *…because they want us to leave our farms.*). With the phrase *If somebody has his possessions and another wants to extort him, it means creating a conflict,* the problem is brought to a higher, generalised level, aimed at getting support from the researcher as well.

The conflict broke out when PAMF destroyed a cashew plantation to replace it with a plantation of forest trees. Farmers started blaming PAMF, saying that it had changed the initial objectives and agreements:

> *When PAMF started, its staff members organised meetings in our villages. At these meetings, they said the project will be implemented in our region. We asked them what they really wanted to do and they replied that they were coming to restore the protected forests of our region. We then asked them whether or not we would be chased away later. They told us that they would not chase us away; rather that they were coming to work together with us. That was what we agreed upon together.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

Another farmer said:

> *When the project came first, they did not tell us what they are doing now, namely, chasing people away from the forest. They said that they would give farmers some tree seedlings to replace the trees farmers had destroyed on their farms. We would grow our crops while simultaneously planting forestry trees. When these forestry trees were big enough, we would leave these sites. Suddenly, they asked some people to destroy our plantations and crops*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

PAMF was pictured by the farmers as untrustworthy as the utterances show (They told us that they will not chase us away; rather they came to work together with us, and When the project came first, they did not tell us what they are doing now, namely, chasing people away from the forest). The farmers justified the fact that they had not protested when the zoning was being established and that they were now refusing to leave their farm by characterising the PAMF as liars (They said that they would give farmers some tree seedlings to replace the trees farmers had destroyed on their farms....Suddenly, they asked some people to destroy our plantations and crops).

Also, the government officers were blamed for not having informed the farmers about the status of the forest in the past and instead allowed them to settle in the forest and helped them to establish themselves there, whereas the same officers were now allowing PAMF to *chase them away*, as becomes clear in the next two utterances:

> *When we came back from Ghana in 1970s, we heard that some farmers had been chased from one side of the forest. Then we settled on the other side. We were not informed that this side was also part of the forest until PAMF came. When we were settling, nobody bothered us and now after working for so many years we are warned to leave.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

And:

> *In the past when the Ministry of Agriculture used to take care of the forests, the extension workers helped us to plant cashew trees in our farms in the forest. We established villages in the forest and the government built schools, dug wells and even opened health centres in these villages.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

Through these utterances, farmers presented themselves as the ultimate victims. Apparently, the mayor acknowledged the responsibility of the State for the actual situation:

> *You may be better informed than me about the status of this forest as a protected forest, the fact that it belongs to the State and cannot be occupied by anyone. However, in the past the State made the mistake of abandoning the forest for more than forty years, and this facilitated and favoured the settlement of the local communities in this area.*
>
> Source: Bantè's Mayor, August 2008

The CeCPA director in Bantè Municipality also argued:

> *In one way or another, the State is the one responsible. In the 1950s, this forest was declared a protected area. Since then, people have been allowed to settle in it. The State built some infrastructures, such as schools, health centres, wells etc., in the villages created in the forest. Some of these villages are nowadays officially recognised villages. Then suddenly, one day farmers are told to leave as they are in a public domain. It would have been better if the State had taken its responsibility from the start by fencing the forest. Then, this situation would never have occurred.*
>
> Source: Bantè's CeCPA Director, August 2008

However, contrary to these vocalised stakeholder perspectives, PAMF rejected the analysis of both the farmers and the municipality. This is highlighted in the following testimony of the PAMF office head in Bantè Municipality:

> *For them [the farmers] the project will just establish the Zoning Plan and stop by the end of the last year (2006) as it is a five-year project. So then, they will go back to their initial places in the forest. It was clear in their mind that 'we will help them make it and the project will finish before they implement it. They will leave and we will go back again to our places.' The forest will become what it was before the project. When they realised at the end of 2006 that the project started again with the implementation of the PMP, they said 'we will never leave'.*
>
> Source: Bantè's PAMF office head, September 2008

In this utterance, PAMF explained the situation by the fact that, when the zoning was agreed upon, farmers did not protest because they thought that the actual implementation of the Zoning Plan would never take place. As demonstrated by the staff members' utterances below, PAMF characterised the farmers' protests as selfish, since those who were complaining were the ones who had to move, and thus had a direct stake:

> *After the zoning of the forest, everybody agreed it was not acceptable for farmers to be scattered everywhere in the forest. So, they had to be concentrated in the agro-forestry zones. However, at that time we did not know who had to leave the forest and who could stay. When the details of the Zoning Plan were demonstrated in the field, those who found their lands in production and protection zones of the forest, and who had to be displaced, started to complain that they didn't agree with the zoning, nor would they leave.*
>
> Source: PAMF staff member in Bantè, September 2008

They added:

> *The farmers to be relocated are those who settled deep in the forest and are still extending their farms. We told them that they had to leave. They said that they agreed with us but that they had to be compensated before they left. That's the whole problem. The farmers are just asking to be compensated for the plantations they have to leave.*
>
> Source: PAMF staff member in Bantè, September 2008

In both testimonies, PAMF suggested that farmers in general agreed with the zoning, but only the few who had to be relocated insisted on the preservation of their cashew plantations or compensation.

The utterances so far have been parts of conversations of stakeholders, who share a set of perceptions, norms and expectations as constructed and expressed in their talks (we-groups) with the researcher (Gumperz 1965). What is striking is that in such we-contexts both farmers and PAMF managers rejected any responsibility for the situation and overtly blamed and accused the other side. By doing so, they presented themselves as victims and the other party as causer of the conflict. Farmers blamed PAMF for not telling them the truth at the start of the project, and the government for encouraging their settlement in the forest for many years before asking them to leave. From PAMF's perspective, the farmers ignored the Zoning Plan as they thought that it would not be implemented before the ending of the project.

These interview excerpts also show a shift in farmers' characterisations of PAMF from positive to negative, and the emergence of conflict frames in their discourse from the moment the implementation of the Zoning Plan was announced. Accusations that PAMF was untrustworthy and a liar, emerged when PAMF started to talk about its decision to really implement the Zoning Plan. PAMF rejected these accusations and constructed the problem as a fight started by those farmers who were concerned with their personal interests. Victim identity frames, and blaming and accusing characterisation frames emerged in the stakeholders' discourse, reinforcing the tension between the different stakeholder groups. Each party was tacitly attributing the causes of the situation to the others. Here, we recognise the situation as described by Ford *et al*. (2002), who argued that change and resistance to change are a function of the ongoing background conversations constructed in we-group conversations and consequently form the context for both the change initiative and the responses to it.

2.3.3 Evolution of the conflict

The destruction of a cashew plantation incited farmers to action. They wrote a letter to Benin's president on 12 October 2006 with copies to the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Breeding and Fisheries. In this letter, they called upon the president for help to preserve their plantations and farms in the forest. To persuade the president,

they used an argument that they thought the president would find relevant: PAMF was hindering their efforts to increase crop production in their region by destroying their farms. In informal conversations however, they also claimed their right to protection from the State as citizens represented by the president, arguing:

> *We agree that the land is owned by the State, but we as human beings also belong to the State.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

Implicitly they accused the State of not taking care of them by refusing to take their side. Both of the ministries contacted sent a separate team to investigate the situation. They brought back different pictures about the situation. Then the president asked for an inter-ministerial commission to assess the situation and to come up with propositions to solve the problem.

The inter-ministerial commission was the first to call a meeting to hear the different stakeholders' opinions on the situation. The meeting was held in the conference room of Bantè Municipality on 3 March 2007. The representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Breeding and Fisheries and the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation - forming the inter-ministerial commission wished by the president - all the farmers' representatives of all the local villages, the PAMF staff members, the mayor of the municipality, and the director of CeCPA were present at the meeting.

At this meeting, the PAMF staff members reminded the participants how the zoning had been determined. According to PAMF, five meetings had been organised with local communities' representatives - the village councils for sustainable development (CVDD: *Conseil Villageois de Développement Durable*) of all the local villages - to talk about the Zoning Plan. On each CVDD, farmers had at least one representative. As far as PAMF was concerned, the CVDDs were in charge of informing the farmers of the outcomes of the meetings. The different zones, their surface areas and their functions were shown to the farmers. PAMF reassured the farmers that nobody would be chased out of the forest, but rather that those who had their farms in the production and protection zones would be relocated to the agro-forestry zones.

The farmers publicly expressed their opposition to leaving the forest. They argued that they were not involved in the elaboration of the Zoning Plan; in particular, they contested the five meetings held to discuss the zoning. According to

them, some meetings had been organised in the framework of the participatory management of the forest but not especially to discuss the zoning of the forest. They did not even remember PAMF showing them the agro-forestry zones before they were unveiled at the meeting:

> *When they tell farmers to move to the agro-forestry zones, which are occupied by other farmers, where will the newcomers be settled? Are they going to dispute land with their brothers or is it the government who is going to redistribute these lands to the farmers? We don't even know where these places [agro-forestry zones] are.*
>
> Source: Bantè's farmers at the meeting, March 2007

Later, in an interview with him, the director of the CeCPA supported this argument by the farmers and recognised that:

> *The fundamental problem that exists is where the farmers will settle if they leave their plantations in the forest. The farmers estimated that about 10,300 households settled in the forest had to leave. Where will they settle? Bantè Municipality is bordered by Monts Kouffè forest in the north, in the north-east by another forest, Wari-Maro forest, and in the south by Agbado river. Agoua forest occupies the whole western part of the municipality.*
>
> Source: Bantè's CeCPA director, August 2008

For the farmers and the director of the CeCPA, the lands PAMF presented as representing the agro-forestry zones were occupied by other farmers who were forbidding their peers to settle there, arguing that these lands were their fallows. According to them, there was no land left for them in that area. Even if they got lands in these zones they would not be allowed to recreate their destroyed cashew plantations, which represented their main source of livelihood. Some farmers stated that they had been chased away from other countries and would not accept being chased anyway from the lands of their ancestors. They warned whoever intended to destroy their farms to be ready for a fight. Either the farmers would kill him or they would be killed. At the end of the meeting, the farmers refused to sign the report of the meeting.

The behaviours of PAMF and the farmers' representatives in this we-versus-they interaction setting show that each party was fighting to gain credibility in the eyes of the inter-ministerial commission. PAMF tried to convince the participants at the meeting that it had done its job properly. According to PAMF,

the situation was due to farmers' representatives who did not pass on to their constituency the zoning information communicated at the meetings. PAMF also tried to calm the situation via utterances like:

> *We will not chase you out of the forest, but relocate you. Only those who have their farms and plantations deeper in the forest will be moved into the agro-forestry zone.*
>
> Source: PAMF staff members at the meeting, March 2007

At the same time, the farmers' representatives denied all the actions that the PAMF claimed to have undertaken to inform them about the zoning process. They even characterised PAMF staff members as *killers,* like in this piece:

> *For us, the PAMF wants to kill us alive. They want to kill farmers alive, which means killing us before our age to die, as some of the farmers are old and unable to create new plantations, which are their only one source of livelihood now and during their retirement period. Since God created Bantè our municipality, no factory has been built here. We only grow crops and the land is our wealth.*
>
> Source: Farmer informants, March 2007

With the aim of gaining the support of the commission (Shmueli *et al*. 2006; Marichal 2009), they again framed themselves as victims of PAMF's actions. They expressed their distrust vis-à-vis PAMF by refusing to sign the report of the meeting at the end. At that meeting, farmers expressed themselves freely as they constituted a majority vis-à-vis the members of the commission and PAMF staff members. Emotion, anger and violence were noticeable in all their utterances. PAMF staff members, in their turn, used positive identity frames to describe themselves. The difference between the farmers' negative characterisation frames of PAMF staff members and the PAMF staff members' own identity frames increased the distance between these stakeholders and thus reinforced the conflict.

Identity and characterisation frames were used by the different stakeholders in this we-versus-they interaction setting to persuade the members of the inter-ministerial commission to support their position. The commission heard the farmers' complaints and PAMF's reactions. As discussions raised tension, the commission decided to stop the meeting and call another negotiation meeting with only the farmers' representatives, PAMF and the other stakeholders involved in the conflict. Before the commission members left, they asked the

farmers to stay calm and reassured them that they would solve the problem. However, despite the commission's warning, on 3 August 2007 the farmers held a demonstration march that the national television was invited by the farmers to cover and broadcast. This action by the farmers aimed at gaining governmental support:

> *Because they did not follow what the president said, that is, to discuss with us and look for our agreement before taking any action and starting to destroy our farms, we decided to have a demonstration. That will enable the government to know what is happening here'.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, September 2008

When broadcast on national TV, this news indeed pushed the president to take the situation seriously, and he sent the Minister of Environment and Nature Conservation to solve the problem. The minister organised a tour in the project area to see what the project was doing and had a discussion with the members of the project and the farmers. After listening to all the parties, the minister appeased the farmers and promised to organise a meeting between the representatives of the parties and herself.

2.3.4 Escalation of the conflict

After two postponements, the last negotiation meeting was finally held on 18 and 19 October 2007 in Bohicon but without the presence of the minister, who sent representatives. The representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Breeding and Fisheries, of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Conservation, of the PAMF project, of Savalou and Bantè Municipality, of the farmers, of the forest restoration committees and of the parliament member of Bantè Municipality, and the local radio reporter were present at the meeting.

The meeting opened with a résumé of the history of the conflict as some participants had not been involved since the beginning. The process that resulted in the zoning was presented by PAMF. The floor was then given to the farmers' representatives. Farmers started by accepting the zoning of the forest and the principles involved. Next, they started negotiating by proposing a wish list. They wanted the occupation fees payable by the farmers in agro-forestry zones to be abolished or at least reduced. They also proposed that cashew trees and forest trees should be allowed to co-exist in the forest. So, they wanted all the plantations in the forest to be saved. If this was not feasible, they suggested as-

sisting the farmers to create new cashew plantations outside the forest. In this case, they asked for a moratorium of about twenty or thirty years to continue harvesting their cashew plantations in the production and protection zones in order to be able to create new cashew plantations outside the forest. They asked for financial compensation to be paid by the government if they had to abandon their plantations. And they asked PAMF to accept the creation of new cashew plantations in agro-forestry zones.

The PAMF representatives reacted by arguing that farmers would not be allowed either to create new cashew plantations in the agro-forestry zones or to continue harvesting the existing plantations in the production and protection zones. Otherwise, they would continue exercising their property right on these lands, which their children would consider as their heritage. PAMF agreed to compensate farmers by assisting them to create new cashew plantations outside the forest. They would receive improved cashew varieties and technical assistance to grow them. However, it was out of the question for PAMF to give financial compensation to the farmers who had to leave the forest because the land belonged to the State. The only compensation that the project could give the farmers was to help them start beekeeping and raising grasscutters. Farmers would be allowed to continue harvesting cashew nuts in plantations that were more than five years' old in the production and protection zones for eight years only, to enable them to create new ones outside the forest. Plantations that were less than five years' old would be destroyed. PAMF agreed to reduce the annual fees payable by farmers in agro-forestry zones to 7,500 FCFA rather than 10,000 FCFA per year for those who were already settled in the forest for annual crops, 15,000 FCFA rather than 20,000 FCFA for new land occupation in the agro-forestry zones, and 15,000 rather than 20,000 FCFA for cashew plantations in the forest. Finally, PAMF promised to note in the report to be sent to the minister that farmers would like compensation for their investments (cashew plantations) in the forest. This proposition was to be presented to government to be studied in depth and see whether or not the government would take social measures to help them. These PAMF propositions constituted the points of the meeting's report. All the participants present at the meeting signed the report; this was interpreted by the officials as agreement.

However, although all the participants signed the report, later interviews with them showed that they had different interpretations and views about the meeting and the outcomes. The representatives of the farmers reacted in this way:

Researcher: What do you think about the outcomes of the meeting?

Farmers' representative 1: All the solutions retained there where proposed by them. They did not accept any of our propositions. We asked them to compensate us and they said that they could not ask the president to give us compensation as many other villages are in the same situation. If they compensate us they will have to do the same for these other villages. We told them that we were not asking for compensation for the land we are leaving but for our plantations, as we would need a lot of funding to start other ones. Many of us are old and weak and do not have the strength necessary to create a new plantation without funding.

Researcher: But why did you sign the report of the meeting?

Farmers' representative 1: We just accepted keeping in mind that we will not leave unless the State pays us every year what we get from our cashew plantations. We know that it cannot do that, so we are sure that we will never leave. Even when we told this to the farmers, most of them answered that they don't want any kind of compensation but only to let them continue harvesting their cashew plantations.

Farmers' representative 2: First of all, they invited us to a city far from the place where the problem is taking place, and at the end of the meeting they threatened us by saying that those parties who will not respect the agreements will be taken to court.

Source: Interview with farmers' representatives, November 2007

In this we-group discussion, farmers vocalised their hidden agenda, which was to conserve their farms in the forest. Even though they signed the report, they neither agreed with PAMF's propositions nor expressed this at the we-versus-they meeting. According to them, they started to negotiate, proposed solutions and signed at this specific meeting because they were a minority (four farmers out of twenty-nine participants). As they were less represented than the other stakeholders, they did not feel able to express and defend their arguments as they did in the former meeting. Instead, farmers postponed their contestations to later when the plan was being implemented.

For PAMF, the problem was solved at the end of this meeting as the farmers signed the final report; this means that in eight years they will leave the forest without any concessions.

> *The Minister of Environment and Nature Conservation said that she does not understand how a forest could be restored without any damage. She also said that enough concessions have been made by the PAMF. At this stage, she said, it is time to go to the essential matters. The awareness raising time is over, it is time to act.*
>
> Source: PAMF staff members, November 2007

PAMF used this testimony of the minister to give more credibility to its own plan, which was to throw farmers out of the forest. Like the farmers, PAMF vocalised this plan only in interviews with the researcher, not in the meeting where it probably should have been discussed. As a result, the agreement that was reached at the meeting was no more than a pseudo consensus, hiding the conflict that was nevertheless experienced by all stakeholders involved.

No action was taken after this meeting in the framework of the management of the conflict. The project ended in June 2008 in this impasse without implementing the Zoning Plan. Although a lot of discussions took place, both within we-groups and between the different stakeholders, at the end of the project nothing had been implemented.

The research shows that the conflict was constructed by means of talk. Failing negotiations in combination with a lot of stereotyping and stigmatising that mainly took place in we-groups reinforced the conflict. The project ended in a formal agreement that hid a serious impasse. Over time, the issue of implementing the forest restoration evolved into a protracted or intractable conflict (Coleman et al. 2007; Gray 2003; Shmueli et al. 2006).

2.4 Discussion and Conclusions

Although strict natural resource conservation in the past has succeeded in preserving such resources in some cases, in many others it has created conflicts between local communities and public institutions charged with conservation (Rishi 2007). Participatory management was initiated to avoid these conflicts and promote sustainable management of natural resources. However, in the Agoua participatory restoration project, despite its positive start and agreed upon plan, conflict emerged and local communities opposed the project.

The dispute began when PAMF started talking about the implementation of the PMP. Farmers framed this situation as a threat, because they felt that the

PAMF wanted to throw them out of the forest, and this triggered frame shifting on their part. In retrospect, they started blaming the government for not forbidding them earlier from settling in the forest and PAMF for not informing them about the zoning of the forest at the beginning of the project. Until then, PAMF had considered that the farmers had been informed about the Zoning Plan by their representatives who attended all the meetings organised by PAMF to discuss the zoning. PAMF was surprised by the farmers' reactions as its staff members had not monitored the feedback process of the farmers' representatives to their constituency. The support of stakeholder constituencies is critical to participatory management and conflict resolution; hence meetings and discussions should not be limited to stakeholders' representatives but involve the wider stakeholder population.

The conflict was constructed, interpreted, enacted and maintained in stakeholders' discourses through which they emphasised different realities and had different senses of themselves and their world (Ford et al. 2002). As in other conflict situations, frames as uttered in different contexts consisted of blaming, stereotyping and stigmatising, resulting in divergence and distancing (Aarts et al. Forthcoming; Gray 2003). All stakeholders portrayed their opponents negatively and projected responsibility for the conflict onto them. At the same time, they presented themselves as being the victims of the others' behaviours. Stakeholders constructed and expressed their frames in we-group conversations, recognising and affirming each other. In we-versus-they interactions, depending on their framing of power positions and interdependence, stakeholders used denial and disapproval to attack each other or to start positional bargaining. In public, they referred to frames constructed in we-group conversations to look for support from powerful outsiders.

By analysing and connecting different conversation contexts (both over time and between different people), this study makes clear why negotiations did not result in stakeholders' reframing the situation, but rather ended in distrust, accusations and even threats.

The conflict management process did not succeed in creating a new reality that would enable the deconstruction of stakeholders' former frames as no effort was made inside or outside the meetings arenas to exchange and critically discuss these we-group frames to trigger integrative reframing (Ford et al. 2002). This may be explained by the fact that all the parties had a stake in the conflict. No neutral party was involved in the conflict management process as was requested by the farmers, who called upon the president to mediate because they

did not trust PAMF. Although the request to the president led to interest and involvement of relative outsiders, they did not play a mediating role. They merely attended a PAMF management meeting that led only to pseudo consensus. We agree with Gray (2003: 32) who argues 'since reframing requires perspective taking, it is often difficult for parties to reframe without the help of a neutral third party or someone who does not have a direct stake in the conflict.' Thus, one way of solving the conflict in relation to the restoration of Agoua forest may be to involve a neutral mediator in its management. The main task of the mediator would be to bring the stakeholders together to discuss their frames with regard to the problem at stake, including the causes and solutions they have in mind, with the aim of creating mutual understanding, which may trigger common reframing (Shmueli et al. 2006).

It can be concluded that in participatory management there is no shortage of power struggles between stakeholders (Leeuwis 2000, 2004). Our analysis shows that conflict was constructed by means of conversations, both within we-groups and in negotiations with all the stakeholders involved. Conscious and unconscious, explicit and implicit accusations destroyed the relationships between the stakeholders, reinforcing the distance and thereby reducing the space for changing situations. To understand the evolution of a conflict, an interactional framing approach, such as we used, showing how conflicts emerge, evolve and end, or persist in talk, seems to be effective (Aarts et al. Forthcoming; Dewulf et al. 2009).

From this case study, we have learned that, if potential problems are not properly discussed at the start, conflicts emerge during implementation. On the basis of our study, we stress that people who are involved in participatory protected area management should pay more attention to the divergences that often exist between upper level and local discourses (Bosak 2008). Not only should what happens during the participatory meetings be taken into account, but also what happens in we-group conversations in which stereotypes and stigmas are constructed. Hence discourse can create conflict, even when utterances are not supported by concrete action. In our case, the conflict was a discursive affair as very little changed on the ground.

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3

From Cohesion to Conflict in Participatory Forest Management: The Case of *Ouémé Supérieur* and *N'Dali* (OSN) Forests in Benin

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Abstract

Community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) was introduced in Benin in the early 1990s, after the failure of the former top-down management system to enhance sustainable conservation in the country's protected areas. CBNRM was first tested on a small scale in a few protected areas. Because of the initially positive results, the Forest Department decided to continue and scale up this participatory approach to all Benin's protected areas. Focusing on the relationships between the actors involved, this paper seeks to explain the dynamics of the participatory management process in the *Ouémé Supérieur* and *N'Dali* forests in Northern Benin. The analysis is based on data gathered from interviews with the different actors involved. The study shows that social cohesion between people involved in CBNRM, the Forest Rangers and local communities was built at the beginning of the process, but then disappeared and was followed by conflict. Stakeholders interpreted and made sense of formally declared participatory management rules (formal institutions) and gradually developed informal relationships, rules and routines (informal institutions) that facilitated the collaboration process and resulted in social cohesion. Conflicts and distrust emerged when replacement CBNRM officers did not respect the informal rules of conduct. The case shows that it is the state of informal rules and relationships that determines the success of a collaborative process rather than formally declared institutions; hence this should be recognized.

3.1 Introduction

Most protected area management in developing countries has been characterized by two main successive phases: strict conservation by the state followed by devolution of management to local communities (Garcia and Lescuyer 2008; Kumar 2007; Masozera et al. 2006; Murali et al. 2002). During the strict conservation phase, the state and local communities played a cat and mouse game. The state formally devolved no role to local communities in the management of these resources and used coercion measures to keep them at a distance. Local communities then adopted a rebel attitude towards these resources, taking any opportunity to use them to improve their livelihood. This management strategy, based on fences and fines, which aimed at keeping human beings far from protected areas, created conflicts between local communities and management authorities and contributed little to resource conservation (Masozera et al. 2006; Wells et al. 1992). The shift towards a participatory approach to management arose due to the failure of the conservationist system to meet the need both to conserve natural resources and to reduce poverty within local communities (Masozera et al. 2006). The involvement of stakeholders in planning and management was seen as a necessary condition for sustainable conservation of natural resources and was advocated at the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) is considered as the optimal management system to minimize conflicts over local natural resource use rights, for subsistence, for commercial use and for the preservation of the environment and ecology (Rishi 2007). However, despite many attempts at citizen participation, efforts often fail to resolve conflicts, to create support for decisions, or to raise the level of trust between citizens and public officials (Smith and McDonough 2001).

Protected area management in Benin has followed the general trend in developing countries. Reforms in protected area management, based on participatory principles, were undertaken in 1993 after the failure of the coercive management system. Under a new law (*Loi n°93-009 du 2 Juillet 1993 portant regime des forêts)*, the Forest Department (FD) proclaimed that they wanted to involve local communities in forest management to end conflicts and better conserve forests. By doing so, it was expected to gain the support of local communities in the sustainable management of these protected areas and to contribute to the reduction of their poverty level. CBNRM was first tested on a small scale between 1993 and 1998 through the implementation of the Project of Natural Resources Management (PGRN: *Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles*).

The FD found the results satisfactory and decided later to scale up CBNRM to all Benin's protected areas (MDR and PGFTR 1999; Siebert and Elwert 2004). However, instead of leading to collaborative and cohesive management, the scaling up of CBNRM in Benin finally gave way to conflicts between the FD and local communities that hinder the sustainable management of the forests (Alohou 2007; Arouna 2006; MDR and PGFTR 1999; Siebert and Elwert 2004). After nearly two decades of CBNRM implementation of protected area management in Benin, this study investigated how and why despite the relatively successful beginning, conflicts worsened between the stakeholders.

Advocates of the participatory approach expect participation to contribute to well-informed and justified decisions that will positively affect the life of the stakeholders and be easier to implement than top-down decisions (Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Saarikoski et al. 2010). However, they seem to overlook the role of social relations in guaranteeing or impeding the success of the process (Golooba-Mutebi 2005). It is possible to apply all the rules and guidelines of public participation in a mechanical way, while leaving people with a feeling that they are being treated unfairly because, for example, they may think they are being treated disrespectfully (Idrissou et al. 2011; Smith and McDonough 2001). The participatory approach is likely to succeed when its implementation takes into account the social, political and cultural context (Golooba-Mutebi 2005). Thus, social relation characteristics such as social cohesion influence the implementation and results of participatory processes (Cradock et al. 2009; Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Van Marissing et al. 2006). The aim of this study was then to understand how social cohesion has evolved between the stakeholders involved in CBNRM in Benin, and to what extent it contributes to the explanation of the collapse of the process.

Social cohesion and participation shape and evolve in social actors' interactions. Through social interactions, meanings are created and maintained between social actors (Bloch 2003). Attributing meanings to situations, events, policies and so forth is known as framing (Agustín 2008). Thus, to understand the influence of social cohesion in CBNRM and figure out what led the process to the current situation, we analysed the frames the stakeholders involved in CBNRM bring to the fore in interviews and interactions. In other words, frames people construct in interactions show the social context as well as their concerns. Frames make it possible to understand individuals' actions as they are used to '(1) define issues, (2) shape what action should be taken and by whom, (3) protect oneself, (4) justify a stance we are taking on an issue, and (5) mobilize people to take or refrain from action on issues' (Gray 2003: 15).

3.2 Social cohesion and institutions for participatory forest management

Participation is often defined as a process of involving, in decision making and implementation, stakeholders who will be affected by the decisions made (Hjortso 2004). It is expected that participation will build social and institutional capital and promote individual and organizational learning among stakeholders (Saarikoski et al. 2010). Thus, the participatory process fosters interactions among the stakeholders concerned with the implementation of a policy and leads to the building of social relations between the societal units such as individuals, groups, associations and territorial units (Berger-Schmitt 2002). Webler et al. (2001) identified five public discourses that characterize good participation. According to the public, a good participation process should be legitimate, promote a search for common values, realize democratic principles of fairness and equality, promote equal power among all participants and viewpoints, and foster responsible leadership (Webler et al. 2001). These characteristics of a good participation process pertain to the relations that should exist between the stakeholders. They are all related to different dimensions of social cohesion as described by scholars such as Kearns and Forrest (2000), Ache and Andersen (2008), Van Marissing (2008), Cradock et al. (2009), Dekker and Van Kempen (2009), Tolsma et al. (2009), Van Kempen and Bolt (2009), etc. Hence, a good participatory process should be characterized by social cohesion among stakeholders that might enable them to achieve the goals pursued (Cradock et al. 2009; Van Marissing et al. 2006).

3.2.1 Social cohesion

Social cohesion is associated with the ties that individuals have with other individuals (Tolsma et al. 2009), the absence of latent conflicts and the presence of strong social bonds (Cradock et al. 2009; Kawachi and Berkman 2000), a kind of glue holding society together (Dekker 2006; Maloutas and Malouta 2004; Van Kempen and Bolt 2009). The definitions of social cohesion in current literature are best summarized by what Kearns and Forrest consider as the kernel of the concept and formulate as follows:

> *A cohesive society 'hangs together'; all the component parts somehow fit in and contribute to society's collective project and well-being; and conflict between societal goals and groups, and disruptive behaviours, are largely absent or minimal.*
>
> Kearns and Forrest, 2000: 996

This rather broad definition can be narrowed down to the case of participatory forest management. Social cohesion refers in this case to the relations and interactions that bond together stakeholders involved in the participatory management of a forest and the extent to which each stakeholder category acts for the sustainable management of the forest, relying or not on the support of the others. As the stakeholders involved in participatory forest management often have diverse backgrounds, knowledge, interests and perspectives vis-à-vis the forest, social cohesion between them is neither perfect nor absent (Dekker and Van Kempen 2009). Rather, participatory processes are arenas of continuous transformation of relationships and responsibilities, of networks and competence, of collective memory and memberships (Aarts and Leeuwis 2010). Participation enables social interactions where meanings are created and maintained through language (Bloch 2003). Participation can thus be considered as a socially constructed reality in which social cohesion is constructed, interpreted, enacted and maintained through discourse (Ford 1999). Our ways of speaking and making accounts determine how we experience reality, and this then influences our communication (Bloch 2003). Participants in different constructed realities will thus have different senses of themselves and the world (Ford et al. 2002). As a result, they will engage in different actions, and offer different forms of resistance, depending on the reality in which they live (Ford et al. 2002).

Frames and framing

People make sense of social reality by constructing understandings through the framing process (Aarts and Woerkum 2006; Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2003; Gray et al. 2007; Kaufman et al. 2003; Shmueli et al. 2006). Frames are shared, structured ways of speaking, thinking, interpreting and representing social realities in the world (Webler et al. 2001). They are the lenses through which people see the word around them. Frames refer to how people evaluate various aspects of a situation, what knowledge and attitudes become cognitively most accessible and preferred, what alternatives are considered, and what goals they want to reach (Lindenberg and Steg 2007). Through the framing process, people construct social realities and present them in interactions. Stakeholders thus construct and present social cohesion in interactions using frames. As frames are not static entities and can rather be revised and transformed under certain circumstances (Gray 2003), in a participatory process, social cohesion among stakeholders is expected to undergo transformation in particular situations as well.

Social cohesion dimensions and frames related

The definitions of the notion of social cohesion proposed by scholars in the field also recognize and share its multidimensional features (Ache and Andersen 2008; Cradock et al. 2009; Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Kearns and Forrest 2000; Tolsma et al. 2009; Van Kempen and Bolt 2009; Van Marissing 2008). Kearns and Forrest (2000) identified five constituent dimensions of social cohesion that take into account those formulated by most of the other authors. Each dimension focuses on a particular aspect of the social tie that binds members of a society. They are associated with particular types of frames that represent the meanings that the stakeholders attribute to the dimension.

Common values and civic culture refer to a society in which the members share common values that enable them to recognize and support common aims and objectives. They also share a common set of moral principles and codes of behaviour through which to conduct their relations with one another (Kearns and Forrest 2000). In a cohesive participatory management process, stakeholders agree and share the same or at least overlapping views about the need for sustainable management (in the present case of forests) and act accordingly, supported by the others. Analysing social cohesion in participatory management from the perspective of the common values and civic culture dimension consists of focusing on stakeholders' knowledge, their feelings and their judgement of the rationale behind sustainable management. The frames associated with this dimension are problem and solution frames. In cohesive participatory forest management, the stakeholders may have different frames about the forest's problems but have the same or at least overlapping frames about the solutions and the process of implementing them.

Social order and social control: social cohesion refers to a situation without latent conflicts or where conflicts are minimized and the existing order and system is not challenged (Cradock et al. 2009; Kearns and Forrest 2000). As conflicts of interests are inherent in natural resources management (Hares 2009; Hellström 2001; Yasmi 2003), this dimension of social cohesion analysis in participatory forest management refers to the way conflicts of interests are considered and managed. In a cohesive forest management process, social control is not asserted through overt means of coercion and repression, and potential conflicts are democratically resolved (Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Kearns and Forrest 2000). This entails stakeholders sharing the same conflict management frames. Conflict management frames refer to the stakeholders' preferences for managing or dealing with conflicts (Gray 2003).

Social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities: one of the key elements of social cohesion is solidarity, which refers to a harmonious development of the different groups in society (Kearns and Forrest 2000). Participants in a cohesive society expect solidarity in the distribution of the advantages deriving from the functioning of the society (Chipkin and Ngqulunga 2008). In a participatory forest management process as well, stakeholders involved expect the financial revenues or benefits in kind and opportunities stemming from such management to be shared with them without disparities and exclusion. They must have the feeling that they can gain from their participation. Here, social cohesion is framed in term of gain or loss by the stakeholders. Whether the stakeholders see the actions taken by others or the process in which they are involved as creating gain or loss for themselves or for others is determinant for their behaviours in the process (Gray 2003).

Social networks and social capital: both informal networks such as family or friendship ties and formal networks concerning whether participation in organized activities is high or low are important in a cohesive society (Stafford et al. 2003). The formal network is considered as the common form of social network in organized associations such as participatory forest management where different stakeholder categories are at least formally involved. Social networks are constitutive and producers of social capital. They are networks in which dilemmas and problems are easily solved by collective actions and in relationships, and they are sustained by expectations, norms and trust, which facilitate such solutions (Kearns and Forrest 2000). Social capital and trust are intimately related and required between the members of a social network so that they are willing to moderate their demands in order to reach agreements (Chipkin and Ngqulunga 2008; Heuser 2005). This dimension is about relationship building among the stakeholders that would enable them to work together. Important frames here in building such relationships are identity and characterization frames. In interactions, individuals claim an identity that is accepted or denied by others (Dewulf et al. 2009). Identity frames are individuals' answers to the question *who I am?* (Gray 2003). At the same time, they present the others using characterization frames that answer the questions *who are they?* (Gray 2003) or *how do I construct you in relation to me?* (Dewulf et al. 2009).

Territorial belonging and identity: this dimension of social cohesion refers to the intertwining of the people's identity and that of a place to which they are attached and consequently has a positive effect upon this place (Kearns and Forrest 2000). Attachment to place includes the sharing of common values and norms and a willingness to participate in social networks and building social

capital or trust (Kearns and Forrest 2000). Social cohesion in participatory forest management will thus depend on the degree to which the stakeholders are attached to the forest, share its sustainable management principles and are willing to cooperate with others to reach this goal. This dimension is associated with relationship frames, especially how stakeholders see themselves in relation to the forest. Frames developed here are called place-based identity frames and are the answers to the question *who I am* in relation to my geographic location or my community (Gray 2003).

The dimensions of social cohesion described above characterize the relationships among actors and how these relationships constrain and enable smooth interactions among them. This aspect of human relations is related to institutions. Thus, although social cohesion develops in an institutional context that constrains its development, it contributes in turn to shaping the existing institutions.

Institutions

All the dimensions of social cohesion and their related frames are important in understanding relations constructed in interactions among stakeholders involved in a participatory process. Social cohesion represents a state of transformation of institutions in interactions where the different relationships and behaviours of the stakeholders contribute to achieving the collective goals. Institutions essentially create incentives, both positive and negative, for individuals and groups to act in particular ways (Woodhill 2008). They are sets of formal and informal rules that enable and structure all forms of social interaction (Arts and Buizer 2009; Torniainen and Saastamoinen 2007; Woodhill 2008). Formal institutions are openly established rules communicated through officially accepted channels, whereas informal institutions are shared rules, usually unwritten, that are built, communicated and enforced through non officially recognized channels (Torniainen and Saastamoinen 2007). Participation thus takes place in an institutional context that represents the set of rules according to which decision making and implementation in a management process are carried out. It encompasses formal and informal rules that govern relationships and interactions among the stakeholders. Formal rules in participatory management are agreed upon plans officially established by the stakeholders and through which they should conduct interactions and build relationships. At the same time, informal rules emerge among them and interfere with the formal rules. They consist of informal relationships and codes of conduct that emerge and persist among the stakeholders outside the official arena.

Institutions are dynamic, and the reasons for their dynamism are not fully understood (Arts and Buizer 2009; Woodhill 2008). On the basis of insights from neo-institutionalism and discourse theory, Arts and Buizer (2009) make two assumptions about institutional dynamics. The first considers institutional dynamics as originating from the emergence of new ideas, concepts and narratives in society that institutionalize in social practices and that affect social outcomes (Arts and Buizer 2009). The new ideas, concepts and narratives emerge from the interpretation of social realities and represent thus second-order realities or represented realities (Ford 1999). Arts and Buizer's (2009) second assumption asserts that, in turn, ideas, concepts and narratives that become strongly institutionalized in social practices are especially relevant to understand how institutions changes or remain stable (Arts and Buizer 2009). Second-order realities may institutionalize, becoming thus first-order realities or presented realities from which new interpretations may start (Ford 1999). In both cases, institutions are constructed and shaped through discourses that carry ideas, concepts and narratives. In fact, ideas, concepts and narratives reflect frames that are constructed and expressed in interaction through discourses (Webler et al. 2001).

So, in this study, by analysing the evolution of the stakeholders' frames, we investigated how dynamics of social cohesion among the stakeholders are related to the dynamic of participatory management. To do so, we used the above discussion to develop our analytical framework in Figure 1. It is based on the assumption that stakeholders' frames, social cohesion among them, and institutions are all characteristics of social processes such as participation. They are also linked, as social cohesion and institutions are presented and represented in stakeholders' frames that in turn influence social cohesion and institutions built. This dynamic may also evolve over time according to the specific situations in which it takes place.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Research setting

The evolution of social cohesion in CBNRM was analysed in the case of the management of *Ouémé Supérieure* and *N'dali (OSN)* forests in Benin. The OSN forests are among those in which the participatory natural resources management process began in Benin in 1993. They thus represent the historical picture of the implementation of the participatory approach to forest management in Benin as they have been subject to this approach from its inception to the present day.

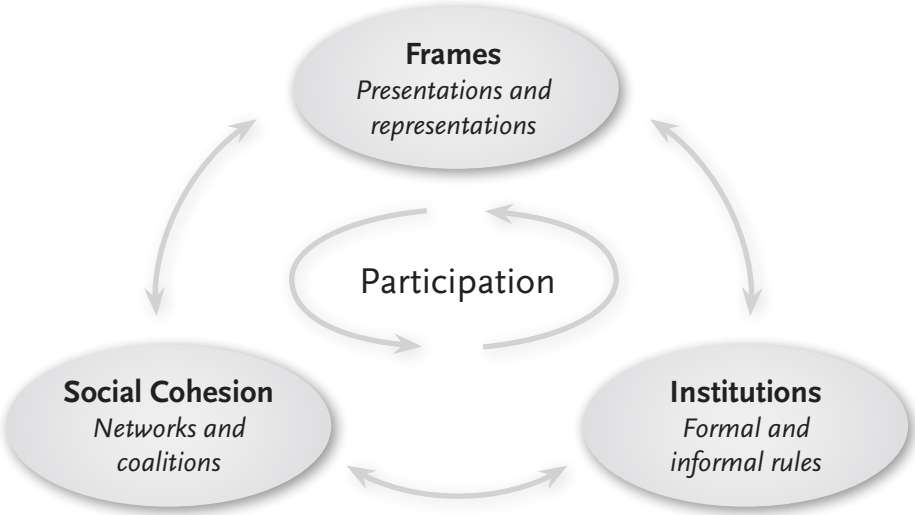

Figure 3.1: A framework for analysing participation evolution

They are also the largest of the forests involved in both the test and the scaling up phase of participatory management implementation in Benin.

OSN is formed by two forests: the forest of *Ouémé Supérieure* (OSF) and the forest of *N'dali* (NF). They have been managed together because they are ecosystems, close to each other, facing similar anthropogenic pressures. According to the FD, solving the problems of one of them may increase the pressure on the other (PGRN 1999). The OSF was declared protected during Benin's colonial period by decree *n° 4310 SE of July 27, 1952*. It covers an area of 193,406 ha and straddles two departments, Donga and Borgou. NF was put under government protection by decree *n° 366 SE of January 30, 1942* and covers an area of 4,721 ha. It is bordered by two villages and one city and wholly located in Borgou department.

The number of local people living around these two forests was estimated at 99,126 in 1992 dispersed over 82 villages (RGPH2 1992). According to the 2002 census, this population grew to 173,557 people living in 13,234 households dispersed over 83 villages (RGPH3 2002). The main sources of livelihood of these local communities are agriculture, hunting, fishing and trade. All these activities are linked to the forests. Even trade, which is mainly a female occupation, involves agricultural produce, non-timber forest products, firewood and charcoal (Alohou 2007; PGRN 1999). With the growth of the local population, the pressure on the OSN increased because of demand for land for farming, the use of forest products and grazing (Alohou 2007).

3.3.2 Research methodology

The case study approach was used in this research to investigate the implementation of CBNRM in the OSN in Benin. This research approach focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings (Eisendhardt 1989). The case study approach is particularly relevant when the researcher intends to carry out an in-depth probe of a subject (Noor 2008). According to Yin (1994, 2002), case studies should be undertaken in situations where the researcher is interested in studying how processes unfold. They are indicated when it is necessary to explore in depth the relations between individuals and institutions, to understand, describe, explain and interpret behaviours and attitudes, as is the case in this research (Mettrick 1994).

Multiple qualitative techniques were used to collect data to enhance the validity and reliability of findings in the case studied (Noor 2008). Data were collected through semi-structures interviews and conversations with the stakeholders involved in the management of the OSN. These techniques were used because they offer sufficient flexibility to approach different respondents differently while still investigating the same topic (Noor 2008). They were carried out with individual stakeholders and groups of stakeholders. Individual interviews (33) were completed with local community committee board members (10), forests users (7), FD staff members (7), municipality staff members (5) and NGO staff members (4). The respondents were chosen according to the importance of their role in the management of the OSN. Focus group interviews were also carried out with local community committee board members (2), forests users (6) and NGO staff members (1). This enabled triangulation of the various points of view of individual stakeholders interviewed. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

The interviews and conversations were supplemented by observations and documentary sources, employed to gather information that interviews and conversations did not provide. The observations concerned the physical settings and the social environment in which CBNRM is been implementing. Documents were used to cross-validate information gathered from interviews, conversations and observations as what people say and how they act may be different than what is written (Noor 2008). Documents concerning the forests, the projects implemented and still in progress, and the local communities were consulted.

Framing studies use techniques from discourse and conversation analysis to analyse frames (Dewulf 2005; Koenig 2004). The data gathered and processed

were analysed using critical discourse analysis principles. Discourse analysis deals with studying and analysing language as a social production (de Pinho et al. 2009; Hodges et al. 2008; Punch 2005). From the range of discourse analysis approaches (see Hodges et al. 2008), we chose critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis studies not only texts and the use of language but also how they are used in social contexts. It shows how the existence of institutions and the roles to be played by individuals are made possible by ways of thinking and speaking (de Pinho et al. 2009; Hodges et al. 2008; Punch 2005). Critical discourse analysis makes it possible to understand phenomena such as social practices, individuals and institutions in a certain way and make statements about what is considered to be true (Hodges et al. 2008). This approach is relevant for investigating how social cohesion evolved over time in the CBNRM of the OSN through stakeholders' framing and reframing.

3.4 Case study

In 1993, the FD proposed to involve local communities in the management of the OSN through the implementation of CBNRM. CBNRM was carried out in the OSN through the establishment and implementation of the Participatory Management Plan (PAP: *Plan d'Aménagement Participatif*). Three different phases characterize CBNRM implementation in the OSN. It was introduced in 1993 by the Project of Natural Resources Management (PGRN: *Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles*), which established the PAP for the OSN. At the end of this project in 1998, a phase without a project followed, during which the implementation of the PAP started. Later, in 2005, the Programme of Forests and Adjacent Lands Management (PGFTR: *Projet de Gestion des Forêts et Terroirs Riverains*) was initiated to scale up participatory management to other protected areas and to support the implementation of the PAP in the OSN. Both the PGRN and the PGFTR are run by the FD.

3.4.1 The establishment of the OSN's PAP

When the participatory approach was introduced, the PAP represented the formal institutional framework under which a forest should be managed in Benin. It describes the new relationships, roles and responsibilities among local communities, the FD, and NGOs in the CBNRM of the OSN. The OSN's PAP was established through multiple village meetings, involving local communities, the PGRN staff members, the FD representatives and the facilitators of the Co-

operative League of the United States of America (CLUSA), an American NGO to which training and facilitation activities were confided. The meetings provided the stakeholders with the opportunity to meet, assess the forests' problems, and agree on actions to be undertaken as well as the roles and responsibilities of each actor (Table 1). During the establishment of the PAP, both local communities and Forest Rangers (FR) were sensitized and trained on the participatory approach by CLUSA facilitators. The PAP states that the management of the forests belongs to local communities, who should get technical and financial support from the FD and be trained in organization management skills by the NGOs (PGRN 1999). The Village Association for Forest Management (AVIGEF: *Association Villageoise de Gestion des Forêts*) was created and represents the local communities' organizations. It is to take the lead in the management of the OSN at the end of the project (PGRN 1999). AVIGEF has boards at villages level, management unit (UA[2]: *Unité d'Aménagement*) level and forest level. The different AVIGEF boards are responsible for organizing the sustainable management of the OSN at each level (PGRN 1999). The establishment of the OSN's PAP was completed by the end of the PGRN in 1998. The implementation of the plan was then confided to AVIGEF members who were to be assisted by FRs and CLUSA facilitators.

While the PAP was being established, the restoration of the OSN was undertaken by both the local communities and FRs. The establishment of the PAP and the restoration activities were occasions for villagers to get closer to FRs without fear, in contrast to the past. The meetings enabled FRs and local communities to interact and build new relationships. Both FRs and local communities evoke their relationships built during this period, using positive frames. The head of Borgou FD office stated:

> *Contrary to the past, the FD invited local communities to define what to do and work together. Since the beginning, we have noticed local communities' interest in the participatory management of the OSN forests as they could approach the FRs without fear. It was clear that the FD was a little bit frustrated as we had managed these forests alone for decades and we were powerful and feared. However, immediately this fear of local communities was reduced with the introduction of the participatory management.*
>
> Source: Head of Borgou's FD office, February 2009

2 The OSN forests are divided into six sections or management units (UA: *Unité d'Aménagement*) around six main villages bordering them: Affon, Bakou, Bétérou, Bori, N'dali and Sirarou.

Table 3.1 Roles and responsibilities of AVIGEF, FD and NGO in the OSN's PAP

AVIGEF	*Forest Department (FD)*	*NGO*
• Organize the association • Plan and coordinate activities to be carried out for the management of the forests • Assign seedling production or services providing markets in OSN forest restoration • Sign contracts with forest user groups in OSN forest management • Mobilize (especially by collection of contributions) and manage financial resources necessary for the restoration of the forest • Respect the technical prescriptions of the PAP • Achieve internal management control	• Look after the application of requirements under forest management laws and the PAP • Provide technical services and the training of local communities involved in the implementation of the PAP • Advise and support local communities in the implementation of the PAP • Assure the collection of forest exploitation taxes • Assist village organizations in the elaboration and implementation of their annual working plans and the budget • Assist local communities in the implementation of the plan	• Training and facilitation

Source: The OSN's PAP (PGRN, 1999)

This utterance shows that the participatory process led to the deconstruction of former relationships between FRs and local communities, who framed each other as enemies before CBNRM was introduced. The regular meetings that were organized opened space for social network building and interactions between them, and conflicts gave way to collaboration. A member of the AVIGEF board supports this point, arguing:

> *During the management of the forest by the PGRN, villagers were very enthusiastic as they were very often invited to meetings. Each month there were meetings to which we were invited together with the FRs and then we knew what was going on in the management of the forests.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

At these meetings, FRs and AVIGEF members shared their views about the forests' problems and the possible solutions. They discussed the conflicting issues that divided them, such as local communities' forest resources use rights and the sharing of the benefits deriving from the sustainable management of the forests. Thus, local communities were allowed to undertake in the forests some activities formerly forbidden. In each UA, a restoration committee was created by local communities and trained on seedlings and reforestation by CLUSA. The PGRN signed contracts with these committees to carry out restoration activities. Restoration activities mobilized local communities who were paid in return. These initiatives were framed by the local communities as their profit from the participatory management of the forests. The following statements corroborate this frame on the part of the local communities:

> *The participatory approach was better than the former management system. During the PGRN phase, we were allowed to carry out many activities in the forests such as firewood gathering, fruit picking, and grass harvesting. There were also forest enrichment groups in almost all the villages and the young men worked in these groups and earned money.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou villagers, December 2008

The PGRN phase was associated with the building of the formal institutional framework through which the participatory management of the OSN should be implemented. However, it seems to have led to the construction, between the FRs and local communities, of social networks through meetings and restoration activities that fostered interactions between them, common or overlapping values about the forests by sharing their frames of the forests' problems and solutions, and social solidarity as each of the actors identified the benefits of participating. The PGRN was implemented without conflict between the FRs and local communities who even worked together to complete the PAP and the restoration of the forests. Local communities stopped fearing FRs, and conflicts about forest resources use existing between them during the coercion management period disappeared and were replaced by peace and social order. The formal participation of the stakeholders seems to have stimulated social cohesion among them with the emergence of some dimensions such as social networks, common values, social solidarity and social order (Dekker and Van Kempen 2006, 2009; Saarikoski et al. 2010; Van Marissing et al. 2006).

3.4.2 The implementation of the OSN's PAP by AVIGEF

When the PGRN finished in 1998, a few personnel from CLUSA were retained by the FD as there was no follow-up project to preserve and further implement the PAP. They had assisted AVIGEF in the implementation of the PAP until 2000. Later, the former facilitators of CLUSA created the NGO Action for Communitarian Initiatives Support (APIC: *Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Communautaires*). APIC signed contracts with the FD for social mobilization and support for local communities in the implementation of the OSN's PAP.

The implementation of the OSN's PAP involves the elaboration and execution of the Annual Working Plan (PAT: *Plan Annuel de Travail*) by all the stakeholders (AVIGEF, FD and NGO). The PAT includes the organization of local communities' awareness raising campaigns on the sustainable management of the forests, and exploitation and reforestation activities in the forests. Exploitation activities concern the granting of authorizations and the collection of taxes for all activities carried out in the forests such as timber logging, grazing of cattle, charcoal production, fishing and occupation of forest zones that have been authorized for agriculture. At the same time, reforestation and forest surveillance is pursued.

The implementation of the OSN's PAP started with the stakeholders (FRs, APIC facilitators, and AVIGEF members) involved in its establishment. They had all been trained on participation during the PGRN phase. According to them, their experiences and previous relationships facilitated the collaboration in the PAP implementation. AVIGEF board members expressed it in the following statement:

> *At the beginning of the PAP implementation, everything went all right. At that time, when the FRs wanted to go anywhere in the forest, we went together. They never entered the forest without some member of the AVIGEF board. When they caught illegal users in the forest, before deciding anything they called us. When they fined them, before going to make the payment in the state's bank account, we used to collect what belonged to AVIGEF. They even gave us their permission to enter and carry out surveillances in the forests when they were away. If we caught illegal users, they only asked us to wait for them before deciding on the measures to be taken.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

The same feelings were shared by an APIC facilitator who assisted AVIGEF during this period:

> *The early period of the PAP's implementation was great. We worked with both FRs and AVIGEF without any problem. It was because all those present at that point in time were trained together by the PGRN. We had worked together with them during the PGRN period.*
>
> Source: APIC facilitator at Beterou village, February 2009

These testimonies show that the implementation phase of the PAP started quite well although the PGRN had ended. FRs, local communities and the facilitators managed to continue the activities undertaken during the PGRN phase even though there was no project to monitor the process. The stakeholders explained this by the fact that they knew each other and were all trained on the approach during the PGRN phase.

The stakeholders evoke here the impact of social cohesion built during the PGRN phase. In fact, the stakeholders' frames relating to social cohesion dimensions constructed during the PGRN phase remained and shaped the institutional relations among them. Social cohesion co-constructed during the PGRN phase enabled them to build informal roles and rules among themselves in the management of the forests. As the social network was conserved after the end of the PGRN, these informal relationships, roles and rules persisted. This is emphasized in utterances such as '*...when FRs wanted to go anywhere in the forests, we went together... before deciding anything they called us...they even gave us their permission to go to surveillances ...*'. Tacitly agreed upon roles and rules had emerged and evolved beyond the formal institutions, enabling a smooth evolution of the participatory process (see also Arts and Buizer, 2009; Torniainen and Saastamoinen, 2007; Woodhill, 2008). During this phase, in addition to the previous social cohesion dimensions developed during the PGRN phase, social capital in terms of trust emerged from the interactions among the stakeholders. This is well emphasized by the fact that the FRs involved the AVIGEF members in surveillance of the forests and even allowed them to go alone and shared the outcomes with them. Thus, no tension was perceptible after the end of the project.

However, a few years after the implementation phase of the PAP began, the FD started to replace the FRs of the villages surrounding the OSN. A conflict of role division between FRs and AVIGEF members arose when the new FRs arrived. The conflict hindered the implementation of the PAP as the new FRs

and AVIGEF members did not agree on how to carry out the activities such as surveillances of the forests and logging. Both stakeholders blamed and accused each other, holding each other responsible for the conflict using identity and characterization frames (Aarts and Woerkum 2006; Gray 2003; Gray et al. 2001). AVIGEF members present the new FRs as responsible for the slowing down of the PAP implementation by their behaviour on arrival. The following interview excerpts highlight their thoughts:

> *The new FRs, when they came, had chosen to work with villagers who were not members of the AVIGEF board. Even when we complained to the higher level of the FD hierarchy they said nothing. What could we do? As they are the FRs so they can manage the forests alone. When everything finishes in the forests, we will all stay quiet.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

Another member argued:

> *The FRs started considering us like their trackers or their workmen, and I told them that we are not like that. I told them that we are members of an organization with which they should work as partners. We then decided if it is like that they should manage the forest alone and we will just watch them.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

The replacement of the FRs in the villages broke down the former social network built during the PGRN phase. The above utterances show how much the relationship, roles and rules had been affected by this decision. By saying *'...they had chosen to work with villagers who were not members of the AVIGEF board'* and *'The FRs started considering us like their trackers or their workmen...'* the AVIGEF members meant that, when the new FRs arrived, they did not follow the former informal relationships, roles and rules articulated with the former FRs. So, they evoked their intention to withdraw from the process, like in this piece of talk *'... they can manage the forests alone...'*.

On the other hand, for the FRs, the conflicts occurred because they had tried to stop the AVIGEF members from going beyond their remit. According to the FRs, when they came, they noticed that the AVIGEF members considered themselves as 'FRs'. The following statement shows it clearly:

> *The AVIGEF members who should work with the FRs transformed themselves into FRs. In the villages you could notice AVIGFEF members were called 'Bâ-Forêt' [FR in local language]. When a logger came into the village, he was directly sent to the AVIGEF members who authorized him to log trees in the forests without referring to us. They even carry out surveillances and receive taxes from illegal loggers and herders without informing us, but this does not come within their remit.*
>
> Source: Head of N'Dali Municipality FD office, February 2009

The conflicts arose when the stakeholders started contesting each other's roles and the forest management rules. Whereas the local communities were still committed to the informal roles and rules that had been gradually developed, the new FRs framed this as usurping FR duties from a formal perspective. What we see here is a mismatch between the stakeholders' identity and characterization frames that affected the social cohesion existing between the former FRs and the AVIGEF members, as well as the informal institutions built.

AVIGEF members explained the behaviour of the new FRs in terms of their lack of knowledge about participation as they were not trained together. In the following utterance, they present FRs as 'laymen' in the participatory approach and still committed to the former top-down management approach of the FD:

> *Immediately after the end of the PGRN, the first participatory forest management project, many things had changed positively in the forest until the FRs trained in participatory management were moved to other places. The FRs sent to us after the end of the PGRN had just left school, lacked training on participatory management and confused everything in the process. Participatory management was not their problem. They knew only what the FD was doing before it was decided to shift to a participatory process.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

AVIGEF members also evoked in the above utterance that, contrary to their predecessors, the new FRs lacked training on participatory management and were not committed to this approach. This idea is acknowledged by the FD staff members. Therefore, the head of Borgou FD said:

> *The worse is also that the PAP was only completed when the PGRN was about to end. The PAP was written, the committees were installed*

> *and the project was finished. Another project did not follow immediately. The FRs trained in the participatory approach were transferred to other places, and new FRs came in to do the job. At the end of the process that led to the PAP, local communities should have been supported but they were left on their own. All this led to the delay in the implementation of the PAP.*
>
> Source: Head of Borgou's FD office, February 2009

He was supported by FRs, as one of them argued in the following utterance:

> *When an FR is sent to a post where the participatory approach is being implemented, he should be trained. This does not happen. He reads the PAP himself or he is helped by his predecessor to understand the on-going process. After one or two years when he has started understanding the process, he is sent to another place and we see a perpetual renewal of the FRs.*
>
> Source: Kpessou village FD representative, December 2009

AVIGEF members and FD staff members meant here that, besides the break of the social network built during PGRN, another cause of conflict is the differences in understanding of the participatory process between AVIGEF members and the new FRs. Unfortunately, there was no project to monitor the involvement of the new FRs in the ongoing process as the PGRN did at the beginning of the process.

3.4.3 The implementation of the OSN's PAP under the PGFTR

The PGFTR was launched in 2003 and started its activities in 2005 to support the implementation of the PAP established for several forests, including the OSN. The project also had to establish the PAP for Benin's forests that did not have their plan yet. The PGFTR was based on the experiences of the PGRN and was meant to pursue activities started during the PGRN phase, such as awareness raising, forest restoration and surveillance. In addition, the PGFTR introduced an innovation intended to support local communities in carrying out income-generating activities to reduce their livelihood dependency on forest resources. In each village adjacent to the forest, local communities were trained and given subsidies to carry out activities such as beekeeping, breeding of grasscutters (*Thryonomys swinderianus*: Greater Cane Rat, classified as micro-livestock), shea butter production, tree nursery, etc.

In the OSN case, the PGFTR inherited the tense situation between the FRs and the AVIGEF members. However, the PGFTR did not assess the state of affairs in order to decide whether or not it should organize, as PGRN did, intense meetings and awareness raising campaigns that might enable FRs, AVIGEF members and APIC facilitators to interact and reconsider the rules to improve social cohesion among them. The PGFTR signed contracts with APIC to continue their assistance to the local communities in the implementation of the PAP. Instead of reconsidering the management situation and solving the existing problems, the corrective measure undertaken by the PGFTR was to officially ban logging activities in the OSN in 2005. This measure escalated conflict between the stakeholders who interpreted the decision differently.

For the FD, logging was stopped because it was not being properly implemented by both FRs and AVIGEF members. The FRs accused AVIGEF members of usurping the FRs' remit by organizing logging in the forests without permission. The FD blamed AVIGEF members for misusing the revenue they earned from forest exploitation. The head of Borgou FD stated:

> *Unfortunately, the money collected by the members of the AVIGEF boards is misappropriated. An audit of the management of the OSN's AVIGEF from the introduction of co-management until now showed that up to 80% of the money collected has been misappropriated and the board members are not bothered. They know their job perfectly, but it is a lack of patriotism that has led to bad management of the resources.*
>
> Source: Head of Borgou's FD office, February 2009

The FRs also believed that logging should be stopped because the implementation of the participatory approach should be questioned. For them, it failed to achieve the sustainability of the OSN, as in this statement of an FR:

> *It is not that the participatory approach as theoretically described in the PAP is not being applied as it should be. We could say that this participatory approach has contributed more to the destruction of our forests than to their protection. I say that because I am in the field and I see what is happening.*
>
> Source: Head of N'Dali Municipality FD office, February 2009

However, for the AVIGEF board members, the FD officially stopped logging activities in the forests to be free to carry it out illegally. This utterance during a focus group discussion with AVIGEF board members highlights their thoughts:

> *In the past, the loggers were allowed to get a licence and log only with hand saws and not the motor chain-saws. During this period, when the loggers with licence were in the forest and heard the motor chain-saw sound, they informed us because they knew that motor chain-sawyers were illegal. We informed the FRs and they were caught. So the legal loggers helped us arrest the illegal loggers because they were jealous. Suddenly in 2005, logging was forbidden by the FD even for those who had a licence. They did it to be free to send their own sawyers into the forest; since then, illegal logging has increased anarchically.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with AVIGEF board members of Beterou, January 2009

According to AVIGEF board members, by suspending logging the FD was implementing its hidden intention of dispossessing local communities from the power they had been given in CBNRM implementation. On this issue, the head of the executive board of the OSN's AVIGEF stated:

> *They said that the forest is for us but they did not grant us all the power to manage it. We have no power in practice. For example, when there are illegal loggings in the forest, AVIGEF is not allowed to act. We don't have the power to catch the illegal users. It is the FRs who have the right to do so. Also, it is the FRs who are allowed to fine the illegal loggers and solve the problems. They said we are there only to inform them. But in the end, we never got any feedback even verbally as partners.*
>
> Source: President of the OSN's AVIGEF, January 2009

AVIGEF board members present the FD's behaviour as a way of making the participatory approach fail in order to regain their former power with regard to forest management. The following extract from a focus group interview with AVIGEF board members also confirms their idea:

> *It seems like the FD proclaimed publicly that local communities are managing the forests through the AVIGEF, while FRs are illegally exploiting forest resources. Then, they would be able to say later that it is local communities who are responsible of the degradation of the forests and conclude that the sustainable management of the forests using a participatory approach failed.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou AVIGEF board members, January 2009

Even though the PGFTR was launched, the cohesion between FRs and AVIGEF members continued to degenerate, and the conflict between them escalated. This was mainly due to the decision of the PGFTR to stop logging activities - a decision that was differently interpreted by FRs and AVIGEF members. This decision reinforced their blaming and accusations of each other. So, the lack of participation in decision making degraded the cohesion and escalated conflict between the stakeholders (see also Cradock et al. 2009).

In contrast to the PGRN, the PGFTR did not succeed in rebuilding social cohesion between the FRs and local communities. Rather, its decision to suspend logging intensified the conflict existing between them. Unlike the PGRN, the PGFTR did not have a team charged with organizing and following up the implementation of the PAP in each forest. The PGRN experience shows that social networks and trust were built during the regular meetings and training sessions organized by the project for all the stakeholders together. Regular interactions between people favour the construction of social networks and trust (Cradock et al. 2009; Dekker and Van Kempen 2006, 2009; Van Marissing et al. 2006). This was confirmed during the implementation of the PAP as the replacement of FRs and the lack of meetings involving all the stakeholders led to the breakup of the social networks and the emergence of conflict and distrust. Even though the PGFTR was launched, the cohesion between the stakeholders continued to deteriorate and even reached rock bottom as no formal procedure was undertaken to enforce interactions and enable coalitions and network building.

3.5 Conclusions

Despite the multiple political theories and policy models for forest conservation, we still need more understanding of the evolution of institutions in participatory management (Arts and Buizer 2009; Buizer and Van Herzele 2010; Saarikoski et al. 2010; Woodhill 2008). This analysis of the OSN participatory management has increased our understanding of the dynamics and interrelations that exist between social cohesion, institutions and stakeholders' frames in participatory processes.

Participatory processes start with formal institutions that represent the formal rules according to which interactions and relationships among stakeholders should be conducted (Buizer and Van Herzele 2010; Saarikoski et al. 2010). However, we discovered that progressively informal institutions and relationships emerged and even became decisive in the further implementation of the

process. Formal rules, representing the stakeholders' first-order reality at the beginning of processes, were interpreted, extended and translated into informal rules that were considered as their second-order reality. Progressively, these informal rules among the stakeholders became tacitly more important than the formal rules and institutionalized in the first-order reality on which interactions and relationships were henceforth based (Arts and Buizer 2009; Ford 1999). When the transformation of formal and informal rules evolves towards social cohesion, participation becomes effective (Cradock et al. 2009; Van Marissing et al. 2006). The OSN's PAP represents the formal institutional set up at the beginning of the participatory management of these forests. However, during the course of the implementation of the plan, it was interpreted, extended and translated into a set of informal agreements and relationships through which FRs and AVIGEF members conducted the management of the OSN until the FRs were replaced. The stakeholders managed to establish and implement the OSN's PAP during the PGRN, and for a few years after it ended. This happened because the training on participation that the stakeholders attended together and the interactions during restoration activities and meetings favoured the emergence of social cohesion from their interpretation and transformation of the PAP. Social cohesion dimensions such as social networks, common values, social solidarity, social order and trust emerged and enabled them to work together.

The informal rules co-constructed by the stakeholders in interactions reflected and supported the social cohesion among them. Stakeholders' behaviours always contribute to reinforcing or undermining institutions (Woodhill 2008). Formal institutions and centrally formulated plans are constantly challenged by new coalitions and networks that emerge from the interactions of the stakeholders and lead to re-defined informal rules and sets of relationships (Arts and Buizer 2009; Buizer and Van Herzele 2010; Ford 1999). When they become first-order reality, informal institutions and the set of coalitions and networks that goes with them become so strong that the risk of conflict among participants is high when an attempt is made to break even some of them without proper monitoring. Conflict emerged in the case of the OSN's participatory management when the social network created during the PGRN phase by FRs, AVIGEF members and APIC facilitators was broken by the FD when they replaced the FRs with new recruits, who subsequently challenged the established informal rules.

Social cohesion as well as informal institutions are dynamic and change with time. When there is a gap between one project phase and the next, it is likely that

social cohesion as well as the informal institutions will change (Arts and Buizer 2009; Cradock et al. 2009; Dekker and Van Kempen 2009; Woodhill 2008). Thus, it is critical to conduct an assessment of the state of affairs to adapt the implementation of the next project phase to the current social context. In the management of the OSN, after the PGRN phase ended, no project followed immediately. So, when the PGFTR was launched later, its decisions exacerbated conflicts between FRs and local communities because it was implemented on the basis of the results of the PGRN and failed to take into account the ongoing dynamics of social cohesion and institutions. The new project phase did not start with any joint stakeholder meeting reconsidering the state of affairs and the required process management.

Finally, we note that a joint vision is not always needed to create coordinated action. What is essential is a process in which social cohesion is developed in terms of trust and constructive relationships that motivate stakeholders to collaborate and develop informal institutions and effective social organization (Woodhill 2008). FRs and local communities did not have the same backgrounds, interests and perspectives vis-à-vis the forests; however, they succeeded in implementing CBNRM without major conflicts during the PGRN phase and for a few years after because of social cohesion and informal institutions built together. Thus, the lack of a comprehensive joint review and renewed preparation and implementation by the stakeholders lies at the root of the failure of the next phase (Hounkonnou 2001).

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4

Trust and Hidden Conflict in Participatory Natural Resources Management: The Case of the *Pendjari National Park* (PNP) in Benin

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Abstract

This paper investigated how and why the issue of trust building between the park direction and the local communities gave way to a hidden conflict in the participatory management of the Pendjari national park (PNP) in Benin, and how it was resolved. The findings revealed that calculus-based trust was built at the beginning of the process and enabled an improved relationship and collaboration between the park direction and local communities, and a subsequent raise of wildlife in the park. However, dysfunctional use of the trust built led to the emergence of distrust, which evolved into conflict. This conflict was hidden by the illusion of peaceful relationships between the stakeholders as pursued in common meetings. It was noticeable only through accusations on each other, including the shift of responsibility for solving the conflict when discussing the management separately with the different stakeholders. We conclude that (dis) trust should not be looked as a static/cognitive state, but as a dynamic frame that may be strategically used in interaction.

4.1 Introduction

Interactions in social networks have a strong but often overlooked influence on the propensity of stakeholders to participate in the implementation of policies that affect their livelihood (McClurg 2003). In stakeholders' interactions, trust is one of the most influential factors that contribute to the success or failure of the relationships (Lewicki 2006; Lijeblad et al. 2009). When trust is high between individuals, they are generally more likely to engage in social exchanges and co-operative interactions (Ache and Andersen 2008). Trust is an important requirement for peaceful and effective management of all relationships between individuals, between groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong (Kelman 2005). Thus, building and enhancing trust is a way to improve co-operation and reduce insecurity in the relationship of different actors (Shahbaz et al. 2008). However, trust building among actors in interaction is a process where resistance forces emerge and need to be managed productively to weaken rather than strengthen them (Marcus 2006). Trust building needs change in the relationship system between the different actors involved, which cannot happen without experiencing conflict (Marcus 2006).

The relationship between trust and conflict is an obvious one as most people think that trust is the 'glue' that holds relationships together (Lewicki 2006). Trust is at the core of conflict resolution (Marcus 2006). Trust is important in conflict management as when parties trust each other they can resolve relatively easily conflicts whereas when they do not trust each other, conflicts are destructive and their resolution is more difficult (Lewicki 2006).

Conflicts are inherent to participatory natural resources management because of the differences between the stakeholders involved (Hjortso 2004). Participatory natural resources management involves many more or less interdependent stakeholders with fundamental different values, backgrounds, perceptions, interests, and perspectives vis-à-vis these resources (Anderson et al. 1998; Hjortso 2004). Participatory natural resources management thus depends on (perceived) interdependence and co-operation of the stakeholders involved. When co-operation and interdependence are evoked in a social process, the closely related issue of trust becomes important too (Eshuis and Van Woerkum 2003; Kelman 2005). Trust is a vital component for effective negotiation between stakeholders, especially when they have an ongoing relationship with one another (Tomlinson et al. 2009).

The participatory management of the Pendjari national park (PNP) started in 1993 after the Rio de Janeiro Summit. The park was created by the state during the colonial period in 1954 without the consent of the local communities, who were chased from their lands to create it. Consequently, the park had been managed with power and repression by the forest department until 1992. This management period was characterized by continuous overt conflicts with many clashes, which opposed the forest administration and local communities for resources use. Because the local communities had a conflicting relationship with the park direction for decades, they were reluctant to engage in the management of the park at the beginning of the participatory process. However, after nearly two decades of the implementation of participatory management of natural resources in Benin, the case of the PNP is seen as relatively successful (Kiansi and Sinsin 2007; Natta et al. 2009). This study investigated the dynamics of trust in the relationships and interactions among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of the PNP.

Many studies carried out by organizational scholars attempting to better understand the dynamics of cooperation and competition, the resolution of conflicts, and the facilitation of economical exchange focused on interpersonal trust (Lewicki 2006). However, most researches have taken a static view of trust and limited attention has been given to the emergence, evolution and strategic use of trust over time within interpersonal relationships (Lewicki et al. 2006). In this study, we analyzed the construction, the dynamics and the strategic use of trust over time in the management of conflict in the participatory management of the PNP. To this end, we investigated how and why the trust related frames as expressed in interactions by the stakeholders involved, are reinforced or revised over time in the management of the park.

4.2 Visiting the concept of trust

The importance of trust in understanding relationships and interactions has caught much attention especially during the last decade (Bigley and Pearce 1998; Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006). Many definitions of trust have emerged and evolved over time (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). Early researches on trust focused on intentions and motives and associated trust with the individuals' expressions of confidence in others' intentions and motives when they must make a decision to act (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006; Lewicki 2006). In recent researches, scholars include the behavioural aspect and define trust as '... the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on

the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (Mayer et al. 1995:712). Putting these two considerations together, trust can be defined as an individual's positive expectation regarding another's words, decisions, and actions (Lewicki et al. 1998).

Despite the existence of many definitions of trust, most scholars in this field of research agreed that trust has two fundamental features: the psychological and the behavioural features (Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006).

Trust has been defined as a psychological state of an individual, which entails a perceived vulnerability or risk deriving from the uncertainty regarding the motives, intentions, and future actions of others (Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006; Lewicki et al. 2006; Tomlinson et al. 2009). Trust in this case is a more general attitude or expectancy about others and the social environment in which they are embedded (Kramer 1999). Psychological trust definitions share the notion of expectation from the trustor's side (e.g. Mayor et al. 1995; Lewicki et al. 1998; Rousseau et al. 1998). This notion of trust is associated with cognition.

Other definitions conceptualized trust in terms of risk taking behaviour (Mayer et al. 1995; Schoorman et al. 2007), choice behaviour (Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006; Lewicki et al. 2006; Tomlinson et al. 2009), or as an action (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). Trust in this case refers to interactional behaviour rather than just a state of mind. A behavioural approach to trust considers that trust is grounded in observable choices made by individuals in interpersonal interaction context (Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006). Individual's assessments of the trusting relationship in terms of whether or not the expected gains will be maximized or the expected losses minimized are prior to trusting decision making (Kramer 1999). Trust is considered in that sense as a willingly rational and active choice (Kramer 1999; Lewicki et al. 2006). Behavioural trust is thus a discursive constructed social relation, built in interaction between actors (Lewis 2008).

In both cases, trust can be considered as a frame held or built by individuals in interaction. Frames are what we use to make sense of the world around us (Gray 2003). Frames are either cognitive or interactional. Cognitive frames are memory structures that help us to organize and to interpret new experiences (Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2003; Minsky 1975). In the other hand, interactional frames are alignments or co-constructions produced and negotiated in interactions (Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2003; Idrissou et al. 2011). As a cognitive frame,

trust is thus a memory-based structure of expectations of an individual about the other party's future behaviours as well as the world around him (Dewulf et al. 2009). Trust is a knowledge schema, which refers to individuals' expectations about others, objects, events and settings in the world (Tannen and Wallat 1987; Dewulf et al. 2009). It is a product of past experiences with individuals and the relationships among them stored in memory and used to predict future behaviours. When trust is considered as an interactional frame, it is considered to be used strategically, co-constructed and continuously negotiated in the ongoing interaction among actors. Interactional trust frames are alignments co-constructed through social actors' discourses in interactions (Gray 2003; Aarts and Woerkum 2006; Dewulf et al. 2009).

We assume that individuals start any interaction with cognitive levels of trust built from their past experiences, which become continuously negotiated and up-to-dated in their current interaction with new information of the changing context. At the start of any participatory natural resources management, all the stakeholders involved hold a level of cognitive trust about each other and their relationships based on their past experiences. Through out the process, alignment to each others' trust is negotiated the result of which may be trust reinforcement or distrust. Several factors play key roles in these dynamics of trust.

4.3 Trust dynamics

4.3.1 Factors affecting trust formation

The definitions of trust converge towards the idea that trust is a multi-dimensional construction (Mayer et al. 1995; Lewicki et al. 1998; Mayer and Davis 1999; Dietz and Den Hartog 2006; Lewicki 2006; Schoorman et al. 2007). Several factors were identified to influence the formation of trust in relationships. These factors are related to the trustor, the trustee, and the social context in which trust is been built. The factor related to the trustor is his *propensity* to trust what means his general willingness to trust others (Mayer et al. 1995). This propensity to trust represents his intrinsic disposition to trust someone prior to additional data on the other party. This identity of a party remains stable over time but varies across individuals due to their difference in developmental experiences, personality types, and cultural backgrounds (Mayer et al. 1995; Gray 2003; Aarts and Woerkum 2006; Dewulf et al. 2009).

In trust development, the factors related to the trustee concern his trustworthiness. Three characteristics often appear in the literature as factors determining a trustee's trustworthiness: ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al. 1995). These factors represent the trustor's characterization frames about the trustee in their trust relationship. The *ability* of a trustee is the group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable him to have a capacity to act in a specific domain (Mayer et al. 1995). When a trustor frames the trustee as having the ability in a specific situation, it means that the trustor believes that the trustee have the knowledge necessary to act in his favour in that context. As for *benevolence*, it is the degree to which a trustee is considered to want to behave in the trustor's interest without considering his own interests (Mayer et al. 1995). Framing the trustee as imbued of benevolence vis-à-vis the trustor means that the trustor is sure that the trustee will do what ever is possible to help the trustor in any situation. In the case of *integrity*, the trustor first believes that he shares a set of principles with the trustee (Mayer et al. 1995). Secondly, the trustor frames the trustee as having integrity, when he knows that the trustee always respects the sets of principles they share. Ability, benevolence and integrity are all characterization frames used by the trustor to present the trustee. Ability, benevolence and integrity are all important to trust formation, but each may evolve independently to one another. Although they are related to one another, they are different at the same time. These factors enable the trustor to trust the other party in a specific domain and context and maybe not in others. They also contribute to the development of different stages of trust in different interaction contexts.

4.3.2 Different stages of trust and informative frames

Different forms of relationships develop among individuals in different interactions (Kelman 2005; Lewicki 2006). Depending on the frames related to the factors affecting trust formation constructed by the stakeholders in interaction and their dynamics, different stages of trust develop among them. Trust that emerges may also evolve to another stage due to the changing characteristics of the environment of relationships and interactions among the stakeholders. Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) discerned five stages of trust along the continuum of trust evolution. Deterrence-based trust is followed by calculus-based trust, knowledge-based trust, and relational-based trust before reaching identification-based trust (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). The trust stages are different intensities to which one trusts another.

Deterrence-based trust is trust that develops from the fear of punishment or negative consequences associated with the violation of trust (Lewicki 2006). Calculus-based trust is built and maintained through the promise of rewards for preserving trust (Lewicki 2006). Between these two trust relationships, punishment is likely to be more significant motivator than the promise of reward (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). These forms of trust belongs to the behavioral tradition of trust as they emerge from the evaluation of the social context of the relationship (Kramer 1999; Lewicki 2006). Trust is considered here as a rational choice and related to gain or loss evaluation in both cases. Stakeholders involved in a participatory process develop calculus-based trust depending on their assessment of their potential interests in terms of gain or loss in participating to the process. They develop deterrence-based trust when their frames underlying their trusting relationship are related to the sanctions they may receive from the other party when they do not trust him and act accordingly.

For Dietz and Den Hartog (2006), 'real' trust develops from knowledge-based trust as before no trust exist (deterrence-based trust) or the relationship is characterized by suspicions (calculus-based trust). Knowledge-based trust exists when the parties are able to predict each other's behaviour because they know each other's motives, abilities, and reliability (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). The relationship moves to relational-based trust when emotional behaviour appears; trust is based on the affection one has towards the other (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). Finally the development of identification-based trust is based on the mutual identification with the other's desires and intentions (Lewicki 2006). At this stage, parties know each other up to the point that they understand more clearly what they must do to sustain the other's trust. These three stages of trust are best captured through the identity and characterization frames of the trustor. The emergence of knowledge-based, relational-based, and identification-based trust depends on the match or mismatch of trustor's identity frames with his characterization frames about the trustee. In a participatory process, these forms of trust are linked to the mutual identity and characterization frames of the different parties. They trust each other when their respective identity and characterization frames match.

4.4 Trust versus distrust

There is an ongoing debate in trust literature about the relationship between trust and distrust (Lewicki et al. 1998; Schoorman et al. 2007). Some researchers believe that trust and distrust are opposite ends of the same continuum

(e.g. Mayer et al. 1995; Schoorman et al. 2007). Shoorman et al. (2007) argue that the definition of trust- willingness to take risk (i.e. be vulnerable) in a relationship- means that at the lowest level of trust, no risk would be taken at all. Thus, for scholars of this strand of thought, distrust is defined as the complete lack or absence of trust or what Ross et al. (2001:568) called 'absence of faith in other people' (Ross et al. 2001; Schoorman et al. 2007).

Other researchers support the idea that although trust and distrust are separate dimensions, they are linked rather than being opposite ends of a single continuum (e.g. Lewicki et al. 1998; Dietz and Den Hartog 2006; Lewicki 2006; Lewicki et al. 2006). They argued that trust is not a simple matter of 'either/ or' in other words to trust or to distrust (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). Trust and distrust can coexist like in the existing ambivalences under which positive and negative attitudes can coexist as well as expectations of benefit and harm, and love and hate sentiments have been shown to coexist (Lewicki et al. 1998). Another argument that supports this relation between trust and distrust is that one may trust the other party in some contexts and distrust him in others (Lewicki et al. 2006). This argument is also supported by the fact that relationships are multifaceted and multiplex rather than unidimensional constructs, and moreover the parties involved are constantly inconsistent and in a state of imbalance (Lewicki et al. 1998; Seppänen and Blomqvist 2006). Thus, trust and distrust may appear simultaneously in a relationship and are considered important coexistent mechanisms for managing relationship complexity (Seppänen and Blomqvist 2006). As participatory natural resources management involves many stakeholders with different characteristics, relationships among them are multiplex and multidimensional. We posit that in participatory natural resources management, trust and distrust coexist and evolve simultaneously depending on the interactional contexts rather than being opposite ends of a continuum. Trust and distrust both describe the state of the relationships but they are also used strategically by the stakeholders involved.

4.4.1 Functional and dysfunctional trust

Trust is mostly seen as having positive function in relationships (Mayer et al. 1995; Dietz and Den Hartog 2006; Lewicki 2006; Schoorman et al. 2007; Tomlinson et al. 2009). Trust is usually associated with positive emotional reactions (hope, confidence and assurance) towards another (Benamati et al. 2006). Trust reduces perceptions of physical risk by instilling confidence about the relationship, the work environment, another's competence, and so on (Conchie

and Donald 2008). It also reduces psychological risk that is the distress caused by the expectations about others words, behaviour and actions (Conchie and Donald 2008). According to social exchange theory, when an individual voluntary engages in behaviour that benefits to another, it generates trust to the other party's side and a sense of obligation to reciprocate with positive actions (Conchie and Donald 2008). Trust is also know as enabling organizational outcomes such as co-operation and high level of performance as it creates or enhances the conditions of positive interpretations of another's behaviour (McEvily et al. 2003).

However, trust does not always yield positive effects. Organizations that rely exclusively on trust as an organizing principle may experience strategic blindness, overconfidence, inertia, or the inability to innovate (McEvily et al. 2003; Conchie and Donald 2008). Thus, a level of distrust can be functional in some situations.

4.4.2 Functional and dysfunctional distrust

Although distrust has always been seen as negative and harmful, it should be acknowledged that there are potentially valuable benefits of some distrust (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006; Conchie and Donald 2008). Healthy and resilient organizations contain elements of distrust and suspicious in their management system for the importance of being vigilant and prudent in their behavioural (Conchie and Donald 2008). Lewicki and Tomlinson (2003) argued that vigilance of another, periodic monitoring of their behaviour, and formal contracts are all reasonable and appropriate ways to ensure compliance and maintain 'appropriate boundaries' in a relationship. A certain level of distrust is also seen as vital to preventing excessive group cohesion that precludes sound decision making (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003). Functional distrust is valuable as it prevent us from adopting naïve view of others that may blind us from seeing the cues of their untrustworthiness and thus set boundaries around their behaviours to limit their freedom (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006).

However, distrust is often regarded as having negative effects as it can foster cynicism and paranoia (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006). Distrust is associated in this case with a lack of cooperation, lower satisfaction and commitment, and even hostile behaviour (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003). Dysfunctional distrust hinders communication and reduces the parties'

willingness to share information and engage in problem solving in conflict situation (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006). As with dysfunctional distrust the positions of the parties harden and they becomes reluctant to make any concessions, conflicts escalate towards intractability (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006).

The theoretical discussion of this section shows that trust is a multidimensional frame with several stages. Although interactions between individuals start with a certain stage of trust/distrust, it evolves based on the characteristics of the interaction context. Both trust and distrust may contribute to enhancing or hindering the relationships and even lead to conflict or escalate the existing conflict in interaction. The emergence, dynamics, functions and uses of trust and distrust and the roles they played in the management of the PNP in Benin were investigated.

4.5 Methodology

4.5.1 Research setting

The study was carried out on the management of the Pendjari national park (PNP). The PNP comprises the total wildlife reserve of 266,000 ha surrounded by two partial reserves of 205,000 ha, Pendjari and Atacora, for hunting and ecotourism (CENAGREF 2004). The park was declared a State forest and partial wildlife reserve in 1954. One year later, it became a State forest and complete wildlife reserve, which was renamed Pendjari national park in 1961. In 1986, UNESCO included PNP and its adjacent hunting zones in world's biosphere reserves list.

The PNP is located in the north-western part of Benin and mainly shared by two municipalities: Tanguiéta and Matéri (Figure 1). It is surrounded by 23 villages and one town. These villages are located alongside two axes that mark two of the three borders of the park: the Tanguiéta-Batia axis with 11 villages and the Tanguiéta-Porga axis with 12 villages. The third border of the park is the interstate border between Benin and Burkina Faso in the north-west of Benin, which is the Pendjari river. The populations living in these villages are farmers, hunters, herders and fishermen. Agriculture is their main source of livelihood. The villagers use slash and burn farming systems coupled with long term fallow periods. Hunting is a custom in the villages.

Figure 4.1: Study area location

4.5.2 Research method

The case study method was used to investigate the management of the PNP. We were interested in understanding the 'how' and 'why' trust has been constructed and evolved in the management of the PNP. The case study method is suitable this research as we tries to illuminate why decisions were taken, how they were implemented, and what results were obtained (Schramm 1971; Bruhn 2009). The case study examines a phenomenon in its natural setting using multiple data collection methods to gather information from one or few entities (people, groups, organizations) (Benbasat et al. 1987; Eisendhardt 1989). In this research, we collected data through literature reviews, observations, interviews and discussions.

Data were gathered from September 2009 to February 2010. We consulted documents available on the park and the communities living in the area for background information. We conducted interviews and informal conversations with different stakeholders involved in the management of the park such as the park director, the president of the AVIGREF of the PNP, the technical advisor of the park direction (3), the EGs (4), the mayor of Tanguiéta, the hunters (6), and the villagers (15). Some stakeholders were met two to four times to triangulate information. In addition, four focus group discussions with the farmers and three with the hunters were carried out to triangulate the information gathered from individual discussions with the stakeholders. All interviews and conversations have been tape-recorded. Participatory observations were also made when attending meetings organised by the stakeholders in the framework of the management of the park, and when living and drinking with people to catch their stories.

The interviews and conversations were transcribed and analysed using discourse analysis method. Discourse analysis method is about studying and analyzing the uses of language (Hodges et al. 2008). It seeks, within the area of social sciences, to unveil the linguistic singularities of discourse as a social production (de Pinho et al. 2009). Discourse analysis also considers that language-use is as a form of action (Hammersley 2003). In the range of the existing discourse analysis methods, we used critical discourse analysis method. Critical discourse analysis sees discourse as socially constructive as well as socially conditioned (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000). Critical discourse analysis method was suitable for this study as we were interested in understanding how and why trust was socially constructed and influenced in the management of the PNP.

4.6 Case study results

4.6.1 Introduction of participation in the management of the PNP

Until 1993 the PNP was managed solely by the forest department since it was declared protected area in 1954. During this period, forest rangers (FRs) in charge of the surveillance of the park struggled to keep the local communities far away by the mean of repression. Some of the local communities who were living in the park were chased and forbidden to enter the park for any reason even for non-timber resources use, watering for their cattle and rituals for their gods still in the park. During the 1980s the tension raised up after clashes between the local communities and the FRs occasioned death of villagers and their animals, shot by the FRs.

Participatory management of the PNP was introduced in 1993 by the project of natural resources management (PGRN: *Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles*), the first participatory natural resources management project implemented in Benin. This project tested the feasibility of participatory process in the management of natural resources in Benin between 1993 and 1999. In the case of PNP, participation was experimented in the village of Batia, where the PGRN involved the villagers in activities such as reforestation, tracking at game hunting and wildlife ecological monitoring (surveillance, wildlife counting,...). In the same period, the national centre for wildlife reserves management (CENAGREF: *Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune*), a state office endowed with administrative and financial autonomous was created in 1996 to take over the management of Benin's parks.

The participatory management of the PNP effectively started in 2000, when the CENAGREF decided to scale up this management system to the entire park by involving all the villages surrounding the park and all the stakeholders in the management of the park. The village association for wildlife reserve management (AVIGREF: *Association Villageoise de Gestion des Réserves de Faune*) was created and represents all the local communities living in the 23 villages surrounding the PNP. This organisation is managed by a board in each village. The members of the village boards meet to elect the representatives of the axes of Tanguiéta-Porga and Tanguiéta-Batia, and the president of the AVIGREF-Pendjari. The AVIGREF has an executive board formed by a secretary, and an accountant and his assistant to manage respectively the administrative and financial issues of the organisation. AVIGREF has a directorate, which members are the president of AVIGREF and two other members, the Director of the PNP,

the mayors of Tangiéta and Matéri Municipalities, and two representatives of the farmers association of these two municipalities.

Participation was introduced in the management of the PNP in a context characterized by more than four decades of conflicts and tension between local communities and the park direction. Thus, a number of decisions and actions have been undertaken by the park administration supported by international donors to stimulate collaboration among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of the PNP.

4.6.2 Trust building

At the beginning of the implementation of the participatory management of the PNP, the local communities were reluctant to the aim of the park direction to involve them in the management of the park due to the tense relationship they had with the park direction for many decades. The first intention of the park direction was thus to gain the collaboration of the local communities by building a trustworthy relationship with them. This is evoked by the Park director in the following utterance:

> *The objective was to reassure the local communities, who had had for long time since the park was created, tense relationship with the park direction.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

Therefore, the park direction intended to foster the participation of local communities by carrying out some actions. The Park director stated:

> *... beyond our intentions, we had to act to convince the local communities of our good intentions. The actions, which interest them mostly, are the perceptible financial incomes deriving from the management of the park and the access of certain resources in the park. It is why we started sharing income generated by the exploitation of the hunting zones with them,... the meat, which is systematically given to the villagers, ...and at last, in the same idea of concrete actions to be undertaken, the park direction allowed the villagers to have access to the park for non-timber resources, watering their cattle and land for agriculture in the zone for controlled occupation (ZOC: Zone d'Occupation Contrôlée) created to answer to land shortage evoked by farmers.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010)

This interview excerpt highlights the intention of the park direction at the beginning, which was to achieve some concrete actions that would enable the local communities to trust it and thus commit to its objective of sustainable management of the park.

The park direction started replacing progressively the FRs by eco-guards (EGs), some young men recruited in the 23 AVIGREF-villages to carry out surveillances in the park. According to the park director,

> *...continuing to send the FRs, with whom the local communities had had a lot of troubles in the past even with gunshots, would mean that the park direction still wanted to pacify the region instead of collaborating with the local communities.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

The EGs have been trained to conduct surveillances in the park and also raised awareness among their parents on the sustainable management of the park in the villages. The park direction believed that the EGs will be more trusted and heard by their relatives than the FRs. Henceforth, surveillances were carried out by the EG and the AVIGREF members. A surveillance team was composed with 3 EGs and 2 AVIGREF members. They spent 15 days in the park, after which they were replaced by another team. The AVIGREF members were alternatively chosen in different villages to enable many villages to be involved in the surveillance. They were also asked by the park direction to organize awareness raising campaigns with the EGs in the villages and village surveillances by its members only at the borders of their villages with the park.

The above statement of the park director shows that the park direction also decided to release each year, 30% of the benefits deriving from game hunting it organizes to the AVIGREF. The money is shared among the villages based on their results in the implementation of the activities requested by the park direction. It is used to pay the villagers, who participated to the surveillances with the EG and those who were involved in the village surveillances. Part of the money is also used to pay AVIGREF members, who organised meetings in the villages and abroad. The rest of the money is kept in the bank account of the AVIGREF of each village and dedicated to building infrastructures in the villages.

The AVIGREF villages are also scheduled to receive the animals killed in the park by tourists at game hunting organised every year by the park direction. The meat is shared in priority among AVIGREF members, who pay 300 FCFA[3] per kilo and sometimes sold among non-members paying 600 FCFA per kilo.

The local communities are also allowed to have access to the park for their rituals and sacrifices to their gods, harvest non timber resources, and watering their cattle with the permission of the park direction. The park direction also delimitated a strip of land between the park and the villages called ZOC, where villagers are allowed to crop after signing a contract with the park direction.

Both the park direction and the AVIGREF members acknowledged that these actions had an impact on the behaviour of the local communities vis-à-vis the park direction and the park. The park director said in that sense:

> *I can say that for at least 5 years, we saw the impacts of the implication of local communities because of the positive evolution of wildlife, which was perceptible. At the same time, we noticed an improvement of our relationship with them.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

The president of AVIGREF-Pendjari confirms this point of view of the park director in the following statement:

> *The fauna had increased between 2000 and 2005 as a result of the decrease of poaching. Many poachers were caught with the collaboration of the EGs and the local communities.*
>
> Source: President of AVIGREF, December 2009

The local communities also acknowledged that the actions of the park direction changed their mind about the park direction before participation was introduced. This focus group discussion excerpt of the researcher with them shows it:

> *Local communities: We were all hunters in this village, but now almost all of us stopped.*
>
> *Researcher: Why?*

3 1 €=655.957 FCFA

> *Local communities: We realized that our village is penalized from benefiting from the CENAGREF because of few persons' behaviour. When we poach and kill an animal, we only use a part of the meat and leave the rest in the park. This is not significant compared to what we receive from the CENAGREF for working with it. We build schools, health centres, pay teachers and nurses with this money, which is good for us and for our children. Also nowadays it is more and more difficult to hunt without anybody else in the village noticing and telling the AVIGREF members or the CENAGREF.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with local communities, November 2009

The above utterances show that according to the park director, the president of AVIGREF and the local communities, the park direction succeeded in building a trustworthy relationship with the local communities through its actions towards them. A close analysis of them enables to understand that the park direction developed a calculus-based trust with the local communities. The park director believed that with the rewards and concession of the park direction to the local communities, the park direction has been able to gain their confidence.

4.6.3 Conflict emergence

However, according to the park direction, since 2006 the counting of wildlife population in the park revealed a significant decrease after 5 years of continuous raise. The different stakeholders started accusing each other of acting irresponsible and they even acted one against another.

The accusations of the park direction and the AVIGREF executive board
The park direction and the AVIGREF executive board members explained the decrease of wildlife in park by the raise of poaching. They reported to have witnessed since 2006, an increase in wild animal meat transactions in the neighboring villages of the park. Both parties blamed the EGs of being responsible of this reverse of the situation.

The EGs were mainly accused by the park direction and the AVIGREF executive board for carrying the responsibility of the increase of poaching because their behaviour has changed compared to what it was at the beginning of the process. The park director:

> *The EGs started behaving like in the public sector. You may know what is happening there. It is that once you become an agent of the public sector, your job is secured for 30 years. Whether you work or not, you will get your salary at the end of each month until you retire and start getting your retirement allowances.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

He continued by saying:

> *In the management of the park, we made a mistake in putting in place a remuneration system, which is not linked to the result; an automatic remuneration like in the public sector.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

These utterances show that according to the park director, the reverse of the situation is due to the fact that the park direction has secured the EGs' job up to a point that they became overconfident about their job situation. The park direction converted the EGs into permanent workers of the CENAGREF with permanent salary and retirement; it granted them with healthcare insurance, built houses for them, and created bonuses and rewards for them when they arrest illegal users in the park. All these actions contributed to the fact that the EGs saw their job secured enough, what, according to the Park Director, harmed their motivation to work.

These points of view were shared by the technical advisor of the park direction who stated:

> *The EGs developed the complex of the 'spoiled child'. As they had succeeded many times in the past in getting some advantages through claiming and disobediences, finally it became a habit for them. They were asking more and more advantages threatening to stop their job if they did not get satisfaction. As there were no more advantages to give them, they started working less and less. According to me, this could lead to the disappearance of the EGs' corporation.*
>
> Source: Technical advisor of PNP, February 2010

Both the park director and the technical advisor pointed in their talks, the lack of benevolence of the EGs. According to them, the way the park direction dealt with the EGs at the beginning of the process empowered them so that they became overconfident about their importance in the management of the park.

For the park direction, the EGs even developed complicity relationships with some poachers instead of combating them. The park director referred to that in the following piece of talk:

> *Because they thought they acquired a permanent job situation, they wanted to gain more by any mean and even by using their position of EGs, someone who should protect the park, to be in complicity with the poachers.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

This utterance shows that the park direction put also the integrity of the EGs in question. The EGs were accused of lack of integrity in carrying out the surveillances.

The president of AVIGREF confirmed the thoughts of the park director and the technical advisor on the fact that the EGs became less efficient in their job. However, he raised other aspects, which he believed explain the current behaviour of the EGs as shown in the following interview excerpt:

> *The job became too difficult for the EGs. At the beginning they were strong, but their strength has decreased over time. Some have the will but they are not able to walk for long distances anymore. So when they go to surveillance, they don't penetrate deeper in the park. Most of them built a family and need to stay sometimes at home. Some of them developed other businesses in the cities and come back to monitor them instead of staying in the park. These are factors, which explain the inefficiency of the EGs vis-à-vis the poachers, who always fear to be caught and are vigilante. When the poachers realized that there were less risk to be caught, their number increased in the park.*
>
> Source: President of AVIGREF of PNP, December, 2009

The president of AVIGREF pointed out here the loss of ability and integrity of the EGs in their job. According to him, although some had the will to do their job, they were no more able because they became less capable. For some, it is because other activities compete with their job as EGs that they spent less time for surveillance in the park.

Although the park direction succeeded in building trust with the EGs, this trust was instable and even disappeared. The utterances above show that the park direction had developed a calculus-based trust with the EGs' at the beginning

of the process by the mean of incentives. When poaching started raising in the park, the park direction and the AVIGREF executive board distrusted the EGs as they believed that the situation was due to the EGs' loss of benevolence, integrity and ability. According to them, the EGs made a dysfunctional use of trust developed as they reciprocated with inadequate job fulfillment.

The accusations of the EGs

The EGs agreed that they became less efficient than how they were at the beginning of the process. However, they evoked other reasons than those of the park direction to explain their current performance. In the following utterance, they pointed out their job:

> *This job is not the one someone can do for longtime. It is a very tough one. Since we started until 2006, we were young and enthusiastic. During this period, when we saw signs of poachers in the park or when we got some information about them, we went deeper in the park and even at night to catch them. But after a while, we were not able to do that.*
>
> Source: EG informant, October 2009

Another EG stated:

> *We have been doing this job for almost 10 years. Nobody could be active in this job after 10 years like he was at the beginning. In few years, we will become unable to perform this job. Some young EGs should be recruited to refresh the corp.*
>
> Source: EG informant, December 2009

In these utterances, the EGs confirmed what the president of AVIGREF believed was one of the causes of their loss of ability. For them, as their job is hard, the park direction should renew the EGs after a while with fresh recruited EGs to keep the trend of working. The former EGs should thus be promoted to other positions demanding less physical effort.

However, the EGs believed that it was mainly their lack of motivation, which explain their performance. According to them, the park direction started behaving unfairly with them what affected slowly their motivation. A EG resumed their opinion by saying:

> *The important problem is our career, which is wrongly managed by the park direction. As our job is physically demanding, we should be strongly motivated to keep our performance what the park direction did not do. Since we started, our salary had been raised until 2006. But since then, we are getting this salary until now. We did not get any promotion and in 5 years some of us could not go to surveillance because they will become useless... it seems like we are like bananas that the CENAGREF will eat the flesh and then throw away the peels later.*
>
> Source: EG informant, January 2010

Another EG added:

> *The EGs lost hope. It is when people believe that something will change that they spend a lot of energy at their work. We are still expecting the document, which is supposed to describe how the EGs should evolve since they are recruited until their retirement, to be signed. Added to that, we are still at the same salary since four years ago despite inflation all over the world.*
>
> Source: EG informant, December 2009

These interview excerpts highlight a raise of distrust at the EGs' side. For them, the dramatically decline of their performance is due to their '*loss of hope*' about the achievement of expectations they have built upon their relationship with the park direction. They explain the decline of their motivation as a response to their distrust to the park direction's way of managing their career. These utterances of the EGs also show that they considered their work as a job, what means that they were mainly interested in the material benefits from their work and did not seek or receive other type of reward from it (see Wrzesniewski et al. 1997).

This section displays through the utterances of the stakeholders, the emergence of a conflict between the park direction and the executive board of AVIGREF in one side and the EGs in the other side in the management of the PNP. This conflict is characterized by mutual accusations, showing the rise of distrust among the stakeholders. The EGs distrusted the park direction because they believed that the park direction was mismanaging their career by not respecting its words. As a consequence, they *lost the motivation* they had at the beginning of the process. This situation led to the raise of poaching in the park, which the park direction interpreted as a result of the EGs' complacency. The park direction and the executive board of AVIGREF in turn distrusted the EGs and

accused them to have *lost benevolence*, *integrity* and *ability* in the surveillance of the park. Although the park direction and the executive board of AVIGREF, and the EGs agreed on the rise of poaching in the park because the EGs became less efficient, they had different opinions on what led to the current situation. Each party distrusted the other and as a consequence shifted the responsibility of the raise of poaching on him.

To solve the problem of poaching, the park direction decided to take new measures to boost the surveillances in the park.

4.6.4 Management of the conflict

The reaction of the park direction to the drop of the population of wildlife due to the raise of poaching was to involve the poachers in the surveillance of the park since 2009. According to the park direction, poaching was persisting in the park because it has failed to involve this category of stakeholder since the beginning of the participatory management of the park. The poachers were asked by the park direction to form their own organization. They were henceforth called local professional hunters (CPL: *Chasseurs Professionels Locaux*). Since then, the surveillance of the park was carried out by a team of 6 persons: 2 EGs, 2 AVIGREF members and 2 CPLs. However, this decision was differently interpreted by the park direction and the EGs.

The arguments of the park direction
The park direction justified its decision to involve the CPLs in the management of the park with a research carried out, which confirmed its importance and possibility. However, a close discussion with the park director and the technical advisor of the park showed that the park direction accepted to negotiate with the poachers because it believed that their involvement in the surveillances will solve many problems they were facing with both the poachers and the EGs. With regard to the involvement of the poachers, the park director declared:

> *Poachers work in networks. So, if we have at least some of the members of these networks with us, the others will be worried as they knew their former fellows will reveal to us their secrets and they will be caught.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

He continued by arguing:

> *We encourage the combination of actors for the surveillances to avoid complicities and corruption. Because when you are alone to hold the power like it was with the EGs in the past, complicities start. But now that the CPLs, with who the EGs were used to have complicity deals are also involved in the surveillances, it complicates things for the EGs. We are even getting some good results. The CPLs started reporting to us the behaviours of the EGs. They told us that sometimes the EGs don't want to go far in the park for surveillance. The CPLs want to show that they are worthy.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

These utterances of the park director show how the park direction was dealing with the conflict, which opposed it with the EGs. Instead of continuing to negotiate with the EGs, the park direction decided to involve the CPLs to counter the effects of the complicities, corruption and lack of motivation of the EGs. The park direction believed that the combination of actors in the surveillances will balance the power between the EGs and the CPLs.

The utterances highlight that the park direction legitimized the involvement of the CPLs with its distrust to the EGs. It made a functional use of its distrust to the EGs. By involving the CPLs, the park direction was protecting itself from the consequences of the potential negative intentions, behaviours and actions of the EGs such as complacence, complicities and corruption. It also involved the CPLs to share their knowledge on poaching that might enable it to catch their former fellows and denounced the dishonest EGs. The park direction thus developed deterrence-based trust with the EGs as they were controlled by the CPLs at their job.

The park direction also made a functional use of distrust in setting-up his new relationship with the CPLs expressed in the following statement of the park director:

> *We might experience in the future with the CPLs what is happing with the EGs now meaning loss of enthusiasm and complicities. The most important is that we learned from our experience with the EGs. Even if we might have problems with the CPLs, it will be different because we will never consider a CPL as a permanent agent of the CENAGREF like we did with the EGs. We will work with them as partners and they will be paid according to the job they would do.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

In this piece of talk, the park director showed that the park direction used its experience with the EGs in setting up its relationship with the CPLs by avoiding signing permanent contract with them. This behaviour of the park direction is an illustration of a functional use of distrust. Because of its distrust to the EGs and for fear of experiencing the same later with the CPLs, the park direction adapted a new type of contract with the CPLs. This is to avoid the development of complacence, complicities, corruptions and the lack of motivation by the CPLs as experienced with the EGs because of the permanent contract the park direction signed with them. The behaviour of the park direction illustrates the development of both calculus-based and deterrence-based trusts with the CPLs since the beginning of their relationship.

According to the park direction, this management strategy is working so far as with the contribution of the CPLs they have arrested some poachers and no overt conflict is noticed among the actors except the complains of the EGs.

The reaction of the EGs

Not surprisingly the EGs complained about the involvement of the CPLs in the management of the park. They raised some concerns about the trustworthiness of the CPLs in their surveillance of the park. One of the EGs said:

> *Nothing proves us that the CPLs fully reconverted. Give them guns and allow them to go to surveillance is a danger as nothing proves that they won't start again their former behaviour after they know all our surveillance strategies.*
>
> Source: EG informant, January 2010

The EGs evoked clearly in this piece of talk, their distrust to the CPLs. They showed that the change of the CPLs will not be sustained in the future. They supported their thought by evoking their experience with some poachers, who trained them on patrols in the park and were caught later for poaching in the park. They presented those who showed up as opportunistic poachers who wanted to gain from the park direction.

The EGs also considered the involvement of the CPLs as a threat for them because of their past conflicting relationship. An EG declared in that sense:

> *The park direction is asking us to go to surveillance with the CPLs who we had tracked for many years. We found it difficult to work*

> *with our enemies as it is an occasion the park direction is giving them to pay back what we did to them.*
>
> Source: EG informant, January 2010

This utterance shows that the EGs presented the CPLs as untrustworthy persons who may be dangerous and violent against them.

This decision to involve the CPLs in the surveillance also increased the EGs' distrust towards the park direction with regard to the management of their career. For the EGs, the involvement of the CPLs confirmed that the park direction was not willing to improving their job conditions as expressed in the following piece of talk of one of them:

> *The EGs are frustrated as the park direction still owes them four years of bonuses, saying that there are not enough resources. But where do the resources, which are used to pay the CPLs come from?*
>
> Source: EG informant, December 2009

The EGs used distrust here as strategic means to protect their job and defend their bonuses they believe the CPLs will share with them.

The park direction considered the reactions of the EGs as reflecting the same reaction the FRs had in 2000, when the EGs were involved in the surveillance. It considered their reaction as normal as they all focus on their interest threatened. Like it happened in 2000, the park direction believed that the EGs and AVIGREF members will slowly accommodate themselves to this new situation. By saying '*We even started getting some good results*', the park director expresses that the park direction still had the situation under control and believed that its plan was working.

Both the park direction and the EGs used distrust as agency. The park direction used distrust to legitimize the involvement of the CPLs, which it believed will force the EGs to work and in setting up its relationship with the CPLs. The EGs in the other hand expressed distrust to fight against the involvement of the CPLs and claim the improvement of their job conditions.

4.7 Discussion and conclusions

Conflict is often defined as the incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, behaviours, roles, needs, desires, values, and so on among individuals (Lewicki 2006). In many cases, the apparently peaceful surface of management processes observed by an outsider gives the illusion of absence of conflict between the actors involved. The conflict in the management of the PNP was noticeable only when discussing with each of the stakeholders separately. Although many consider as conflicts only dramatic confrontations that attract public attention and even involve sometimes third party in the resolution of the differences, the vast majority of conflicts occur out of sight and in forms other than official negotiation (Kolb and Putnam 1992). Hidden or silent conflicts in management processes are usually embedded in the routine activities of the work settings and are rarely officially acknowledged or managed in the ways most conflict models suggest (Bartunek et al. 1992). In the case of the PNP participatory management, the conflict was not officially acknowledged and managed. Stakeholders only developed strategies to accommodate to the situation and reduce their vulnerability towards the other party. In that sense, hidden conflicts are more difficult to solve as stakeholders do not really communicate with each other and do not put issues and ideas at stake into perspectives by contesting them overtly. Instead they only express their feelings with people with whom they already agree and who will confirm their existing opinions. This case study gives insight on the role of trust and distrust in the emergence and dynamics of such conflicts.

We uncovered that trust development in the management process started with calculus-based trust building, where the different parties weighted the costs and benefits that may derive from their trusting behavior to make their decision (Dietz and Den Hartog 2006). In the participatory management of the PNP, the park direction developed a calculus-based trust with the local communities by sharing the benefits deriving from the management of the park with them each year, by allowing them to carry out some activities in the park, and by delimitating for them a zone for agriculture to respond to their land shortage claims. The local communities reciprocated by collaborating with the park direction, resulting in the decrease of poaching in the park.

However, calculus-based trust is inherently instable, vulnerable to erosion in the changing context. As it is based on rewards, calculus-based trust is instrumental and needs to be constantly sustained through the supply of at least the promises. Calculus-based trust is also differently interpreted over time by the

parties. Dysfunctional use of trust is susceptible to develop. Then, one party becomes overconfident about his position, asks more rewards and threatens to break his trusting behavior by stopping fulfilling his role in the relationship. Calculus-based trust needs thus to be counter balanced with deterrence-based trust, which enables the different parties to set the boundaries of the relationship and the punishments in case of trust breaking (Lewicki 2006). The EGs made dysfunctional use of the trust relationship built with the park direction as they became overconfident about their importance in the surveillance of the park. This overconfidence was not constrained by any deterrent what enabled the development of inefficiency by the EGs. The situation led to the raise of distrust between the stakeholders that hindered the process. When calculus-based trust is not constantly managed, distrust raises among the parties as a result of at least one party's breaking of the trust rules.

Although distrust is usually seen as having negative connotations, our study shows that a reasonable level of distrust is needed in management processes (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Conchie and Donald 2008). A certain level of distrust is functional for building trust and collaboration, particularly in case of calculus-based trust, as it enables actors to not think only about rewards but also to set boundaries and punishments that the parties will face in case of breaking the trust (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Conchie and Donald 2008). Functional distrust motivates actors to put deterrents in place, thus nurturing the development of deterrence-based trust combined with calculus-based trust. In case of professional relationships the treat of punishment is likely to be a more significant trust motivator than the promise of rewards (Lewicki 2006). EGs developed overconfidence (dysfunctional trust) because the park direction focused on providing incentives to them for trust building and did not develop clear, possible and likely to occur, deterrents for when the EGs violate the trust relationship. Thus, when building calculus-based trust a 'healthy dose of distrust' (functional distrust) is needed to enable stakeholders to focus on developing both rewards for sustaining trust behavior and punishments in case appointments are broken (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Tomlinson and Lewicki 2006).

Another way of avoiding dysfunctional use of trust would be to focus on building knowledge-based, relationship-based or identification based trust among the stakeholders. For these cases, managers should based trust building on drawing the attention of the other party on the enjoyment of fulfilling their work and of the socially usefulness of their work, which will enable them to experience their work as a calling instead of just a job or a career (Wrzesniewski et al.

1997). Nevertheless in any relationship, issues of trust should be considered as dynamic and thus constantly be worked on in the ongoing process through negotiations among the stakeholders.

The raising of dysfunctional distrust is the manifestation of conflict between parties as when it arises, parties start developing strategies to protect themselves instead of considering the common interest. Conflict raised between the park direction and the EGs when both developed dysfunctional distrust about each other as shown by their mutual accusations. Parties use strategically distrust to legitimise decisions and actions in conflict situation. Both the park direction and the EGs made a strategically use of dysfunctional distrust. The park direction showed distrust of the EGs accusing them of being responsible of the increased poaching in the park and used this distrust to legitimate the involvement of the CPLs in the surveillance. The EGs made a dysfunctional use of distrust in justifying their loss of motivation, which resulted in the raised of poaching in the park using their distrust to the park direction. Distrust is thus used as agency in the conflict as both parties used it to protect themselves or act against the behavior of the other party (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Conchie and Donald 2008). The park direction showed his distrust to the EGs by involving the CPLs in the surveillance to prevent the consequences of the EGs' behaviour. The EGs in turn, manifested their loss of motivation as a result of their distrust to the park direction to underline their needs that were not fulfilled. They also expressed their distrust concerning the involvement of the CPLs to defend their job.

Our study shows that issues of trust and distrust are fragile and important frames in conflicts emergence and dynamic in management process. Our investigation of trust and distrust as frames has made it possible to understand the initial relative success and later problems in the participatory management of the PNP. It also helped to open and refine the 'black box' of trust as a dynamic/interactional frame instead of a static/cognitive frame as it has been used conventionally.

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5

Identity Dynamics and Conflict in Collaborative Processes: The Case of Participatory Management of Protected Areas in Benin

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Abstract

The research reported in this paper investigated the role of identity construction in the emergence and escalation of conflict in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin. Three cases were studied. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document consultation, and analysed using the interaction analysis method. The study shows that social identity salience was dynamic and played an important role in the emergence and escalation of conflict in the cases studied. Conflicts emerged when identities became salient as a result of the stakeholders' framing of contextual factors as a threat to their identity. The conflicts escalated when decisions and actions undertaken in the management process were framed as top-down and as posing a threat to the identities of the stakeholders. We conclude that, although participation was introduced by the government in the management of the protected areas, unilateral decisions taken about the way the conflicts should be managed caused disappointment and distrust, and thus led to a greater distance between the parties involved and to conflict escalation.

5.1 Introduction

Conflicts over natural resources such as land, water, and forests are inevitable, ubiquitous, and will exist for the foreseeable future (Buckles and Rusnak 1999; Castro and Nielson 2003; Hares 2009; Mola-Yudego and Gritten 2010). However, there is still confusion about whether or not conflicts are desirable in natural resources management (Hellström 2001). On the one hand, conflicts over natural resources are considered as negative phenomena because of their complexity and the unpredictability of their impact on these resources, and on both the interests and the well-being of the people involved (Hellström 2001; Tyler 1999). Indeed, conflicts over resources can sometimes become harsh and result in violence, resource degradation, the undermining of livelihoods, and uprooting of communities (Castro and Nielson 2003). On the other hand, conflicts over natural resources have been seen as an important leverage for environment management by ensuring that the voices of the different stakeholders are heard and that new social demands are responded to (Hellström 2001).

Although conflict has many negative impacts, many studies have recognized the value of conflict as a catalyst for positive social change (Buckles and Rusnak 1999). Conflict can be extremely valuable as the motor of progress or the mechanism by which injustice is removed (Smith 1997).

Nowadays, the aim is not to avoid conflicts, but to make it possible for conflicts to evolve without violence, death, suffering, and misery (Smith 1997). In that sense, Desloges and Gauthier (1997:111) have pointed out that:

> *As such, conflictual situations are neither positive nor negative but they can be used in a constructive or destructive way. Many authors consider that conflicts are crucial not only for social change but [also] for the continuous creation of society by society itself. Therefore, conflict should not be viewed only as a dysfunctional relationship between individuals and communities that should be avoided at all cost but, also, as an opportunity for constructive change and growth.*

Thus, if managed adequately, conflict over natural resources can yield positive outcomes such as reaching agreements and improving resources management (e.g., via better collaboration), whereas, if addressed badly, it may carry negative overtones such as bad relationships, destruction of resources, and violence (Yasmi et al. 2009). With this mix of the impacts of conflicts, we still

need to understand when and how conflicts over resources become cooperative and beneficial or destructive in the participatory management of natural resources.

Participatory management of natural resources was introduced in Benin during the early 1990s when the top-down approach used in the management of these resources proved unsuccessful in terms of conservation. In 1993, the forest department decided to involve local communities in the management of its protected areas in order to cope with their continuous degradation caused by illegal logging, poaching, overgrazing, and occupation for agriculture. After a few years of relatively successful collaborative management, various conflicts emerged between the forest department representatives and the local communities (El-Hadj Issa 2001; Idrissou et al. 2011; Tchiwanou 2001; Zoundoh 2001). Negotiations undertaken between the stakeholders even escalated some of these conflicts (see Idrissou et al., 2011). In this paper, we present a study that investigated three cases of conflict in the participatory management of natural resources in Benin.

Different social groups, who often have clearly diverging agendas, values, perspectives, and goals, are involved in participatory natural resources management on the assumption that they share power in decision making about, and implementation and evaluation of, the management of these resources (Haslam 2001; Hjortso 2004). In the natural resources management literature, conflicts that emerge are often seen as a consequence of the incompatibility of interests, values, roles, responsibilities, or access and property rights to the same territory or resources between at least two interdependent groups (see de Jong et al. 2006; Götmark 2009; Hares 2009; Mola-Yudego and Gritten 2010; Yasmi et al. 2009). These conflicts often give rise to confrontations between local communities and government officials (see de Jong et al. 2006; Götmark 2009), between different stakeholder groups in the same community (see Hares 2009), between different ethnic groups (see Macias 2008), or between local communities and private companies. Whereas natural resources have economic, cultural, and historical importance for the local communities, government officials often favour conservation while promoting alternative income-generating activities as sources of livelihood for local communities, and private companies are driven by purely economic goals.

In the conflict literature however, social identity construction is considered to be at the core of conflict emergence in intergroup negotiation such as participatory management, which is commonly conceptualized as a process centred

around the dual concerns (and perspectives) of self and other (Haslam 2001). Many of the core concepts in the negotiation literature relate to the issue of social identity because the primary problem in negotiation is the existence of social groups whose members are exposed to ingroup favouritism and outgroup pressures (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Haslam 2001). Many conflicts are thus attributed to differences in social identity (e.g., Aspinall 2007; Assal 2006; Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007; Korostelina 2007; Livingstone and Haslam 2008). However, the natural resources management literature pays little attention to the influence of the social identity of groups involved in conflict. The focus is often on tangible and especially economic interests and clashes, but group conflict can also revolve around symbolic resources, such as social status, values, and identity (Chapman 2006; Flippen 1999; Henningsen et al. 2006).

People define their sense of self in social contexts by referring to their group membership, which impacts on their behaviour (Stets and Burke 2000; Zhou and Mori 2010). According to Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, and Flament (1971), the mere fact of social categorization is an inevitable source of conflict and tension (Haslam 2001; Tzeng and Jackson 1994). Social identity theory focuses on prejudices, discrimination, and conditions that promote different types of intergroup behaviour such as conflict, cooperation, social change, and social stasis (Hogg and Reid 2006). It is used to analyse intergroup interactions either to predict conflict emergence or to manage them better in negotiation processes (Haslam 2001; Korostelina 2007). Thus, in this study we used the social identity approach to understand the role of identity construction in conflict relating to participatory natural resources management. We investigated three such conflicts in Benin to deepen our understanding of the role that social identity played in the stakeholders' interactions and the extent to which it contributed to the emergence and escalation of the conflicts.

First we provide a theoretical overview of the concept of social identity, then explain the methodology used in our study, and finally present and discuss our results.

5.2 Social identity approach

The concept of social identity was first introduced by Tajfel who defined it as 'the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership'

(Tajfel 1972:292). Social identity theory thus explains how self is conceptualized in intergroup contexts, which means how people create and define their own place in society through a system of self categorizations (Hogg and Terry 2000). According to social identity theory, people tend to categorize themselves and others into various social categories such as organizational membership, religious affiliation, gender, age group, locality, etc. (Ashforth and Mael 1989).

Social identity plays an important role in the connection that people feel with groups; in their wish to distinguish themselves from others; and in group behaviour such as the more positive treatment of members of one's own group - ingroup-favouring - as opposed to members of other groups - stereotyping and prejudice - (Cohen and Caspary 2010; Fischer et al. 2010). It provides a basis for perceptual, attitudinal, and behavioural effects of group membership (Van Knippenberg et al. 2002). It appears that groups react differently according to the social context. Depending on the social context, different identities are made salient by groups. Groups make salient a type of social identity in response to a situational activation of an identity at a particular level to fit with the social field (Hogg and Terry 2000; Stets and Burke 2000).

5.3 Social identity salience and conflict emergence in negotiation

Social identity salience is seen as the main predictor of conflict in intergroup interaction (Haslam 2001; Hogg and Reid 2006; Korostelina 2007; Stets and Burke 2000; Tzeng and Jackson 1994). A group's salient identity can be defined as the most important identity of that group and with which people belonging to the group psychologically identify themselves within that context (Hogg and Reid 2006; Korostelina 2007; Stets and Burke 2000). For example, people with a salient ethnic identity are more prejudiced and show more readiness for conflict behaviour towards other ethnic groups (Korostelina 2007; Phinney 1991). Thus, a salient social identity triggers actions against outgroup members and leads to conflict (Korostelina 2007).

Scholars involved in social identity research have always been concerned about what makes a particular social identity salient in a situation and thus activates conflict. Several predictors of early warning of conflict centred on social identity have been identified by Korostelina (2007). As a particular identity activation or salience is a function of the interaction between the characteristics of the group and the situation (Stets and Burke 2000), conflict emergence is related to the

characteristics, forms, types, and nature of the salient social identity, and intergroup relations (see Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007; Korostelina 2007). We discuss below those relevant in understanding conflict emergence in natural resources management.

One of the main group features that plays a significant role in group behaviour in interaction is *ingroup primacy*, which refers to the feeling of supremacy of group goals and values over individual goals and values (Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007). Several components form the primacy of an ingroup (Korostelina 2007): (1) predominance of ingroup aims over individual aims, (2) the readiness to forget all internal ingroup conflicts in situations of threat to the ingroup, and (3) the readiness to unite against an outgroup. This characteristic of group identity can increase or decrease the influence of identity salience on the conflict behaviour of the members of the ingroup. Thus, in participatory natural resources management, a group may enter into conflict with other groups just because the interests of some ingroup members are threatened and not those of the group as a whole; this results in unstable relationships.

The *mode of identity meaning* or social identity content determines the type of identity conflict that emerges (Korostelina 2007; Livingstone and Haslam 2008). The meaning of social identity is usually multimodal and contains several components such as ingroup traditions and values (culture), ingroup language, characteristics of ingroup members, ingroup interests, history of ingroup, ideology of ingroup, outgroup image, etc. The dominance of a component in the social identity of a group in a context leads to conflict based on the difference in that component compared with outgroups (Livingstone and Haslam 2008). The dominance of outgroup image, for example, may lead to conflict about difference in image arising from ingroup and outgroup comparison. As participatory natural resources management involves stakeholder groups with different perspectives, objectives, and interests vis-à-vis these resources, conflict among them may emerge due to the dominance of some of these differences in interaction.

States of intergroup relations such as *intergroup prejudice* and *outgroup threat* also lead to conflict. Prejudice is often defined as a negative attitude or as an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization directed towards individuals as members of a group or to the group as a whole (Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007). Thus, outgroup threats increase intergroup prejudice and lead to more hostility towards the outgroup. When threatened, group members perceive members of other groups as more homogenous with one another, and

develop more extreme positions and less tolerance towards them (Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007). Group members feel more threatened when the threat is directed at their social identity by an outgroup (Fischer et al. 2010). In participatory natural resources management, intergroup prejudice may often be experienced as each group may evaluate positively its members and negatively outgroup members when they feel the identity of their ingroup threatened by the outgroup.

According to Korostelina (2007), the intensity of the perceived prejudice or threat to the social identity of the ingroup is higher when the social identity is *acquired* by ingroup members than when it is *ascribed* to them. People who acquire a social identity are more committed to ingroup beliefs, values, and norms than people with ascribed identities. Thus, in participatory natural resources management, conflicts are more likely to emerge when the perception of prejudice or threat concerns an acquired rather than an ascribed social identity.

In summary, identity conflict may emerge in participatory natural resources management when the social identities of the stakeholder groups become salient due to intergroup primacy and the development of intergroup prejudice or the feeling of threat from an outgroup. The type of identity conflict that emerges depends on the mode of identity meaning at the basis of intergroup comparison and the intensity of its influence on the nature of the identity (acquired or ascribed) under threat. Identity salience could thus be a major concern in participatory natural resources management.

5.4 Dynamic of social identity salience in negotiation

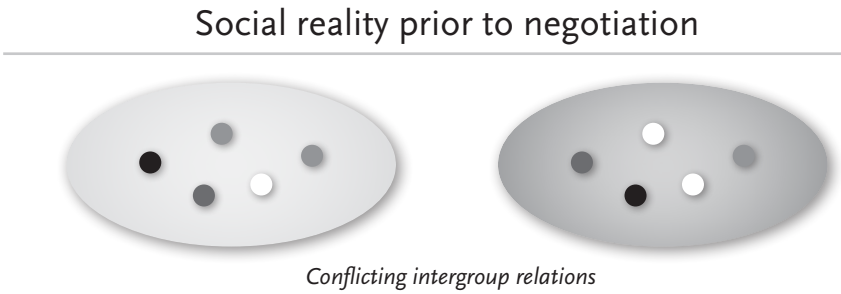
Many approaches to reducing intergroup identity conflicts focus on the need to increase the quantity and quality of intergroup contact in order to decrease the salience of groups' identities (Gaertner et al. 1989; Haslam 2001; Hewstone et al. 2002). However, different views have been developed on how intergroup contact should be achieved to deal with social identity salience in conflict prevention and conflict management in negotiation processes. In early applications of social identity principles, scholars argued that the most appropriate method to avoid or resolve social conflict was to apply procedures that served to reduce the social identity salience of groups involved in interaction or conflict (Haslam 2001). They suggested the *decategorized contact model*, which encouraged individual representations of (potentially) conflicting group mem-

bers in intergroup contacts because individualized views would be inconsistent with the stereotypic beliefs of the group that lead to or perpetuate conflict. Decategorization seeks to reduce ingroup and outgroup bias that leads to conflict by moving (former) ingroup members, as individuals rather than as part of a group, away from the self towards outgroup members (Haslam 2001; Hewstone et al. 2002). Other scholars proposed the *common ingroup identity model* and argued that a superior strategy was rather *recategorization*, which 'transforms members' cognitive representations ... from 'us' and 'them' to a more inclusive 'we'' (Gaertner et al. 1996:232). Recategorization seeks to alter the categorizations used by replacing the subordinate 'us' and 'them' to create a superordinate 'we' categorization (Hewstone et al. 2002).

Several criticisms have been made of the decategorization and recategorization models (see Ashforth and Mael 1989; Haslam 2001; Hewstone et al. 2002) as both advocate violence to the social reality that they are supposed to address by seeking to break the existing social identities. The recategorization model even overlooks the power relations between the different groups in their willingness to impose a superordinate social identity on the parties in negotiation. Another limitation of both models is that they are based on the assumption that intergroup conflicts are bad and hence must be avoided at all cost, whereas conflict and co-operation are seen as two sides of the same coin that alternate to give structure, meaning, and direction to social life (Haslam 2001).

Some scholars then argued that the fact that parties were involved in negotiation presupposed that they all believed in the existence of a so-called win-win or integrative agreement that would satisfy the minimum requirements of both parties. Thus, negotiation usually happens because the parties involved acknowledge the existence of a shared superordinate identity (Haslam 2001). Intergroup negotiation is then seen as revolving around counter-posed social identities defined at subgroup and superordinate levels. Researchers have recently argued that the best way to deal with intergroup negotiation is not to increase the salience of a social identity at the expense of subgroup identities but to acknowledge and allow the expression of both superordinate and subgroup identities (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Haslam 2001; Hewstone et al. 2002). This way of thinking is at the core of the *dual-identity model* of conflict management. This model seeks to reduce bias between subgroups who share a common superordinate identity in addition to considering themselves as members of separate groups (Gaertner et al. 1989; Hewstone et al. 2002). Figure 1 depicts the dual-identity, the decategorization, and the recategorization models, schematically.

Figure 5.1. Categories-based solutions to intergroup conflict (Haslam, 2001)



The models for intergroup identity conflict management are presented as if, in a negotiation process, one model or another should be applied that may or may not fit the negotiation process. However, we posit that a negotiation process is dynamic and may reflect different models at different steps of the process. Thus, a negotiation process may start with one model and switch to another due to the salience of either the subgroup identity or a superordinate identity, or both subgroup and superordinate identities in interaction. So, rather than being considered as strictly distinct, these models should be seen as interconnected interactional contexts within which a negotiation process may be going back and forth.

Participatory natural resources management involves different stakeholder categories with different identities. Thus, different identities may become salient in different contexts. In this study, we looked at how identities became salient and how their dynamic led to conflict in three case studies of participatory natural resources management in Benin.

5.5 Cases studied and method

This study investigated conflict emergence and escalation in the participatory management of three protected areas in Benin: the Agoua forest, the Ouémé Spérieur and N'dali (OSN) forests and the Pendjari National Park (PNP).

The Agoua forest is a protected area put under government protection in 1953. It is situated in the centre-west of Benin in the municipality of Bantè. When it was declared a protected area, the Agoua forest covered about 75,300 ha (Akpado 1996). However, this forest was progressively occupied by local communities who created villages and farms in it. The forest's area had decreased to 68,848.43 in 2002 (PAMF 2006). The forest department thus decided to restore it in 2002 under a five-year project, the Project for the Management of the Wari-Waro, Monts Kouffè and Agoua Forest Massifs (PAMF: *Projet d'Aménagement des Massifs Forestiers d'Agoua, des Monts Kouffè et de Wari-Waro*). The aim of the project was the participatory restoration of the forest through the establishment and implementation of the participatory management plan for the Agoua forest (PAMF 2006).

The OSN forests are formed by the Ouémé Supérieur forest, declared a protected area in 1952, and the N'dali forest, declared protected in 1942. These forests cover respectively 193,406 ha and 4,721 ha, are located in the north of

Benin, and shared by the municipalities of Tchaourou, Djougou, and N'dali. These forests are managed together as they are close, have similar ecosystems, and face the same anthropogenic pressure (PGRN 1999). These forests were solely managed by the forest department from 1952 until the early 1990s when a participatory approach was introduced in the management of Benin's protected areas. The participatory approach - community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) - was introduced in the management of the OSN forests by the Natural Resources Management (NRM) project (*Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles*) in 1993, which established the participatory management plan for these forests. The implementation of the plan was started by the local communities and later supported by the Forests and Adjacent Lands Management (FALM) programme (*Programme de Gestion des Forêts et Terroirs Riverains*). Local communities formed village associations for forest management (VAFM: *Association Villageoise de Gestion des Forêts*), which were involved in the management of these forests together with government officials.

The PNP was created by the colonial administration in 1954 and covers an area of 471,000 ha. It is located in north-western Benin and shared by the municipalities of Tanguiéta and Matéri. Like all Benin's protected areas, it had been managed by government officials using a top-down approach until 1993 when the participatory approach was introduced. Local communities have been involved in the management of the park through the village associations for wildlife management and eco-guards recruited by the park direction in the villages surrounding the park.

In each of these cases, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document consultation (see Table 1). Key informants in each stakeholder category were interviewed individually, and focus group discussions were organized to triangulate the information gathered through the individual interviews. Data were also collected through participation in meetings organized in the framework of the management of these protected areas and observations of the activities of the different stakeholders involved. The interviews and conversations were tape-recorded and transcribed. Documents such as project and study reports on the protected areas and the local communities were consulted to gather general information on the protected areas and the local communities, as well as events that occurred during the management of these protected areas and that have been documented.

Table 5.1: Interviews, focus group discussions, and meetings attended for each case

Cases	Individual interviews	Focus group discussions	Meetings attended
Agoua forest	39	06	02
OSN forests	33	09	03
PNP	31	07	05

The data gathered and processed were analysed using the interaction analysis method (see Fairhurst 2004; Jordan and Henderson 1995). Interaction analysis is an interdisciplinary method suitable for the empirical investigation of the interaction of people with each other and with objects in their environment (Jordan and Henderson 1995). Interaction analysis consists of describing people's behaviour in relation to those with whom they are doing interaction work in the construction of recognizable social scenes or events (Fairhurst 2004). We used interaction analysis in this study to investigate activities such as talk and non-verbal interactions of stakeholders involved in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin to identify routines, practices, and problems, and the resources for their resolution (see Jordan and Henderson 1995). Interaction analysis was used in multiple cases studied to identify interactional patterns in conflict emergence and escalation in protected area management in Benin (see Jordan and Henderson 1995).

5.6 Findings

Because protected areas were created in Benin during colonial times, government officials managed them solely, and it was considered undesirable for local communities to be involved in their management (Arouna 2006). This created tense relationships between the forest department and local communities who never accepted the way these protected areas were created and managed by the state. The local communities perceived that their lands and resources had been expropriated by the state and used any occasion to exploit these resources for their livelihood. At the same time, the forest department considered the local communities as a threat to the natural resources and put its efforts into keeping them as far as possible from the protected areas. The relationship between local communities and the forest department was characterized by conflicts

that persisted for more than three decades, since the protected areas were created between 1940 and 1960 and lasted until participation was introduced in 1993.

The aim of the forest department was to foster sustainable management of forest resources under their care, but they had insufficient personnel to do so on their own. By introducing a participatory process, they intended to enlist the assistance of local communities in this endeavour (MDR and PGFTR 1999; PGRN 1999; Siebert and Elwert 2004). The first challenge for the forest department at the beginning of the process was to reverse the negative images that they and the local communities had constructed of each other over time. In the participatory management processes implemented, the forest department, in conjunction with the representatives of the local communities, undertook to reconstruct each other's social identity through several actions and interventions during the establishment and implementation of the participatory management plans for the protected areas.

5.6.1 The establishment of the participatory management plans for the protected areas

Participatory management of the protected areas in Benin started with the establishment of their respective participatory management plans. In the three cases studied, establishment of the plan involved the forest department and the local communities. However, the process was facilitated by an NGO in the case of the OSN forests. The establishment of the plan began with several meetings involving both forest department representatives and local communities. They were organized to assess the problems of the protected areas and those of the local communities and raise awareness among the stakeholders about these issues. The way the resources of these areas should be managed and the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders were also decided and inscribed in the participatory management plan. These meetings were also meant to enable the local communities to become familiar with the forest department representatives in order to extinguish the fear of the forest rangers experienced by the local communities over the past decades of coercive management. The forest department also undertook to improve the livelihood of local communities by building socio-communitarian infrastructures and initiating and financing income-generating activities in the villages surrounding the protected areas. Local communities were also involved in the management of the protected areas through VAFM. In the case of the Agoua and OSN forests' participatory

management, local communities had been assigned the task of carrying out reforestation activities and forest surveillance assisted by forest rangers (FRs). In the case of the PNP, the guards were recruited as staff of the park direction. The former forest rangers were progressively replaced by eco-guards recruited in the villages surrounding the park to carry out surveillance. The director of the park explained the recruitment of the local communities as personnel of the park direction, arguing:

> *...continuing to send the FRs, with whom the local communities had had a lot of trouble in the past even with gunshots, would mean that the park direction still wanted to pacify the region instead of collaborating with the local communities.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

By changing the local communities' negative frames about forest department representatives, constructed from the time the protected areas were created until participation was introduced in 1993, the forest department hoped to enable better collaboration with these local communities. This intention of the forest department was highlighted in the utterances of its representatives interviewed in the three cases. The head of the forest department in the Borgou region said in this respect:

> *Contrary to the past, the forest department invited local communities to define what to do and work together. From the beginning, we have noticed local communities' interest in the participatory management of the OSN forests as they could approach the FRs without fear. It was clear that the forest department was a little bit frustrated as we had managed these forests alone for decades and we were powerful and feared. However, immediately this fear of local communities was reduced with the introduction of participatory management.*
>
> Source: Head of Borgou's forest department office, February 2009

These statements show that the main concern of the forest department at the beginning of the participatory process was to alter the categorization established during the coercive management period between the forest department representatives and the local communities. These statements also show that, according to the forest department, the actions that it undertook during the participatory management process to reverse this tendency yielded encouraging results as the local communities' fear of the FRs decreased.

The local communities also expressed their enthusiasm vis-à-vis these actions by the forest department, as illustrated in their statements below. The local communities in the Agoua forest restoration case praised the PAMF project in this respect:

> *At the start, we were happy with the PAMF as it built infrastructures in our villages and enabled many villagers to earn money by working with the restoration and hunting committees. We thanked the government for choosing our region for the implementation of this project.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bantè's farmers, March 2007

The local communities involved in the management of the OSN forests also expressed their positive view of the forest department through their appreciation of the actions of the NRM project. Their representatives acknowledged it, arguing:

> *During the management of the forest by the NRM project, villagers were very enthusiastic as they were very often invited to meetings. Each month there were meetings to which we were invited together with the FRs and then we knew what was going on in the management of the forests.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bétérou VAFM board members, January 2009

The interview excerpts above show that, although the forest department and local communities had considered each other as enemies for decades, they apparently managed to build positive frames of each other during the earlier phase of the participatory process. These utterances in particular highlight the fact that the change in these stakeholders' framing of each other was due to interactions at meetings, awareness raising campaigns, training, promotion of income-generating activities involving both stakeholder categories organized in the framework of the participatory management of the protected areas, and some concessions made to the local communities in terms of access to, and use of, some resources in the protected areas. A close look at these statements reveals that all these activities provided local communities with new roles, responsibilities, and resources that had been exclusively held and controlled by the forest department in the past. The forest department in all these cases presented itself as close to the local communities in contrast to the past when its representatives were feared by them.

The establishment phase of the participatory management plan shows the negotiation models adopted by the forest department. In each of these cases, the forest department opted for the creation of a superordinate identity involving the representatives of the forest department and local communities in the sustainable management of the protected areas, within which the participatory management plan represented the institutional framework. However, in the case of the Agoua and OSN forests, the identities of both stakeholders were acknowledged and the roles and responsibilities were shared on the basis of these in the participatory management plan, whereas, in the case of the PNP, the identities of the eco-guards and of the park direction were downplayed as the eco-guards were considered members of the staff of the park direction. Thus, the forest department opted for the dual-identity model in the cases of the Agoua and OSN forests and the recategorization model in the case of the PNP.

In all three cases, the establishment of the participatory management plans for the protected areas was followed by their implementation.

5.6.2 The implementation of the participatory management plan and the emergence of conflicts

The implementation of the participatory management plan consists of the management of the protected areas according to the rules established in the plan. In contrast to the establishment phase of the plan where the forest department and local communities built new relationships that brought them closer together, the implementation phase was characterized in the three cases studied by conflicts between these stakeholders. Although these conflicts arose in different contexts and were triggered by different reasons, they had several features in common.

The Agoua forest case

Although the forest department managed the protected areas coercively for decades until participation was introduced, local communities settled in the Agoua forest where they created villages and farms. The participatory management plan for Agoua forest thus divided the forest into four zones: the service zones for roads to access the villages in the forest, the agro-forestry zones dedicated to farming, and the protection and production zones - where no farmer was allowed to settle - dedicated to reforestation (PAMF 2006). It was also decided in the plan that all the farmers scattered throughout the forest

should move to the agro-forestry zone. The managers of the PAMF project and local communities' representatives agreed on the plan at the beginning of the project (Idrissou et al. 2011). However, when the implementation phase was announced by the project in 2006, the local communities opposed it. The implementation of the plan presupposed that farmers who had their farms in the production and protection zones should abandon them and move to agro-forestry zones where they would be given some lands for which they would pay annual fees, as also the farmers who already had their farms in these zones for forest land occupation.

Immediately the decision to implement the participatory management plan was announced by the project, the local communities expressed their objection to it. A farmer said in this regard:

> *When PAMF started, its staff members organized meetings in our villages. At these meetings, they said the project would be implemented in our region. We asked them what they really wanted to do and they replied that they were coming to restore the protected forests of our region. We then asked them whether or not we would be chased away later. They told us that they would not chase us away; rather that they were coming to work together with us. That was what we agreed upon together.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

Another farmer said:

> *When the project came first, they did not tell us what they are doing now, namely, chasing people away from the forest. They said that they would give farmers some tree seedlings to replace the trees farmers had destroyed on their farms. We would grow our crops while simultaneously planting forestry trees. When these forestry trees were big enough, we would leave these sites. Suddenly, they asked some people to destroy our plantations and crops.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, August 2008

These interview excerpts reveal that, according to the farmers, they did not react against the PAMF project as at the beginning of the project no threat to their farming activity was apparent in the discourses of the project representatives. So, the farmers constructed positive frames about the project because it was presented to them as only beneficial; this explains their interest in the proj-

ect at that time. After the announcement of the implementation of the plan, these frames about the project changed and the locals started blaming the project, as in the following statements by some farmers:

> *We were living here in peace and working on our farms when PAMF came and created the conflict. If somebody has his possessions and another wants to extort him, it means creating a conflict.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, November 2007

Another farmer added:

> *We don't agree with the way PAMF manages our forests because they want us to leave our farms.*
>
> Source: Farmer informant, November 2007

These excerpts show that the farmers considered the implementation of the participatory management plan - which implied that some of them would lose their farms - as a way of expropriating their farms. They saw this decision as a threat to their identity as farmers, and this affected their frames about the project. Here, the identity of the farmers is associated with their activities or source of livelihood. These frames became negative in contrast to the positive frames they had held about the project during the establishment of the plan. The PAMF representatives confirmed this feeling experienced by the farmers and explained it as in the following testimonies:

> *For them [the farmers] the project will just establish the Zoning Plan and stop by the end of the last year (2006) as it is a five-year project. So then, they will go back to their initial places in the forest. It was clear in their mind that 'we will help them make it and the project will finish before they implement it. They will leave and we will go back again to our places.' The forest will become what it was before the project. When they realized at the end of 2006 that the project started again with the implementation of the participatory management plan, they said 'we will never leave.'*
>
> Source: Bantè's PAMF office head, September 2008

And another PAMF staff member continued:

> *After the zoning of the forest, everybody agreed that it was not acceptable for farmers to be scattered everywhere in the forest. So, they had to*

> *be concentrated in the agro-forestry zones. However, at that time we did not know who had to leave the forest and who could stay. When the details of the Zoning Plan were demonstrated in the field, those who found their lands in production and protection zones of the forest, and who had to be displaced, started to complain that they didn't agree with the zoning, nor would they leave.*
>
> Source: PAMF staff member in Bantè, September 2008

The PAMF staff members in these testimonies corroborated the idea that the local communities accepted the project at the beginning of the implementation of the plan without resistance because they did not feel their identity directly threatened by the project. Their frame shift was triggered by the imminence of the threat to their source of livelihood.

The OSN forests case

The implementation of the participatory management plan in the OSN forests started without trouble, in contrast to the Agoua forest case. Indeed, this phase was not that different from the establishment phase because all the actors involved in the former phase remained, and the activities undertaken during the previous phase continued. One difference between the two phases was that the implementation phase started without any project to support it as the end of the NRM project coincided with the end of the establishment phase in 1999. Notwithstanding this difference, the implementation phase started quite well, as articulated by the local communities' representatives in the following utterances:

> *At the beginning of the participatory management plan implementation, everything went alright. At that time, when the FRs wanted to go anywhere in the forest, we went together. They never entered the forest without some member of the VAFM board. When they caught illegal users in the forest, before deciding anything they called us. When they fined them, before going to make the payment in the state's bank account, we used to collect what belonged to VAFM. They even gave us their permission to enter and carry out surveillances in the forests when they were away. If we caught illegal users, they only asked us to wait for them before deciding on the measures to be taken.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bétérou VAFM board members, January 2009

The facilitator from the NGO involved in the establishment of the participatory management plan confirmed this view and said:

> *The early period of the participatory management plan's implementation was great. We worked with both FRs and VAFM without any problem. It was because all those present at that point in time were trained together by the NRM project. We had worked together with them during the NRM project period.*
>
> Source: APIC facilitator at Bétérou village, February 2009

These statements show that, initially, the implementation phase proceeded without any complaint from the stakeholders. Both the FRs and VAFM members pointed out that they had known each other during the first phase and carried out the activities in the participatory management plan together, and that this was the source of the relative success. However, a few years later, new FRs were appointed in the villages surrounding the OSN forests. In fact, the forest department developed the rotation system to avoid letting FRs spend a long time in any one place because they might develop corrupt and collusive behaviour.

Conflict about the implementation of the participatory management plan for the OSN forests started when the new FRs arrived. The new FRs and the local communities disagreed on roles and responsibility sharing in carrying out the different activities and started accusing each other of misconduct. For the local communities:

> *The new FRs, when they came, had chosen to work with villagers who were not members of the VAFM board. Even when we complained to the higher level of the forest department hierarchy they said nothing. What could we do? As they are the FRs so they can manage the forests alone. When everything finishes in the forests, we will all stay quiet.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bétérou VAFM board members, January 2009

They also argued:

> *The FRs started considering us like their trackers or their workmen, and I told them that we are not like that. I told them that we are members of an organization with which they should work as partners. We then decided if it is like that they should manage the forest alone and we will just watch them.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Bétérou VAFM board members, January 2009

In these interview excerpts, the representatives of the local communities expressed their opposition to the new FRs who wanted to change their status

co-constructed with the former FRs. Instead of considering them as partners like the former FRs, the new FRs wanted the VAFM members to serve them. The VAFM members in fact opposed changing their identity co-constructed with the former FRs during the establishment phase and which conferred on them some roles and responsibilities; but the FRs rangers believed that the conflict was caused by their behaviour in stopping the VAFM members from exceeding their remit. The following statement by an FR confirms this feeling of the new FRs:

> *The VAFM members who should work with the FRs transformed themselves into FRs. In the villages you could notice VAFM members were called 'Bâ-Forêt' [FR in local language]. When a logger came into the village, he was directly sent to the VAFM members who authorized him to log trees in the forests without referring to us. They even carry out surveillances and receive taxes from illegal loggers and herders without informing us, but this does not come within their remit.*
>
> Source: Head of N'Dali Municipality forest department office, February 2009

According to the FRs in this statement, the VAFM members embodied the FRs' identity, which allowed them to take some actions that they should not. So, they tried to stop them but the VAFM members considered this unacceptable.

The statements above show that both the FRs and the VAFM members were fighting for their new identity. The VAFM members believed that the new FRs did not want to honour their identity built with the former FRs, which conferred on them some roles and responsibilities. The new FRs as well were struggling for their identity, which they also considered threatened by the VAFM members who were using it. In this case, the identities of the stakeholders were more characterized by their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the plan. The conflict emerged because each stakeholder felt his new identity threatened by the other.

The PNP case

The implementation of the PNP participatory management plan started with much enthusiasm on the stakeholders' part, like in the OSN case. Both the park direction and the local communities were satisfied because they acknowledged that they were all gaining from the process. The director of the park stated in this respect:

> *I can say that, for at least five years, we saw the impacts of the involvement of local communities because of the positive improvement*

> *in wildlife, which was perceptible. At the same time, we noticed an improvement in our relationship with them.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

This feeling of the park director was confirmed by the local communities, as in this testimony by one of them during a focus group discussion:

> *When we poach and kill an animal, we use only some of the meat and leave the rest in the park. This is not significant compared to what we receive from the park direction for working with it. We build schools, health centres, pay teachers and nurses with this money, which is good for us and for our children. Also nowadays it is more and more difficult to hunt without anybody else in the village noticing and telling the VAFM members or the park direction.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with local communities, November 2009

These interview excerpts show that the local communities considered that working with the park direction was better than continuing poaching. The park direction noticed this change in local communities' behaviour through their collaboration in fighting against poaching and the results obtained.

However, the park director's statement also points to the fact that this situation lasted for only five years. Indeed, after five years, the park direction noticed an increase in poaching in the park and accused the eco-guards of being responsible for it. The park director posited it in the following statement:

> *The eco-guards started behaving like in the public sector. You may know what is happening there. It is that once you become an agent of the public sector, your job is secure for 30 years. Whether you work or not, you will get your salary at the end of each month until you retire and start getting your retirement allowances.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

He explained this behaviour by the eco-guards, saying:

> *In the management of the park, we made a mistake in putting in place a remuneration system that is not linked to results; an automatic remuneration like in the public sector.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

The park director continued, arguing:

> *Because they thought they acquired a permanent job situation, they wanted to gain more by any means and even by using their position as eco-guards, someone who should protect the park, to be in cahoots with the poachers.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

These statements show that, for the park direction, poaching started to increase in the park because the eco-guards became aware that their status had changed as their job was secure. So, they did not need to work to get their salary paid and even conspired with the poachers, according to the park direction. The park direction believed that it was the development of this new identity by the eco-guards that explained their strange behaviour. He was supported by the park direction's technical advisor, who argued that:

> *The eco-guards developed a 'spoiled child' complex. As they had often succeeded in the past in getting some benefits through claiming and disobedience, finally it became a habit for them. They were asking for more and more benefits, threatening to stop working if they did not get satisfaction. As there were no more benefits to give them, they started working less and less. In my view, this could lead to the disappearance of the eco-guards' corps.*
>
> Source: PNP technical advisor, February 2010

This testimony of the technical advisor reveals that the park direction considered that the eco-guards were exaggerating their claims due to their status and started thinking about measures to be taken against them.

Although the eco-guards acknowledged the increase in poaching in the park due to the decrease in their motivation over time, to explain their behaviour they evoked the particularity of their job compared to how they were treated by the park direction. They expressed it in the following interview excerpts:

> *We have been doing this job for almost 10 years. Nobody could be active in this job after 10 years like he was at the beginning. In a few years, we will become unable to perform this job. Some young eco-guards should be recruited to refresh the corps.*
>
> Source: Eco-guard informant, December 2009

Another eco-guard added:

> *The important problem is our career, which is wrongly managed by the park direction. As our job is physically demanding, we should be strongly motivated to maintain our performance but the park direction did not do so. From the time we started, we got an annual salary raise until 2006. But since then, we have been getting the same salary. We did not get any promotion and in five years some of us will not be able to go on surveillance because they will become useless...it seems like we are like bananas that the park direction will eat the flesh and then throw away the peels later.*
>
> Source: Eco-guard informant, January 2010

These interview excerpts show that the eco-guards explained their behaviour as a response to the way the park direction considered and treated their corps of eco-guards. According to them, they were treated without considering the difficult aspect of their job and its consequences on their life. They felt their future in danger and preferred to take action as soon as possible. The eco-guards considered that their rights and the promises made to their corps had not been honoured by the park direction.

The conflict in the management of the PNP was born from the mutual accusations of the park direction and the eco-guards about the root cause of the increase in poaching in the park. The park direction considered that the eco-guards had lost their motivation because they had become overconfident as their job was secure, whereas the eco-guards explained their loss of motivation as a result of the park direction not fulfilling its obligations towards them. The park direction pointed to the eco-guards' identity shift as the explanation for their behaviour, whereas the eco-guards considered their behaviour as a response to the threat to their eco-guard identity.

The cases studied proved that several features contributed to the salience of social identities and highlighted some of them. Each of the cases informed us about a feature of social identity that may have led to conflict when threatened in a multi-stakeholder collaboration such as the participatory management of natural resources. In the Agoua forest conflict, the social identity feature that was made salient was the source of livelihood. Thus, people who shared the same source of livelihood considered themselves as having the same social identity when this source of livelihood was threatened. A similar situation was revealed in the case of the conflict in the management of the OSN forests

where people sharing the same roles and responsibilities claimed a similar social identity and reacted when it was threatened by those they considered as outsiders - the new FRs. In the case of the conflict in the PNP management, social identity was made salient through the eco-guards claiming rights and promises when they felt these rights and promises threatened by the park direction. In all three cases, the conflict was an identity conflict as groups polarized because their identities were threatened.

In the three cases, the forest department representatives took some measures to manage the situation. However, in all three, these measures led to escalation of the conflict.

5.6.3 Conflict management and escalation

The conflicts in the three cases studied evolved differently. In each case, the parties involved undertook some actions to cope with the situation. Different strategies were used by the parties according to the nature of the conflict they were facing. However, in all three cases, despite the management strategies deployed by the officials to resolve the conflicts, they escalated.

The Agoua forest case
The conflict became open in the case of the restoration of the Agoua forest when the farmers violently expressed their opposition to the decision of the PAMF project to implement the zoning plan at a meeting held by the forest department representatives, the PAMF staff members, the municipality staff members, and the local communities in Bantè municipality where the conflict was unfolding. At the meeting, the local communities contested their involvement in the formulation of the zoning plan. They also denied the existence of enough land in the agro-forestry zones for the farmers who had to abandon their farms in the protection and production zones. For them, the lands designated by the forest department already belonged to farmers who would not agree to others settling there.

Because they did not get satisfaction and the project destroyed a cashew plantation, the farmers wrote a letter to the president requesting his personal involvement in the management of the conflict and also organized a march, broadcast on national television, to publicize their protest against the project's decision. They informed the president that the PAMF project was hindering their effort to contribute to increasing agricultural production. These actions

were meant to create a group effect amongst farmers and also to get support from others such as the president and national opinion. These actions paid off, as both farmers who were affected and others who were not directly affected by the conflict participated in the march, and the president reacted by sending the minister of the environment and nature conservation, and later an inter-ministerial commission, to solve the problem. These actions put the PAMF under pressure because it was warned by the president to solve the problem as fast as possible and also because the project was coming to an end. Thus, the forest department organized a meeting to resolve the conflict. The main outcomes of the meeting were that the farmers were allowed to harvest cashew plantations that were more than five years old for eight more years, after which they would be destroyed; the annual fees for forest land occupation were reduced; and a promise was made to the farmers to ask the government to compensate the departing farmers.

However, these decisions escalated the conflict. Although the meeting ended with a report, which was signed by all the participants including the farmers' representatives, the farmers decided henceforth not to abandon their farms in the forest under any conditions. After the meeting, the farmers' representatives argued in this respect with the researcher:

Researcher: What do you think about the outcomes of the meeting?

Farmers' representative 1: All the solutions adopted there where proposed by them. They did not accept any of our propositions. We asked them to compensate us and they said that they could not ask the president to give us compensation as many other villages are in the same situation. If they compensate us, they will have to do the same for these other villages. We told them that we were not asking for compensation for the land we are leaving but for our plantations, as we would need a lot of funding to start other ones. Many of us are old and weak and do not have the strength necessary to create a new plantation without funding.

Researcher: But why did you sign the report of the meeting?

Farmers' representative 1: We just accepted keeping in mind that we will not leave unless the state pays us every year what we get from our cashew plantations. We know that it cannot do that, so we are sure that we will never leave. Even when we told this to the farmers, most

of them answered that they don't want any kind of compensation but only to let them continue harvesting their cashew plantations.

Farmers' representative 2: First of all, they invited us to a city far from the place where the problem is taking place, and at the end of the meeting they threatened us by saying that those parties who will not respect the agreements will be taken to court.

Source: Interview with farmers' representatives, November 2007

This interview excerpt displays that, whereas the project managers believed that the conflict was resolved as the farmers' representatives signed the final report of the meeting, the farmers did not agree with the project. By saying '*... they [the farmers] don't want any kind of compensation but only to let them continue harvesting their cashew plantations,*' the farmers meant that they were not ready to accept any compromise if it meant that they had to leave their farms.

The reactions of the farmers' representatives and their peers show that they considered the solutions adopted by the meeting as threatening their identity. Talking constantly in terms of 'we' versus 'they', shows that identities have been shifted again to the initial stage. The farmers' representatives expressed their feeling that the decisions were made at the meeting by threatening them. Their peers considered that these decisions of the PAMF were still threatening their livelihood.

Thus, instead of resolving the conflict, the outcomes of the meeting escalated the conflict as it pushed the farmers to reject any compensation that would be given to them to leave their farms. The project ended in an impasse, as the plan was not implemented by the time the project ended in June 2008.

The OSN forests case

In the case of the conflict in the implementation of the OSN participatory management plan, no measure was immediately taken by the forest department in this regard although the VAFM board members complained about not being involved in the implementation of the activities foreseen in the plan. Thus, the activities were carried out by each of the parties separately at the expense of the forest users such as loggers and herders who grazed their cattle in these forests. Indeed, these stakeholders complained that they were often obliged to pay many times the taxes for any activity they carried out in the forests to either the FRs or the VAFM board members, or even both, and sometimes to other villagers who presented themselves as members of the VAFM board or sent by the FRs.

The management of the conflict started only after the FALM programme was launched in 2003 to support the implementation of the plan. The first measure undertaken by this programme to resolve the conflict was to take unilaterally the decision to stop logging in the OSN forests, the main activity in the implementation of the participatory management plan, because it was not being carried out as it should be according to its managers. This measure was justified by the head of Borgou forest department who said:

> *Unfortunately, the money collected by the members of the VAFM boards is misappropriated. An audit of the management of the OSN's VAFM from the introduction of co-management until now showed that up to 80% of the money collected has been misappropriated and the board members are not bothered. They know their job perfectly, but it is a lack of patriotism that has led to bad management of the resources.*
>
> Source: Head of Borgou's forest department office, February 2009

He meant by this statement that the forest department stopped logging because the VAFM were misusing the money they collected in organizing it. However, instead of solving the problem, this measure escalated the conflict. As far as the local communities were concerned, the forest department took this measure to be able to organize logging alone as, although this measure was enacted, the FRs continued to send their sawyers into the forests to log, as in the following utterance:

> *In the past, the loggers were allowed to get a licence and log only with hand saws and not the motor chain-saws. During this period, when the licensed loggers were in the forest and heard the motor chain-saw sound, they informed us because they knew that motor chain-sawyers were illegal. We informed the FRs and they were caught. So the legal loggers helped us arrest the illegal loggers because they were jealous. Suddenly in 2005, logging was forbidden by the forest department even for those who had a licence. They did it to be free to send their own sawyers into the forest; since then, illegal logging has increased anarchically.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with VAFM board members of Beterou, January 2009

The VAFM members also interpreted this measure as a way of pushing them out of the process, as in this statement:

> *It seems like the forest department proclaimed publicly that local communities are managing the forests through the VAFM, while FRs are illegally exploiting forest resources. Then, they would be able to say later that it is local communities who are responsible of the degradation of the forests and conclude that the sustainable management of the forests using a participatory approach failed.*
>
> Source: Focus group discussion with Beterou VAFM board members, January 2009

This testimony of the VAFM members shows that, as far as they were concerned, the intention of the new FRs in marginalizing them in the process, and of the forest department in stopping logging, was part of a hidden agenda of the forest department that was trying to stop the participatory process itself and accused them of being responsible. For the VAFM members, it was a plot against them prepared by the forest department. So, instead of rebuilding between the new FRs and the VAFM members the cohesive relationship that had existed between the former FRs and VAFM members, the FALM programme escalated the conflict that brought them into opposition through its corrective measure, as the VAFM members considered it as a threat to their identity in the participatory process as a whole. This measure created more distance between the two parties who continued working separately and often undermined each other's actions.

The PNP case

To manage conflict in the PNP, the park direction decided in August 2009, instead of negotiating with the eco-guards to look for ways of improving their performance, to negotiate with the poachers and involve them in the surveillance of the park. The poachers were henceforth called local professional hunters (LPH) (*Chasseurs Professionels Locaux*) by the park direction, and they were told to form their own organization. Since then, they have been going on surveillance in the same teams as the eco-guards. The park direction justified its decision in the following statement by the park director:

> *We encourage the combination of actors for the surveillances to avoid collusion and corruption. Because when you alone hold the power like it was with the eco-guards in the past, collusions start. But now that the LPHs - with whom the eco-guards used to collude - are also involved in the surveillances, it complicates things for the eco-guards. We are even getting some good results. The LPHs started reporting the eco-guards' behaviours to us. They told us that sometimes the eco-guards don't want to go far into the park for surveillance. The LPHs want to show that they are trustworthy.*
>
> Source: Director of PNP, January 2010

This piece of talk shows that the park direction distrusted the eco-guards and included the LPHs to counterbalance the impact of the eco-guards on park surveillance. For the park direction, the presence of the LPHs in the surveillance teams was a guarantee that the behaviour of the eco-guards would change. However, the eco-guards complained about this decision, claiming that they did not trust the reconverted poachers and even feared them. They expressed it in the following statements:

> *Nothing proves to us that the LPHs are fully converted. Giving them guns and allowing them to go on surveillance is a danger as there is nothing to say that they won't start their former behaviour again once they know all our surveillance strategies.*
>
> Source: Eco-guard informant, January 2010

And another eco-guard added:

> *The park direction is asking us to go on surveillance with the LPHs who we had tracked for many years. We found it difficult to work with our enemies as it is an opportunity that the park direction is giving them to pay back what we did to them.*
>
> Source: Eco-guard informant, January 2010

The eco-guards in the statements above rather considered the involvement of the LPHs as a threat to them because they were sceptical about the hunters' change of heart and also because of their former relationship with them. The decision of the park direction also increased the eco-guards' distrust of the park direction about its willingness to improve their working conditions. An eco-guard stated in that sense:

> *The eco-guards are frustrated as the park direction still owes them four years of bonuses, saying that there are not enough resources. But where do the resources that are used to pay the LPHs come from?*
>
> Source: Eco-guard informant, December 2009

These statements show that the eco-guards considered their identity threatened by the decision of the park direction to involve the poachers in the management of the PNP. Even though the LPHs were also part of the local communities, the eco-guards did not agree with their involvement in the surveillance of the park as they saw their inclusion as a way of reducing their importance in the process and as reflecting the unwillingness of the park direction to meet

their needs. Thus, this decision by the park direction escalated the conflict as the eco-guards perceived it as a threat to their identity, and their distrust of the park direction increased. As in the OSN forests case, the park direction in this case took the decision to involve the LPHs without involving the eco-guards in its decision-making process. This decision was taken by the park direction because it believed that it was the best way to counterbalance the influence of the eco-guards and fight against poaching.

The outbreak of conflict in the management of the protected areas triggered each party's reaction. In the three cases, the conflicts escalated because the features that made salient the social identities of the parties were not addressed properly in the decisions made to resolve the conflicts. Rather, the actions undertaken to manage the conflicts escalated the conflicts as they were perceived as threatening the identities of the local communities in the different cases.

5.7 Discussion and conclusions

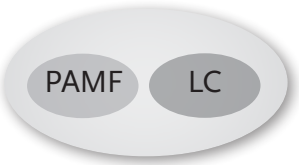
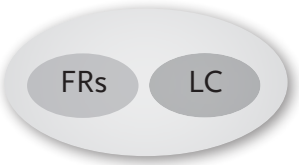
Participatory management of natural resources often involves different stakeholder groups with different social identities (Haslam 2001). As the mere social categorization of stakeholders is an inevitable source of conflict, several strategies are used to deal with differences in social identity in negotiation (Haslam 2001; Tajfel et al. 1971; Tzeng and Jackson 1994). We revealed in this study that different negotiation models were adopted in the participatory management of the protected areas in Benin. The models adopted by the PAMF and the NRM project, respectively in the Agoua forest case and the OSN forests case, were close to the dual-identity model, whereas in the PNP case the model adopted by the park direction was close to the recategorization model. However, neither the recategorization nor the dual-identity model proposed for intergroup negotiation represents a panacea to deal with identity conflicts. The adoption of both models in different intergroup negotiation processes did not prevent conflicts from emerging in the management of these protected areas in Benin. In both models, conflict emerged because the different identities of the subgroups of stakeholders involved became more salient than the superordinate identity supposed to encompass all the members of the subgroups, which was downplayed. The salience of the subgroups' identities was triggered by contextual factors that were framed as threats by the members of these subgroups (Dalton and Chrobot-Mason 2007; Fischer et al. 2010; Haslam 2001; Korostelina 2007). The decision of the PAMF to implement the participatory management plan was framed by the farmers in the Agoua forest as a threat to

their livelihood and triggered the salience of their identity. The VAFM members in the OSN forests interpreted the behaviour of the new FRs when they arrived as a threat to the roles and responsibilities that they had co-constructed with the former FRs, and their identity became salient. In the case of the PNP, the identity of the eco-guards became salient when they framed the behaviour of the park direction as a threat to their rights and promises to them because the park direction was not honouring these.

The study also shows that new identity creation is a potential source of identity conflict as it offers room for new categorizations and claims. In the OSN and PNP cases, new identities were created - VAFM members in the case of the OSN and eco-guards and LPHs in the case of the PNP. Conflicts emerged in these cases as these new identities became salient when their members felt that their identities were threatened - their roles and responsibilities in the case of the VAFM members, and their rights and promises in the case of the eco-guards.

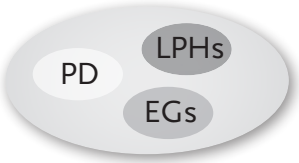
When the identity of a stakeholder group becomes salient, it affects the behaviour of its members and leads to conflict (Haslam 2001; Hogg and Reid 2006; Korostelina 2007; Stets and Burke 2000). The stakeholders undertake collective actions to react against the threat to their identity. These actions result in the strengthening of the cohesion among the group members, coalitions building, and fighting against the threat. The farmers in the Agoua forest management case organized a march and wrote to the president; the VAFM board members decided to withdraw from the process and continued carrying out activities on their own; and the eco-guards became demotivated, and this significantly reduced their spirit in carrying out surveillance in the park - an occurrence that was noticeable in the increase in poaching. When conflict emerges, the different stakeholders involved undertake actions to deal with the situation. Nevertheless, conflicts often escalate. We found that the escalation of the identity conflicts in the management of the protected areas in Benin arose as a result of unilateral decision making and the outcomes of it as framed by the stakeholders. Although a participatory approach was ostensibly used in the management of these protected areas, the perception was that a top-down approach had been taken in making the decisions that were supposed to resolve the conflicts. Farmers' representatives complained that none of their propositions was accepted and that they had been forced to accept the propositions made by the project at the meeting to resolve the Agoua forest conflict. The conflict escalated in the OSN forests case when the decision to stop logging was made by the FALM programme and the VAFM members were informed.

Table 5.2: Dynamic of identities and conflict emergence and escalation in the management of protected areas in Benin

Cases	*Before participatory management*	*Beginning of participatory management*
Agoua forest		 Dual-identity model
OSN forests		 Dual-identity model
PNP		 Recategorization model

In the case of the PNP, the conflict escalated when the park direction decided to involve the LPHs and informed the eco-guards. In the three cases, the decisions were framed by the local communities as a threat to their identity and thus they adopted a harsher attitude.

This study shows that the salience of identities is dynamic and relates to the emergence and escalation of conflict in a negotiation process (see Table 2). This dynamic is triggered by the framing of contextual factors that determine its intensity. When stakeholders frame some decisions and actions as threatening their identity, this triggers the salience of their identity and leads to conflict. Thus, dealing with social identity in negotiations is a continuous and permanent process. How the stakeholders frame the decisions and actions in the negotiation process needs to be continuously checked and the negotiation model redesigned accordingly. This means that stakeholders must continuously listen and communicate.

	*Conflict emergence **	*Conflict escalation **
		
		
Dual-identity model		

Acronyms
PAMF: Project of the Management of the Wari-Waro, Monts Kouffè and Agoua Forest Massifs, LC: Local Community; FR: Forest Ranger; PD: Park Direction; EG: Eco-Guard; LPH: Local Professional Hunter.

** The distance between the groups shows the intensity of the conflict*

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6

General Discussion and Conclusion

Latifou Idrissou Aboubacary

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this thesis was to understand why and how conflicts emerge and evolve in negotiation among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of protected areas in Benin. Three cases were studied where participatory protected areas management started with cooperation and ended in conflicts among the stakeholders involved. Frame analysis was used to investigate how stakeholders involved built cooperation at the start of the process and why and how conflicts emerged and evolved.

Building upon the individual case-studies and the comparative analysis conducted in the previous chapter, this chapter starts with an identification of the cross-cutting conclusions and themes about the emergence and escalation of conflict in participatory processes. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the practical implications for participatory and community-based natural resources management. The chapter ends with the overall conclusion of the thesis, including a reflection on the usefulness of a frame analysis for understanding conflict dynamics in participatory processes.

6.2 Discussion of cross-cutting issues and conclusions

When looking at the cases from a somewhat greater distance, several cross-cutting themes can be discerned in relation to the emergence and escalation of conflict in the participatory management of protected areas. They relate to the central role of identity and context, the dynamics of trust and distrust, the relations between formal and informal institutions and the role of text and talk in the emergence of conflict. These themes are discussed below.

6.2.1 The central role of identity and contextual dynamics in the emergence and escalation of conflict

Conflicts over natural resources are inevitable and ubiquitous (Desloges and Gauthier 1997; Buckles 1999; Yasmi 2003; Yasmi et al. 2009; Mola-Yudego and Gritten 2010). According to Glasl (1999) conflict occurs when an actor feels 'impairment' from the behavior of another actor. In many studies, such impairment and associated conflicts are seen to be connected to the natural resource itself. That is, people struggle over and compete for the ownership, access and use of, for example, the forest, the trees, the water, or the land (Ramirez 2001;

Wollenberg et al. 2001; Sneddon et al. 2002; Scholz and Stiften 2005; Fayse 2006; Yasmi 2006; Sauer 2008; Warner 2009). In this line of thought, conflicts in the management of natural resources occur when there are disagreements and disputes regarding the access and management of the natural resources (Mola-Yudego and Gritten 2010). This study shows this is only one side of the story, and that conflicts about natural resource management are not only about bio-physical resources. The case studies in this thesis indicate that symbolic resources, including social status, moral values, trust and other identity-related issues play decisive roles as well (Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006).

As we have seen in this thesis, participatory forest management involves different stakeholder groups who continuously cast and recast their identities in interaction with others through discursive practices (Ford 1999; Musson and Duberley 2007). This is not surprising, as social differentiation to in-groups and out-groups is a universal phenomenon. Individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of group identities and aspire to a positive social identity (Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006). Identity construction is an active and essential process of sense making for our 'selves' (Musson and Duberley 2007). However, the existence of social differentiation leads almost inevitably to conflict and tension (Haslam 2001a).

In interaction, group members may develop conflicting relationships with outgroup members, in order to protect their positively valued social identities (Richter et al. 2005). As demonstrated in chapter 5, the conflicts in the different cases studied have developed in coherence with the co-construction of identities among the stakeholders involved in the participatory management of the protected areas. All the conflicts involved confrontation between the local communities living around the protected areas and the forest department representatives. The cases show that the co-construction and the dynamics of the social identities of these stakeholders reinforced the conflicts in the different cases (see chapter 5).

While perceived non-respect and threat to, and therewith the salience of, an identity played an important role in all conflicts, the cases also indicated that the salience of identities is not fixed and co-evolved with dynamics in the context. At the beginning of the participatory processes in the different cases, the local communities positively framed the forest department representatives and welcomed their initiative, which comprised of an invitation of local communities to become involved in the management of the protected areas. Positive identity and characterization frames about each other were co-constructed

by the different stakeholder categories. The social context created by the forest department in involving the local communities significantly reduced the distance between the two stakeholder groups (local communities and forest department) and minimized the salience of different identities. This enabled cooperation among them at the beginning of the process in the different cases studied. However, progressively the change of the social context triggered the salience of the different groups' identities (both 'we' and 'they') and led to conflict. In the Agoua forest case, the social context changed with the forest departments' decision to implement a plan in which several farmers had to abandon their farms in the forest, which represented their core livelihood. In the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case the social context changed with the arrival of new forest rangers and their denial to acknowledge the informal institutions and co-management responsibilities/authorities articulated by the former forest rangers and the local communities. In the Pendjari National Park (PNP) case, the context changed as the identity frame of eco-guards evolved and they started to think that the park direction was not fulfilling the rights and promises made to them. Their identity as eco-guards became a topic, which resulted in changed behavior vis-à-vis the park administration. These cases show differences in identity are not an issue or positively valued when actors collaborate, but when contexts change and conflicts emerge the salience and perceived non-respect or threat of one's identity often play a contributing role.

In all, the cases demonstrate the interplay between the context and the salience of social identities, and how this is associated with the emergence and escalation of conflict. Social identities have particular content and meanings that are inextricably tied to the intergroup relations in specific contexts (Livingstone and Haslam 2008). The specific social context influences which categories of stakeholder become relevant and form the basis for social identity construction. Social context thus affects the salience or importance of social identities (Jackson 2002; Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006). More specifically, the cases suggest that the emergence and escalation of conflict are related to the contextual expression of in-group bias (defined as the in-group being evaluated relatively more favourably than the out-group) which in turn influences and legitimizes courses of action that further aggravate tension (Jackson 2002). The emergence and escalation of conflict is thus associated with the salience of identities (Stets and Burke 2000; Haslam 2001a; Hogg and Reid 2006; Korostelina 2007).

6.2.2 Trust dynamics and conflict in participation

Given the often troublesome relations between stakeholders in natural resource management, it is not surprising that both scholars and practitioners have become interested in issues of trust. Trust has become an important concept for scholars attempting to better understand the dynamics of cooperation and competition, conflict and conflict resolution, etc. (Eshuis and Van Woerkum 2003; Lewicki and Tomlinson 2003; Kelman 2005; Lewicki 2006; Schumann 2010). According to Lewicki (2006) trust is fundamental in intergroup relations as it is the glue that holds a relationship together. Thus, trust building and enhancing is a central requirement for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships between individuals, groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong (Kelman 2005). When groups trust each other, they can work together and even work through conflict relatively easily whereas when they do not trust each other, conflict arises, becomes destructive, and its resolution is more difficult (Lewicki 2006). In the different cases studied, the first endeavor of the forest department was to build trust with the local communities - an effort which is in fact advocated as a first step in several handbooks on participatory processes (Slocum 2005; Schuman 2006; Kanet et al. 2007; Mysiak 2010). Although it is recognized by many that the development of trust is not an easy process (Kumar and Paddison 2000; Mostert et al. 2007; Swain and Tait 2007; Tait 2011), the participatory forest management initiatives studied all succeeded to improve relationships between the various stakeholders in the early stages of the process. This is in line with Schumann (2010) who argues that the mere organization of intensified interaction between groups can lead to an increase in trust between stakeholder groups involved in a participatory process. The trust built enabled cooperation at the beginning of the participatory management of the protected areas between the forest department representatives and local communities. However, in all three cases distrust among the local communities and the representatives of forest department re-emerged at a later stage, and went along with intensified conflict and counterproductive processes of identity co-construction (see the previous section).

Distrust emerged in the management of the Agoua forest case when the implementation of the participatory management plan was stated by the forest department and triggered the conflict (see chapter 2). The local communities considered that through this decision, the forest department was not following its words of the beginning of the process. Distrust is also associated to the emergence of the conflict in the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case.

The conflict started when the trust built at the beginning of the participatory process vanished with the arrival of the new forest rangers who ignored the informal rules co-constructed which were both the result and the enabling factor of increasing trust. For the local communities, the new forest rangers lacked knowledge on participation and were not even committed to this approach (see chapter 3). The emergence of the hidden conflict in the management of the Pendjari National Park is also associated with the development of distrust between the park administration and the eco-guards. They accused each other of being responsible of the increase of poaching in the park. The eco-guards distrusted the park administration in its willingness to satisfy the (assumed) rights of an eco-guard, whereas the park administration accused the eco-guards of complicity with the poachers (see chapter 4). Since the stakeholders increasingly distrusted each other, subsequent interventions and interactions only led to further escalation.

As is demonstrated in chapter 4 the apparently vulnerability of the trust build in the early stages of the participatory process seems to be associated with the type of trust involved. As shown in chapters 4 improved relations and trust were built essentially through the proposition of rewards and incentives to local communities for their participation to the management of the natural resources. In terms of Lewicki (2006) this means that the forest department in the different cases built calculus-based trust. That is: trust based on the assessment that the overall anticipated benefits to be derived from the relationship outweigh the anticipated costs (Lewicky 2006: 100). However, it is argued by Lewicky (2006) that calculus-based trust is inherently instable, and easily turns into distrust when promises, rewards and expectations are not fulfilled. The case-studies presented in this thesis support that argument.

The promises and expectations of rewards and incentives as perceived in the early stages of the processes enabled cooperation, and reduced the salience of the differential identities of the stakeholders involved in the intergroup relation. However, the trust built at the beginning of the processes vanished progressively when the fulfilment of promises and incentives were seen to be undermined later in the process. Trust is thus a relationship that is not given, but is instead highly dynamic and constantly negotiated over time (Kelman 2005). Chapters 2 and 4 presenting respectively the Agoua Forest Restoration case and the Penjari National Park case also show that trust and distrust are discursively constructed social relations that depend on the fulfilling of the agreements and the norm of reciprocity (see also Lewis 2008). As will be argued in the next section, dynamics of trust, distrust and conflict are also linked with

tensions that emerge between the formal and informal arenas that emerge within the participatory management of the protected areas.

6.2.3 Formal and informal institutions and conflict in participation

The Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, highlighting the ongoing degradation of environmental resources and the need to involve local communication in natural resource management, inspired many governments try more participatory approaches and invite local communities to participate in the elaboration and implementation of natural resource plans. Notwithstanding a great deal of bottom-up participatory rhetoric, our cases from Benin confirm that participatory forest management projects can go along with considerable government control and disciplining of interaction (see also Cook and Kothari 2001). The participatory processes often started with the building of formal institutions in terms of formal projects, plans, rules and procedures that should enable and constrain the relationships and interactions between the stakeholders involved in the management of the resources (Leskinen 2004; Ibarra and Hirakuri 2007). These institutions were typically agreed upon in formal meetings between the stakeholders in the framework of project implementation. However, our cases suggest that initial formal institutions are often re-negotiated and complemented by informal rules as the process enfolds and as personal relationships develop (Schumann 2010). As the cases demonstrate, the mere involvement of actors gives rise to a further articulation and contextualization of process rules to fit the local reality. In interaction, actors progressively reinterpret and operationalize formal institutions into a framework of informal rules and routines, that pay respect to and can work in their (partly tacit) reality. In the cases presented in chapter 3 and 4 face-to-face communication and coconstruction of informal institutions led to social cohesion (Kearns and Forrest 2000). That is: stakeholders developed shared ideas about the value and moral principles of the project, constructed an acceptable social order (e.g. in terms of the distribution of responsibilities and benefits) and built a network and social capital that further nurtured their feeling of territorial belonging and trust. At certain stages of the projects, such social cohesion provided support for the cooperative implementation of the management plans. Thus, while formal institutions provide the initial framework for legitimate action, they become intertwined with informal institutions that become decisive in the achievement of objectives.

Although we have seen that formal and informal institutions are both important and can reinforce each other (Torniainen and Saastamoinen 2007; Woodhill 2008), we have also seen that the intertwining of formal and informal institutions may result in problems and conflict, especially when there is discontinuity and turn-over with regard to participants. This is not surprising as participants tend to go through a social learning process, which is hard to explain or transfer to non-involved actors and newcomers (Loeber 2004). Some issues might be explained but newly arriving participants have to go through an experiential learning period to grasp and master the (partly tacit) articulated informal institutions (Lave and Wenger 1991). The *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) case showed that newly arriving officers had a different interpretation of the concept 'participatory management', and the distribution of responsibilities and benefits amongst the different partners. Although the new forester's interpretations might be in line with the more abstract formal policies, they did not fit the existing informal institutions co-constructed by the local communities and former forest rangers. Even so, the new forest rangers felt that it was legitimate for them to adhere to and impose their own management procedures, rather than to accept and take time to learn about the prevailing informal institutions. In a hard way, local communities learned that existing informal (but very real) locally adapted and highly valued principles and procedures were disregarded, and they subsequently lost trust in the whole exercise. This case shows the importance to recognize the power of informal institutions. When the normative content of newly imposed procedures is at odds with the prevailing informal institutions, conflicts are likely to arise and hamper the achievement of formal plans (Ibarra and Hirakuri 2007; Woodhill 2008).

The above discussion shows the relevance of inter-human processes for the emergence and escalation of conflicts in participatory processes. In particular we mention the role of perceived threats to one's identity and the ignorance of articulated informal rules. Informal institutions are fundamental for the development of social cohesion needed to successfully execute the joint enterprise. Inter-human processes contribute to the success or failure of a participatory management process. As discussed below, actors' utterances reveal these inter-human processes and discursively construct them.

6.2.4 The emergence and escalation of conflict via talk and text: frame construction in interaction

The case-studies presented in this thesis show that conflicts are gradually co-constructed by the stakeholders involved in the process through their everyday conversations in interactions. Conversations range from single speech acts to an extensive network of speech acts which form arguments, narratives and other forms of discourses, and the full conversational apparatus of symbols, artifacts, theatrics etc. that are used in conjunction with (or as substitutes for) what is spoken (Ford 1999). In the cases studied, the conversations consisted of talks and texts that were held and written by the stakeholders in formal and informal settings during the implementation of the participatory process. Conversations, thus are organized as well as organizing systems of meaning, which frame reality and influence the way people understand and act upon it (Tietze 2005).

At the start of the participatory process in the different cases studied, the stakeholders seemed willing to collaborate and their conversations do not reveal any perceived threat to their identity. The stakeholders constructed positive frames about each other, and the text and talk at that time reflects trust and cohesion. This lasted until the discourses of the representatives of the forest department shifted and triggered the creation of a new reality. In the Agoua forest case, it was the decision of the Management Project for the Wari-Waro, Monts Kouffè and Agoua Forest Massifs (PAMF: *Projet d'Aménagement des Massifs Forestiers d'Agoua, des Monts Kouffè et de Wari-Waro*) to implement the participatory management plan that provoked the shift in conversations and triggered the conflict. The study shows that the stakeholders involved constructed different frames in different interaction contexts. These frames reflect what they perceived was going on, what they thought they were doing, and what they felt was strategically wise from their perspective (e.g. negotiation, cooperation, conflict, etc.) (Agne 2007). Through conversations, a reality of conflict has thus been constructed (Ford 1999; Ford et al. 2002; Tietze 2005). In the *Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali* (OSN) forests case too it became clear that participation of local people in the management of the forests was realized initially by constructing, interpreting, enacting and maintaining social cohesion through discourse. Via conversations formal rules were interpreted, extended and translated into informal rules that formed the glue for trust and cooperation. As these informal rules progressively became more important than the formal rules, conflict arose from the moment these informal rules were ignored by newly arrived forest rangers that replaced the ones who were involved in the process from the beginning. The

Pendjari case has shown that hidden conflicts are the result of actors sharing their feelings of dissatisfaction in conversations with those with whom they already agree and who confirm their existing opinions. In other words, whereas conflict is often supposed to be the result of interactions between opponents, this case makes clear that conflicts often develop in the interactions among actors within 'we' groups. The fact that the conflict was not expressed in interactions among the different stakeholders made it a hidden conflict, which was even more difficult to solve because it amplified serious problems of trust. In all cases we found that the salience of identities were constructed in interactions and triggered by the framing of contextual factors playing an important role in the emergence and escalation of conflict.

The cases show that people actively engage in conversations and in doing so they dynamically (re)shape and develop them with a purpose to justify or legitimate particular actions or outcomes (Kusztal 2002; Tietze 2005). The emergence of conflict is thus not only expressed in the relations between individuals and resources but also in the way stakeholders construct realities in which they operate and that include interpretations of contexts as far as they consider these important (see Ford et al. 2002; Kusztal 2002). Stakeholders thus act and respond within a reality that is constructed in everyday conversation and talk. Within such a setting, emerging shifts in formal and informal conversations reflect the construction of new realities and offer opportunities for new actions and results, leading to either cooperation or conflict (Ford 1999).

It can be concluded that conflict and escalation emerge from the everyday interactions among stakeholders, and become visible in everyday conversation, text and talk. It is through such talking and framing before, after, between and during critical events that actors actively construe and give meaning to the situation, which may or may not lead to the emergence and escalation of conflicts (Schon and Rein 1994; Elliot et al. 2002; Prins 2005; Schweitzer et al. 2005; Dewulf et al. 2009). Therefore conflict and conflict development can be studied by investigating the frames that people co-construct in different interaction settings, including how these change over time.

6.3 Implications for participatory and community-based natural resources management

This section outlines several conceptual and practical implications that emerge from this dissertation.

6.3.1 Limitations to planning: the significance of human relations and inter-human dynamics

Participatory and community-based natural resources management are regarded as processes through which management power is shared with or devolved to local communities living in and or around the natural resource areas (Lesknien 2004). In the operationalization of such processes there tends to be a lot of attention to methods, procedures and planning of separate meetings and activities as well as for organizing the longer term process. Many handbooks, methods and guidelines exist on how to make joint diagnosis, prioritize problems, reach agreement etc. in different participatory settings (e.g. Chambers 1994; Pretty et al. 1995; van Veldhuizen et al. 1997; Leeuwis 2004). In longer term process plans there tends to be considerable attention to the phasing of the trajectory, to defining who to involve and how, and to the roles and responsibilities of all the actors in different stages of the process (Turnhout et al. 2010; Leeuwis 2004). In the sphere of community-based natural resources management initial activities typically result in the elaboration of a 'management plan' that should be 'implemented' and which contains goals and procedures at both material and process level, sometimes with particular emphasis on the management of power relations and accountability among the stakeholders involved (see Ribot 2003; Cornwall 2008; Nikkhah and Redzuan 2009; Dworski-Riggs and Langhout 2010). In sum, most attention is given to the careful and rational planning and control of all activities deemed essential for a participatory trajectory such as learning, negotiation, decision-making, and implementation. In many ways this is understandable in view of the demands that donors pose and the enormous challenges such processes face - indeed it would not be wise to confront complex situations such as those in forest management in Benin without proper preparation. However, this thesis points to the fact that accompanying, less obvious/more tacit inter-human processes and dynamics (e.g. related to identity, relationships and trust) are critically important in the context of community-based forest management. In all three cases conflict escalated because negative inter-human dynamics took the upper hand. Such dynamics appeared to be highly emergent and contextual, and hence are inherently difficult to anticipate and deal with in a pre-planned manner. The cases suggest that the negative inter-human dynamics were only partially recognized by the forest management authorities, who tended to be part and parcel of these tensions rather than being in a position to somehow deal with them from a more distanced and neutral position. In all, it seems important that those involved in facilitating community-based forest management develop better concepts and strategies to 'manage' inter-human process-

es. This is a useful addition and specification to Leeuwis (2000, 2004) plea for developing a better language to deal with conflict in the context of participatory processes, and fits well within the more general realization that we need alternative planning models that are better suited for complex environments and for building on self-organizational dynamics in networks of interaction (Whittington, 2001; Stacey and Griffin, 2005; Stacey, 2001). Some further suggestions on how to enhance the capacity to deal with inter-human dynamics in participatory processes are outlined in the next section.

6.3.2 Embedding monitoring of inter-human dynamics in the facilitation of participatory processes

Dealing effectively with inter-human dynamics and relationships requires first and foremost that participants and project staff have a general awareness that these kinds of issues are important and require actives strategies in the sphere of process facilitation and monitoring.

Strengthening facilitation

The general push for participatory management is driven by considerable optimism about its ability to improve the substantive and procedural quality of the decisions and execution. However, in line with the cases presented in this thesis it has been argued that -in the context of natural resource management- processes and procedures tend to pay limited attention to (a) the fact that natural resources management is rife of conflicts among competing interests, and (b) the synchronization of expertise-based management approach with values, opinions and risk concerns of the public (Beierle and Koninsky 2000; Giller et al. 2008). The proof of the pudding of a well-functioning management system is (a) whether stakeholder values are integrated into the decision making and execution; (b) whether conflicts among interests have been resolved (c) whether actors have trust in the management system (Beierle and Koninsky 2000; chapter 4). As has been suggested in the previous section, such outcomes are not likely to be achieved when participation is approached solely as a process of 'participatory planning and implementation' (see also Leeuwis 2000) as this ignores the significance of inter-human dynamics. In the broader literature of the facilitation of social learning and negotiation there are many useful insights regarding inter-human dynamics that could be taken into account in a more facilitative approach to participatory processes.

Research on group, team and network development, for example, shows that in interactive processes (potential) participants simultaneously explore and try to

solve questions related to substance (what is our overriding purpose and distributions of tasks, etc.), procedures (what style of decision making and conflict management do we want, etc.) and relationships (how is power and influence distributed; how can we collaborate, differ and disagree in a way that maintains respect and dignity of all identities; how to give and receive feedback, etc.) (Halveson 2008). Rather than assuming that stakeholders have clarity about such issues from the outset and/or that procedural matters can be decided beforehand, initiators of participatory processes may usefully support stakeholders (including themselves) to come to terms with such substantive, procedural as well as relational dimensions of the process (Daniels and Walker 2001). Such support may be provided by 'process leaders' (who have relatively strong ideas regarding process matters) or by 'process facilitators' (who tend to give more space to participants). Tuckman (1977) identified four phases or process modes (forming, storming, norming and performing) and related levels of common rules, commitment and trust in the process and co-actors. 'Leaders' tend to guide the groups to mature performance via telling, selling, delegation and participation (Hersey and Blanchard 1972), while 'facilitators' rather enhance participants' open communication, reflection and negotiation of substantive, procedural and relational questions-at-stake (Leeuwis 2004). A facilitated participatory process seems most fruitful, because deliberation and inclusion of participants' values, assumptions and concerns coupled with reciprocity tends to nurture the kind of engagement and trust needed to achieve productive cooperation in the complex setting of natural resource management. In such a process participants may concentrate on the performance of their own and overall tasks and do not monitor each other's activities as they trust others to perform as expected (Pretty 2003). Furthermore, collaborative deliberation puts the norm of open communication. In this way participants gain trust that others care for their identity and concerns, and are willing to reflect upon and satisfactorily solve dilemmas and conflict that emerge in the process.

Embedding monitoring

To further strengthen the facilitation dimension of participatory processes, it is useful to think about an active and effective strategy to actually monitor and discover emergent tensions, unproductive dynamics and disturbed relationships. As demonstrated in this thesis, participatory management processes take place in an ever changing context in which stakeholders develop new insights, strategies and behaviours. This can simultaneously create new dilemma's, threats to identities, unproductive dynamics and/or disturbed relationships that project members need to deal with. It is important that such emergent dynamics are recognized in a timely fashion. However, monitoring

such tensions is far from easy for several reasons: (a) these kinds of problems can be highly invisible for interventionists as they are likely to emerge and happen outside (i.e. in-between) formal meetings, (b) actors may wish to conceal such problems and tensions in view of fear of harm, (c) actors themselves may not even be explicitly aware of collectively repressed or projected emotions and irritations that crop up, or (c) actors have blind spots and blocks as they are controlled by their beliefs, assumptions, values and paradigms (Halverson and Tirmizi 2008).

Actors with considerable reflective capacities and skills may be able to 'see' blockages, express the issues and work towards a solution. However, as the cases in this thesis demonstrate, participating actors may well submerge in personal emotions and strategic behaviour rather than to act for the benefit of the overall group or process. To evade this trap, it may be beneficial to create deliberate monitoring capacity in the form of a relatively independent outsider who is respected and trusted by the stakeholders involved. This may be the appointed facilitator, but in conflictive settings it can be better to have an extra person who is less absorbed and has time to observe from a distance. Such a more neutral, respected 'monitor' could observe meetings, collaboration and have regular informal talks with various types of participants to capture the perspectives that are only displayed in we-groups and more private settings. As this thesis has shown, tensions and conflict are created through, and become visible in, the everyday conversations among stakeholders and within stakeholder groups. This implies that a monitor could usefully document and analyse formal and informal conversations to identify emerging tensions. This does not necessarily require sophisticated forms of framing analysis on the side of the monitor, but may be aided usefully by practical guidelines and a checklist with indicators for identifying relevant process issues (see e.g. Van Mierlo et al. 2010a, 2010b) and emerging conflicts in everyday talk.

Through the use of such a simplified methodology the monitor can get an understanding of relevant process variables such as: participants concerns and feeling of urgency about the issues-at-stake and their satisfaction with the results and ongoing process; the extent to which stakeholders feel dependent on each other in realizing positive outcomes; their commitment to the issue; the level of trust in other parties; the frequency and type of communication and interaction; the level of trust in the process; the mutual willingness to share information and express concerns, and the readiness to reflect on and solve emerging dilemmas and conflicts. The monitoring person acts as a 'responsive evaluator' (Abma and Stake 2001) or 'reflexive monitor' (Van Mierlo et

al. 2010b), who analyses utterances and behaviour to get an idea of the inter-human dynamics and either starts a dialogue or will advise the involved leaders, participants and/or facilitators. Facilitation and mediation may help participants to overcome deadlocks, re-establish trust and commitment. When conflicts have become too personal threatening and intractable, participants will not be able to unlock the situation and an outside leader or manager has to take action so as to save face and restore balance (Behfar et al. 2006).

However, in addition to remedying conflicts, leaders and facilitators could build and cherish trustful relationships with all stakeholders involved. As discussed above, this requires their participation in informal settings, continuous communication with stakeholders and deliberate efforts to not only invite stakeholders to narrate their stories and concerns, but also to listen to them. It is important that these stories and concerns are shared in safe discussion settings with relevant stakeholders. This prevents the construction of multiple and mutually excluding realities as constructed in conversations within 'we' groups. Facilitators and monitors then become boundary spanners of whom the main task is building bridges between the different stakeholders by ensuring that all parties are constantly heard, and organizing continuous interactions between them.

6.4 Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that framing analysis helps to identify inter-human processes and dynamics that are critically important in shaping the course and outcomes of participatory processes. In particular, such analysis has improved our understanding of how and why conflicts emerge and evolve in the context of participatory management of protected areas in Benin. The thesis has shown that conflict emerges contextually when actors experience a threat to existing or newly emerging identities, and that calculus-based trust alone provides an insufficient basis for inducing constructive conflict dynamics. In addition, the thesis indicates that informal rules and agreements among stakeholders are critically important to the emergence of social cohesion. Such social cohesion, in turn, aids considerably in realizing a constructive dynamic among stakeholders. However, when authorities fail to recognize and honour the informal basis of social cohesion, escalation of conflict is likely to occur.

The cases presented in this thesis suggest that conflict and tension are partially created in discourse. In everyday conversation people create realities that

become a source of conflict, even if nothing is happening (yet) 'on the ground' (in the sense that people are physically denied access from a resource or so). And even without having access to financial or other material resources, communities can derive power and influence through the mobilization of particular discourses and the creation of conflict in the right time and place (e.g. during the visit of a presidential delegation to the region in the Agoua case). In essence, we see that conversations are both the source and the carrier of conflict.

In all, this thesis draws attention to less tangible dimensions of natural resource management and resource conflicts. Such conflicts are not only about bio-physical resources such as forest, land and water, but also about human identities, relationships and meanings created through discourse. The importance of these less tangible dimensions is so far insufficiently recognized in both theory and practice of participatory community-based forest management. The cases presented in this thesis suggest that such management efforts tend to be informed by planning models that do not take changes in context, conflict and emergent inter-human dynamics within stakeholder networks seriously enough. As this thesis demonstrates, frame analysis offers interesting possibilities to come to grips with inter-human dimensions of participatory resource management, and hence has considerable scope for enriching our scientific understanding of the more and less productive dynamics within such trajectories. Moreover, such kinds of analysis could - in a simplified form- be useful as part of a monitoring approach within participatory processes.

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Summary

This thesis aims at contributing to a better understanding of the emergence and evolution of conflict in participatory natural resources management in Benin, West Africa.

Chapter one provides the background to the study. It starts with a description of protected areas management in Benin, which forms the context of the case studies on participatory forest management that are presented in this thesis. It sketches the creation of the protected areas between 1940 and 1960, and how these were initially managed by the government by means of force and repression vis-à-vis the local communities, until the idea of participatory management was introduced in the early 1990s. After a seemingly promising start of participatory management efforts, conflicts have re-emerged in many protected areas. This makes it relevant to gain a better understanding of why and how such conflicts emerge. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the conceptual background to participation and conflict in natural resources management, and proposes the use of a framing perspective in order to develop a better understanding of conflict in such settings. The choice of this perspective is justified by the starting point that realities are socially constructed in people's conversations and discourses, in which framing (i.e. the selection of certain aspects of a perceived reality) plays an important role. This holds equally for processes of participation and negotiation in natural resources management. In order to better understand the emergence and evolution of conflict, the central question in a specific case setting then becomes: what frames do stakeholders construct and mobilize in participatory natural resources management, how do these frames change in interaction, and how do they affect the process and outcome of negotiation and conflict management?

The chapter concludes with some notes on the interpretative research methodology used in the study, and on the selection of cases. This approach provides us with a variety of methods for data collection and data analysis, several of which were used in this study.

Chapter two presents a conflict that emerged during the participatory restoration of the Agoua forest. An interactional framing perspective was used to analyze the emergence of the conflict that ended in an impasse. The Agoua forest conflict revealed the role of discourse in the emergence and evolution of conflict in participatory management of protected areas. The participatory management of Agoua forest started without a major clash among the stakeholders

involved. Farmers thanked the Management Project for building infrastructures in their region and even praised the government for choosing to implement the project in their region. However, conflict emerged when the Management Project started talking about implementing a zoning plan that would deprive some farmers of their lands. They framed the decision to implement the plan as a threat, and this triggered a framing shift on their part. Their new frames consisted of blaming, stereotyping and stigmatizing, resulting in divergence and distancing from the project management. These frames were constructed and expressed in we-groups, whereas in we-versus-they interactions the stakeholders used denial and disapproval to attack one another or to start bargaining, depending on their framing of power positions and interdependence. The conflict was thus constructed, interpreted, enacted and maintained in stakeholders' discourses through which they emphasized different realities and developed a different sense of themselves and their world. The conflict was constructed in conversations between the stakeholders both in we-groups and in negotiation with all the stakeholders. Despite the negotiation meetings organized to resolve the conflict, no reframing happened. The conflict resulted in distrust, accusations and even threats, with the project ending in an impasse.

Chapter three examines a conflict in the participatory management of the *Ouémé Supérieur* and *N'Dali* forests. The results of this study show the importance of social cohesion and institutions in such a process. At the beginning of the process, the local communities and the forest rangers had built social cohesion through the development of informal institutions on which interactions and relationships were based. Conflict emerged when the forest rangers in the villages were replaced by new ones who had a different interpretation of participatory management and rejected the informal institutions built by their predecessors. In participatory management, formal institutions are often set up at the beginning of the process that enable and constrain the interactions and relationships among the stakeholders. However, these formal institutions were in this case gradually transformed into informal institutions that became more important than the initial formal rules. The co-construction of informal rules went together with the gradual development of social cohesion among the stakeholders, and this contributed to the implementation of participatory natural resources management. Conflict emerged when an attempt was made to break some of these informal institutions. This study shows that participatory natural resources management is a process of building social cohesion in terms of trust and constructive relationships as this motivates stakeholders to collaborate and to develop informal institutions for effective cooperation and organization.

Chapter four examines the conflict in the participatory management of the Pendjari National Park (PNP) in Benin. The objective of the study was to understand how and why the issue of trust building between the park direction and the local communities gave way to conflict in the participatory management of the PNP, and how it was resolved. The study shows that conflicts over natural resources are not always open confrontations among the stakeholders that attract public attention and that they sometimes require the involvement of third party for their management. Conflicts in this management process were silently embedded in the everyday activities and routine of the work setting. The study shows the importance and role of trust and distrust in such conflicts. We discovered that trust building in this management process started with calculus-based trust, characterized by different parties weighing the costs and benefits associated with their trusting behavior before making their decision. However, the study confirms that calculus-based trust is inherently unstable and vulnerable to erosion in the changing context. As it is instrumental and built with rewards, such trust needs to be constantly sustained through the supply of promises. The interpretations of calculus-based trust by the parties involved in its building evolved over time. Dysfunctional trust developed when one party became overconfident about his position, asking for more rewards and threatening to break the relationship. It is therefore concluded that calculus-based trust needs to be counterbalanced with deterrence-based trust that enables the different parties to set the boundaries of their relationships and the punishments in the event of the trust being broken. Functional distrust is thus needed to monitor calculus-based trust as it motivates actors to put deterrents in place that support calculus-based trust. However, dysfunctional distrust is liable to emerge. The rise of dysfunctional distrust is the manifestation of conflict between parties. When it arises, the parties involved start to develop strategies to protect themselves and reduce their vulnerability, instead of considering the interests of the other parties. In other words, each party in conflict uses dysfunctional distrust as a form of agency to protect themselves and act against the behavioral strategies of the other party.

In chapter five, a cross-study of the three cases is presented. Here the role of identity construction in the emergence and escalation of conflict in the participatory management of the three areas is highlighted. The study revealed that participatory management of natural resources often involved different stakeholder groups with different social identities. The mere social categorization of stakeholders is an inevitable source of conflict. De-categorization, re-categorization and dual-identity models were used to analyze the role of the social identities of the different stakeholders involved in negotiations. The study shows

that conflicts emerged in the three cases studied because the identities of the subgroups became salient due to the stakeholders framing contextual factors as a threat to their identity. The salience of the identity of a stakeholder group affected the behavior of the group members and triggered collective action to react against the threat to their identity. The group members thus strengthened the cohesion among them, built coalitions and struggled against the perceived threat. The analysis shows that identity conflicts often escalate when the stakeholders frame the decisions made to resolve the conflict as unilateral. It is concluded that the salience of social identity is dynamic and relates to the emergence and escalation of conflict in negotiation processes. This dynamic is triggered by the stakeholders' framing of the contextual factors, which affects the intensity of the conflict. When decisions and actions are framed as threatening the identity of the stakeholders, it triggers social identity salience and leads to conflict. It becomes clear that dealing with social identity in negotiation is a continuous and permanent endeavor.

In chapter six the cross-cutting conclusions of the thesis are presented and discussed with regard to their contribution to understanding the emergence and escalation of conflicts in participatory processes. In addition, the chapter discusses practical implications for participatory and community-based natural resources management. The various cases studied show that the idea that conflicts in natural resources management occur when there are disagreements and disputes regarding access to, and management of, the natural reet al.s is only one side of the story. The thesis indicates that conflict about natural resources management are not only about bio-physical resources; symbolic resources, including social status, moral values, trust and other identity-related issues, play decisive roles as well. In this line of thought, the thesis shows that the co-construction and the dynamics of the social identities of the stakeholders involved in natural resources management tended to reinforce conflicts in the different cases. In addition, the thesis demonstrates that trust is an important variable in the participatory management of natural resources. It makes clear that trust is not a static state or a given characteristic of a relationship, but must be regarded as highly dynamic and constantly negotiated over time. In all the cases studied, trust was built at the beginning of the process. However, this trust was calculus-based and thus vanished progressively when the fulfillment of promises and incentives was seen to be undermined later in the process. The thesis also makes clear that formal institutions provide the initial framework for legitimate action and become intertwined with informal institutions that become decisive in the achievement of the objectives of the process. However, although formal and informal institutions are both important and

can reinforce each other, the intertwining of formal and informal institutions may result in problems and conflict, especially when there is discontinuity and turn-over with regard to participants. A final cross-cutting conclusion is that conflicts are gradually co-constructed by stakeholders in discourse. In everyday conversation, people create realities that become a source of conflict.

An important practical implication of the study is that those involved in facilitating community-based forest management should develop better concepts and strategies to 'manage' and facilitate inter-human processes. To strengthen this facilitation dimension of participatory processes, it is useful to think about an active and effective strategy to actually monitor and discover emergent tensions, unproductive dynamics and disturbed relationships by carefully listening to the formal and informal conversations between actors involved, especially those of the different 'we' groups. The thesis ends with the conclusion that framing analysis helps to identify inter-human processes and dynamics that are easily overlooked but are critically important in shaping the course and outcomes of participatory processes.

Samenvatting

De doelstelling van deze thesis is een bijdrage leveren aan een beter begrip van het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van conflict in participatief beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen in Benin, West Afrika.

Hoofdstuk één biedt de achtergrond van het onderzoek. Het begint met een omschrijving van het beheer van beschermde gebieden in Benin, tevens de context van de casusstudies over participatief bosbeheer die worden gepresenteerd in deze thesis. Het schetst de aanwijzing van beschermde gebieden tussen 1940 en 1960 en hoe deze aanvankelijk werden beheerd door de regering middels druk en repressie jegens de lokale gemeenschappen, totdat het idee van participatief beheer werd geïntroduceerd in de vroege jaren '90. Na een ogenschijnlijk veelbelovende start van inspanningen ten bate van participatief beheer zijn in veel beschermde gebieden opnieuw conflicten opgelaaid. Dit maakt het relevant om beter inzicht te verkrijgen in het waarom en hoe van het ontstaan en het verloop van dergelijke conflicten. Vervolgens wordt de conceptuele achtergrond behandeld van participatie en conflict in het beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen en stellen we een framing analyse voor om inzicht te verkrijgen in het ontstaan en het verloop van conflicten in dergelijke situaties. Het startpunt van een framing perspectief is de gedachte dat realiteiten worden geconstrueerd in de gesprekken die mensen met elkaar voeren, waarin framing (d.w.z. de selectie van bepaalde aspecten van een subjectief waargenomen realiteit) een belangrijke rol speelt. Dit geldt ook voor processen van participatie en onderhandeling in het beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen. Om te komen tot een beter begrip van het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van conflict is de volgende de centrale vraagstelling geformuleerd: welke frames worden door belanghebbenden (stakeholders) geconstrueerd en gemobiliseerd in participatief beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen, hoe veranderen deze frames in interactie en hoe beïnvloeden zij het proces en de uitkomst van conflicthantering en onderhandeling?

Het hoofdstuk eindigt met enkele aantekeningen over de in het onderzoek gebruikte interpretatieve onderzoeksmethodiek en over de selectie van casussen. Deze benadering biedt ons een variëteit aan methodieken voor dataverzameling en data-analyse, waarvan meerdere in dit onderzoek zijn gebruikt.

In hoofdstuk twee wordt een conflict gepresenteerd dat ontstond tijdens de participatieve restauratie van het Agoua-bos. Een interactief framing perspectief werd gebruikt om het ontstaan van het conflict, dat eindigde in een impas-

se, te analyseren. Het participatieve beheer van het Agoua-bos begon met een aanzienlijke confrontatie tussen de verschillende belanghebbenden. Boeren dankten het projectmanagement voor de bouw van infrastructuur in hun regio en prezen zelfs de regering voor hun keuze om het project juist in hun regio uit te voeren. Desondanks ontstond er conflict toen het management begon over de implementatie van een zôneplan, waardoor sommige boeren hun land zouden verliezen. De beslissing om het plan te implementeren werd opgevat als een dreiging en dit veroorzaakte een verschuiving van de framing van de boeren. Hun nieuwe frames bestonden uit beschuldiging, stereotypering en stigmatisering wat leidde tot een verwijdering ten opzichte van het projectmanagement. De frames waren geconstrueerd en verwoord in wij-groepen, terwijl in wij-versus-zij-interacties gebruik gemaakt werd van ontkenning en afkeuring om ofwel aan te vallen ofwel een onderhandeling te initiëren, afhankelijk van de wijze waarop machtsposities en wederzijdse afhankelijkheden werden geframed. Het conflict werd geconstrueerd, geïnterpreteerd, uitgevoerd en onderhouden in de discourses van belanghebbenden die verschillende realiteiten benadrukten en een verschillend gevoel ontwikkelden van hun eigen betrokkenheid en van de wereld om hen heen. En zo werd conflict geconstrueerd in gesprekken tussen de belanghebbenden onderling, zowel in wij-groepen alsook in onderhandelingen met alle verdere belanghebbenden. Ondanks de onderhandelingsbijeenkomsten, georganiseerd om het conflict op te lossen, vond geen reframing plaats. In plaats daarvan leidde het conflict tot wantrouwen, beschuldigingen en zelfs dreigingen en mondde het project als geheel uit in een impasse.

In hoofdstuk drie wordt een conflict in het participatief beheer van de Ouémé Supérieur en N'Dali bossen geanalyseerd. De resultaten van dit onderzoek tonen het belang van sociale cohesie en instituties in dergelijk processen. Aan het begin van het proces hadden de lokale gemeenschappen en de boswachters sociale cohesie opgebouwd die gepaard ging met de ontwikkeling van informele instituties die een belangrijke rol speelden in interacties en relaties. Conflict ontstond toen de boswachters in de dorpen vervangen werden door nieuwe boswachters, die een andere interpretatie hadden van participatief beheer en die bovendien de informele instituties die met hun voorgangers waren opgebouwd verwierpen. In participatief beheer worden aan het begin van het proces formele instituties geformuleerd, die de interacties en relaties tussen de belanghebbenden faciliteren, maar ook beperken, opgezet aan het begin van het proces. Deze formele instituties waren in dit geval geleidelijk aan getransformeerd in informele instituties dies belangrijker werden dan de aanvankelijke formele regels. De co-constructie van informele regels ging samen met

de geleidelijke ontwikkeling van sociale cohesie tussen belanghebbenden en dit droeg bij aan de implementatie van het participatief beheer. Conflict ontstond toen een poging werd gedaan om enkele van deze belangrijke informele instituties te breken. Deze studie onderzoek toont aan dat participatief beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen een proces is van bouwen aan sociale cohesie in termen van vertrouwen en constructieve relaties aangezien dit belanghebbenden motiveert tot samenwerken en tot het ontwikkelen van informele instituties voor effectieve samenwerking en organisatie.

Hoofdstuk vier gaat over een conflict in het participatief beheer van het Pendjari Nationaal Park (PNP) in Benin. Het beoogde doel van het onderzoek was beter inzicht te verkrijgen in hoe en waarom de kwestie van het bouwen aan vertrouwen tussen de directie van het park en de lokale gemeenschappen uitmondde in conflict hoe dit werd opgelost. Het onderzoek toont aan dat het bij conflicten over natuurlijke hulpbronnen niet enkel gaat over openlijke, publieke en waarneembare confrontaties die soms inmenging van derden vereisen voor hun beheer. In dit beheerproces waren conflicten impliciet en onzichtbaar ingebed in de dagelijkse activiteiten en routine van het werkterrein. Het onderzoek toont het belang en de rol van vertrouwen en wantrouwen in dergelijke conflicten. Wij ontdekten dat vertrouwen bouwen in dit beheerproces begon met een berekenend soort vertrouwen, gekenmerkt door een afwegen van de kosten en baten die verbonden zijn aan het vertrouwensgedrag alvorens een besluit daarover te nemen. Het onderzoek laat zien dat dat berekenend vertrouwen inherent onstabiel is en kwetsbaar voor erosie in een veranderlijke context. Dergelijk vertrouwen wordt gebouwd middels beloningen en moet dus tevens worden onderhouden door de levering van beloftes. De interpretaties van berekenend vertrouwen van betrokken partijen ontwikkelden zich met de tijd. Disfunctioneel vertrouwen ontwikkelde zich toen één van de partijen overmoedig werd over diens positie, om meer beloningen vroeg en dreigde met het breken van de relatie. Om die reden is geconcludeerd dat berekenend vertrouwen bij wijze van tegenwicht moet worden gecompenseerd met duidelijke regels die het mogelijk maken grenzen stellen aan relaties en de daaraan verbonden bestraffingen in het geval het vertrouwen wordt verbroken. Functioneel wantrouwen is dus nodig om berekenend vertrouwen te controleren aangezien dit actoren motiveert om regels te stellen die berekenend vertrouwen in goede banen leidt. Het ligt echter in de lijn der verwachting dat disfunctioneel wantrouwen ontstaat. Het ontstaan van disfunctioneel wantrouwen manifesteert zich als conflict tussen partijen. Wanneer het ontstaat beginnen de betrokken partijen strategieën te ontwikkelen om zich te beschermen en hun kwetsbaarheid te verminderen. Met andere woorden, elke partij in conflict gebruikt disfunctioneel wantrouwen als

een vorm van bemiddeling om zich te verdedigen tegen de gedragsstrategieën van de andere partij.

In hoofdstuk vijf wordt een vergelijkend onderzoek van de drie casussen gepresenteerd. Hierin wordt de rol van identiteitsconstructie belicht in het ontstaan en het escaleren van conflict in het participatief beheer van de drie gebieden. Het onderzoek onthult dat participatief beheer van natuurlijk hulpbronnen vaak verschillende stakeholder-groepen omvat met verschillende sociale identiteiten. De sociale categorisering van stakeholders vormt op zichzelf al een onvermijdelijke bron van conflict. De-categoriseren, re-categoriseren en duale-identiteitsmodellen werden gebruikt om de betekenis te analyseren van sociale identiteiten van de verschillende belanghebbenden die betrokken waren bij de onderhandelingen.

Het onderzoek toont aan dat, in de drie onderzochte casussen, conflict ontstond omdat de identiteiten van de subgroepen in deze context een belangrijk issue werden omdat specifieke contextuele factoren door de belanghebbenden werden beschouwd als zijnde een bedreiging van hun identiteit. De verhoogde relevantie van de identiteit van een stakeholder-groep beïnvloedde het gedrag van de groepsleden en leidde tot collectieve actie tegen de vermeende bedreiging van hun identiteit. Zo versterkten de groepsleden de onderlinge sociale cohesie, bouwden zij coalities en worstelden tegen de waargenomen dreiging. De analyse toont aan dat conflicten vaak escaleren omdat de betrokkenen al gauw het gevoel hebben dat hun bestaande identiteit wordt bedreigd wanneer het conflict, vanuit hun perceptie, unilateraal wordt opgelost. Geconstateerd wordt dat de relevantie van sociale identiteit dynamisch is en tevens gerelateerd aan het ontstaan en escaleren van conflict in onderhandelingsprocessen. Deze dynamiek wordt aangewakkerd door de manier waarop belanghebbenden de contextuele factoren bezien, wat de intensiteit van het conflict beïnvloedt. Kortom, wanneer beslissingen en acties worden opgevat als een bedreiging van de identiteit van de belanghebbenden, dan wordt daarmee de relevantie van sociale identiteit aangewakkerd en dat leidt dus gemakkelijk tot een conflict. Het omgaan met sociale identiteit in onderhandeling is dus een doorlopende en permanente inspanning.

In hoofdstuk zes worden de integrale conclusies van de thesis gepresenteerd en besproken tegen het licht van hun bijdrage aan een beter begrip van het ontstaan en de escalatie van conflicten in participatieve processen. Voorts worden in dit hoofdstuk de praktische implicaties belicht voor participatief en collectief beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen. De verschillende casussen die zijn

onderzocht laten zien dat de gedachte dat conflicten rondom het beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen voortkomen uit onenigheid over de toegang tot de natuurlijke hulpbronnen slechts één kant is van het verhaal. In deze thesis wordt aangetoond dat conflict over beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen niet alleen gaat over bio-fysieke bronnen; symbolische bronnen, inclusief sociale status, morele waarden, vertrouwen en andere identiteit-gerelateerde kwesties spelen eveneens een doorslaggevende rol. In het verlengde hiervan laten de verschillende studies zien dat de co-constructie en dynamiek van de sociale identiteiten van de belanghebbenden betrokken bij het beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen de conflicten in de verschillende casussen neigen te versterken. Bovendien is aangetoond dat vertrouwen een belangrijke variabele is in het participatief beheer van natuurlijke hulpbronnen. Het maakt helder dat vertrouwen niet een statisch gegeven is of een eigenschap van een relatie, maar dat moet worden bezien als hoogst dynamisch en voortdurend in onderhandeling. De thesis maakt ook helder dat formele instituties aanvankelijk een kader bieden voor legitieme actie en gaandeweg verbonden raken met informele instituties die vervolgens doorslaggevend zijn voor het behalen van de doelstellingen van het project. Zowel formele als informele instituties zijn belangrijk en kunnen elkaar ook versterken. Echter, wanneer informele regels die organisch en in onderlinge overeenstemming zijn ontstaan waardoor zij haast als vanzelf functioneel zijn, worden genegeerd, ontstaan problemen. Een laatste integrale conclusie is dat conflicten geleidelijk aan mede worden geconstrueerd in de gesprekken tussen belanghebbenden en met name in de gesprekken die mensen voeren binnen zogenoemde wij-groepen. vooral ook onder de betrokkenen binnen een en dezelfde belangengroep. in discours. Met andere woorden, de realiteiten die mensen met elkaar in gesprekken construeren kunnen verworden tot bronnen van conflict.

Een belangrijke praktische implicatie van het onderzoek, ten slotte, is dat degenen die betrokken zijn bij de facilitering van participatief bosbeheer betere concepten en strategieën zouden kunnen ontwikkelen voor het ‘beheren’ en faciliteren van intermenselijke processen. Om deze dimensie van participatieve processen te versterken is het zinvol na te denken over een actieve en effectieve strategie om indicaties te ontdekken voor het ontstaan van spanningen, onproductieve dynamieken en verstoorde relaties. Een dergelijke strategie zal gebaseerd moeten zijn op zorgvuldig luisteren naar formele en informele gesprekken tussen verschillende betrokkenen, met name binnen de verschillende ‘wij’-groepen.

De thesis eindigt met de conclusie dat framing-analyse een belangrijk onderzoeksperspectief is om intermenselijke processen en dynamieken te identificeren die gemakkelijk over het hoofd worden gezien, maar die van wezenlijk belang zijn bij het verloop van participatieve processen voor effectief bosbeheer.

Biography

Latifou Idrissou Aboubacary was born in Parakou in the north of Benin Republic on August 1st, 1977. After completing his secondary school in 1996, he studied physics and chemistry for one year at Faculté des Sciences et Techniques of the University of Abomey-Calavi. In 1997 he started studying agricultural sciences at Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques of the University of Abomey-Calavi and graduated in 2002 as Agricultural Engineer with major in Economics, Socio-Anthropology and Communication. He then worked for the NGO Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB) as research assistant of this NGO in the implementation of the project Healthy Vegetable Production through Participatory Integrated Pest Management carried out jointly by OBEPAB, Benin National Institute for Agricultural Research and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). Since June 2004, he joined the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Parakou where he works as research and teaching assistant in communication and agricultural extension. In June 2006, he was granted a scholarship by The Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) for his PhD research on the dynamics of conflict in participatory natural resources management at Wageningen University in the sub-department of Communication Science.

His research interests include the role of communication in collective action, participatory intervention, participatory problem solving, participatory natural resources management, conflict emergence and conflict management.
Latifou is presently assistant professor in the University of Parakou at the Department of Rural Economy and Sociology of the Faculty of Agronomy.

Publications

Peer reviewed publications

Idrissou, L., N. Aarts, A. van Paassen, C. Leeuwis (2011). From cohesion to conflict in participatory forests management: the case of Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali (OSN) forests management. In: *Forest Policy and Economics* 13 (7): 525-534.

Idrissou, L., A. van Paassen, N. Aarts, C. Leeuwis (2011). The discursive construction of conflict in participatory forest management: the case of Agoua forest restoration in Benin. In: *Conservation and Society* 9 (2): 119-131.

Idrissou, L., N. Aarts, A. van Paassen, S. Vodouhè, C. Leeuwis. (forthcoming). Trust and Hidden Conflict in Participatory Natural Resources Management: The Case of the Pendjari National Park (PNP) in Benin. Submitted for publication to: *Journal Ecology and Society*.

Idrissou, L., N. Aarts, C. Leeuwis, A. van Paassen (forthcoming). Identity Dynamics and Conflict in Collaborative Processes: The Case of Participatory Management of Protected Areas in Benin. Submitted for publication to: *Negotiation and Conflict Management Journal*.

Thesis

Idrissou, L. (2002). *Socio-economical determinants in a decision making process: the case of organic cotton adoption in Kandi region.* Engineer thesis, Faculty of Agronomical Sciences, University of Benin.

Conference papers

Idrissou, L. (2007). *Stakeholders' frames analysis in social learning and negotiation process: a case study of participatory forests management in Benin.* Paper presented at the 14th International Conference on Multi-Organisational Partnerships, Alliances and Networks (MOPAN) held in Leuven (Belgium) 28-29 June 2007.

Idrissou, L.; N. Aarts; A. van Paassen; C. Leeuwis and S. Vodouhè (2007). *Social learning and negotiation in sustainable parks management: a case study of the national park of Pendjari in Benin.* Paper presented to the first African Youth Congress for Science and Technology held in Kampala (Uganda) from 3 to 5 July 2007.

Idrissou, L. (2009). *Power devolution and social cohesion in forests management: the case of Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali forests participatory management.* Paper presented to the Symposium Decentralization, Power and Tenure Rights of Forest Dependent People, Dahod (India) from 27to 29 October 2009.

WASS PhD Education Certificate: Latifou Idrissou Aboubacary

Educational activities completed by the PhD candidate to fulfil the requirements set by the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS) which comprises of a minimum of total of 32 ECTS (= 22 weeks of activities)

Description	*Organisers*	*Month/Year*	*Credits*
I. General			
CERES orientation programme	CERES, Utrecht	March-June 2007	5
CERES presentation tutorials	CERES, Utrecht	May - June 2007	5.5
II. Research methods and techniques and Domain Specific Theories			
Introduction to Communication and Innovation Studies	CIS Group, WUR	Sept-Nov 2006	4
Essay (CIS 52302)	CIS Group, WUR	Sept-Nov 2006	2
Research Design and Research Methods	ENP Group	Sept-Nov 2006	6
Workshops with BIN Students on Methods, Techniques and Data Analysis for Field Research	RDS Group, WUR	Mai 2007	4
Literature review and Proposal writing	COM, WUR	June-Nov 2006	4
III. Academic Skills			
Academic writing	CENTA	November 2006	2
Scientific writing	CENTA	October 2007	2

Description	*Organisers*	*Month/Year*	*Credits*
IV. Presentation of research results			
Stakeholders frames analysis in social learning and negotiation process: A case study of participatory forests management in Benin	14th International conference on Multi-Organisational Partnerships, Alliances and Networks, Leuven, Belgium	June 2007	2
Social learning and Negotiation in sustainable park management: A case study of Pendjari National Park Management	African Youth Forum for Science and Technology, Kampala, Uganda	July 2007	2
Power devolution and social cohesion in forests management: the case of Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali forests participatory management	Symposium Decentralization, Power and Tenure Rights of Forest Dependent People, Dahod, India	October 2009	2
Presentation of research result at COM seminar	COM, WUR	June 2010	1.5
From cohesion to conflict in participatory forest management: the case of Ouémé Supérieur and N'Dali forests	Summer School organized by CERES, The Hague, Netherlands	June 2010	2
TOTAL ECTS			44