

CAMEROONIAN FOREST-RELATED POLICIES

A MULTISECTORAL OVERVIEW
OF PUBLIC POLICIES IN CAMEROON'S FORESTS
SINCE 1960

Benjamin Singer

DRAFT

This Report is Part of a PhD on Tropical Forest Policies
at the Institut d'Études Politiques and CIRAD, France

September 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION	7
2. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMEROON	8
2.1. BACKGROUND.....	8
2.1.1. Geography.....	8
2.1.2. Natural History.....	10
2.1.3. Population, Culture and Religion.....	10
2.1.4. Economy	11
2.1.5. Politics and Political Institutions	12
2.1.6. Foreign Policy and Geopolitics.....	13
2.1.7. Cameroon's Forests	14
2.2. METHODS AND MATERIALS	15
2.3. HISTORY OF CAMEROON.....	19
2.3.1. From Camarões to Kamerun.....	20
2.3.2. German Expansion and Retreat	22
2.3.3. French and British Cameroons.....	24
2.3.4. Ahidjo's Cameroon.....	28
2.3.5. Biya's Cameroon	31
2.4. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMEROON	34
2.4.1. Forest Policies.....	34
2.4.1.1. <i>Historical Background</i>	34
2.4.1.2. <i>Nineteen Ninety Four</i>	36
2.4.1.3. <i>Large-Scale Industry since 1994</i>	41
2.4.1.4. <i>Trends in Illegal logging</i>	49
2.4.1.5. <i>Curbing Illegal Logging: Independent Observer, Certification and FLEGT</i>	51
2.4.1.6. <i>Devolving Forest Management: Community and Council Forests</i>	56
2.4.1.7. <i>A Plethora of National and Regional Organisations</i>	62
2.4.2. The Indigenous Issue	69
2.4.2.1. <i>Background</i>	70
2.4.2.2. <i>Governmental versus Non-Governmental Policies</i>	71
2.4.3. Conservation Policies.....	76
2.4.4. Agriculture	81
2.4.4.1. <i>The Evolution of the Agricultural Sector</i>	81
2.4.4.2. <i>Agriculture and Forests Today</i>	83
2.4.5. Energy, Mining and Infrastructure.....	84
2.4.6. Who's Who in Forestry Research.....	86

3. FOREST POLICIES IN DIMAKO	89
3.1. BACKGROUND.....	89
3.1.1. “The Company as the Foundation of the City”	90
3.2. TWO FRENCH FORESTRY PROJECTS	94
3.2.1. API Dimako	94
3.2.2. Forêts et Terroirs.....	96
3.2.3. Legacies	97
3.3. DIMAKO’S COUNCIL FOREST	98
3.3.1. History.....	99
3.3.2. The Benefits of the Council Forest.....	101
3.3.3. Unresolved Issues	104
3.3.4. The Risk of Elite Capture	109
3.4. CONCLUSION.....	113
4. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMPO-MA’AN NATIONAL PARK	115
4.1. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING.....	115
4.2. HISTORY	116
4.3. CONSERVATION POLICIES	118
4.3.1. A Complex Institutional History.....	118
4.3.2. Poaching: The Park’s Greatest Threat	121
4.3.3. Carrot and Stick	123
4.4. ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE.....	125
4.4.1. Timber Production	125
4.4.1.1. <i>Timber Companies</i>	125
4.4.1.2. <i>Community Forestry</i>	129
4.4.1.3. <i>Informal Timber Production</i>	131
4.4.2. Agriculture and Agroforestry.....	131
4.4.2.1. <i>Industrial Plantations</i>	131
4.4.2.2. <i>Small-scale agriculture</i>	132
4.4.3. The Indigenous Component.....	133
4.4.4. Ecotourism	136
4.4.5. Infrastructure.....	137
4.5. TOWARDS A GLOBAL POLICY	138
4.6. ALMOST THERE	141

5. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN MA'AN	143
5.1. TIMBER CONCESSIONS IN CAMEROON: A BRIEF OVERVIEW	143
5.1.1. Historical Origins of Social Policies in Concessions.....	144
5.1.2. Forest Concessions Today	146
5.2. FMUs 09-021 AND 09-024: A CASE-STUDY	149
5.2.1. Geography	149
5.2.2. Early History	150
5.2.3. HFC and the Beginnings of Industrial Logging.....	151
5.2.4. The Early Years of Wijma Douala SARL	152
5.2.5. RFA and the Management Committee	155
5.2.6. The Shaky Beginnings of FSC.....	156
5.2.7. The FSC Controversy	158
5.2.8. All Better?	161
5.2.9. Institutional Proliferation	167
5.3. SOCIAL POLICIES IN CAMEROON'S TIMBER CONCESSIONS: THREE MODELS	170
5.3.1. The Flying Saucer	170
5.3.2. The State within a State	172
5.3.3. The Professional Model	176
5.3.4. Where Are We Heading?	179
5.3.5. Questioning the Community Paradigm in Rural Development	180
6. GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	183

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Tables

Table I. — Cameroon at a glance	9
Table II. — The selection of case-studies according to the three main criteria	18
Table III. — Distribution of roles to different donor agencies in FESP	65
Table IV. — DMEs and DMAs for exploitable species in Dimako Council Forest	109
Table V. — Resources, needs and problems according to legitimate stakeholders of Campo Ma'an UTO	142
Table VI. — The three types of forest committee in Ma'an	169
Table VII. — The three different models of social policies in timber concessions	178

Figures

Figure I. — Share of importing countries of Cameroonian logs in 2005	42
Figure II. — Share of importing countries of Cameroonian lumber in 2005	43
Figure III. — Official timber production and export figures 1980-2005 in round wood equivalent	45
Figure IV. — Cameroon's official timber exports by type 1998 to 2005	46
Figure V. — Annual tax revenue from the timber sector in Cameroon by type of tax	47
Figure VI. — Local Council revenue between 1997 and 2005 in millions of FCFA	102
Figure VII. — Percentage of Dimako council revenue coming from the council's own activities	103
Figure VIII. — Minimum production figures for Dimako Council Forest	105
Figure IX. — Timber production in Dimako Council Forest in 2007 by species	106
Figure X. — Wild game by species intercepted in Campo Ma'an National Park	123

Boxes

Box I. — Defining Forest-Related Policies	16
Box II. — How sustainable is sustainable forest management?	55
Box III. — Bushmeat trade in Cameroon	80
Box IV. — Baka Pygmies in Dimako	112
Box V. — Tya'Assono or the difficulties of community forestry.	153
Box VI. — <i>Boucles du Ntem II</i> : the case of FMU 09-024's enclaves.	166
Box VII. — TRC's social policies in FMU 00-004.	169

Acknowledgments

For supporting me logistically during my entire fieldwork in Cameroon and inviting me for an internship, I would like to thank the entire team at CIFOR-Cameroon, especially Cyrie Sendashonga. I collaborated closely with a number of researchers at CIFOR, notably Guillaume Lescuyer (CIFOR-CIRAD) and particularly Paolo Cerutti (CIFOR), to whom I am greatly indebted for his suggestions on my research, contacts and logistical support. My thanks also go to a number of contacts in Yaoundé who were particularly helpful in providing me with information and support, including Sylvie Lewicki-Dhainault (CIRAD) who sheltered me during the February riots, the entire CIRAD team at Yaoundé, Ayissi Mba (MINFOF), Samuel Nguiffo (CED) and Kenmegne Benoît (Prime Minister's Office) and his family.

For my stay in Dimako I am grateful to Baudelaire Kemajou (Mairies Conseil), Françoise Plancheron (ONF-International / CTFT) and especially Janvier Mongui for helping me get established and providing me with contacts in the town of Dimako. In Dimako I would like to thank Tchounkeu Moïse (Secretary General of the local council), Bayké Pierre and Poum Bimbar Olivier (Receveur) for having supported me logistically during my stay.

My study of Campo Ma'an was greatly facilitated by the WWF Kudu-Zombo Programme who provided both financial and invaluable logistical support for my fieldwork. I am thus indebted to George Akwah and his entire team whom I greatly appreciated for their friendliness and making me feel at home. My thanks especially go to Simon "Bisso" ("Question de temps") who accompanied me on my research in Kribi and Akom II.

For my research in Ma'an, I am extremely grateful to Wijma and especially Sébastien Delion, Etienne Kuzong, Sacha Pouget and Central Awe for facilitating my research whilst in Douala and Ma'an. I would probably have been unable to carry out this research had it not been for the staff's friendliness, openness and readiness to help. My thanks also go to Ndemenga Verlaine (SAGED) for her contributions and contacts and the villagers and interviewees in Ma'an for the information they provided me with.

This research benefited from partial financial support from CIRAD. Both my directors of studies, Pierre Lascoumes and especially Alain Karsenty, were extremely helpful in advising me and establishing contacts in Cameroon. Finally, I wish to thank close friends and family, notably Alan Singer and Malik Aït-Saïd who greatly helped me through the challenging periods which all researchers are confronted to in difficult field conditions.

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This report has been written up as part of a PhD on a comparison of forest-related policies in Brazil, Cameroon and Indonesia. It is structured so as to reflect the four case-studies selected to illustrate the diversity of forest-related policies in Cameroon: policies at the national level and at three local levels (Dimako, Campo-Ma'an National Park and FMUS 09-021 and 09-024 in Ma'an). Each chapter is structured to provide (i) a general geographical and historical background and (ii) a narrative of the evolution of forest-related policies sector by sector.

Two features immediately strike the scholar when briefly comparing the Cameroonian case with the other two countries studied for this PhD. First, the forest sector is by far the most predominant sector affecting Cameroon's forests. Whilst this might appear as self evident at first, a glance at forest-related policies in Brazil shows that this is not always the case. Secondly, whilst change in Brazil and Indonesia are determined primarily by national events, in Cameroon change appears to be influenced mostly by external factors. Both the particularities are briefly tackled in this report but explained at greater lengths in the PhD itself.

Where appropriate or necessary, a minimum of interpretation has been provided to better understand each case-study. For deeper interpretation using more specific tools of public policy theory as well as a comparison with similar policies in Brazil and Indonesia, please refer to the body of the PhD.

2. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMEROON

Studying forest-related policies in Cameroon is useful in more ways than one. First, as forestry expert Patrice Bigombe-Logo put it, “forest policies are the way of being and reason to live of the Cameroonian state” (personal communication, March 2008). Whilst such a claim should be watered down somewhat by reminding the reader that the timber sector ranks “only” third in the Cameroonian economy, forest policies do act like a microcosm of national policies, as this report describes.

Secondly, Cameroonian forest policies have acted both as a laboratory and a model for implementing reform in the forest sectors of other Central African countries. Cameroon’s 1994 reforms are the most profound that the forest sector has undergone since European colonisation and have acted, for better or worse, as a blueprint for reforms across the region.

2.1. BACKGROUND

2.1.1. Geography

Cameroon is a middle-sized country of Central Africa roughly shaped like a triangle and wedged in the Gulf of Guinea. It is home to ten provinces of which two are Anglophone (South West and North West), the remaining being French-speaking.

		Cameroon	France
Geography	Population size*	18,467,692 (July 2008 est.)	60,876,136 (July 2008 est.)
	Surface area (km ²)*	475,440	547,030
Economy	GDP per capita (PPP) (US\$)*	2,100 (2007 est.)	33,200 (2007 est.)
	Human development index 2007 (rank)**	0.532 (144)	0.952 (10)
Politics	Corruption perceptions index 2007 (rank)***	2.4 (138 th)	7.3 (19 th)
Forestry	Forest cover in km ² 2005 (% of country's surface area)****	212,450 (46.5%)	155,540 (28.3%)
	Percentage of world's forests****	0.54%	0.39%
	Annual rate of forest cover change in km ² /yr 2000-2005 (%)****	-2,200 (-1.0%)	+410 (+0.3%)
	Removal of wood products in 1000 m ³ o.b. 2005 (1990)****	19,772 (14,861)	51,475 (55,621)
	Formal employment in forestry 2000****	20,000	35,000

Table I. — Cameroon at a glance (with France as a comparison).

* CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>, retrieved 26 August 2008)

** Wikipedia's list of countries by Human Development Index, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index, retrieved 26 August 2008)

*** CPI table by Transparency International (http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007, retrieved 26 August 2008). Transparency International's methods have been severely criticised by some observers. For instance, it is believed that the Cameroonian ranking for 1999 (when the country came top in terms of corruption) resulted from only 8 questionnaires.

**** FRA 2005 Global Tables (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/32006/en/>, retrieved 26 August 2008). Some of the figures are to be taken with caution; for instance, Karsenty *et al.* (2006:40) finds that the number of people officially employed in the Cameroonian timber sector varied between 12,012 and 17,140 between 1998 and 2004 according to different sources; however, it never reached the figure of 20,000 put forward by FRA 2005 and listed above.

Often dubbed “Africa in miniature”, it embodies the African continent in several ways. First, the country is geographically hinged between West and Central Africa, with a limited coastline on the Gulf of Guinea opposite the Equato-Guinean island of Bioko.

2.1.2. Natural History

Cameroon is home to all the major biotopes that characterise Africa in the eyes of outsiders. In terms of flora and fauna, the country is broadly divided into two zones. The “Sudano-Zambezian” region covers the northern half of the country and is typically either Sahelian (open, sun-baked vegetation struck by regular droughts) or savannah-like (tall grasses with large, free-roaming mammals such as elephants and giraffes). The southern half, known as the “Congo-Guinean” region, is naturally covered in thick forest and is home to a much more humid and less seasonal climate favourable to jungle vegetation and fauna (Achoundong 2006:64).

The western edge is the extreme eastern tip of the Guinean forest that stretches to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry, characterised by its fragmentation but very high species diversity and endemism. The Guinean forest’s uniqueness was further underlined a few years ago with the discovery of a new gorilla subspecies (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) in (the future) Takamanda National Park (Cameroon) (Oates *et al.* 2007). The east and south of the country, on the other hand, is firmly anchored in the Congo Basin, the world’s second largest forest after Amazonia. Forests tend to be much larger and home to a larger biomass which again includes large mammals (gorillas, chimpanzees and forest elephants notably).

Cameroon has an equally varied relief, ranging from the swampy coastal lowlands of the area around Douala to the peaks of Mount Cameroon (4,095 m) and Mount Oku (3,008 m), both located in the West. In between lie the arid plains of the north, the southern Cameroonian plateau which covers much of the country’s forest-rich area as well as the heart of the country, and a chain of hills and mountains ranging from the Bamenda grassfields of the West to the hills of the Ngaoundéré area in the centre-north province of Adamaoua (Tchawa 2006:58).

2.1.3. Population, Culture and Religion

Cameroon’s population which stood at an estimated 18.5 million approximately in 2008 (5.3 million in 1960) is primarily located in the Central and Extreme Northern Provinces with slightly lower population densities in the Littoral, Western and North Western Provinces (Iyébi-Mandjek 2006:83). By contrast, the Southern and especially Eastern provinces are demographically almost empty. The country is composed of 230 officially recognised ethnic groups, making it one of the world’s most diverse given its moderate surface area.

The most prominent “tribes” in economic and political terms have historically been those of the Grassfields such as the Bamileke, but also the Douala and the Ewondo who have taken advantage of the presence of Douala and Yaoundé in their respective heartlands. However, given the absence of any dominant tribe in the country, French and English have remained Cameroon’s official languages as a result of its dual colonisation history. In practice, French remains the *lingua franca*, mainly because of the relatively small size of the population of the Anglophone provinces of Cameroon (some 22%).

Cameroon lies across many of the cultural and religious schisms that characterise the African continent. “Discovered” by the Portuguese and initially explored by the Dutch, Cameroon became a German colony following the 1884 Treaty of Berlin. However, its colonial heritage is first and foremost French and British since it is the result of the reunification of French Cameroon and (part of) the British Cameroons in 1961 after independence. Likewise, whilst the northern half is distinctly Muslim, having been in contact with Arab traders for several centuries, the southern half was heavily Christianised by Catholic and Protestant missionaries alike.

Cameroon’s cultural diversity does not stop with its outside influences. According to Mbida Mindzié (2006:70), four cultural areas can be identified: (i) the Sudano-Sahelian zone which has traditionally been dominated by Muslim pastoralists, (ii) the Grassfields which cover the plateaus of the West and Northwest, populated with strongly hierarchical societies with sacred royalty (such as the Bamun and the Bamileke); (iii) the Sawa zone which stretches from Edéa through Buea to the Bakassi Peninsula, home to a number of “tribes” who define themselves by their use of the sea and centuries-long contact with Europeans; and (iv) the Fang-Beti zone, of greatest interest here as it covers the whole of the Eastern, Central and Southern Provinces and thus the country’s forested areas. These mostly Bantu “tribes” are characterised by their linguistic proximity (Fang, Beti, Bulu, Ntumu, Mvae, etc.) and the absence of any obvious hierarchy. The southeastern and southwestern areas of the Fang-Beti zone are also populated with two distinct “Pygmy” groups known as the Baka and Bakola respectively.

2.1.4. Economy

Cameroon continues to rely primarily on exports of raw materials with little or no local transformation, making it vulnerable to international price variations. According to the sources, timber production ranks either second or third in Cameroon’s economy after oil (1st) and agricultural products (2nd or 3rd). Oil accounts by far for the country’s main source of foreign income, although production has been dwindling in the last couple of decades as a result of (i) a sharp drop in international prices in the mid-1980s and (ii) dwindling supplies. However, the construction of a pipeline from Chad running through the country (the famous “Chad-Cameroon Pipeline” funded partly by the World Bank)¹ has enabled Cameroon to benefit financially from its neighbour’s production since the early 2000s.

Timber production has also fallen somewhat since the 1990s but has maintained itself as a reliable source of foreign income in spite of major reforms. Most of the timber exported is now transformed, although only primarily, sawn wood accounting for a majority of the exported timber. Plywood exports remain minimal, partly as a result of stiff international competition from Asia, especially Indonesia and China. The economy of the forest sector is further described in the section below on forest policies in Cameroon.

Agriculture remains the most important sector both in terms of employment (70% of the country’s population, as opposed to 13% in industry) and in terms of local livelihoods. Most of

¹ For further information on the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, please refer to the section on forest policies in Campo-Ma’an National Park.

the country's production is on a small, local scale and is destined for domestic markets (plantain banana, peanuts, corn, cassava, especially in the southern half of the country; sorghum and millet in the north). However, a number of cash crops are also grown at a larger scale and is turned towards exports, although not on the same scale as Brazil or Indonesia. These crops include coffee, cocoa, palm oil, tobacco and rubber in the southern half, and cotton in the north.

Many of these crops, notably cocoa and coffee (which together account for 28% of non-oil exports according to Lieugomg [2006:86]), are both grown in large plantations and among smaller-scale operations. Fluctuations in international prices lead to considerable variations in the quantities produced from one decade to the next: after a sharp fall in international prices in the early 1990s, coffee and cocoa stopped being produced by small-scale farmers, only to have been taken up again in recent years.

Whilst Cameroon once was a model of economic stability and growth in Africa, its economy today is in crisis. GDP per capita grew steadily in the years following independence and even reached some 8% per annum in the late 1970s and early 1980s thanks to increasing oil exports; yet 1985 and 1986 saw a sharp drop in international oil prices, followed by a severe crisis in Cameroon that lasted well into the 1990s and after the 1994 devaluation of the region's currency, the Franc CFA (*Communauté financière africaine*). According to Aerts *et al.* (2000:247), growth picked up again in the late 1990s, only to stop again in the 2000s. The last few years have seen negative GDP growth and a consistent deficit between imports and exports (Engola Oyep 2006:98). The evolution of the Cameroonian economy and its effect on the country's politics is described in the following sections and in the history of Cameroon.

2.1.5. Politics and Political Institutions

Cameroon has inherited two systems of government from the colonial era: the British system in Anglophone Cameroon which relied more heavily on traditional chiefdoms, and the French system, which modelled its institutions closely according to those of the French Fifth Republic (characterised by a strong executive). In 1961, when British Southern Cameroons was joined to the newly created Republic of Cameroon, a federal system was created with two states, the Francophone East and the Anglophone West, with Francophone Ahmadou Ahidjo as the President and Anglophone John Ngu Foncha as the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

In 1972, however, Ahidjo held a referendum for the abolition of the Federal System and the country became known as the United Republic of Cameroon on 20 May, which has since become the main national holiday. In 1983, the name was changed to "Republic of Cameroon" despite complaints by Anglophones who saw in this name the country as it stood in 1960, before the Anglophone part joined it. In their eyes, the country no longer recognised the Anglophone part.

In 1982, Ahidjo handed over power to his prime minister, Paul Biya, who has remained in power since then. Following riots in 1990 and the ghost town operation led by the opposition (see below), Biya finally introduced a multiple party system and the right to create associations,

creating for the first time an atmosphere in which political opinions could be more or less freely expressed. However, the opposition has remained weak and fragmented and has so far been unable to change the President, despite elections in 1992 and again in 2004.

In February 2008, Biya successfully got the National Assembly to approve a revision of the country's constitution that would enable him to stand again for the 2011 elections. This decision, along with sharp increases in food prices that reflected the 2008 world food crisis, led to considerable discontent which began with strikes by taxi drivers in Yaoundé, Douala and a number of cities in the West known to be strongholds of the opposition. Outbreaks of violence led to the army going in, resulting in a dozen deaths according to official sources and several hundred according to opposition media. Since then, the situation has calmed down somewhat, although neither of the problems that sparked the worst riots since 1990 has been solved.

As in the French system, Cameroon is also equipped with a Parliament known as the National Assembly (*Assemblée nationale*) which does not meet regularly, leading to observers claiming that it has little power compared to the President. The government, headed by the Prime Minister (allocated to an Anglophone by tradition), is composed of a particularly large cabinet which is currently composed of over 60 ministers, allegedly as a means of multiplying Biya's allies in a form of clientelism.

2.1.6. Foreign Policy and Geopolitics

Ever since France took over the bulk of German Kamerun during the First World War, Cameroon has witnessed very close ties both to France and its colonies in Central Africa, known at the time as French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique équatoriale française* or AEF). Both ties have continued after independence: on the regional level Cameroon is part of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (*Communauté économique et monétaire d'Afrique centrale* or CEMAC) whose headquarters are based in Yaoundé and is composed of Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. CEMAC was created in 1999 when its predecessor (Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa or UDEAC, founded in 1966) was dissolved.

Members of CEMAC have a common currency, the CFA Franc once pegged to the French Franc and now to the Euro, and enjoy free trade between member countries. Yet cooperation among CEMAC countries goes well beyond the economy: in international meetings, Cameroon often teams up with other CEMAC countries to create delegations large enough (often with French support) to have the region's voice heard in negotiations. Regional forest initiatives such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CFBP) and the Forests Commission of Central Africa (COMIFAC) have also been established on the basis of the similarities and proximity of Central African states (including the DRC in the case of forests).

Relations with Cameroon's western giant of a neighbour, Nigeria, have been frosty at best. The relationship started on a bad footing when Cameroon resented the fact that British Northern Cameroons voted in favour of becoming part of Nigeria and the countries have been rivals ever

since. Relations recently focused on the Bakassi Peninsula, a small stretch of land on the border between Cameroon and Nigeria that each country has claimed its own since independence. In 2002, the International Court of Justice backed by the United Nations requested Nigeria to hand the Peninsula over to Cameroon and an agreement was signed by the two heads of state in 2006 in this direction. The remaining Nigerian troops left Bakassi in August 2008.

Ever since independence, France has been Cameroon's main political and economic partner. Like many other former French colonies in Africa, the very close relationship between the Cameroonian and French heads of state have led many observers to denounce a state of neo-colonialism under the name *Françafrique* according to which the French government maintains allies in power in a number of French-speaking countries, including Cameroon (*e.g.*, Agir ici & Survie 1996, Verschave 1999). This alleged domination of Cameroonian politics and economy by the French causes strong anti-French resentment among many Cameroonians who create a strong, occasionally paranoid yet powerful anti-colonial discourse also found in debates on forest management (see below).

In recent years, however, the concept of *Françafrique* has been increasingly questioned as the United States has reinforced diplomatic ties with a number of African countries such as Cameroon. In the months leading to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a display of diplomacy took place between France and the United States over Cameroon which enjoyed a non-permanent seat at the Security Council at the time. Several heads of state visited Cameroon at the time, and despite its historical ties with France, it is believed that Cameroon finally decided to support the United States' initiative to invade Iraq, although the vote at the Security Council was never passed, the US having finally invaded without UN approval. More generally, observers claim that the US is taking increasing interest in Cameroon and Central Africa at wide as a means of diversifying its sources of oil, as witnessed by the recent re-opening of the Cameroonian branch of USAID and the decision to establish an American military base in the nearby country of São Tomé e Príncipe.

Relations with Britain have always come second to France, both as a result of the lack of interest in the colonial power towards British Cameroons, but also at the expense of Cameroon's ties with France in the decades following independence. Cameroon only joined the Commonwealth in 1995. Finally, Cameroonian policy towards the Middle East witnessed a U-turn after Biya took over power from Muslim Ahmadou Ahidjo. Diplomatic relations were re-established with Israel in 1984 which has provided the country both with greater security for the Presidency and with cooperation in agricultural technology (Ngoh 1996:334).

2.1.7. Cameroon's Forests

The bulk of Cameroon's 212,450 km² of forests lie in the Southern and especially the Eastern Provinces, with smaller fragments scattered across the Central, Littoral, Western, South Western and North Western Provinces. The three northern provinces (Adamaoua, North and Extreme North) are also home to a few forest fragments, although forests there are much drier and serve

mainly as a source of fuel to local populations. The Eastern and Southern provinces, on the other hand, are the motor of Cameroon's thriving timber sector.

The claim that industrial logging leads to deforestation in Cameroon is strictly speaking untrue. Most of the country's deforestation occurs in areas other than where logging companies operate, primarily along the forest edge – especially in the western half of the country where small-scale agriculture is increasingly encroaching on forests. This phenomenon is the greatest threat to forests in Anglophone Cameroon which are characterised by high endemicity, but is much less of a threat in the East and South where population density is much lower.

However, industrial logging can lead to forest degradation whereby the functions provided by the forest (such as economic value, biodiversity and contribution to climate and water cycles) are altered. The 1994 reforms introduced the need to establish management plans in logging concessions, thus mitigating the damage that logging operations can have on forest ecology, although as will be seen below, this is still a matter of debate.

Since the 1994 law, Cameroon's forests are legally recognised as the National Forest Domain which is split into Permanent Forests (state forest and council forests), and Non-Permanent Forests (community forests, private forests and other state forests). The bulk of the country's forests, however, fall into the category of state forest which encompasses all protected areas and logging areas (concessions and other types, notably logging sales or *ventes de coupe*). The country's main forested protected areas include the Dja Wildlife Reserve (Réserve de faune du Dja), Campo Ma'an National Park, Lobéké National Park, Boumba-Bek and Nki, Korup National Park and the proposed Takamanda National Park (the latter two being in the Anglophone part of the country).

On the international stage Cameroon ranks as a forest-rich country and although its forest cover is considerably smaller than that of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, which ranks third after Russia and Brazil), its position in international forest debates is central. This is partly a result of the fact that Cameroon has enjoyed a leading position in the region, both in economic and legislative terms, with the introduction of reforms starting in 1994 which have transformed the country's forest sector. These reforms have acted as a model for those of neighbouring countries, as Karsenty (2006:19) points out. This leading role is described in greater detail below.

2.2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study is based on data collected between February and May 2008 in Cameroon – mainly in Yaoundé, Douala and the Eastern and Southern Provinces (notably Dimako, Campo and Ma'an). This research was carried out as part of a PhD on a comparison of Brazilian, Cameroonian and Indonesian forest policies at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris and CIRAD in Montpellier, France.

The central question of this thesis is to evaluate the effect of the emergence of an international debate about tropical forests on the national policies of a small number of forested tropical countries. In this respect, this report provides a mainly descriptive analysis of the change that has occurred over the past three decades or so in the forest policies of a number of case-studies. Data and information provided in this report will eventually be used in the thesis itself.

The angle chosen is political and the theoretical perspective is based on a much-used tool in public policy theory, namely that of policy networks. The concept of policy networks has been defined by Legalès & Thatcher (1995:14) as “the result of more or less stable and non-hierarchical cooperation between organisations that know and recognise each other, negotiate, exchange resources and sometimes share norms and interests”. In order to distinguish policy networks from other types of social networks, one might add to this definition that the organisations in question need to interact over the discussion and attempt to solve specific collective problems.

The notion of policy network is particularly useful in the present study because of the nature of Cameroonian forest policies. First, it adapts well to situations characterised by the fragmentation and multiplication of actors involved in specific policies. Secondly, it emphasises the “fluidity” of resources among different spheres – in this case the local, national and international levels which are generally not as waterproof as they are often portrayed. Finally, the policy network approach is best used to understand the relations between actors and the flow of ideas and interests, which are all crucial elements in this research.

Box I **Defining Forest-Related Policies**

Definitions of what is meant by “forest policies” are very rare in the existing literature, but based on the implicit interpretations of the term, forest policies are generally seen to refer to policies determined by the State that are specifically aimed at forest management of one type or another. Such a definition is subject to two problems.

First, as in any other country or sector, public organisations are no longer the only actors or stakeholders in public policies; Brazilian forest policies have in fact witnessed a sharp rise in the number of different actors involved in forest management. It would therefore be more appropriate to describe public policies as the result of the exchanges between a number of different actors who interact in order to solve collective problems such as that of forest management.

Secondly, policies specifically aimed at forests are not the only public policies that have an impact on forests and forest management. Although the impact of extrasectorial activities on forests is not felt as strongly in Cameroon as they are for instance in Brazil, some sectors still have a real (agriculture, transport) or potential (mining) effect on forests and their policies. Restricting a study on forest policies to timber production and forest conservation policies would only allow us to focus on one part of the picture. This is why in this study forest policies have been defined as follows:

“Forest-related policies can be defined as public policies which result from interactions among a number of actors involved in forests and that have an impact on forests and their management, whether this impact be intentional or not”.

The case-studies described here were selected according to three main criteria:

1. **Importance.** The case-studies were chosen according to their importance in two respects: first, the issue of forests has to play a large role in the economy and politics of the case-study, and secondly, the case-study has to be of regional or national importance. For example, this explains why FMUs 09-021 and 09-024 managed by Wijma were selected over other, more studied FMUs such as those of Rougier or Pallisco: although all these FMUs act as relevant illustrations of concession policies, those of Wijma have set the trend for FSC certification among Cameroon's large timber companies.

Moreover, the criterion of importance also explains why none of the forests in Cameroon's Anglophone or northern provinces were selected as case-studies. Despite the fact that the Anglophone provinces of the Northwest and Southwest are home to several protected areas and those of the north have forest fragments that play an essential role as a source of fuel for local populations, neither of these areas' forests plays an important role in the state's economy and politics.

2. **Diversity.** The case-studies selected need to be as diverse from each other as possible. It was not possible to choose representativeness as a criterion given that in a study like this, each case is unique, characterised by a specific array of issues and actors. However, the criterion of diversity enables this study to illustrate the wide range of different issues and policy networks operating within Cameroonian forest policies.

For example, this criterion explains why case-studies were selected from both spheres (local and national). It also accounts for the selection of Dimako, Campo and Ma'an as local case-studies, since each of them reflects a different component of forest-related policies (council forests, conservation and concession-based timber production respectively). Additional components of forest-related policies such as community forestry and indigenous issues are each covered in at least two of the three case-studies. It might appear surprising that two adjacent geographical areas (Campo and Ma'an) were selected despite the criterion of diversity. However, (i) the historical background, (ii) the ethnic makeup (Yassa vs. Mvaé/Ntumu), (iii) the administrative divisions (Divisions of Océan vs. Ntem) and (iv) the issues covered (conservation vs. timber production) make these two case-studies decidedly distinct from one another with policy networks that do not overlap.

3. **Complementarity.** Scholars and professionals alike have already produced a mass of data on Cameroonian forest policies, many of them having focused on specific case-studies. The cases selected in the current research are aimed at providing complementarity to the existing research. Rather than focusing on case-studies that have already been looked at several times, cases were selected about which little is known.

The main advantage of this criterion is to increase the potential contribution of this study to the already existing databank on Cameroonian forest policies rather than duplicating research that has already been carried out. Carrying out first-hand research (through interviews and participant observation) on issues that have already been studied could arguably be perceived

as a waste of time. This explains why protected areas such as Dja Reserve and Korup National Park, but also councils such as Djoum or Lomié, were not selected.

The condition for selecting each case-study was that it had to fulfil at least two of the criteria above. Table II shows the results for the selection process. The most striking difference with the selection of case-studies in Brazil and Indonesia is that only four studies were carried out in Cameroon, as opposed to seven for the other two countries. There are two explanations for this decision. First, Cameroon lacks the intermediate sphere of policies and politics that both Brazil and Indonesia are home to (state and provincial levels respectively). Cameroon is also composed of provinces like Indonesia, and the author did attempt to study policies at province-level. However, the small number of political actors present at the level of provinces (notably provincial units of the Ministry of Forests and a handful of NGOs) was not sufficient to claim the existence of policy networks operating at that level and thus the existence of a provincial sphere. Case-studies were thus limited to the national and local spheres.

Secondly, Cameroon being a much smaller country than Brazil or Indonesia, both in terms of population size and surface area, it does not display the bewildering variety of forest-related policies that can be observed in the other two countries studied. In fact, policies in the main forest-rich regions of Cameroon (South and East) are surprisingly uniform, especially when compared to variations within the Brazilian Amazon, let alone the Indonesian archipelago. Three local case-studies were deemed sufficient to provide the reader with an impression of the diversity of forest-related policies researchers could come across in Cameroon.

Case-studies	Sphere	Criterion 1 Importance	Criterion 2 Diversity	Criterion 3 Complementarity
National forest-related policies (Yaoundé, Douala)	National	As national forest policies that interact with the local sphere	As the only representative of policies at the national sphere	
Forest-related policies in Dimako (Eastern Province)	Local (council)	The main site for French ODA in the forest sector and the site of the first council forest	An example of forest management by local government (council)	
Forest-related policies in Campo-Ma'an National Park (Southern Province)	Local (national park)	One of the most visible protected areas in Cameroon with its historical links to the Chad-Cameroon pipeline	An example of conservation policies in Cameroon	A case-study that has benefited from less research than Dja reserve or Korup National Park
Timber production policies in FMUs 09-021 and 09-024 (Ma'an, Southern Province)	Local (FMUs)	FMU 09-021 was the first concession to benefit from FSC certification in Cameroon	An example of timber production policies and the concessionary system	Two examples that have never been studied in depth, unlike FMUs managed by Rougier or Pallisco

Table II. — The selection of case-studies according to the three main criteria.

In order to investigate each of these case-studies, the relevant cities and states were visited, where two types of data collection were carried out. First, grey and academic literature, previous studies, correspondence, reports and governmental documents were collected wherever possible, providing a background of information on the case-studies in question and helping orient the researcher towards relevant issues and actors.

Secondly, a large number of interviews were carried out, totalling some 109 for the entire study on Cameroonian forest policies. Identification of key actors and interviewees was based both on existing literature and “snowballing”, whereby each interviewee is asked which other actors he or she would recommend the researcher meet next. Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured fashion and based on a small number of questions such as (i) how would you describe the organisation you work for and what is its history? (ii) what are your daily activities? Do you have any projects underway or that you have taken part in? (iii) Whom do you work with most often? And (iv) the interviewee was asked to define a number of concepts (sustainable development, sustainable forest management, participation, conservation and preservation). The data provided by question (iv) will be analysed separately and in comparison with Brazilian and Indonesian interviewees in a future study.

Data were collected on paper rather than on tape. Although this method of recording may not be as accurate as using a tape, it enabled the researcher to save considerable amounts of time and, more importantly, it allowed interviewees to speak more freely. Recording interviews by tape has been known to prevent interviewees from freely expressing their views on delicate issues such as that of deforestation.

Compared to Brazil and Indonesia, sources available on Cameroonian forest policies are relatively homogeneous and poor in reliable quantitative data. The lack of research carried out by local institutions such as Cameroonian universities has been compensated by the high number of consultancy reports available on the issue, but as is mentioned below in the section on research in Cameroonian forest-related policies, these studies tend to be based on quick data collection that lacks the depth of analysis that university studies usually provide the visiting researcher with. Moreover, the failure of state institutions to establish either systematic archives or reliable statistics further complicates the matter. This report uses much less quantitative data than do those on Brazilian and Indonesian forest-related policies and relies on a limited number of sources for factual or background data.

2.3. HISTORY OF CAMEROON

The following section summarises Cameroonian history based on a very small number of sources, notably Gaillard (1989), Ngoh (1996) and Mveng & Beling-Nkoumba (1983), the last one being a school textbook. The lack of Cameroonian research on the country’s own history is likely to be – just like in Indonesia – a consequence of a social taboo because of partial censorship of the press that lasted until 1990 and is still found in some ways today. The fact that

the two main histories of Cameroon have been written (i) by a foreigner (Philippe Gaillard) and (ii) by an Anglophone member of the opposition (Victor Julius Ngoh), whose book was published by a Presbyterian Press, appear to confirm this hypothesis. It is further corroborated by Mveng & Beling-Nkoumba's textbook which devotes a mere 14 pages out of 249 to the period following independence.

2.3.1. From Camarões to Kamerun

Little is obviously known of what is now Cameroon before Europeans caught sight of its coastline because of the absence of any written record. However, archaeologists have been able to reconstruct pre-colonial history based on artefacts left by a number of complex societies that were all characterised by their mobility. Remains of these societies are particularly common in the northern part of the country which was home to the Saos (around Lake Chad, 5th century AD) and the Kanembous (8th century) notably.

Islam is believed to have first arrived from West Africa when the Empire of Kanem-Bornou officially converted in the 11th century AD. Just like nearby kingdoms of Mali and Ghana, Kanem-Bornou remained a loose federation of states that spread across northern Nigeria to Lake Chad and down to Adamaoua. The empire's "golden age" has been established around the early 17th century during which Islam spread across the region, before the empire crumbled at the hands of neighbouring rivals in the 18th century. Further south, while smaller kingdoms in the western Grassfields developed, the centre, east and south of the country were home to mobile Bantu societies. The forested areas of the country are believed to have been occupied for several millennia by Pygmy societies and only saw the arrival of Bantu populations in the 18th century.

Meanwhile, the Europeans were setting up camp at various points along the coast, without venturing more than a few kilometres inland for some four centuries. As in Brazil and Indonesia the first Europeans to arrive were the Portuguese. In 1472, they first sighted Mount Cameroon and the Wouri River which they named *Rio dos Camarões* (River of Shrimps). Although the Portuguese remained firmly established on the islands off the coast (such as Fernando Pô until 1777 and São Tomé and Príncipe until their independence in 1975), their hold on the coast of Cameroon remained tenuous. Whilst slave trade flourished in West Africa starting in the 16th century, the "slave coast" stopped short of Cameroon and the Bassa populations only received few boats from Europe.

The Cameroonian coastline continued to remain on the margins of colonisation even when the Dutch temporarily took over the island of São Tomé in 1599. Gaillard (1989:I-56) explains this lack of interest in Cameroon by the fact that demand was paradoxically weak and quotes a Dutchman, Cuny, as having stated in 1804 that "Since the negroes [from this part of Africa] fiercely covet their freedom and often kill themselves to avoid slavery, they only fetch very low prices among shipowners".²

² « Comme ces nègres sont extrêmement jaloux de leur liberté et qu'ils se donnent souvent la mort eux-mêmes pour se soustraire à l'esclavage, les armateurs n'y attachent qu'un très bas prix » (quoted in Gaillard 1989:56).

European occupation of the coast of Cameroon only began in earnest in the late 18th century when the English Baptist Missionary Society set up a mission in 1792. Yet Britain's fight against slavery following its abolition in its own colonies in 1807 was the determining event in bringing the British to the area after they established a post on Fernando Poo. In 1840, the first European to settle in Cameroon (in Bonabéri, near today's Douala) was John Beecroft. Following this first permanent contact, trade increased with the populations of the Wouri estuary, notably the Douala kings Akwa and Bell, notably for palm oil and ebony. The Spanish only tolerated British (Protestant) missionary activity for a limited time on Fernando Poo and soon expelled all of them, a few of whom settled in "Cameroons" (Douala) such as Alfred Saker.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the country now known as Cameroon, British explorers Dixon Denham, Walter Oudney and Hugh Clapperton reached Lake Chad and made their way south into the land of Peuls in the 1820s. The British were thus the first to grasp Cameroon at its northern tip and along its coastline. However, by 1884 it had become a German colony under the name *Kamerun*. A complex rivalry between the French, British and Germans took place throughout the second half of the nineteenth century that finally led to German colonisation of the country.

Until the 1880s, the British seemed to have the "upper hand" in Cameroon with both commercial and missionary presence, although two German explorers, Barth and Nachtigal, ventured into northern Cameroon in the 1850s and 1860s. Yet apart from a few expeditions inland, virtually nothing was known by the Europeans of Cameroon, which did not prevent the British from intensifying their presence along the coast with the establishment of a consulate in Douala. Edward Hewett, the Queen's representative in the Gulf of Guinea, even made a case for turning Cameroon in a British Protectorate, but Prime Minister William Gladstone voiced his opposition to the project, thus giving more time to Germany to consider colonising the country.

Yet increasing French presence further south in Central Africa worried the British and finally tipped the balance in favour of Hewett's plea. In February 1884, the Crown officially requested Hewett to declare the area around Victoria Mission (today's Limbe) a crown colony; but at the same time, Nachtigal was given the same task by the German government. As both ships sped towards the coast of Cameroon, the German vessel *Möwe* arrived only hours before the British *Flirt* got to Douala, and King Bell had already signed an agreement with German authorities on 14 July 1884. On 15 October that year, the German government made public the creation of the German Protectorate of *Kamerun*, which the French and British could only recognise at the Berlin Conference that began a month later.

In 1885, German authorities thus controlled little more than a coastline and a population whose European component was still mainly British, yet the coast was clear for colonisation of the interior; the faster the Germans could get to the borders of *Kamerun*, the further inland these would be, mainly at the expense of French Equatorial Africa or AEF.

2.3.2. German Expansion and Retreat

History books in France and Cameroon tend to depict the period of German colonisation as particularly violent (“machetes and machine guns”³ is the title of the section in Gaillard’s book covering this period [1989:I-73]). However, it is also recognised that this perception was partly influenced by the French who tried to legitimise their occupation of eastern Cameroon after the First World War. It is possible that violent means were used more commonly during German occupation than during the French period simply because the French merely inherited an already largely “pacified” Cameroonian colony that the Germans had invaded *manu militari*.

Setting the comparison between German and French colonial styles aside, German authorities focused on “opening up” Cameroon to colonisation as soon as the country had been secured on paper as a colony. *Kamerun* was to be colonised in three directions: (i) from Douala, renamed Kamerunstadt, to Bali in the West, (ii) from Kribi to Yaoundé and north to Lake Chad following caravan routes, and (iii) from Kribi to Yaoundé and eastwards in the direction of German East Africa (now Tanzania) since Kaiser William II dreamed of a German East-West axis across the continent.

It took approximately two decades – from 1890 to 1910 – for German authorities to conquer the whole of Cameroon. After two years organising an expedition from Kribi, Captain Richard Kund reached Jaunde (now spelt Yaoundé) in 1889 which they decided to use as a base for future expeditions inland. The conquest of the North was more problematic as it turned out to be the scene of a race between the three main European powers – Britain from the West, Germany from the South and France from the East. In particular, Adamaoua was claimed by all three: by Britain as being on the route between the Niger and the Nile which it both occupied, by Germany as the “natural” hinterland of *Kamerun* and by France as a way of linking Western with Equatorial French Africa (AOF with AEF). It was not until 1900 that the Germans secured the northern part of Cameroon that stretches to Lake Chad, the British having established the protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the French having managed to wrestle Oubangui and Chari (today’s Central African Republic) from Rabah, a Sudanese warlord.

It took as long and considerably more bloodshed to incorporate the forested regions of the East and South into the German colony. The advancing German army met with fierce opposition from the Bulu, the Bassa and the Bakoko in the 1890s and further inland with the Maka in the region of Abong Mbang, where the rebellions are finally crushed in 1907. The Germans eventually succeeded in pushing East to the Sangha and Ngoko rivers where local populations had already been trading ivory and palm oil with the French for over a decade.

As Gaillard points out, the style of German colonisation was distinct from that of the French or the British: “the Second Reich did not want to colonise. Its intentions were merely limited to supporting German traders. As a result of this orientation, the German empire did not refer to a

³ « A la machette et à la mitrailleuse ».

specific ideology, unlike the so-called *mission civilisatrice* of the French Republic, or the British white man's burden."^{4,5} The commercial focus of German occupation saw the light in the second period of German colonisation in Cameroon in the form of a system inspired by the great concessions that the French had established in the Congo and Gabon and the creation of large-scale plantations, particularly in the West.

In 1896 and 1899 respectively, Cameroon's two German concession companies were created, soberly called the *Gesellschaft Süd Kamerun* and the *Gesellschaft Nordwest Kamerun* which together covered about two fifths of the colony. The *Süd Kamerun* is of particular interest here as it occupied a vast area in the southeast, but managed little more than to invert the direction of local trade, from one turned towards the French possessions on the east bank of the Sangha to one resolutely turned towards Yaoundé to which it was going to be linked by road. Just like Coquery Vidrovitch's (2001) account of concessions in French colonies of Central Africa, Gaillard (1989:I-101) points out that "these huge zones of exploitation of the land and forced labour were everything but a success, leading to economic growth without development or even any profit, and at tragic human costs".⁶

Despite having been in the hands of Germany for over two decades, it was not until 1911 that the boundaries of German *Kamerun* were finally fixed, although those were to change again when the colony was handed over to the British and French. *Kamerun*'s border with British Nigeria and Spanish Guinea had both been fixed in 1885, but the Germans had felt left out of the colonial game in North Africa when, following the 1904 *Entente Cordiale*, the French left Egypt to the British and the British left Morocco to the French.

Conflict simmered between the French and Germans over Morocco and an agreement was only reached between the two powers in 1911 when France handed over a wide strip of land along eastern and southern *Kamerun* to Germany. To the annoyance of the French, this strip went as far south as to reach the northern bank of the Congo River, thus giving access to the River for the Germans and splitting French Equatorial Africa into two (Middle Congo and Gabon to the southwest, Oubangui-Chari and Chad to the northeast). A small strip of land known as the "duck's beak" (*bed de canard*) because of its shape was handed over from *Kamerun* to French Chad so as to give the French access to the Logone River.

On the eve of the First World War, colonial rivalries between France and Germany in particular even coloured domestic Cameroonian politics. Following the expulsion of Doualas from the town, Chief Rudolf Douala Manga Bell sent official protests to Berlin but to no avail, sparking strikes in December 1913. Rudolf Douala Manga was accused of high treason in May 1914 after requesting help from Britain and was hanged on 9 August, barely a week after Germany declared

⁴ « Le II^e Reich ne voulait pas coloniser ; son intention se limitait à soutenir les marchands allemands. Il restera quelque chose de ce dessein empirique dans l'absence de références idéologiques comparables aux grandes déclarations françaises sur la mission civilisatrice de la République, ou anglaises sur le fardeau de l'homme blanc. » (Gaillard 1989:I-95).

⁵ In fact, the White Man's Burden, a poem by Rudyard Kipling, describes the costs of colonisation ("The blame of those ye better, The hate of those ye guard-- The cry of hosts ye humour"), but it was mainly American imperialists who caught onto the phrase in their description of colonisation as a noble enterprise.

⁶ « Ces gigantesques zones d'exploitation du territoire et de la main-d'œuvre forcée auront été tout sauf un succès, entraînant une croissance sans développement et même sans profit, à un coût humain tragique ».

war on Russia. Likewise, Paul Samba, branded today as a Cameroonian hero, was executed on the same day in Ebolowa after having tried to organise an uprising. It would only be a matter of weeks before *Kamerun* was invaded by the Allies.

2.3.3. French and British Cameroons

The Great War saw the opening of fronts all over Africa, including Cameroon. By September 1914, the British had conquered Douala and moved onto Victoria, Buea and the North, while the French moved into eastern and southern Cameroon. After having pushed the German forces into Spanish Guinea, the British and French split Cameroon amongst themselves in 1916, the British agreeing to give France a larger part of the country allegedly to boost the morale back home, ravaged by the Battle of Verdun (Gaillard 1989:I-110). Britain kept two strips along the border with Nigeria (known as Southern and Northern Cameroons) whilst France took over the rest of the country, bringing the 1911 land acquisitions back into AEF (although failing to hand over the “duck’s beak” back to Cameroon).

The war had come at a great cost, however. Plantations were abandoned and men had been enrolled in the war effort, leaving the country in a state of famine. Rubber production which in the early 1910s accounted for over half of Cameroon’s exports had all but ground to a halt. As for education, German authorities had not made it a priority and it had mainly been ensured by missionaries, namely the Lutheran mission from Basel which had replaced the British in Victoria, American Presbyterians who had settled in Kribi as early as 1871, and the Catholic missions of the south and west.

In 1920, when the partition of Cameroon between the French and the British was made official, it was agreed that all former German colonies would be governed as mandates under the League of Nations as a compromise between the United States and the European Allies. This granted Cameroon the obligation by colonial powers to send annual reports to the League of Nations and the respect of freedom of thought and religion as well as the banning of military presence on Cameroonian soil. In practice, however, Cameroon was ruled much as a colony on both sides of the divide and the means of governing differed little between Nigeria and British Cameroons on the one hand, and French Cameroon and AEF on the other.

Public affairs were managed in distinctly different ways in French and British Cameroons. In French Cameroon, policies focused on wiping out all traces of German occupation and turning the colony into an undeniably French territory. The French language replaced German everywhere and German-language books were even banned. As in other French colonies an extremely centralised administrative power was established with at its head a Commissioner of the Republic (*Commissaire de la République*). According to Gaillard (1989:I-123), French colonisation relied on two pillars:

1. The *indigénat* was the term used to refer both to the indigenous (African) population and the system of racial segregation that permeated colonial society in Cameroon. The *indigénat*

population had different rights from the French and were even subject to specific courts of law.

2. Forced labour was inherited from the Germans and maintained as a tenet of agricultural production.

Politicisation of French-speaking Cameroonian society remained minimal during the interwar years. A small number of pro-German societies appeared but the Francophile organisations were obviously more favoured by the colonial power, including the French Cameroonian Youth Organisation (*Jeunesse camerounaise française* or Jeucafra) created by Commissioner Rhicard Brunot in 1938.

Transport infrastructure gradually developed in French Cameroon. After having inherited from an already comprehensive road network from the Germans, French authorities, which had moved the capital from Douala to Yaoundé, opened the first railway between both cities in 1927. In 1937 a regular air route linked Douala to Paris in a mere four days. Following the Second World War, five-year plans devoted large funds to building further infrastructure, including a dam near Edéa in the 1950s which provided the country with 1.3 billion kWh of electricity a year (*i.e.*, 10 times the consumption of the whole of AOF).

The greatest legacy of the French during the interwar period, however, was cultural and institutional. As Gaillard (1989:I-147) put it, “The French enjoyed doing what appeared natural to them, as they did elsewhere: to make laws and share their culture as their supreme gift [to Cameroon]”.⁷ Education was the principal means of sharing this gift, summarised in the all-encompassing French colonial expression “Our ancestors the Gauls” (*nos ancêtres les Gaulois*). The colonial government competed with missionaries in providing Cameroonians with a minimal amount of education, but also of access to health, of which the most famous actor is undoubtedly Eugène Jamot who was famous for inoculating vast amounts of the population against sleeping sickness (whilst also making 700 of his patients go blind because of high doses of medication).

In contrast, the impact of British colonisation in Northern and Southern Cameroons was much more tenuous. Historians agree on the fact that British authorities never devoted much time or effort to this small addition to their already vast empire; in fact, British Cameroons was never even equipped with its own government and depended directly on Lagos instead. British Cameroons represented a mere 2.5% of the population of Nigeria and only 8% of its territory. In 1938, a grand total of 12 Europeans were permanently based in the whole of Northern Cameroons.

However, in taking over Southern Cameroons in particular, the British inherited vast plantations that the Germans had originally set up, but faced with the lack of British interest in running the plantations, British authorities finally accepted to let the original German owners return. Unlike French Cameroons where the thrust of development focused on infrastructure, the British favoured the development of agriculture which had reached its pre-war levels in 1931 and saw production triple in the next seven years. Until the Second World War, most of the exports still

⁷ « Comme il lui est naturel, ici comme ailleurs, le Français se délectera à faire des lois et le cadeau suprême de sa culture ».

went to Germany, but as tea plantations spread across the Grassfields, an increasing percentage of exports went to Britain. As for health and education, the British relied much more heavily on missionary activity in the Cameroons. In 1938, state schools had a total intake of 1,070 pupils, as opposed to 1,531 in schools managed by “Native Authorities” and over 7,000 in missionary schools.

The outbreak of the Second World War had a much more decisive influence on French Cameroon than on the British colony. Following the rapid invasion of France by the German and Italian armies in May and June 1940, the status of Cameroon remained ambiguous. Commissioner Richard Brunot did officially rally the Vichy government on 20 July, but the following month the colony welcomed René Pleven (who was to play a decisive role in the French Committee for National Liberation) and General Leclerc, both close allies of De Gaulle who had fled to London. On the footsteps of this decision, Félix, Eboué, Commissioner of Chad, also got the rest of AEF to rally with the Free French Forces (*Forces françaises libres*) which would fight alongside the Allies in the liberation of France from German occupation.

In 1944, General de Gaulle made his famous Brazzaville speech in which he made vague promises for “emancipation” (rather than independence) whilst setting a base for the future French Union (*Union française*), the new name for the French colonial empire under which colonies officially became overseas departments and territories. Likewise, the French postwar Parliament (*Assemblée Nationale*) was opened to representatives of the colonies for the very first time.

The postwar period was characterised by rapid politicisation among Cameroonian society. One of the events that prompted this change was a decree issued in August 1944 authorising trade unions to be set up in France’s African colonies. “It had the effect of a tornado, followed by the hatching of a myriad trade unions of all shapes and sizes, like mushrooms sprouting after a bout of rain”,⁸ notes Gaillard (1989:I-168). The following year, strikes headed by a number of trade unions broke out into riots in which youth known as “sand-sand boys” ransacked the centre of Douala.

These events in turn galvanised opposition to indigenous political mobilisation among white settlers who shot indiscriminately among crowds of Africans without managing to take out trade union leaders. Yes with the apparent wind of change over the French empire following the Brazzaville Conference, Cameroon was equipped with a representative assembly (*Assemblée representative du Cameroun* or ARCAM) with 24 Cameroonians out of 40 representatives, whilst Cameroon was turned into a trust territory (*tutelle*) by the United Nations. In 1952, ARCAM was replaced with ATCAM (Territorial Assembly of Cameroon or *Assemblée territoriale du Cameroun*) comprised of 50 members, of whom 32 were Cameroonian, and elected by 580,000 Cameroonians. Four years later, ATCAM was dissolved and ALCAM (Legislative Assembly of Cameroon or *Assemblée législative du Cameroun*) was set up in its place with the express task of preparing the country for independence (Mveng & Beling-Koumba 1983:195).

⁸ « C’est la tornade, suivie de l’éclosion, comme champignons après la pluie, d’une myriade de syndicats de toutes tailles et de toutes espèces ».

The late 1940s and 1950s were marked by the birth of a number of trade unions and other associations which also acted as political parties both at the Cameroonian and Pan-African levels (*i.e.*, within Sub-Saharan French Africa). Following the 1946 Bamako Congress, the African Democratic Rally (*Rassemblement démocratique africain* or RDA) was founded with close ties to the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français* or PCF). A couple of years later, the Cameroonian section of RDA was born and named Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (*Union des populations du Cameroun* or UPC). Alongside UPC were a number of other parties, notably the Cameroonian Democratic Bloc (*Bloc démocratique camerounais* or BDC) of which Ahmadou Ahidjo was a member before he created his own political party in 1958 known as the Cameroonian Union (*Union camerounaise* or UC). Additional parties included the Cameroonian Social Union (*Union sociale camerounaise* or USC) and the Cameroonian Social Evolution (*Evolution sociale camerounaise* or ESOCAM).

UPC and BDC were the two main political actors of 1950s' Cameroon. On the one hand, UPC demanded (i) immediate independence from France and (ii) reunification with British Cameroons, using conflictual means such as petitions to reach this end, rather than seeking representation in ATCAM. On the other hand, BDC demanded no more than Cameroonian membership of the French Union (*Union française*) and was well represented in ATCAM, although the latter was dominated by the USC party.

At a time when the French Union was rocked by the fall of Điện Biên Phủ in Indochina and the unexpected general insurrection in Algeria, the status of Cameroon *vis-à-vis* France came to the forefront of the colony's political agenda. In 1955, UPC took things one step further by unilaterally declaring the end of the Cameroonian Trust Territory before its leader Um Nyobé took to the hills and launched an armed struggle against the police and army. UPC was banned, but in Bamiléké country in particular, the struggle was violent and roads were cut whilst riots led to dozens of deaths in a mere week in May 1955. Repression followed, with arrests without charge of hundreds of UPC sympathisers. The 1956 local elections were a failure after UPC called for a general boycott, resulting in up to 88% abstention in Douala and 61% in Yaoundé, illustrating how well the party was followed. That same year, a generalised insurrection took place that centred around Bassa country south of Douala. Repression by the army was brutal.

In a bid to reduce the popularity of UPC, Ramadier, the French Governor of Guinea who arrived in Cameroon to solve the crisis, offered Prime Minister Mbida and his vice Ahmadou Ahidjo to cut the grass under UPC's feet by getting them to demand independence and reunification as well. Faced with Mbida's refusal to go with the plan, the Commissioner encouraged the cabinet (led by Ahidjo) to resign, eventually forcing Mbida to resign. Ahidjo was elected in his place by ALCAM upon the Commissioner's proposition. In 1958, Um Nyobe was killed whilst leading his armed struggle, dealing a deadly blow to UPC.

The path was now free towards full independence. An Ordinance issued by the French Republic on 20 December 1958 mentioned Cameroonian independence within a year, followed by a resolution fixing the date of independence to 1st January 1960. Political violence did not stop as raids were regularly carried out by UPC sympathisers on Douala, forcing many of the 15,000 white settlers to leave the country in 1959. In the last days of French Cameroon, Ahidjo even benefited from the arrival of French troops to quash the revolts in Bamiléké country.

The situation was decidedly different in British Cameroons. Whilst the debate in French Cameroon focused on issues of independence and reunification, the nascent political movements of British Cameroons argued instead about whether the territory should join French Cameroon or Nigeria, its colonial relay at the time. Moreover, it was almost a decade after ARCAM had been established that British Cameroons was equipped with a representative chamber in 1954, before which all decisions were taken in Lagos. Political parties had not waited for the creation of a representative body, however, to be set up, like John Ngu Foncha's Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), created in 1951, and Endeley's Cameroons Federal Union (CFU), founded four years earlier.

Debates between the two parties immediately cristallised on the two alternatives of the future status of the British Cameroons: on the one hand, Foncha advocated reunification with French Cameroon and sought a *rapprochement* with UPC in this respect. On the other, Endeley argued in favour of unification with Nigeria on the grounds of cultural and linguistic ties with Lagos. As Gaillard expressed it, "between Lagos and Yaoundé, it was a question of whether the sardine would end up being eaten by a whale or a shark"⁹ (1989:I-244). In the meantime, British Cameroons had become an autonomous region in 1954 with two provinces, Northern and Southern Cameroons. From 1959, when Nigeria became independent, to 1st October 1961, when the status of the Cameroons was to be solved, The colony was ruled directly by London.

Eventually, the debate split British Cameroons down the middle: after a first attempt at a referendum in the North in 1959 which resulted in the electorate voting to have the question postponed, Britain held a second one in both British Cameroons under the auspices of the United Nations on 11 and 12 February 1961 to fix the future of the territories. Whilst Southern Cameroons voted 234,000 votes against 98,000 in favour of reunification with eastern (formerly French) Cameroons, Northern Cameroons voted by 146,000 votes against 98,000 for unification with Nigeria. The outcome of the Northern referendum is what prompted Mveng & Beling-Nkoumba to proclaim that "this day is considered in Cameroon a day of national mourning"¹⁰ (1983:215).

2.3.4. *Ahidjo's Cameroon*

From day one of the Republic of Cameroon, France vowed to protect the newly independent state. The secret agreement between the two countries signed five days before independence included a clause committing the French to quash the UPC rebellion which was the main threat to the country's existence. The end of UPC was nigh, though: despite the fact that attacks on Douala took place even on Independence Day 1960, French secret services managed to poison the president of UPC living in exile in Geneva, on 15 October that year, leading to a split in the party and a winding down of guerrilla operations that had marked the year 1960 in Bassa and

⁹ « Entre Lagos et Yaoundé, leur problème est celui de la sardine appelée à choisir d'être avalée par la baleine ou par le requin ».

¹⁰ « Ce jour est considéré au Cameroun comme un jour de deuil national ».

Bamileké countries. The last groups of insurgents fell in late 1961 to the harsh repression led by French forces.

Muslim Northerner Ahmadou Ahidjo naturally followed on from being the leader of autonomous Cameroon (1958-1960) to become the President of the Republic of Cameroon in 1960. He stood at the head of a political structure almost identical to that of the French Fifth Republic that de Gaulle had succeeded in getting established a mere two years beforehand. Ahidjo proved to be more of a pragmatist than an ideologist, although he carried out the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1966 and got himself to be called El Hajj after that.

The Republic also inherited the thorny issue of Anglophone Cameroon which has marred Cameroonian politics to this day. Once Southern Cameroons voted in favour of tying the knot with the Republic, it was decided that reunification would take place in seven months. However, nobody had actually prepared the political structure of a reunited Cameroon, on top of which Southern Cameroons felt in even more of a minority after Northern Cameroons had decided to join Nigeria instead.

It was finally decided that a Federal Republic would be set up with two states, Eastern and Western Cameroon, each with their own government and assembly. The head of the state was to remain Ahmadou Ahidjo, but he chose as his vice-President John Ngu Foncha (who was also Prime Minister of Western [Anglophone] Cameroon). In practice, however, Anglophone Cameroon and national politics were to be heavily dominated by French-speaking institutions, leading many observers to state that “Cameroon is a French-speaking bilingual country”¹¹ (Gaillard 1989:II-34). Yet the disparity in salaries and prices between the two states forced authorities to maintain import taxes between the French- and English-speaking parts of the country for several years.

Over his two decades as President, Ahidjo progressively ensured unity for Cameroon, often at the expense of democratic principles. His first endeavour was to bring together all major Cameroonian parties into one Grand Unified Party of which he would of course be head. As early as 1961 he called for a *parti unifié* (Ngoh 1996:238) and pressed his idea home in Western Cameroon when he met party leaders during his 1962 visit. In 1966, he melted all Eastern Cameroonian parties along with his own UC into a single party, the Cameroon National Union (*Union nationale camerounaise* or UNC) and eventually got all of Western Cameroon’s parties (Foncha’s KNDP, Endeley’s CPNC and Muna’s Cameroon United Congress) to join. By doing so, Ahidjo had effectively signed the death warrant of Cameroon’s multiparty system.

The next step consisted in ousting Foncha – an easy move once the 1970 elections came up, in which Ahidjo was reelected with 97.65% of the vote and got Solomon Tandén Muna elected in Foncha’s place with 99.94%. Muna was much more amenable to close ties between Buea and Yaoundé and less of an autonomist than Foncha, which facilitated Ahidjo’s third step – abolish Cameroon’s federal system.

It nevertheless came as a surprise to most observers when Ahidjo declared on 6th May 1972 that he was organising a referendum on the 20th to let Cameroonians decide whether they wanted to

¹¹ « Le Cameroun est un pays francophone bilingue ».

maintain a federal system, claiming that having three governments was a needless and costly means of governing the country. Anglophone autonomists did not even have time to organise a campaign and with a large French-speaking majority, the decision to create a “United Republic of Cameroon” was approved and proclaimed on 20 May 1972, which became the country’s main national holiday. As autonomists put it, they had the choice between ‘oui’ and ‘yes’ (Gaillard 1989:52).

Three years later, Ahidjo was reelected (his party being the only one) and named Paul Biya as his Prime Minister, and elected once again in 1980. His successor Biya eventually cut the “united” out of the country’s name, much to the anger of Anglophones, as “Republic of Cameroon” had been the name of the country between 1 January 1960 and 1 October 1961, before Southern Cameroons joined its French-speaking neighbour. The cycle was complete and Southern Cameroons completely assimilated, except for the language issue where English is staunchly maintained over the use of French to this day.

Such was the concentration of power in the hands of Ahidjo well beyond the “Anglophone” issue that Gaillard states that

Ahidjo was not only at the head of the executive: he *was* the executive. With the exception of the First Republic, there was never even any pretend government around him. The Council of Ministers was abolished in 1961 only to be re-established in 1964, after which it barely convened more than twice a year, and even then only for keeping up appearances. In order to make things clear, as if that was necessary, a presidential instruction dated 14 August 1975 defined the Council as “a customary authority [*sic*] whose consultation is not compulsory and which has no effect on the validity of presidential acts”.¹²

Gaillard (1989:II-65)

The country’s economy, however, flourished under Ahidjo’s rule. As Aerts *et al.* (2000) point out, the history of Cameroonian economy under Ahidjo can be divided into two periods, 1960-76 and 1976 onwards. Throughout the 1960s and up to 1976, GDP grew at a steady rate of 4% per annum whilst growth was evenly spread out between the country’s four main sectors – agriculture, extractive industries, manufacturing and the tertiary sector which accounted for half of Cameroon’s GDP.

France was bent on supporting the regime it had contributed to creating and between 1960 and 1965, French ODA accounted for 20% of the country’s public expenses, as well as covering most military expenses due to the conflict with UPC sympathisers. However, apart from the construction of several dams as well as the Trans-Cameroon Railway and the port of Douala, transport infrastructure remained much the same.

¹² « Ahidjo ne fut pas seulement le chef de l’exécutif ; il fut le pouvoir exécutif. Sauf sous la première République, il n’y eut jamais fût-ce un semblant de gouvernement autour de lui. Supprimé en 1961, le conseil des ministres fut rétabli en 1964, mais il ne se réunit que rarement plus de deux fois par an, et liturgiquement ; afin que tout soit clair, s’il en était besoin, une instruction présidentielle du 14 août 1975 le définit comme ‘une instance coutumière (*sic*) dont la consultation est facultative et sans aucun effet sur la validité des actes présidentiels ».

It was only from 1976 onwards that Cameroon started sticking out of the African crowd. Fed up with oil companies sitting indefinitely on potential sources, Ahidjo fixed the term of oil concessions to a few years, kick-starting oil production in Cameroon in a tremendous way. Almost overnight, GDP growth increased from 4% to an average of 13% per annum in the period 1977-81 (Aerts *et al.* 2000:16) and was maintained thereafter at 8% per annum until 1985. Oil suddenly became Cameroon's main export product, which it has remained ever since, and provided the state with such a large income that its role and importance in the national economy grew considerably, especially with an increase in civil servant wages. This in turn made the country's economy more vulnerable to variations in international oil prices that were to shake the country from the mid-1980s onwards.

2.3.5. Biya's Cameroon

In pure Ahidjo style, the President of Cameroon announced on 4 November 1982 that he was resigning. Although it is not clear why he took this decision, it has been established that Ahidjo was suffering from health problems; instead of remaining President whilst letting his entourage rule temporarily for him (as was the case of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, as Gaillard [1989:II-73] points out), he preferred stepping down and making sure his Prime Minister Paul Biya was elected vice-president by the UNC. Biya thus took over the Presidency in the absence of Ahidjo who travelled to Europe for medical treatment.

Ahidjo eventually got caught at his own game. Once Biya got to power, he secured it by preventing Ahidjo from ever getting close to the Presidency again. When Ahidjo returned to Cameroon in December 1982, had no intention of letting Biya rule to country alone and began by reaffirming his position as head of the UNC party. The next step was to enshrine the single party system in the Constitution and increase its importance *vis-à-vis* the state as a means for Ahidjo, as the party leader, to challenge the Presidency. However, Biya refused to implement these measures and took further steps to isolate Ahidjo and his followers from the Presidency. In June 1983, Biya formed a new government, thereby purging it of all of Ahidjo's sympathisers and causing the latter's outrage. Another four cabinet reshuffles would take place by February 1984 (Ngho 1996:292).

Yet Ahidjo did not admit defeat. Despite the fact that he had moved to his property in southern France, Biya declared in August 1983 that a plot to overthrow the President had been uncovered and that measures would be taken, such as reshuffling the Cameroonian police. Yet in April of the following year an attempted putsch really did take place, led by the Presidential Guard allegedly dominated by officers from northern Cameroon (where Ahidjo came from). For almost two days, confusion reigned over Yaoundé and it was only late on the second day that Biya announced on Radio Cameroon that the attempted coup had failed.

This prompted President Biya to remove from power anyone or anything that was reminiscent of the Ahidjo years. The name of the country was shortened from United Republic of Cameroon to "Republic of Cameroon" in a bid to erase the 1972 referendum from collective memory.

Likewise, the UNC was dissolved in 1985 and a new political party was founded known as the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM; in French, *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais* or RDPC).

Biya's honeymoon at the head of the country was shortlived, however. The year 1985 saw oil prices fall sharply, causing an immediate decrease in the value of the country's exports: from FCFA 424 billion for 1984-5, the balance fell to 28 billion in 1985-6 and -176 billion the following year (Aerts *et al.* 2000:33). By 1988-9 it was back in the black again, but the crisis was not over yet as international agricultural prices also fell in the late 1980s and early 1990s, only confirming Cameroon's great vulnerability to fluctuations in international prices of raw materials. According to Ngoh, a number of domestic factors only further contributed to the economic downturn, such as capital drain (with civil servants banking their money in foreign banks), widespread embezzlement and an extravagant lifestyle that government officials proved unwilling to give up even in times of crisis (1996:300).

By the late 1980s Cameroon had joined the queue of African countries seeking support from International Financial Institutions. In 1989 Cameroon embarked on its first Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) with the World Bank and IMF in a bid to fight the economic crisis. As a result of conditions set by the IMF, the government ear-marked several companies for privatisation, including HEVECAM (see section on Forest policies in Campo Ma'an National Park) and Cameroon Airlines. Likewise, civil servants were laid off in large numbers and the government further undertook two salary reductions and even failed to pay civil servants for two months in 1993.

The period 1990-1991 was a turning point in Cameroonian politics which saw the return to multi-party politics which Ahidjo had got rid of in 1966, followed by the ghost town operations in the west of the country. Several factors have been put forward to explain why Biya opened up to demands for greater democracy. First and foremost, demonstrations in February and March 1990 and general discontent among the Cameroonian population at the way the government was handling the economic (and social) crisis pushed Biya to repeat one of de Gaulle's phrases, *Je vous ai compris* (I understood you). However, historians view this decision in the wake of the wind of change from Eastern Europe and Latin America which had both witnessed the rise to power of democratic regimes in the late 1980s. International Financial Institutions which Cameroon now depended upon had also their role to play in encouraging the regime to open up to greater democracy, and President Mitterrand's speech at the France – Africa Summit at La Baule in 1990 might have also pushed Cameroon in this direction. As a consequence, the first opposition party, the Anglophone-dominated Social Democratic Front (SDF) was founded in Bamenda in May that year.

By 1991, the main opposition parties agreed to form a Coordination of Opposition Parties and demanded that the country take a new course beginning with the creation of a transitional government. When this proposal was met with a blunt refusal by the President, the opposition parties launched a ghost town operation which consisted in getting all opposition sympathisers to stop economic and social activities. The operation was followed by a majority of the population in many western cities and especially Douala where the closure of shops and public buildings was enforced by youths who also pillaged, looted and burned parts of the city.

The deployment of troops in troubled areas and the lack of unity among the opposition led to the ghost town operation being abandoned within a month, leaving some 400 dead according to Ngoh (1996:310). However, this event – the worst one in Cameroon’s history since the rebellions of the early 1960s – prompted Biya to take a series of measures. A Tripartite conference was held in Yaoundé between CPDM, SDF and the newly formed UNDP (*Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès*) from which a declaration was issued. Among other measures, Biya agreed to lift the ban on public meetings and recognised the right to create associations (including GICs or *groupements d’intérêt commun*), one of the tenets of local and community-based development and forest management that has been used ever since.

Presidential elections in 1992, however, saw Biya remain in power with a narrow majority (39.9% of the vote, closely followed by SDF candidate John Fru Ndi with 35.9%). Some observers blamed the opposition for the outcome of the elections, pointing at the failure of opposition parties to put forward a single candidate; others accused Biya of electoral fraud, as documented by the National Democratic Institute (Ngoh 1996:313). Either way, Biya’s power was now legitimised through (more or less) democratic means. The period between 1992 and 2008 has been characterised by political stability and the lack of a viable opposition to Biya and CPDM, despite the Presidential elections of 2004 in which he allegedly won over 70% of the vote (which the opposition denounced as a massive exercise of fraud).

In the early 1990s, the failure of the economy of Cameroon (and of its neighbours) to pick up again prompted international financial institutions to push for a devaluation of the CFA franc which the French government undertook to operate. Since 1988, the IMF and the World Bank had been pushing for a devaluation of both the West and Central African CFA franc because they were pegged on a strong currency (the French franc) which made exports particularly disastrous in such times of crisis. Against the will of all African governments concerned, the French government finally decided to halve the value of the CFA franc from FF 0.02 to FF 0.01 in January 1994. According to Aerts *et al.* (2000:136), the increase in food prices between December 1993 and December 1994 almost reached 50%. Yet according to the same authors, the economy slowly picked up again towards the end of the decade, mainly thanks to a 10% cut in civil servant staff numbers and despite massive public debts.

Since the turn of the new century, however, the country’s economy has been spiralling downwards again. The country even failed to reduce its external debt sufficiently in 2004 (the so-called “completion point”) for the IMF to release funds for the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Programme which would have provided the country with debt relief and low-interest loans.

Just like in the 1980s, Cameroon fell prey yet again to international price variations when food prices began shooting up again in 2007. In February 2008, continuing price rises along with the Parliament’s decision to approve a constitutional change enabling Biya to stand for a third mandate brought angry youths galvanised by the opposition in the streets following a strike by taxi drivers in Yaoundé and Douala. The worst political violence since the 1990 ghost town operation ran out of steam after a week when the army was deployed in the country’s main cities. Official death tolls were fixed at some 20 or so dead, but according to other observers they might be as high as several hundred. Biya has since attempted to enforce greater control on transport

between cities, particularly between Yaoundé and the west of the country, to prevent discontent from spreading from the opposition's heartland to the political capital.

Biya solved neither problem that forced people out onto the streets, however, and according to many analysts, the 75 year-old President's days in power are counted.

2.4. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMEROON

Unlike Brazil, policies of the forest sector itself constitute the core of forest-related policies in Cameroon. Agricultural policies have only played a marginal part in shaping the issue of forest management, just like non-timber industry, energy and infrastructure apart from the impact of road-building in the Eastern Province (although this could change in the near future with plans to dam the Ntem River and build a railway linking Geovic's concession with the coast). The bulk of forest-related policies, however, have *intentionally* focused on forests and are described in the following section entitled "forest policies".

2.4.1. Forest Policies

In contrast with Brazil and Indonesia, the history of Cameroon and of its forest policies has largely been characterised by continuity and stability since the colonial period in spite of minor political disruptions in 1982, 1990-1 and 2008. Establishing a cut-off line for this study is thus somewhat of an artificial exercise but has been set at 1960 at the date of independence of French Cameroon for practical purposes. Colonial forest legislation is nevertheless briefly described in the section below.

2.4.1.1. Historical Background

Linjouom (2008) provides a thorough study of the evolution of forest legislation in Cameroon since the early years of colonisation and shows that the legal structure of forestry in Cameroon is historically based on forest legislation of French Indochina and British Gold Coast. The first Cameroonian legislation to be enacted came in the form of two acts approved by Governor von Puttkamer in 1900, one protecting the German colony's forest resources and the other legalising timber production. As Linjouom (2008:76) explains, despite the fact that these laws for implemented for less than twenty years, German forest legislation has left legacies in more ways than one: (i) in French Cameroon, legislation passed in 1922 and 1926 was strongly inspired by the previous legislation introduced by the Germans in 1900; and (ii) in the British Cameroons, legislation was copied on that of Nigeria, itself established by foresters who had trained at the French forestry school of Nancy yet largely inspired on the ground by German traditions in scientific forestry.

Yet French and British legislation differed in many ways. In particular, forest laws in French colonies were all inspired and differed very little from the original French colonial laws passed in Indochina in 1867, which were then applied to Madagascar in 1897 and between 1899 and 1901 in French colonies in Africa (1899 for Middle Congo, 1900 for Senegal and Dependencies, Ivory Coast and Dahomey, and 1901 for French Guinea). The strong similarities between forest laws across France's colonial empire carried on into the 1950s: even at a time when French Africa had begun moving towards independence, 1955 saw a forestry reform across all of AOF, AEF and the trusteeships of Cameroon and Togo which reinforced the state's control over the colonies' forest domain.

In contrast, the British also modelled forest legislation of their colonies on each other, using Gold Coast (Ghana) as a basis; yet Linjouom (2008:73) claims that particularly in Nigeria forest legislation was adapted to local social contexts and unwritten laws applied by local populations. In the British Cameroons as in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the state took over management of many of the forests, but the land remained in the hands of local populations. Moreover, according to Linjouom British legislation made more provisions for maintaining timber stocks than French laws did, *e.g.*, by requiring loggers to plant seven trees for each individual felled.

In French Cameroon, the main reforms took place in 1926 (when, for the first time, legislation went beyond regulating mere timber production) and 1946 (which saw the creation of the Cameroon Forestry Service and establishing a *cahier des charges* for logging companies).¹³ French Cameroon's legislation, which defined the forest domain as "vacant land with no master" (*terres vacantes et sans maître*) (Decree of 3 May 1946), continued to focus almost exclusively on timber production, as illustrated in the text implementing the decree of 3 May 1946:

The text implementing the decree of 3 May 1946 (...) simply regulates logging activities, which confirms the utilitarian focus of this piece of legislation which had been questioned in this same decree. It is a dense text composed of 99 articles unequally distributed in nine sections, almost all of which are devoted to different logging regimes and additionally to certain issues or activities related to them.¹⁴

Linjouom (2008:85).

Despite the 1955 law valid across France's African colonies (which never had time to be implemented because of pending independence in almost all countries involved) and the actual independence of Cameroon, the 1946 decree remained the country's main piece of forest legislation until 1973. 1973 saw major changes in Cameroonian forest legislation, but unlike what might be thought at first, these reforms were influenced to a much greater extent by a desire

¹³ A *cahier des charges* is a document in which the duties of a logging concessionaire are established; these usually concern contributing to or maintaining public infrastructure and services, such as roads, schools and health centres.

¹⁴ « On remarque que le texte d'application du décret du 3 mai 1946 (...) est tout simplement un règlement des exploitations forestières, ce qui confirme l'option utilitariste de cette réglementation, qui semblait battue en brèche dans le décret lui-même : c'est un texte dense, composé de 99 articles inégalement répartis en 9 titres, presque tous consacrés aux différents régimes d'exploitation forestière institués et accessoirement à certaines questions ou activités relatives à celui-ci. »

to harmonise national legislation following the abolition of the federal system than by the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment that had been held the previous year.

The 1981 forest law confirmed this “harmonisation” by further imposing legislation inspired by the French system (*i.e.*, that focused on logging). Among other things, it established the first true forest code (*code forestier*), introduced the first production quotas for certain timber species whilst promoting logging of lesser-used species and raised the percentage of timber to be transformed before export from 20 to 60%. Yet it largely ignored the nascent international debate on the environment despite the fact that Cameroon was already a signatory to a number of Pan-African agreements such as the 1968 African Convention on the conservation of nature and natural resources signed in Algiers.

Moreover, the 1981 reforms split the previously united Forests, Water and Hunting Unit (a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture) into a number of organisations: hunting went to the Directorate (and later Ministry) of Tourism, fishing to the Ministry of Rearing, Fisheries and Animal Industries (*Ministère de l'élevage, des pêches et des industries animales*) whilst forestry remained part of the Ministry of Agriculture. Likewise, two forestry agencies in charge of “regeneration” (ONAREF) and “development” (CENADEFOR) were set up – a dual structure which would prove untenable and eventually resulted in the unification of both organisations in 1990 as ONADEF or National Office for Forest Development (*Office national de développement des forêts*).

2.4.1.2. Nineteen Ninety Four

The 1980s saw the first signs of the dramatic change in the forest policy landscape that Cameroon was going to undergo the following decade. As Linjouom (2008:146) and Meyer (1968:38) point out, Cameroon was certainly equipped with a gradually evolving legislation in the forest domain that was composed of a large number of rules; yet the country had no forest policy *per se* in the sense that the successive governments failed to give the sector a particular direction and specific goals other than the *status quo* characterised by stagnating timber production figures.

By the late 1980s, two factors external to the Cameroonian forest sector began putting pressure on the government to bring about change in forest management. The first came from the national economy that witnessed a downward spiral following the 1985 fall in international oil prices. At the end of the decade, two of Cameroon’s three most promising sources of foreign income, namely oil production and agricultural exports, were in a deep crisis, putting a major onus on the country’s third largest export sector, the timber industry. Such an onus could force forest policies to take two directions: (i) intensify timber production to make up for losses in the other two sectors. This seemed to be the direction which Laurent (1985:54) wanted Cameroon to take when he advocated a sharp reduction in taxes so that the government could show a “firmly expressed will to capture foreign investments”;¹⁵ or (ii) rationalise timber production so as to make it a reliable source of income for the long term.

¹⁵ « une volonté clairement affichée de capter les investissements extérieurs ».

Eventually the second option was favoured over the first as it went much more in the direction of the second external factor to the domestic timber sector. From the international environmental debate that had seen its beginnings with the 1972 Stockholm Conference sprouted a debate focusing on tropical rainforest conservation, encouraged by the first figures on deforestation in the Amazon (1987) and the creation of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP, 1985). By the end of the decade, Canada (which had been spending most of its ODA in Cameroon on the forest sector since 1982), France and the United Kingdom had all established projects in the forest sector to improve silvicultural and logging practices. A 1988 assessment of the Cameroonian forest sector by TFAP also concluded that the forest sector's contribution to national GDP (at the time under 2% of GDP) was vastly below potential and that it was seriously damaging the ecology of the forest resource.

Yet the greatest influence was to come from the Bretton Woods institutions, notably the World Bank. The deep economic crisis that Cameroon had been undergoing since the mid-1980s had enabled the World Bank to play a growing role in the country through its loans, at a time when it had just issued a new forest policy in which the finger was squarely pointed at the timber industry as the main culprit for deforestation. As AFTEN explains,

The economic crisis gave the World Bank and IMF an opportunity to introduce and support far-reaching reforms in the forest sector, which would encourage the sector to contribute to economic growth and strike at the heart of the patronage system. The forest sector was a focal point of three successive structural adjustment programs negotiated between the World Bank, IMF and Cameroon.

AFTEN (2008:7)

The period 1990-1994 proved to be critical for the country's forest sector. From a situation in which foreign logging companies and the state's numerous evolving forest-related organisations were pretty much the only actors in the sector, the policy landscape evolved to one with multiple NGOs, many of which were founded or opened Cameroonian branches in the early 1990s, along with a wide array of international donors. At the same time, the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development galvanised international mobilisation on rainforests (among other issues) and brought home the international will to bring about change in the forest sector. As a member of the delegation of 60 or so Cameroonians sent to Rio recalls, "it was over there that we realised that forests were important (...). The [1994] forest law was inspired from all those ideas"¹⁶ (interview dated 25 February 2008).

The first major consequence of the Rio Conference was the upgrading of the Department of Forestry to the rank of Ministry known as MINEF (Ministry of Forests and Environment, of which the most important division was devoted to forestry). Two years earlier, ONAREF and CENADEFOR had merged into a single organisation, ONADEF. In 1992, therefore, only MINEF and ONADEF were responsible for forestry issues.

¹⁶ « C'est là-bas qu'on s'est rendus compte que les forêts avaient de l'importance (...). La loi forestière est inspirée de toutes ces idées ».

However, institutional reform proved to be largely insufficient in the face of pressure to change the forest sector. Until 1994, timber production and its benefits were almost exclusively controlled by what observers considered to be collusion between private companies and state organisations: the allocation of five-year timber licenses or 2,500-ha logging sales contracts (*vente de coupe*) was carried out at the discretion of the Forestry Department, which strongly favoured corruption among high-ranking civil servants. As Karsenty (2006:6) points out, the short term of the licensing arrangements favoured quick extraction with little to ensure the long-term sustainability of logging operations.

In the meantime, benefits for actors outside this “privileged” circle were all but non-existent. In particular, local populations had limited rights to lands surrounding their villages and did not benefit in any way from logging activities except for (i) seasonal jobs and (ii) a minimal *cahier des charges* which logging companies only rarely kept to due to the lack of law enforcement.

Debates raged in the National Assembly throughout the year 1993. In particular, members of Parliaments were thoroughly opposed to the bidding system to allocate timber concessions as they claimed that national companies would be unable to compete against their larger and wealthier foreign rivals. More generally, MPs and observers alike questioned the legitimacy of these reforms that appeared to be imposed from the outside using the principle of national sovereignty that had been reaffirmed at the Rio Conference:

There, there and there, such and such a phrase [of the Forestry Bill] could not have been written by a Cameroonian. They were sentences from the World Bank. But we felt like Don Quixote (...). The economic crisis made the government reach its hand out like a baby. It couldn't be angry at the World Bank, especially as the Bank already had plans to build the pipeline. With its alliances with the US, Dutch, British and Canadian embassies pressure came from all sides: they all said the same thing. All [political] parties including CPDM were against the law because it did not contribute to local development by creating small-scale enterprises. The law was passed because we were resigned.¹⁷

Interview with a former MP, 25 February 2008-09-01

The Law, which was eventually passed on 21 January 1994, was a major turning point in the history of Cameroonian forest policy – in fact, according to Linjouom (2008) it was the most important critical juncture in the country's forest sector since Germany made it a colony. As described in AFTEN (2008), the 1994 Law has five major objectives:

¹⁷ « Là, là et là, telle et telle phrase [du projet de loi] ne pouvait pas avoir été écrite par un Camerounais. C'étaient les phrases de la Banque mondiale. Mais on s'est retrouvés comme des Don Quichotte (...). La crise économique a permis au gouvernement camerounais de tendre la main comme un bébé. Il ne fallait pas se fâcher contre la Banque mondiale, d'autant plus qu'elle avait déjà en tête le pipeline. Avec les alliances entre la Banque et les ambassades des Etats-Unis, des Pays-Bas, de Grande-Bretagne et du Canada, la pression était de toutes parts : ils disaient tous la même chose. Tous les partis [politiques], y compris le RDPC, étaient contre la loi, elle ne participait pas au développement local par la création de petites entreprises. Mais la loi a été passée par des consensus par malheur. »

1. ***Rationalising the use of forest land.*** The law enabled the zoning and gazetting of all of Cameroon's forest lands as planned by the 1993 zoning system which the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had played a crucial role in setting up. In this respect, the Law classifies the forest estate into permanent forests (which include both state forests such as concessions and protected areas, and council forests or *forêts communales*) and non permanent forests (notably community forests, private forests and other categories such as logging sales or *vente de coupe*).

The 1994 Law also organises the forest landscape through the gazetting process which consists in demarcating, first on paper then on the ground, the exact limits of forested areas for specific use. These areas include forest management units as well as community forests. The gazetting process takes place in three steps: (i) a period of information and consultation in which local populations are given the opportunity to take part in the decision-making process; (ii) the elaboration of the gazetting decree by the Ministry of Forests; and (iii) title emission and actual demarcation.

2. ***Enabling communities to to benefit more significantly from their right to use forest resources.*** The 1994 Law introduced the concept of community forests for the first time in Cameroon, whereby forests outside the permanent domain of less than 5,000 ha can be gazetted and managed by "communities" or villages (known in the Cameroonian administrative system as *chefferies de troisième degré* (literally "third degree chiefdoms"). The country's first community forests, Mbimboé and Bengbis, were established in 1997, but further progress has been slow as described in the section below on community forestry.

Likewise, the concept of local council forests was also enshrined for the first time in the 1994 Law, whereby forests inside the permanent domain can be bought by local councils and managed to their own benefit. This second form of decentralisation of forest management was not as popular as community forestry at first but has been catching up in recent year, as described below in the sections on (i) council forests and (ii) forest-related policies in Dimako. Last but not least, local councils and rural populations are to benefit from annual area fee (RFA), as described in point 5 below.

3. ***Allocating harvesting rights with greater transparency and efficiency.*** This objective is a clear attempt to break the close relationship that logging companies enjoyed with government authorities. First, the 1994 Law established a new list of different types of harvesting rights: (i) Forest management units or FMUs (*Unité forestière d'aménagement* or UFA in French) could be allocated inside the permanent domain for a 15-year period renewable twice and replaced the old licenses that had all expired by 1999; (ii) logging sales (*ventes de coupe*) permit harvesting over a maximum of 2,500 ha for up to three years outside the permanent domain in forests to be converted to non-forest use; (iii) small titles such as personal authorisations with a maximum of 30 m³, cutting permits (*permis de coupe*) of up to 300 m³, and authorisations to recover timber following land conversion or special authorisation (*autorisation de récupération de bois* or ARB).

The most revolutionary change, however, has been the introduction of a competitive bidding system for awarding the harvesting rights to forests in concessions,¹⁸ as explained by AFTEN: “to secure the winning bid for a concession, a bidder must demonstrate adequate technical expertise and investment capacity and offer the highest financial bid. In acquiring a concession, the winner commits to develop a management plan and comply with specific technical, social and environmental obligations. Cameroon was the first country in the world to adopt this approach. Comparable approaches are being adopted in other countries in the Congo Basin and Ghana and are being considered in Brazil” (2008:17).

The winner of the bidding system has to fulfil two conditions: (i) fulfil all of the technical requirements linked to the submission (proposed management plan notably) and (ii) make the highest bid on the area fee that determines the annual area fee or RFA. The allocation process is supervised by the Interministerial Commission for Awarding Forest Concessions (*Commission interministérielle d’attribution des concessions forestières*) composed of the ministries of Forests (MINEF, now MINFOF) and Finance (MINEFI), representatives of trade unions, individual experts and an Independent Observer. The principal aim of the bidding system is to break the discretionary distribution of concessions that lay at the centre of the collusion between logging companies and forestry authorities prior to the law. The introduction of auctions ensures – at least in theory – much greater transparency as well as providing the state – as mentioned below – with greater returns from logging activities.

4. **Supporting Sustainable Forest Management.** In order to ensure that timber production was carried out on a more sustainable basis, forest management plans have been made compulsory. These include (i) dividing the FMU into conservation areas where activities are banned, agroforestry zones and actual timber production zones; (ii) splitting the FMU into 30 annual sub-areas (*assiettes annuelles de coupe* or AAC), each of which will be logged in a year; and (iii) establishing minimum diameters for species to be felled at, based on reconstitutions rates and frequency of each species. A brief discussion on reconstitution rates can be found below.

The scope and content of management plans is specified in a decree issued in 2002 (Arrêté MINEF 222/2002), providing a summary of the complex norms derived from scientific knowledge in tropical forestry. “From a company perspective, the preparation of a management plan represents an additional investment estimated at US\$ 5-12 (FCFA 3,000-7,000) per hectare, most of which goes to pay for the forest inventory, technical expertise, and data gathering (AFTEN 2008:22).

5. **Reforming the Taxation System.** The aim of reforming the tax system for logging activities was (i) to provide the state with greater revenue so as to promote development both at local and national levels, and (ii) provide a set of economic incentives favouring greater sustainability in logging activities. This includes shifting the tax basis from the product (the timber itself) to the area of the concession, introducing a sawmill entry tax to help control timber flows and shifting the bulk of taxation away from exports and towards timber operations (AFTEN 2008:23).

¹⁸ Although often used interchangeably, concessions differ slightly from FMUs in that one concession may be composed of more than one FMU. A concession constitutes a unit which is submitted to a bidding process.

Among the different taxes introduced, the annual area fee (*Revenu forestier annuel* or RFA) has attracted most attention as it is this tax that is submitted to the bidding system; moreover, half of the RFA is to be paid to local councils, a fifth of which is theoretically earmarked to fund community-based development projects. RFA is therefore the greatest financial contributor to development at council and local levels, but it has also attracted considerable criticism, as seen below and in the section on forest-related policies in Ma'an.

The 1994 Law not only formed a critical juncture for Cameroon's forest policy but also created a precedent for the entire region. Since then, a number of countries in the Congo Basin have adopted similar measures, including sustainable management principles (Gabon and Republic of Congo), an increase in taxation (Gabon, Republic of Congo and Central African Republic), the bidding system (Gabon, Central African Republic) and community forests (Central African Republic)

2.4.1.3. Large-Scale Industry since 1994

Profile and Recent Trends. With over 100 FMUs across the country and an annual production of between 2.2 and 2.5 millions m³ since 1998-9 (AFTEN 2008:46), Cameroon is way ahead of all its neighbours in terms of timber production issued from forests under management plans. By early 2006, 55 FMUs (approximately 50% of all FMUs) had their management plan approved, concessions accounting for the bulk of production. The main companies operating in Cameroon's FMUs are mostly French and Italian, although there is a current trend towards diversification:

- Vicwood-Thany, once French but now owned by an Hong Kong-based group, has six subsidiaries controlling a minimum of 643,000 ha;
- Alpi is an Italian company and owns both Alpica and Grumcam, controlling 265,502 ha;
- Rougier, a French company present in Cameroon since the 1960s, owns SFID and Cambois, controlling a total of 549,040 and is said to specialise primarily in sapelli;
- Wijma is a smaller company and subsidiary of Dutch company GWZ; with its partner CFK it is said to control 244,968 ha;
- French group Pasquet owns Pallisco and partners Assene Nkou and Sodetrancam, controlling concessions totalling 303,413 ha;
- Italian group SEFAC with its subsidiaries SFIL, SOTREF and Green Valley cover an area of 216,543 ha;
- Other companies include FIP (146,882 ha), PLACAM (119,736 ha), SIM (241,294 ha), TTS (211,888 ha), ECAM-Placages (processing only) and Patrice Bois (381,730 ha) (Karsenty 2007:13).
- National operators witnessed a sharp increase in numbers following the 1994 devaluation but have since remained constant according to local sources. Many of them have established partnerships with foreign companies which are able to provide them with funds and equipment to carry out logging operations in their FMUs.

Almost all of the forest sector's large companies are grouped into a federation known as the *Groupeement de la filière bois au Cameroun* (GFBC) which resulted from the fusion of two groups in 1998. The main importers of Cameroonian timber are pictured in Figures I and II for logs and sawn timber respectively. Whilst importers of lumber (sawn timber) have varied little over the past few years and continue to be dominated by Western and Southern European countries, importers of logs have witnessed a major change with the rapid appearance of India and China on the market. In 2004, both countries already accounted for 23% of Cameroon's log export; by the following year this figure had more than doubled reaching 49%, whilst Italy, Spain and France collectively fell from 51% of log imports in 2004 to 33% in 2005. The sharp increase in log imports by India and China are witness to the growing role that both countries play in timber transformation at the expense of Europe and of course Cameroon itself.

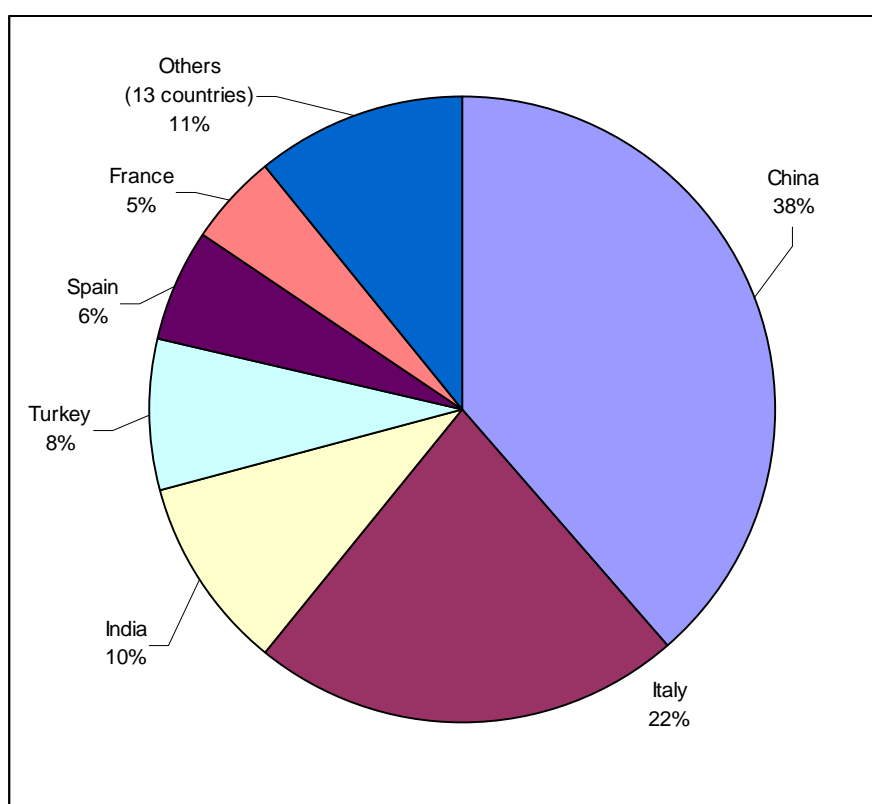


Figure I. — Share of importing countries of Cameroonian **logs** by volume in m³ in 2005 (after Karsenty *et al.* 2006:28) (total: 153,468 m³).

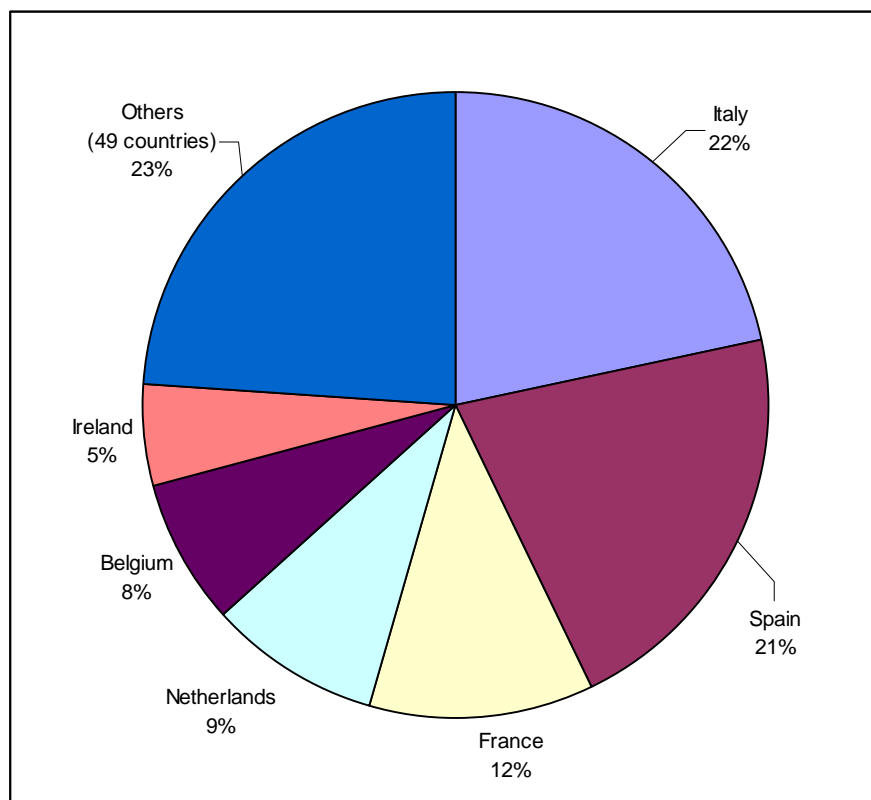


Figure II. — Share of importing countries of Cameroonian **lumber** by volume in m³ in 2005 (after Karsenty *et al.* 2006:28) (total: 661,394 m³).

Although the forest sector appears to be stabilising at last, the road since 1994 has been bumpy at best. In fact, as pointed out in AFTEN (2008:7), despite two decrees issued in 1995 the 1994 Law remained more or less inactive for the first few years following its approval “owing to the lack of corresponding regulations, political commitment, and institutional capacity”.

In fact, in 1996 the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) handed out six FMUs without resorting to the auction process, creating strong criticism from the donor community. The following year, out of 26 allocated FMUs, only six went through the bidding system, sparking anger from observers who had hoped for a swift implementation of the 1994 Law. Due to pressure from the donor community (allegedly the World Bank in particular, which had played a central role in the elaboration of the 1994 Law), the allocation of FMUs was suspended for three years (1998-2000), during which annual logging permits (*permis annuels de coupe* – delivered each year by MINEF to logging companies operating in FMUs) were also suspended.

In another apparent knee-jerk reaction, faced with criticism that smaller titles had become the main source of illegal logging, the government also suspended all smaller titles in 1999 and reintroduced them only in 2006.¹⁹ According to Cerutti & Tacconi (2006:21), this decision

¹⁹ This ban concerned the logging permits (*permis d'exploitation*), personal logging authorisations (*autorisations personnelles de coupe*) and personal non lucrative authorisations (*autorisations personnelles non lucratives*). Timber

(which was illegal in itself, as these authors claim) was the main reason for the sharp increase in illegal logging witnessed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. By preventing timber from being produced in both FMUs and smaller titles, the government literally pushed the existing Cameroonian timber industry underground, effectively forcing a large number of operators either to go bust or find non-legal means of surviving. It should therefore not come as a surprise that illegal logging reached unprecedented levels during this period.

Activities gradually picked up when FMUs began being allocated again in 2000 (by which time all of the pre-1994 licenses had expired), 2001, 2002, 2005 and 2006 (when the last available FMUs were allocated). However, the Independent Observer along with other informal observers have continued to identify ways in which actors involved in the bidding process have tried to make their way round it. These include the following “tricks”:

1. Although each company’s bid should remain confidentially placed in a sealed box, the box is broken into and the highest bid identified a few days ahead of the deadline. This gives enough time for another company in collusion with members of the Ministry to make an extra bid a mere 50 francs higher (the minimum increment) than the highest bidder, which allows it to win the auction.
2. Likewise, those managing the auction take advantage of the complexity of forest legislation concerning management and logging practices to discard all bids for an FMU on technical grounds except for one which therefore wins the bid without going through the expected process of competition.
3. Finally, FMUs abandoned by a company are in effect passed onto another company through a mutual agreement, without the FMU having to go back through an auction process. Many FMUs – including Wijma’s FMU 09-021 – were obtained through this means which uses a loophole in Cameroonian legislation.
4. According to Karsenty (2006:51-2), additional ways round the bidding process include (i) “fictive” bids which should have been checked and that make prices go up, (ii) a non-transparent use of the list of companies banned from bidding and (iii) rock-bottom bids made by companies which apparently knew that they were the only ones making a bid.

As a result, for instance, in 2005 11 concessions were placed on the bidding list and 46 offers were initially submitted. However, 20 of these were disqualified when the envelopes were opened and 15 others during the analysis by the relevant sub-commission. Out of the 11 concessions, therefore, 9 of them only had one bidder, which made the bidding system useless.

The bidding system is not the only regulatory system to have been tested by its users. The 1994 Law also fixed the size of concessions to a maximum of 200,000 ha, which operators have easily worked their way round by working in adjacent FMUs and building partnerships with other companies if need be (*e.g.*, SEFAC, Wijma). Another rule to have been tested is that of the temporary convention (*convention provisoire*), *i.e.*, the three years between which an operator is

recovery authorisations (*autorisations de récupération de bois*) and logging sales (*vente de coupe*) were still authorised.

allocated an FMU and the time when the management plan is approved and the FMU physically demarcated. During these three years, the operator is supposed to carry out inventories of the forest resource and consultations with local populations yet in practice, some companies have also been known to log areas which it then claim should lie outside the boundaries of the demarcated FMU, this enabling it to avoid having to pay an area fee on the area freshly logged.

Figure III which shows the evolution of official production and export figures for Cameroonian timber between 1980 and 2005 shows that production steadily increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s but has been falling since 1997-8. The gradual increase in production and thus exports up to 1997 is most probably due to the regular improvement in transportation and access to previously unlogged forests. As for the fall in production and exports in the past decade, Karsenty (2006:31-2) explains this latest trend through the enforcement of regulations of different types following the 1994 Law, notably those related to forest management plans (especially diameter restrictions). Curiously, export figures are greater than production figures for 1998-9, 1999-2000, 2000-1 and 2001-2; whilst Karsenty (2006:32) blames this contradiction in figures on the increase in production in the informal sector, it also shows how unreliable official figures can sometimes be.

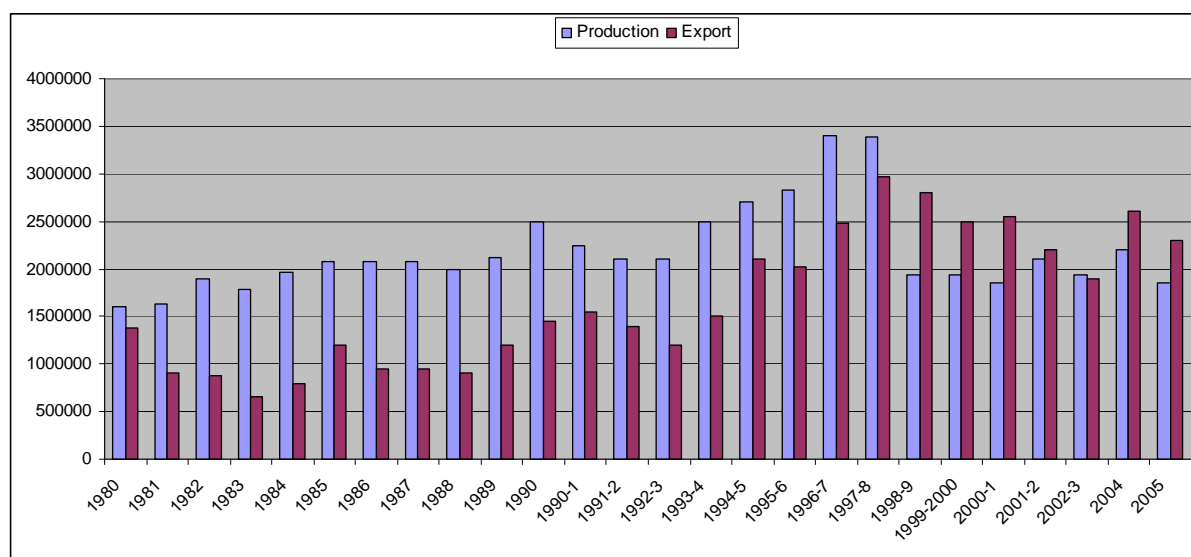


Figure III. — Official timber production and export figures 1980-2005 in round wood equivalent (approximate data based on Karsenty 2006:33).

Also of interest are the trends in timber transformation. The 1994 Law sought to increase local transformation of timber so as to provide the country with greater added value, both through a set of tax incentives favouring transformed timber, but also by imposing a partial log ban through the establishment of quotas on certain species and a tax surcharge. As Figure IV shows below, the Law appears to have reached its goal: whilst logs still accounted for 79% of timber exports in 1983 and 1984 (Laurent 1985:20) and 70% in 1998-9 (Karsenty *et al.* 2006:30), by 2005 it only represented 16% of the country's timber exports in volume.

However, this figure also shows that timber transformation only rarely goes beyond lumber (sawn timber). Exports of products that require a longer or more complex transformation process (such as veneer, plywood and profile wood) have hardly evolved in terms of figures over the past decade. Karsenty *et al.* (2006) explain this by the stiff competition that Cameroon faces with Indonesia and especially China in the timber transformation industry where exchange rates and wages make Asian products much more attractive in terms of price than what Cameroon has to offer.

Finally, it is worth noting that despite being enshrined in law, the rules concerning quotas on log exports continue to be twisted to this day, as witnessed by a “special authorisation” allegedly signed in early 2008 by the Minister of Forests allowing an additional 2,000 m³ of azobe to be exported exceptionally this year (confidential interview dated 25 March 2008).

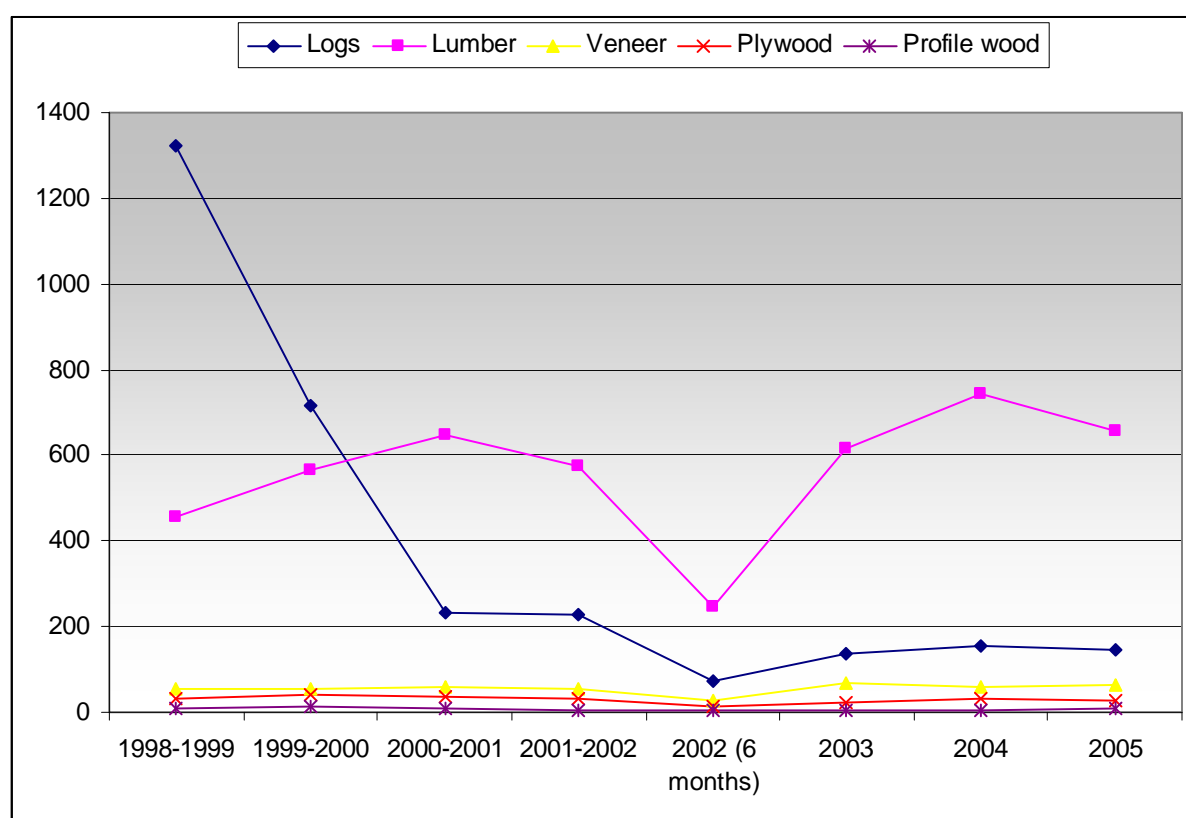


Figure IV. — Cameroon's official timber exports by type 1998 to 2005 (in thousands of m³) (after Karsenty *et al.* 2006:30).

For more quantitative data on recent trends in Cameroon's timber sector please refer to Karsenty *et al.* (2006) and AFTEN (2008).

The New Tax System. The taxation system introduced by the 1994 Law is characterised by two major elements: (i) the sharp rise in taxes compared to the period preceding the Law, and (ii) the novelty of the annual area fee or RFA.

When timber companies operating in Cameroon first realised the amount of profits they made that would be going in taxes following the 1994 Law, they accused the law-makers (including the World Bank) of driving them out of business. For over a decade the debate raged about whether the rise in taxes was a good thing (providing the state with greater revenue which it could then reinvest in promoting sustainable forest management or economic development) or a bad one (driving the entire timber industry either out of business or underground).

Figures available today show that taxes on timber production and transformation did increase by over five-fold between 1991-2 and 1997-8 (Figure V). This is probably the main reason why the number of operators fell sharply in the second half of the 1990s, the only remaining companies being (i) large enough to cover the additional expenses or (ii) smaller (national) companies that only survived by establishing partnerships with larger companies for logging activities. Tax income fell again to between FCFA 25 and 30 billion again after 1999, but this trend is only due to a fall in log exports (and thus log export duties) as shown in Figure IV above.

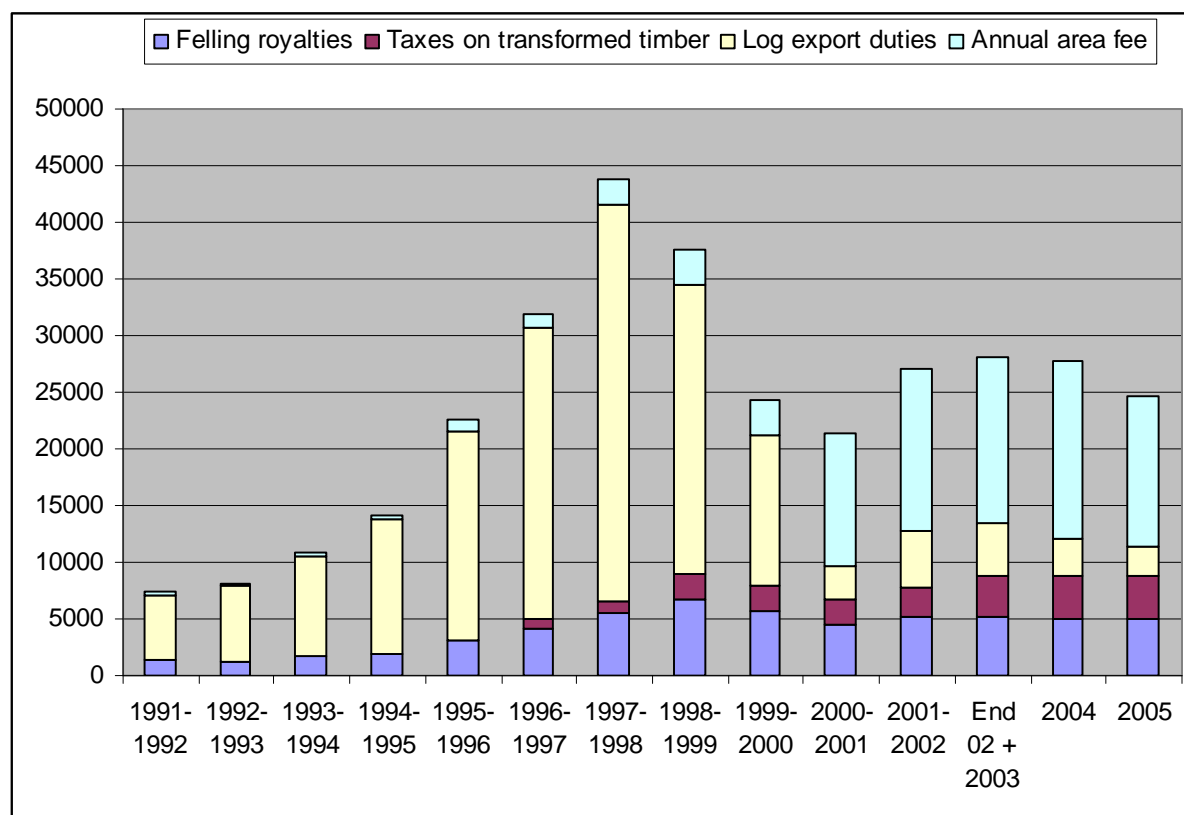


Figure V. — Annual tax revenue from the timber sector in Cameroon by type of tax in millions of FCFA (after Karsenty *et al.* 2006:47-8). Note the increase in area fees and the corresponding fall in volume-based taxes since the early 2000s.

The tax that has been the focus of studies and criticism, however, is the annual area fee, known in French as *redevance forestière annuelle* or RFA. This tax, introduced by the 1994 Law, had

three aims: (i) increase the importance of area taxes *vis-à-vis* volume-based taxes so as to encourage; (ii) create a basis upon which the bidding system could be based, as it is the amount of the RFA per hectare which is submitted to auction; and (iii) act as a source of income for local development.

It is the last point which has attracted both greatest attention and criticism. According to the law, 50% of the RFA goes to the central state, whereas the other 50% goes to the local council where logging activities are being carried out, a fifth of which (*i.e.*, 10% of the total sum) is earmarked for development projects at the level of communities or *chefferies de troisième degré*. Joint decree (*arrêté conjoint*) no. 000122/MINEFI/MINAT dated 29 April 1998 states that a management committee headed by the mayor and composed among others of 6 community members should meet at least every three months to decide what this 10% will be allocated towards amongst the projects submitted by communities themselves.

When it was first implemented in the late 1990s, it had raised hopes that forest-based populations would at last begin to benefit from logging activities after having had to rely for decades on *cahier des charges* that many companies are said not to have respected in any case. The aim was also to empower local councils which have traditionally been all but non-existent and powerless, especially in the face of large foreign timber companies operating in the area.

Forest-rich councils started receiving astronomical sums of money almost overnight. Yokadouma, now the richest local council in the country, received over FCFA 1 billion per year, followed closely by Mindourou, Messok and Lomié. In the Southern Province, Ma'an became the richest council with some FCFA 200 million per year. Yet within a few years, it had become glaringly obvious that these huge sums of money were not being channelled into local development and rural populations remained just as poor as they had always been.

In the first few years, it seemed that it was the lack of information about RFA that had enabled local councils to cash in these vast sums without local populations expecting anything; yet even since figures have been made public (*e.g.*, CERAD *et al.* 2004), little improvement has been observed in rural living standards, if at all, as any stroll through the forested Eastern and Southern Provinces will show. In the case of Yokadouma, for instance, the town has witnessed the construction of two new town halls in the past decade, but the destination of the rest of the funds has never been made public. Elsewhere, observers hear the same story time and again: the money was spent on constructing such and such a building and bills were paid in full, but the buildings were never completed (and in many cases never begun).

Although decision-makers and the donor community have been slow in reacting to this decentralisation of embezzlement, the mayors and their cronies in a number of towns have started feeling the consequences of accusations of corruption. The recent arrest of the former mayor of Yokadouma and the charges that some have attempted to file against the current mayor of Ma'an are only two illustrations of the catching up that still needs to be done in this field.

Moreover, the sharp rise in taxes (notably with the arrival of RFA) and the fact that much of the taxes go to local councils and communities has prompted a number of logging companies to minimise their social enterprises (*oeuvres sociales*) which they had been undertaking until then

in favour of local populations. The fact that these social enterprises are now much rarer coupled with corruption surrounding the local council's share of RFA means that local populations have lost out on the switch by companies from the former to the latter. This problem is further discussed in the section below on forest-related policies in Ma'an.

2.4.1.4. Trends in Illegal logging

As AFTEN (2008:36) points out, the term “illegal logging” is a relative concept and the border is often blurry between what is legal and what is not, especially when the proliferation of laws ends up in rules contradicting each other. Likewise, in a chain of custody, for instance, logs felled illegally may end up as lumber that passes all the legal requirements once it leaves the sawmill. Moreover, “illegal logging” has become such a buzzword in the past decade after having been blamed for deforestation so often that any discussion on the issue automatically becomes politically charged. With its array of rules, it could easily have been foreseen that the 1994 Law and subsequent decrees of all kinds could only contribute to illegal logging, if only temporarily, as the rules themselves turned what was previously legal into illegal activities. As pointed out by AFTEN:

The years from 1998 to 2002 saw illegal activity develop on a massive scale (...); it could have represented more than one-third of annual production. Many forces contributed to the proliferation of illegal logging by industry at this time. The effects of the devaluation persisted, licenses had expired, small harvesting titles had been suspended, and new UFAs had not yet been allocated, because the World Bank awaited improvements in the very corrupt allocation system. Illegal logging occurred mainly outside the boundaries of UFAs and/or outside the annual harvestable area within a given UFA.

AFTEN (2008:36-7).

The proportion of 33% of illegal timber in the market during this period, put forward above by AFTEN (2008:36), appears more realistic than the 50% figure that has been circulating for over a decade – a fact which Cerutti & Tacconi agree with (2006:9). Since 2002, however, observers agree that the situation has improved considerably, as corroborated by the fact that official harvest figures once again became inferior to export figures from 2002-3 onwards (see Figure III above).

Moreover, the form of illegality in timber production has changed considerably since the late 1990s. During that time, illegal timber was produced by all means, especially as most legal means of timber production (FMUs and small titles) had been suspended. In particular, actors focused on logging sales (*ventes de coupe*) as the only legal means remaining and MINEF soon began multiplying their distribution. Likewise, community forests became a way of laundering illegal timber by have the latter labelled as having been produced in a community forest – another rare potential source of legal timber. A black market of transport permits (*lettres de voiture*) for timber products issued from community forests thus flourished.

When FMUs and annual permits to log in FMUs started being allocated again after 2000, the Independent Observer regularly recorded a range of major infringements, especially (i) felling trees beneath the authorised diameter (colloquially known in French as *sous-diamètre*), and (ii) logging beyond the boundaries of the AAC (annual logging area) and even the FMU itself (known in French as *hors limite*). The second type of law infringement was not necessarily intentionally carried out by the operator; in the early 2000s, the use of a GPS was not that widespread; moreover, the forest administration (MINEF) occasionally approved FMU boundaries which overlapped with other forest uses.

Such was the case of logging company HFC (La Forestière de Campo), found by the Independent Observer to be logging inside Campo-Ma'an National Park which its FMU (09-025) was adjacent to. It was only discovered later that HFC had been logging in an area of overlap between its FMU and the National Park. In the meantime, however, the affair led to such bad publicity for HFC that the company folded and Bolloré (the French mother company) simply pulled out of the Cameroonian timber sector.

Over the years, however, these types of blatant infringements have all but stopped, with the major exception of what appears to have been intentional *hors limite* logging in 2006 by FIPCAM in FMU 10-047 (Barume *et al.* 2006). Illegal logging has turned away from large-scale logging companies and the FMUs which became the centre of attention from the Independent Observer and NGOs (such as Friends of the Earth and CED) alike. It has recently shifted instead to more “discreet” areas that are less under the spotlight such as the following:

1. Small titles: as pointed out by AFTEN (2008:37), timber recovery authorisations (ARB) produced around 300,000 m³ in 2006, well in excess of what was expected. “Since the illegal provenance of most of this timber is hidden through falsified documents and routine administrative procedures, it cannot be detected through aggregate statistics”, the report adds.
2. Informal sector: individual chainsaw operators are common throughout the forested region of Cameroon: local villagers who have invested in a chainsaw operate mostly outside the permanent domain, mostly for small-scale local consumption. However, as mentioned by AFTEN, the frequency of these “artisanal loggers” (2008:38) had increased dramatically in recent years, probably as a consequence of local demand for cheap timber which the official timber market is unable to produce.
3. Extraordinary measures are also taken every now and then such as the alleged exceptional authorisation by the Minister of Forests and Wildlife to exceed the annual quota of azobe export by an additional 2,000 m³ for 2008.

Such sources, however, do not allow for the production of illegal timber on the same scale as what was observed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In spite of these setbacks, therefore, most observers agree that the implementation of the 1994 Law and additional measures to reduce illegal logging have mostly been successful.

2.4.1.5. Curbing Illegal Logging: Independent Observer, Certification and FLEGT

The 1994 Law was aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the timber sector whilst ensuring greater sustainability in forest management practices. The years that followed, however, were characterised by confusion and the suspension of logging titles due to the increase in illegal activities which were only further fuelled by such decisions. During those years, however, an important component of the timber sector's institutional structure was introduced: the Independent Observer.

In the face of the alleged incapacity of governmental authorities to check on logging activities in the field, British NGO Global Witness was the first to propose the creation of an Independent Observer in Cambodia as early as 1996. The aim of this additional actor was to provide independent monitoring of logging activities outside of the corrupt networks that existed and report, if need be, any infringement to relevant authorities. At a time when illegal logging had caught the eye of the donor community in Cameroon,²⁰ DFID (the British Department for International Development) picked up the idea and with the support of the World Bank got the reluctant Cameroonian government to agree to the introduction of an Independent Observer in 1999.

From 2000 to 2004, the position was given to Global Witness; the NGO lost the next offer (2004-2008) to another British NGO known as Resource Extraction Monitoring whose founders actually splintered off from Global Witness shortly before 2004. However, methods largely remain the same and involve field missions both planned (in cooperation with MINFOF staff) and impromptu (independently and with no prior warning). Along with field visits, the Independent Observer is also required to follow up court cases in the timber sector and contribute to the sector's transparency by publishing reports on a regular basis. All reports by the Independent Observer can be found on Global Witness' and REM's websites.

According to a number of sources, the Independent Observer has always been perceived as an unwanted intrusion – an imposition – by the forestry authority. Likewise, for a long time, the logging companies that were subject to close scrutiny from the Independent Observer complained that neither Global Witness nor REM were impartial since they had always had an anti-logging position like many other NGOs. In 2002, the Independent Observer sent shockwaves through the sector when it discovered massive fraud by Lebanese company Hazim, which was followed by a court trials and the accused company filing for bankruptcy.

Over the years, however, the Independent Observer has come to be increasingly accepted, although its relations with MINFOF are still said to be frequently conflictual. Claims have notably been made that REM staff are often “conveniently forgotten” in meetings at MINFOF, including those in which the presence of the Independent Observer is mandatory (such as when envelopes enclosing bids for FMUs are opened up). Likewise, it is believed that local branches

²⁰ In 1999, Transparency International ranked Cameroon as the single most corrupt country in the world; although it was later realised that this ranking had been based on a mere 8 interviews, the news attracted particular attention within the donor community.

of MINFOF are ordered to get rid of any evidence ahead of planned field visits by the Independent Observer.

Interestingly, some actors have come to see the Independent Observer as a resource rather than an imposition. In particular, it is believed that some logging companies resort to the Independent Observer to inflict sanctions and bad publicity on their competitors: many of the denunciations that prompt the Independent Observer to carry out field visits without prior declaration are said to be made by logging companies which would see an advantage in such or such an operator being sanctioned. Yet overall, the introduction of an Independent Observer in Cameroon's forest landscape has arguably greatly contributed to reducing illegal logging, especially in quantitative terms. Moreover, it also constitutes a cornerstone in maintaining transparency in the sector, as Brown & Luttrell (undated:20).

The second instrument to have undoubtedly contributed to reducing illegal logging in the 2000s is certification. Although the main objective of certification is to promote sustainable forest management rather than reduce illegal logging per se, the first step in obtaining any form of certification is compliance with all legal requirements; moreover, the promotion sustainable forest management can be seen in many ways as the corollary of the fight against illegal logging, the former being the carrot and the latter the stick for reaching the same objective.

The Forest Stewardship Council, also known as FSC, was first launched in 1993 following the realisation by a number of organisations such as WWF that boycotting tropical timber was not having the desired effect of reducing deforestation. Throughout the 1990s it became very popular in the forest sector in temperate regions, especially in Scandinavia, but in tropical regions, certified forests remained few and far between.

Africa was no exception. In 1996, however, FSC certification was awarded for the first time on the continent to a logging company operating in Gabon, Leroy Gabon. It soon transpired that several of FSC's 10 principles had been violated, notably (i) Principles 1 and 2 (compliance with law and long-term tenure), because the certified lots (28 and 30) were to be on lease for another seven years which was contradictory with the company's management plan; (ii) Principle 6 (maintenance of ecological functions) because of bushmeat hunting by Leroy staff; (iii) Principle 7 (management plan) because the company did not have a management plan at the time of certification; and above all (iv) Principle 9 (maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests) because Lot 32 was inside the Lopé Reserve which had been created in 1982 (CIAJE 1997).

Given the blatant breach of the decree that created the Lopé Reserve, environmental NGOs mobilised and launched a campaign against the certification of Leroy but were met with fierce resistance from a number of NGOs such as *Les Amis du Pangolin* whose motives for defending Leroy were doubtful. In the end, however, FSC agreed to suspend certification for Leroy Gabon which has never got it back since then.

No FSC certificate was delivered in Central Africa for another nine years. The bad memory left by the Leroy Gabon case probably discouraged any logging company in the region from even considering acquiring the certificate. In the early 2000s, Cameroon's major logging companies even promoted an alternative type of certification known as Pan-African Timber Certification

(PAFC) whose criteria were allegedly easier. It should not be surprising that until the mid-2000s most large logging companies were virulently opposed to FSC as it was backed by the same NGOs that regularly launched campaigns against them.

In 2004-2005, the tide turned. The first indicator was the decision by two French-speaking consulting companies, BVQI and SGS, to become FSC-accredited (meaning that they had the capacity to carry out audits to certify forests and chains of custody). Until then, only English-speaking accredited companies existed, which in practice constituted a barrier for many of Cameroon's logging companies that have traditionally been Francophone (and monolingual). The second indicator came from Dutch logging company Wijma when it received certification for FMU 09-021 in Ma'an, near Campo-Ma'an National Park. The case of 09-021 is described in greater detail in the section on forest-related policies in Ma'an.

Despite Wijma's certificate suspension between 2007 and 2008, FMU 09-021 created a precedent in Cameroon by showing other timber companies that certification could be obtained in a timber concession. Faced with growing pressure from Europe's markets for certified products, a number of large logging companies has since begun the certification process (beginning with pre-audits); at the time of writing, three companies had already obtained certification for part of their operations (Wijma, SEFAC and TRC). GFBC representatives have even claimed that 50% of their members are currently seeking or have already obtained FSC certification – a situation which FSC would never have dared hope for only a few years ago.

In the meantime, several companies (Wijma, Pallisco and Rougier among others) have already obtained less stringent forms of certification which are a proof of the fulfilment of FSC's first principle (compliance with all applicable laws and existing treaties). The staunch competition between the region's two main accredited companies, Paris-based BVQI and Geneva-based SGS, means that each company has elaborated its own certificate of legality, known as OLB (*Origine et légalité du bois*) for BVQI and TLTV (*Timber Legality and Traceability Verification*) for SGS.

Despite apparently facing a rosy future in Cameroon and possibly across Central Africa, FSC remains hampered by a number of issues that will need to be solved should the label maintain its credibility in the eyes of consumers. First, BVQI and SGS have all but launched a war of competition with each other to secure the greatest number of certified companies. Certifying forests and chains of custody is a highly lucrative business for accredited companies which are required to carry out a large number of audits prior to certification, and annual audits once it has been obtained. Some observers, however, are concerned that this race to certify companies might lead to a fall in the quality of certification: there appears to be an incentive for accredited companies to minimise corrective demands made to logging companies so as to increase the accredited companies' market share of logging company certification. There is therefore a risk of toning down FSC requirements because of competition between accredited companies – which might contribute to explaining why BVQI was so quick in awarding Wijma with its initial certification label in 2005.

Secondly, whilst most timber producing countries in the world have their own "version" of FSC, Cameroon had yet to be equipped with one at the time of writing. The Constitutive General

Assembly for the creation of FSC-Cameroon was held in June 2006 and a national standardisation committee was recently set up; however, Cameroon has still to set national standards for FSC certification.

This means that for the time being accredited companies (namely SGS and BVQI) are free to set their own standards, which has already led to a discrepancy in the measures required from each logging company for certification. As one observer pointed out, Wijma has added a self-imposed tax on its production, whereby it will pay FCFA 1,000 to local communities for every cubic metre produced.²¹ Yet TRC, a logging company that has also received FSC certification for FMU 00-004, only pays half that amount; and Cameroon's third FSC-certified company, SEFAC, pays no extra taxes. Standardisation is therefore urgently needed should FSC remain credible in consumer markets.

A third instrument to curb illegal logging has been established in the past decade. The European Union (EU) – the world's largest importer of Cameroonian timber as shown in Figures I and II (the pie charts above) – has taken a series of measures in an attempt to prevent illegally logged timber from reaching its shores. These measures are centred on a process known as Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade or FLEGT. FLEGT was first launched by the European Union in May 2003 with an action plan which was followed in October by a Ministerial conference held in Yaoundé in October that year which has come to be known as African Forest Law and Enforcement (AFLEG). This was already the second process of its kind, the first FLEG having taken place on East Asia in Bali in September 2001.

By 2004, the Government of Cameroon had officially expressed its commitment to pursuing the FLEGT process which eventually led the country to being selected as one of the three tropical countries to negotiate a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA, in French *Accord de partenariat volontaire* or APV) along with Ghana and Malaysia. This VPA is an agreement between the producer country and the EU whereby the former commits to ensuring legality and traceability for all of the country's timber which is exported to the EU. Following two years of preparations, negotiations began in November 2007, about 11 months behind schedule.

Negotiations have turned out to be fraught with unforeseen issues. Defining legality is already one of them, but ensuring the complete traceability²² for every piece of Cameroonian timber reaching the EU is likely to be a mammoth task, although it has been decided that all FSC certified timber can already be considered as legal and does therefore not need to be submitted to this process. Likewise, much of the timber leaving the Cameroonian ports of Douala and Kribi are actually logged outside Cameroon, notably in northern Gabon, northern Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic. It is not certain that the would apply to non-Cameroonian timber transiting through Cameroonian territory, although as expressed in a meeting on the issue in March 2008 in Douala, this could be an entry point for signing VPAs with neighbouring countries. The VPA has not been signed although it is believed that Cameroon is likely to be the first country in the world to sign one with the EU on such matters, again setting a precedent.

²¹ Please refer to the section on forest-related policies in Ma'an for further details.

²² Traceability is defined here as the ability to find the actual tree stump from which the piece of timber originates as well as its complete chain of custody, legal documents (DF-10, *lettres de transport*, etc.) and proof that taxes were paid.

More generally, the FLEGT process has been elaborated in coordination with a number of other regional initiatives to fight against illegal logging and which are described in the following section. Despite having started off independently of each other, all these instruments appear to be coordinating with each other to form a coherent means of fighting illegal logging, as illustrated by the need to associate FSC with the EU's VPA.

Box II
How Sustainable is Sustainable Forest Management?
The Debate on Reconstitution Rates

The 1994 Law and subsequent decrees have attempted to ensure that large-scale industrial logging in Cameroon keep to fundamental rules of forest management, with the realisation management plans (*plans d'aménagement*) at the centre of this issue. Among other rules, Article 6 of Decree 222 (Arrêté MINEF 222/2002) states that the species logged must be "managed" (*aménagées*), i.e., that minimum diameters for trees to be felled must be computed and set based on the frequency of the species and their growth rate.

More specifically, this minimum diameter needs to be established based on the rate (called the reconstitution rate) at which the standing stock is reconstituted within a generation (30 years). The decree mentions that the reconstitution rate must be at least 50%, i.e., that if 1,000 m³ of a particular species were felled during cycle n then it should ensure that at least 500 m³ are available for cycle $n+1$, based on scientific growth predictions of each species. The minimum diameter rule is a fundamental component of sustainable forest management as it ensures that younger individuals are not felled so that they can provide of new generation of large trees after a few decades and thus secure regeneration of the standing stock.

However, Decree 222 also stipulates that this rule only applies to 75% of the total volume to be felled – in other words, companies are allowed by law to exclude 25% of the volume which they intend on logging from the management plan. This means that some of the species felled have no lower diameter limit on logging apart from the baseline established by law known as DME (for *diameter minimum d'exploitation*). Many logging have jumped on this legal loophole by filling the 75% group ("group 1") with rarely used species and placing all their most frequently felled species in this 25% category ("group 2"), thereby sharply increasing the number of trees they can fell at the expense of regeneration of the standing stock.

In a study of twenty forest management plans by large companies operating in Cameroon, Vandenhoute shows that half of the plans analysed are in conformity with sustainable forest management principles and notes the frequency of "The very theoretical management (*aménagement*) [of tree species] with the computation of a reconstitution rate that only concerns species of little or no interest to the operator. A large proportion of main species are placed in group 2 which is supposed to be composed of "complementary main species", and where the species are protected from a possible increase of the [baseline] DME [fixed by law] (Vandenhoute (2006:31)).²³

In a further analysis of reconstitution rates, the same author carried out a simulation of the reconstitution of certain species according to whether they were placed in "group 1" or "group 2". It was found that if placed in group 2 (i.e., the minimum diameter is fixed at the DME set by law) some reconstitution rates could be as low as 12%. This means that if 1,000 m³ of a group 2 species was felled in cycle n , it is possible that at cycle $n+1$ there would only remain 120 m³ to be felled and 14.4 m³ at cycle $n+2$ (Vandenhoute, personal communication, 5 March 2008). In other words, forest management as required by law could hardly be called sustainable.

²³ « Aménagement très théorique avec un calcul de reconstitution ne concernant que des essences n'intéressant pas ou peu l'exploitant. Une grande partie des essences phares sont placées dans le groupe 2 réunissant les « essences principales complémentaires » où elles se trouvent à l'abri d'une éventuelle remontée de leur DME ».

Several means of preventing such a scenario from taking place have already been considered. FSC requires that all logged species be taken into account when calculating minimum diameters based on reconstitution rates (*i.e.*, that there be no “group 2”) whilst a number of NGOs is considering launching a campaign either to encourage logging companies to take voluntary steps or to change the rules set by Decree 222.

2.4.1.6. Devolving Forest Management: Community and Council Forests

The 1994 Law created two alternative types of devolution of forest management: one to “communities” or *chefferies de troisième degré*, known as community forests, and one to local councils or *communes*, called council forests. Each of these categories is described in turn.

Community Forestry. The idea that local populations or “communities” could manage their forests rather than the state or large companies grew in popularity in the 1980s as a way of combining nature conservation with grassroots movements. By 1990, Brazilian and Indian national legislations were equipped with special instruments which allowed local populations to access the resources of the forests they lived in or near to, namely RESEX for Brazil and Joint Forest Management or JFM for India.

The 1994 Law was a landmark for Central Africa as it was the first time that the concept of forests managed by communities themselves was enshrined in law. At a time when community-based conservation and natural resource management was at its apex on the agenda of international forestry debates, sections 37 and 38 of the 1994 Law which provided for community forests were hailed as a major step forward by many. Meanwhile, critics – notably within the central government – accused the Law of undermining the central role of the state as the guardian of one of Cameroon’s greatest public assets, namely its forests. Supporters of the concept, on the other hand, claimed that local populations would likely better preserve forests than the state had done so far because they had been using the forest for generations without ever destroying it. If local populations were given the responsibility, they would contribute to curbing deforestation, it was believed.

The 1994 Law stipulated that “communities” – which were in fact the lowest geographical division of administration or villages, officially known as “third degree chiefdoms” (*chefferie de troisième degré*) – could request to have forest adjacent to their village earmarked for their own use. This forest had to be located in the non-permanent forest domain and could not exceed 5,000 ha. Moreover, if the community decided to carry out logging activities, it would not be able to use any heavy machinery in the process (so as to prevent community forests from being “sold off” to logging companies) and would have to transform the timber before sale (a measure selected to add value to the final product and increase income for local populations).

Requirements for setting up a community forest include (i) creating an association or GIC (*groupement d’intérêt commun*) to represent the village concerned; (ii) getting approval from the forest administration (MINEF/MINFOR) for the proposed community forest and demarcating its boundaries (*réserve de la forêt*); (iii) getting approval for a Simple Management Plan (*plan*

simple de gestion), a simplified version of the forest management plans required for FMUs. If the GIC expresses the wish to carry out logging activities, the village needs (iv) to be delivered an annual logging permit from the forest administration, (v) to get hold of equipment to fell trees (saws at the very least) and (vi) to find a market for its products.

This plethora of stringent rules is one of the reasons why progress has been so slow in the domain in Cameroon. The country's first community forests were opened in Mbimboé and Bengbis in 1997 only. As AFTEN explains, measures were undertaken to speed up the process:

To speed the adoption of community forestry the government was given a specific deadline to identify prospective areas for designation as community forests. The conceptual dissonance of this process – asking *government* to dictate the location of a *community forest* in a domain (the non permanent forest) where government was not supposed to intervene – called for an adjustment. In December 2001, communities were officially granted the right to stop the allocation of a *vente de coupe* in their locality by claiming their interest in creating a community forest, which they would manage themselves. Communities very frequently invoke this pre-emptive right (*droit de préemption*);, they then have two years to make a final decision and prepare to manage the community forest area that has been set aside for them.

AFTEN (2008:14).

By April 2008, 174 communities had seen their community forests approved by the forest administration, covering nearly 1,110,000 ha; over three quarters of these were located in the Eastern, Central and Southern Provinces (AFTEN 2008:15). Yet out of these, only few have successfully started carrying out logging operations, and fewer even – if at all – are finding these activities to be a lucrative business that contributes to local development and welfare.

Efforts to turn community forests into a successful tool of forest management from ecological, social and economic viewpoints have been numerous, as witnessed by the flurry of publications on the issue (Burnham 2000, Cuny *et al.* undated, Julve *et al.* 2007, Mangjem & Yamou undated, Pénelon 1997, Tobith & Cuny 2006 and the entire issue no. 25 of ODI's *Rural Development Forestry Network*²⁴ to quote only a few). Likewise, many NGOs and donors have funded community forest projects across the country, such as DFID with its various CFDPs (Community Forest Development Projects) (Singer 2004:51-2), GTZ on Mount Cameroon, SNV in the Lomié region, and SNV, Tropenbos and WWF in the areas surrounding Campo-Ma'an National Park.

!given all the efforts put into this domain of Cameroonian forest management, results have therefore been more than mitigated. Despite over a decade of practical experience, virtually all community forests in the country continue to struggle to exist, let alone make a profit. The literature on the issue, combined with the author's experience in the field, point to several fundamental problems with community forests:

²⁴ This entire issue devoted to community forestry in Cameroon is fully available on <http://www.odi.org.uk/networks/rdfn/publications.asp?issue=25&language=English> (retrieved 8 September 2008).

1. **Red tape.** The most frequently mentioned problem with community forests is the administrative obstacles that lie in their way. The Forest administration has imposed a similar set of bureaucratic rules on community forests as it has on timber concessions. These include, as mentioned above, (i) a “convention” or agreement between a legal entity created within the village (usually a GIC) and the forest administration authorising the creation of a community forest; (ii) the approval of a simple management plan; (iii) annual logging permits and since 2007 (iv) an environmental impact assessment whose usefulness is questionable (Julve *et al.* 2007:24).

Logging companies also complain about the red tape they are subjected to when first obtaining a concession, then every year with the release of annual logging permits (which in the case of community forests are often released at the end of the year, against all logic). However, these companies have the capacity and resources to pay for management plans and pay visits to MINFOF when there are delays, for example, in issuing conventions of permits.

Local populations, on the other hand, are often unable to raise sufficient funds to carry out a simple management plan (which costs approximately FCFA 2 million); likewise, they are usually located in far-flung forested areas and are unable to go to Yaoundé to meet forestry officials when the latter fail to issue required documents (and above all they do not have contacts or networks that can “get things moving”, unlike many large companies). Last but not least, the level of literacy being low in rural areas, those who master French language well enough to read or write official documents are few and far between.

2. **Internal divisions.** One of the tenets of community forestry is that the “community” in question speaks with one voice. This monolithic view of “communities” originates from rather romanticised and simplistic visions of rural populations among decision makers whereby individual interests are non-existent and members always cooperate and behave for the greater good, that of the “community”.

After over a decade of experience in community forestry, however, it is obvious that this vision is flawed. In fact, the risk of elite capture is no longer theoretical: it has been observed in a large number of cases where the decision-making process in a village concerning a community forest is dominated by a single (or a small group of) individuals who emigrated from the area and found well-paid jobs, and eventually retire in the same village. On more than one occasion, the domination of an educated elite in decision-making processes has caused internal divisions that have paralysed the progress made in the steps towards community forestry. The case of Bibou Lemam near Akom II in the Southern Province, described below in the section on forest-related policies in Campo-Ma'an National Park, is only one of many such examples.

3. **Lack of expertise.** Local populations often lack not only the use of administrative-level French, but also the knowledge and know-how which are essential both to managing forests (especially logging techniques) and marketing products. In the case of simple management plans, their realisation is often delegated to a consultant, but to retain a specialist full-time to manage logging operations and marketing of products would be much too costly. Those community forests to have overcome this problem have inevitably been helped out either by

a local NGO (*e.g.*, SAGED for Tya’Assono Community Forest in Ma’an) or an international donor. Others have preferred delegating activities to logging companies, effectively turning their community forest into little more than a glorified concession, often at the expense of local populations who benefit less from logging activities than does the company itself.

4. **Markets.** Along with the lack of expertise mentioned above comes the difficulty in identifying markets which has been a major obstacle in a number of cases. First, potential buyers need to be identified, which is often a problem in itself – especially for those villages which do not even have access to a mobile phone network, let alone a landline or a computer. Secondly, even when they have been identified, most logging companies who would be potential buyers are reluctant to buy any products because of their low-level quality. Very often, the trees available in community forests are not as good as in concessions as these areas have often been logged over at least once. Likewise, the quality of sawing is often lower than in a mill as it is done by hand (because of legal restrictions on community forestry) and sizes of planks might vary.
5. **Financial resources.** Many of the problems described above are linked to the lack of financial resources in rural villages. It appears contradictory that the Forest Administration should expect from a rural “community” that it is able to pay both for a simple management plan and an environmental impact assessment. Along with their lack of expertise, lack of access to MINFOF and MINEP, and their difficulty in identifying markets, their vital need for financial resources to set up a community forest makes these “communities” almost completely dependent on external assistance.

For a long time, such assistance came from donors such as DFID and GTZ, but since issues other than community-based natural resource management have taken the lead in the agenda of international forestry debates, funds have been waning. A number of local NGOs have been created with the help of some international organisations such as SNV, but these local organisations generally are less well-endowed than their international counterparts. Nowadays, few community forests get the assistance they used to get in the late 1990s or early 2000s except in areas where income-generating activities is an essential part of a wider programme such as in the area surrounding Campo-Ma’an National Park (see section below on forest-related policies in this area for greater detail).

On top of these difficulties, in the early 2000s it became clear that following the ban on concessions and small titles, community forests had become involved in laundering illegally logged timber. It should have been foreseen that despite the ban demand for timber would continue and that the sector would have to turn to the remaining legal means of obtaining timber, which in this case was community forests. “Communities” obtained transportation papers for illegally logged timber which was thus marked as coming from community forests.

The discovery of this network created a scandal which damaged the reputation of community forests in Cameroon and reduced the funds made available by international donors and NGOs. In 2007, MINFOF – which had been under pressure to take action – decided to impose a ban on exports of timber products coming from community forests, which has only made it more difficult for community forests to access markets with decent prices.

Council Forests. The 1994 Law established an additional category of forest known as council forest (*forêt communale*) which were to be the property of and managed by local councils (*communes*). Council forests differ from community forests in that (i) they must be located within the permanent forest domain; (ii) there is no upper limit to the size of the forest, (iii) council forests are to be managed according to a management plan which has the same requirements as those of FMUs, and (iv) councils are allowed to use heavy equipment to carry out logging operations and are not obliged to transform timber products before selling them on.

However, as Karsenty *et al.* (2006:107) point out, progress was even slower in developing council forests than community ones. According to these authors, the fact that local populations *per se* were not involved prevented council forests from benefiting from the same popularity as community forests did among donors. Moreover, at the level of councils, the greatest innovation of the 1994 Law was the tax reform and the creation of RFA which captured the spotlight to a much greater extent than council forests. One might add to this that in order for a council forest to be created, the land must be bought upfront by the local council – an obvious luxury that only very few councils could afford or would be willing to invest in.

The first and most famous council forest was that of Dimako, near Bertoua in the Eastern Province, which was created in 2000 as part of an ongoing project on improving forest management funded by the French cooperation. Yet even in this case – which is described in greater detail in the section below on forest-related policies in Dimako – the land was never bought off the state: strictly speaking, therefore, Dimako Council Forest has not fulfilled all its legal obligations.

Dimako Council Forest was also very slow in the making: four years after it had been created and three after its management plan had been written up (by CIRAD staff as part of the French cooperation project), logging operations had not yet begun. Since then, the council has faced a number of difficulties, including getting annual permits from MINFOF (which it never got in 2006, preventing logging from taking place that year) and identifying potential buyers. Furthermore, many have complained that the entire process has been controlled by the mayor, the owner of a logging company himself. As for benefits made from logging operations, these remain unclear as documents and reports appear to contradict each other. In 2004, there were still only 4 council forests, as opposed to 62 FMUs, 46 logging sales (*ventes de coupe*) and 57 community forests (Karsenty *et al.* 2006:107).

After a long period of near hibernation, however, council forests have recently attracted greater attention from forestry actors in Cameroon. After the disillusionment following the community forest scandal in 2003 (see above), donors have turned their eyes towards council forests as the nearest alternative. That year, a partnership was signed between the National Federation of Forested Boroughs of France (*Fédération nationale des communes forestières de France* or FNCoFor) and its Cameroonian equivalent (*Association des communes forestières du Cameroun* or ACFCam) to set up a programme known as the Programme to Support Council Forests in Cameroon (*Programme d'appui aux forêts communales du Cameroun* or PAF2C).

PAF2C eventually saw the light of day in 2006 and was launched in November 2007 by the French Ambassador after it received financial support from a number of organisations, including the French Global Environment Fund (*Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial* or FFEM),²⁵ GTZ, DED²⁶ and FESP. A structure was set up, known as the Tropical Forestry Technical Centre (*Centre technique forestier tropical* or CTFT) to manage the programme, itself supported by two additional French organisations, namely the International section of the National Forestry Office (*ONF International* or ONFi) for technical support, and Paris City Hall which donated € 3 million for a reforestation project in four Cameroonian boroughs (ACFCam *et al.* 2007:1).

The fact that French organisations have been so keen in promoting council forests comes as no surprise: first, Dimako council forest set up with French funds, which probably created a precedent. More importantly, though, council forests fit much better the French notion of decentralisation where forest management remains in the hands of public institutions rather than being handed over to “communities”.

Council forests have thus undoubtedly gained popularity in recent years, as witnessed by donor enthusiasm and the fact that six council forests have been created to date whilst another 12 projects are currently ongoing. According to some, council forests might even be more successful on the long run than community forests or state-owned forests such as FMUs:

Council forests have the same constraints as FMUs, which means that they are not as restricted as community forests. Moreover, community forests do not belong to the community – it is merely their management which is transferred, [whereas] for council forests there is a transfer of competence, revenue and ownership. This gives more responsibility to locally elected bodies and the population because the forest belongs to them. There is greater proximity, less pillaging by the state, greater motivation to monitor [activities] and [revenue from] resources goes directly to them.²⁷

Interview with a supporter of council forestry dated 3 March 2008

Yet despite such enthusiasm, some of the problems faced by community forests are also likely to be shared by council forests. These include (i) the risk of elite capture, in this case by the mayor and/or the council (especially as no further participation by the population is legally required) (Poissonnet & Lescuyer 2005); and (ii) lack of expertise (as the council is not necessarily routinely involved in logging operations or marketing of timber products). CTFC and its programme (PAF2C) is likely to help overcome the second issue, but specific attention will have to be paid to overcome the first hurdle, especially as RFA management has shown that local councils are as capable of embezzling funds as the central state itself.

²⁵ FFEM is part of the French ODA institutional structure.

²⁶ DED (*Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst*) is part of the German ODA institutional structure, along with GTZ.

²⁷ “Les forêts communales ont les mêmes contraintes que les UFA. C’est moins contraignant que les forêts communautaires. En plus, une forêt communautaire n’appartient pas à la communauté : il y a transfert de gestion seulement, [alors que] pour une forêt communale il y a transfert de compétences, de revenus et de propriété. Ça responsabilise les élus locaux et la population car la forêt est à eux. Il y a plus de proximité, moins de pillage par l’Etat, plus de motivation pour la surveillance et les ressources leur reviennent directement. »

It should be noted that both community and council forests are heavily influenced by the model of concessions: the “concession paradigm” appears to have imposed several elements of management on these types of forest both through legal regulations and through mere habit. Among other elements, the fact that the management of community and council forests is dominated by the logging issue is certainly due to the pervasiveness of the “concession paradigm” throughout Cameroonian forestry.

2.4.1.7. A Plethora of National and Regional Organisations

Last but not least, the institutional landscape of Cameroon’s forest sector has been profoundly modified with the exponential growth of actors involved and the arrival of new categories of organisations. A couple of decades ago, the number of actors in the forest sector was limited: on the one hand, a number of different organisations in three ministries (Tourism, Agriculture and Animal Rearing) were responsible for different aspects of forestry (protected areas, forestry and hunting respectively) on top of two agencies (CENADEFOR and ONAREF) in charge of ensuring forest “development” and “regeneration”.

A couple of years later, however, these organisations had been grouped into two bodies: the forestry administration (as part of the Ministry of Agriculture until 1992 and of the Ministry of Environment and Forests from 1992 to 2005) and ONADEF, resulting from the fusion of the two agencies mentioned above. On the other hand, logging activities were dominated by a handful of foreign companies, most of which were French, Italian and Dutch – most of these companies still operate today and are members of GFBC, Cameroon’s largest federation of timber companies.

By the late 1980s, a few foreign donor organisations had also appeared in the forest sector, including CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) present in Cameroonian forestry since 1982 and the French (Ministry of Cooperation) and British (Overseas Development Agency) which first set foot in the sector in the late 1980s. The World Bank, taking advantage of its growing interest in Cameroon and its 1990 forest policy, was soon to focus on the country as well. Likewise, a limited range of NGOs (notably WWF and WCS) had only just started looking into a number of conservation-related issues in Cameroon.

The Private Sector. Today, however, there is nothing less than a plethora of actors present in Cameroon’s increasingly overcrowded forest sector. The two categories of actors present in the 1980s have certainly undergone only moderate change. First, logging operators notably saw (i) an increase in Cameroonian companies in 1994 with the devaluation of the FCFA, followed by a fall several years later once tax reforms were implemented, and (ii) a diversification of nationalities involved in the timber sector. In particular, the Asian share has increased substantially, both in the nationality of operators (such as Vicwood-Thantry, now a Hong Kong-based firm) and in the countries importing Cameroonian timber products.

The Forestry Administration. Secondly, the state administration in charge of forest-related issues has been concentrated into a single division at the Ministry of Environment and Forests (*Ministère de l’environnement et des forêts* or MINEF) created in 1992 in the immediate aftermath of the Rio Conference. The Ministry split in 2005 into two separate entities: the

Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (*Ministère de l'environnement et de la protection de la nature* or MINEP) and the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (*Ministère des forêts et de la faune* or MINFOF).

It remains unclear why MINEF was divided into two ministries, although some believe that the decision was motivated by the will to multiply seats in the cabinet for the President's close entourage. Yet confusion reigned in the years following the creation of these new ministries, as it had not been stipulated which ministry should be in charge of certain issues that cut across the "environment" and "forests", notably conservation. Eventually, it was established that MINFOF should retain the sector of conservation (and thus protected areas), leaving embittered MINEP staff with only "brown" environment issues such as pollution.

MINEP staff are said to have complained that MINFOF had kept all the "lucrative" sectors such as logging and conservation. Some observers therefore claim that MINEP's decision to impose environmental impact assessments on all logging operations (at the expense of the operators of course) was a means of securing some sort of income for MINEP staff.

Two other notable changes in the public arena of Cameroon's forest sector have taken place in the past decade. In a bid to fight against corruption which was suspected to be plaguing forest revenue at MINEF, a World Bank decree was issued in on 19 March 1999 (N° 99/370/PM) establishing a Programme to Secure Forest Revenue (*Programme de sécurisation des recettes forestières*). To the anger of MINEF staff, this programme transferred the competence of forest revenue management to the Ministry of Economy and Finance (*Ministère de l'économie et des finances* or MINEFI) which was equipped with a specially created unit which has managed forest revenue ever since.

In 2002, ONADEF was finally dissolved. As AFTEN puts it, "A parastatal in charge of industrial reforestation and promoting timber use, ONADEF had a monopoly on forest inventories and management plans, which ran counter to the development of consulting services in the private sector and fueled the conviction that corruption and clientelism dominated its workings" (2008:25).

Yet despite these two institutional changes, allegations of corruption carried on, notably at MINEF/MINFOF. The frequency of corruption scandals partly explains why in the past seven years the MINEF/MINFOF teams have changed eight times. The latest one to date at the time of writing had led to a major reshuffle of MINFOF staff in December 2007 following the anonymous denunciation of a network operating illegally among top-ranking officials within the Ministry. Allegedly faced with pressure from the World Bank, the Minister of Forests and Wildlife changed over half his ministry's staff, leaving all but a handful of members from the previous team.

The Donor Community. The category of actors that has undergone most change, however, is undoubtedly that of international governmental and non governmental organisations whose number has dramatically increased over the past two decades. Most of the change had taken place by the mid-1990s, when the World Bank and the French (AFD, SCAC, FFEM), British (ODA/DFID), German (GTZ/DED/KfW), American (USAID), Belgian and Dutch donor

agencies, along with the European Commission, had already established themselves in the forest sector. A number of large NGOs had also started activities in the sector, including WWF, WCS, SNV, Tropenbos International and IUCN.

In 1997, a first study on the donor landscape in the forest sector, aptly named *Technical Forestry Assistance: the Cameroon Rush*, drew a number of conclusions that remain valid today: the donor landscape was characterised by high diversity of outlooks and dispersion of funds into a multitude of uncoordinated projects with limited impact on the forest sector (Grison 1997:14-8). It would take a few years before donor agencies decided to act upon this.

Initially, many of these organisations focused on field activities, each setting out a specific geographical zone in which to work: ODA worked primarily in Mbalmayo and the Anglophone Southwest; the French cooperation set up “camp” in Dimako, near Bertoua, whilst SNV and Tropenbos International set up projects in the Lomié (Eastern Province) and Kribi-Campo areas (Southern Province). However, as international and Cameroonian debates alike evolved on the issue of tropical forests and illegal logging / governance issues came to the forefront, virtually all donor agencies started turning towards more political issues and establishing stronger ties with the forest administration.

A brief look into the type of governance that reigned within MINEF was sufficient to drive two donors out of the country (namely the Dutch and the Americans), whilst those remaining decided to collaborate to prevent any further dispersion of their activities. In 1999, the decision was taken to launch the Forest and Environment Sector Programme (FESP; in French *Programme sectoriel forêts et environnement* or PSFE) – a sector-wide programme that would coordinate the activities of all donor agencies. As donor agencies put it themselves, the aim of PSFE was also to help them shift from a “project approach” (where each agency carried out a number of field projects independently of each other) to a “programme approach” (whereby each agency would be given a specific domain of the forest sector on which to work). In parallel, organisations involved in PSFE and engaged in dialogue with MINFO decided to create the Circle of Consultation of MINEF/MINFOR Partners (*Cercle de concertation des partenaires du MINEF/MINFOR* or CCPM).

The initial phase of setting up PSFE was supposed to last four months; it ended up lasting five years, at the end of which the country’s main donors had decided to split activities amongst themselves into five components, as summarised in Table III below.

Component	Title	Description	Involved donor agencies
C1	Environmental management of forestry activities	Environmental regulation, monitoring, providing information and sensitising	GTZ, DFID, European Commission, FAO
C2	Managing production forests and giving value to forest products	Zoning, forest management, controlling forestry activities and providing economic value	GTZ, ACDI, AFD, DFID
C3	Biodiversity conservation and valuing faunal resources	Maintaining biodiversity, improving knowledge on the forest resource and conservation or protected areas	GTZ, KfW, FEM
C4	Community management of forest and faunal resources	Community forestry and community-based management of fuelwood resources	GTZ, KfW, ACDI, DFID
C5	Institutional strengthening, education and research	Capacity building of MINEF/MINFOF staff and involving all stakeholders	GTZ, KfW, ACDI, SCAC, DFID, World Bank, European Commission, UNDP

Table III. — Distribution of roles to different donor agencies according to the five components of FESP (translated from Singer 2004).

Throughout this process, the World Bank has maintained a leading role not only in the donor landscape, but arguably in the forest sector at large.²⁸ However, this strong leadership has not prevented further disagreements from taking place, as illustrated in recent conflicts that have marred PSFE in the last couple of years (allowing MINFOF to allegedly play donors against each other). In 2005, PSFE seemed to be moving forward at last when DFID agreed to contribute £10 million to the forest sector, half of which was to go in budget support and the other half into a specially created basket fund.

However, at a time when other donors had agreed to do the same thing,²⁹ the decision was taken to fire the person responsible for the basket after allegations of corruption. Interviewees have claimed that GTZ – which had originally recruited this person – was outraged at the decision whilst CIDA and DFID refused to provide the funds they had promised as long as the problem would not be resolved. In the meantime, the money has been sitting in the fund for almost 18 months.

²⁸ For greater detail on the role of the World Bank in the Cameroonian forest sector, see Essama-Nssah & Gockowski (2000) and Karsenty (2001). In particular, the World Bank's series of Structural Adjustment Credits (SAC, in French *Crédit d'ajustement structurel* or CAS) which link loans to institutional reforms, has contributing to maintaining a rapid pace of reform in Cameroon's timber sector.

²⁹ DFID was the first donor to give £5 million to the basket fund and £5 million as budgetary support; other donors followed suit with France (€10 million in each), the World Bank (US\$ 25 million in budgetary support) and CIDA (which put all forest funds in the basket).

Questions of efficiency and coordination set aside, the donor community continues to be criticised on its legitimacy in Cameroon's forest sector. Dissenting voices, which denounced the 1994 Law as being imposed from outside, also resent the fact that the direction which the country's forest policy is taking appears to be set by international donors rather than national actors such as MINFOF. Likewise, many donors have criticised PSFE for falling short of helping MINFOF "appropriate forestry reforms". The donor community and especially the World Bank has undeniably played a much greater role in shaping forest policies in Cameroon than it has in Brazil or Indonesia. Yet as one interviewee put it, when faced with the dilemma of either sitting back and watching forests being mismanaged and disappearing or intervening at the expense of going against sovereignty principles, most donors prefer going for the latter option.

However, after almost two decades of intense scrutiny of the Cameroonian forest sector, a number of observers have noticed a certain amount of "donor fatigue". In a domain where a regular influx of funds leads to the need to make regular disbursements, the donor community has often been criticised for having "fads" where it allocates funds to a certain subsector (conservation, sustainable forest management, indigenous issues) before moving to another one within a few years and without waiting for effects to happen.

Likewise, a shift appears to be occurring whereby donors have been drawing their attention away from Cameroon and towards the Democratic Republic of Congo in the past few years. Virtually all donors have opened branches in Kinshasa whilst reducing their activities in Cameroon. This trend could be due to two factors: (i) frustration at not seeing reforms in Cameroon taking place at a fast enough pace, and (ii) the relative political calm in the DRC and the fact that the country is home to the world's second largest expanse of tropical forest has attracted donors' attention since the early 2000s.

It is not certain whether this trend will carry on for very long; current difficulties in reforming the DRC's forest sector, and Cameroon's long-term role as a laboratory for forestry reforms in Central Africa, might both mean that donors could keep a foot in Cameroon's forests for many years to come.

NGOs. Last but not least, the NGO community has undergone exponential growth since the late 1980s when only a handful of international NGOs were present in the country. In particular, community-based and local NGOs have sprouted across Cameroon's forests; even the smallest *communes* of the Eastern and Southern provinces house several NGOs involved in a range of activities related to local rights, development and natural resources.

Several factors help explain such a proliferation of small NGOs. First, Biya's liberal reforms of 1991 allowed free associations in Cameroon for the first time, which led to the appearance of thousands of GIC and other types of groups, including NGOs, throughout the country. Secondly, several larger NGOs have actively promoted such community-based initiatives and mobilisation: SNV, for instance, supported these initiatives both technically and financially in anticipation of its policy change in 2002 when it stopped implementing its own field activities to focus on coordinating projects through partners instead.

Thirdly – and most importantly – the environment/development sector has turned out to be a highly lucrative sector because of donor funds available and their search for local partners in implementing projects. This factor has unfortunately created a veritable “NGO market” in which local NGOs compete with each other for funds. In many cases, donors out on field visits have been surprised to find that the NGO they had been supporting did not actually exist and had been set up as a façade to receive funds and write up phoney documents. Reports abound where a room is rented out in the field, a sign put up and the room equipped to look like an office until the field visit by the donor organisation has gone.

In stark contrast with this obscure end of the NGO landscape, a handful of international NGOs are active in many aspects of Cameroon’s forest sector. WWF in particular is the heavyweight version of NGOs with programmes all over Cameroon of different sizes, most of them being involved in conservation-related issues such as the Jengi Project in the southeastern corner of Cameroon and the Kudu Zombo Programme (described in greater detail in the section on forest-related policies in Campo-Ma’an National Park). The NGO has also sought to strengthen ties with logging companies to promote sustainable forest management and even conservation issues inside concessions, notably through the Central Africa Forest and Trade Network (CAFTN). WWF’s regional office for Central Africa is based in Yaoundé.

IUCN is also strongly involved in various aspects of the forest sector with a more regional focus. These include (i) managing conservation issues in the Trinationale Sangha area (*Trinationale de la Sangha*) shared between Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, (ii) managing the Central African Regional Programme for the Environment set up by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (see below in the section on regional initiatives), and (iii) housing the regional branch of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network. Another NGO, US-based World Conservation Society (WCS), has witnessed a reduction in its activities in Cameroon but has also continued to focus on conservation initiatives in recent years (see section below on Conservation policies in Cameroon).

Finally, a number of NGOs based in developed countries have preferred establishing partnerships with Cameroonian NGOs rather than opening up local branches. In particular, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (France and Netherlands notably) have often led campaigns in coordination with a local NGO known as the Centre for Environment and Development (*Centre pour l’environnement et le développement* or CED). Throughout the late 1990s and 2000s, this coalition led large-scale campaigns against logging companies accused of carrying out illegal activities or unsustainable management. In recent years, however, as the climate for collaboration with logging companies has considerably improved, some such NGOs have swapped denunciations for dialogue, as illustrated by the evolving relationship between Milieu Defensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands) and Wijma, described in greater detail in the section on forest-related policies in Ma’an.

Regional Initiatives. The growth of the web of institutions in the forest network has spread beyond Cameroon to the entire region. The creation of institutions at the level of the Congo Basin began a mere two years after the 1994 Law was passed. In May 1996, the Conference on dense rainforest ecosystems in Central Africa (*Conférence sur les écosystèmes de forêts denses et humides d’Afrique centrale* or CEFDHAC) was held. The outcome of the conference led to

what is now known as the Brazzaville Process which aims to encourage dialogue between all stakeholders in the region to promote conservation of natural resources and the fair sharing of its benefits. It has since been followed up by another five conferences in 1998 in Bata (Equatorial Guinea), where a strategic action plan on sustainable forest management and conservation was adopted, in 2000 in Bujumbura (Burundi), 2002 in Kinshasa, 2004 in Yaoundé and 2007 in Libreville (Gabon).

However, the previous year the seeds of a higher profile initiative had been sown when the heads of state of the Congo Basin countries met and issued the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration. This declaration laid the basis for a regional recognition of the benefits of sustainable forest management; in practice, it also led to the creation of the Central African Forests Commission (*Commission des forêts d'Afrique centrale* or COMIFAC) which provides both political and technical coordination in a bid to harmonise forest policies and management in its member countries. Unlike CEFDHAC, COMIFAC is a formal structure equipped with a secretariat based in Yaoundé and which has 10 member countries,³⁰ although agreements signed under its watch remain non-binding, (unlike, for instance, the European Union). In 2005, the second meeting on forests of the Congo Basin heads of state took place in Brazzaville, ending in a treaty that reaffirmed the will of all ten COMIFAC members to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the region's forests.

In the meantime, following the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002, a number of developed countries decided with COMIFAC members to create a Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CFBP; in French *Partenariat pour les forêts du Bassin du Congo* or PFBC). After the Partnership's first meeting held in Paris in 2003, the United States took the lead in facilitating the initiative until France took over from 2005 to 2007. It was during this period that COMIFAC members agreed to adopt a Convergence Plan (*Plan de Convergence*) aimed at harmonising their policies and legislation concerning forests and savannahs of the region. Since 2008, CFBP has been facilitated by Germany.³¹

The number of regional initiatives on forest-related issues thus far exceeds those of (i) Brazil in the Amazon Basin (which are limited to ACTO, and even then this organisation does not deal solely with environmental issues) and (ii) Indonesia in Southeast Asia (ASEAN's scope going well beyond the environment, although agreements on the haze have been signed by several members states). Yet Cameroon and its neighbours share a geographical and ecological situation similar to that of the Amazon Basin where regional agreements on forestry issues are few and far between.

Why is it, then, that there should be so many agreements across the Congo Basin? There could be two reasons for this. First, Congo Basin countries share a common history since the late nineteenth century when they were administered as colonial blocks rather than individual political entities. This is especially the case of Belgium's colonies (Belgian Congo, Rwanda and Urundi) and of course France's empire (French Equatorial Africa and Cameroon). Since

³⁰ Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé e Príncipe, Rwanda and Burundi.

³¹ For more information on regional initiatives on Congo Basin forests, please visit <http://www.riddac.org/accueil/>.

independence, regional initiatives in many different sectors have taken place, as mentioned in the section above on Foreign Policy and Geopolitics (*e.g.*, CEMAC).

Secondly, the international donor community has played an essential role in all of these regional initiatives. Many donor agencies have a tendency to want to pool their activities across geographical regions which face similar situations rather than having to establish costly branches in each country in which they intervene. However, in other countries such as Indonesia and especially Brazil (which has steadfastly refused any Latin American equivalent of FLEG), the donor community is in a much weaker bargaining position and is therefore unable to bring about such a flurry of regional initiatives.

Donors are all the more interested in promoting transnational initiatives in the Congo Basin in particular because many have expressed the wish to see reforms and lessons learned in Cameroon spread to the rest of the region. Cameroon has undoubtedly been a laboratory for forestry reforms since the 1990s, a position which several factors have contributed to, including the fact that it is the only bilingual country in the region. The fact that English is an official language is likely to have encouraged foreign organisations to carry out projects there first rather than in other parts of the Congo Basin. Some of the reforms adopted in Cameroon have already spread to other countries, as mentioned above in the section called “Nineteen Ninety Four”.

2.4.2. The Indigenous Issue

The fourth chapter of a secondary school history book on Cameroon published in 1983 is entitled “Cavemen: the Pygmies”³² warns that “Pygmies” are “shy and have simple and pure manners as well as being very religious. They speak a curious idiom but easily adopt the languages of their Bantu neighbours”.³³ Further on, however, the textbook adds that “the evolution of Pygmies poses serious problems. They must no longer be considered as simple objects of curiosity. They are entitled to education and social benefits of all sorts. If we can bring them something, we must bear in mind that they too have a lot to teach us”³⁴ (Mveng & Beling-Nkoumba 1983:28-9). These extracts summarise the paradoxical construct that has dominated indigenist policies in Cameroon since colonial times.

The importance given nowadays to “indigenous” issues and policies in Cameroon is fairly recent. This might stem from the fact that unlike in Brazil, where a clear difference was made between “Indians” and “settlers”, “Pygmies” were not distinguished from the remaining population living in Cameroon during the colonial period. Under French rule, the entire population was referred to as *indigènes*, much like the term *Inlander* used in the Dutch East Indies before Indonesia reached independence. Colonial rulers and post-colonial rulers alike in Cameroon have perceived a

³² « L’homme des cavernes : les Pygmées ».

³³ « Ils sont timides, de mœurs simples et pures, très religieux. Ils parlent un idiome curieux, mais ils adoptent aussi très facilement le parler de leurs voisins Bantou ».

³⁴ « L’évolution des Pygmées pose de sérieux problèmes. Ils ne doivent plus être considérés comme un simple objet de curiosité. Ils ont droit à l’instruction et aux bienfaits sociaux de toutes sortes. Si nous pouvons leur apporter quelque chose, sachons qu’eux aussi, en retour, ont beaucoup à nous apprendre ».

difference between “Pygmies” and “non-Pygmies” which has sometimes appeared in policy formulation, but the emphasis has always been on minimising these differences and focusing on “assimilation”. Only in the past couple of decades have non-governmental policies begun to recognise and/or encourage the distinctiveness of “Pygmy” populations.

2.4.2.1. Background

All the studies on “Pygmies” introduce the subject by pointing out the Greek etymology of the term (*e.g.*, RASED 2006:2) and explaining the three main “Pygmy” groups found in Cameroon:

1. The largest group known as the Baka live in the southern half of the Eastern Province and are especially numerous in the southeastern tip around Salapoumbé and Moloundou where according to Froment (2006:77) they represent over four fifths of the local population and have been estimated at 40,000 (Abega & Bigombe-Logo 2006:1)
2. The second largest group called the Bagyeli or Bakola are located in the western corner of Cameroon’s Southern Province between the Ntem and the Nyong, and especially in the boroughs of Kribi, Campo and Lolodorf.
3. The third and smallest group is the only one not to be located in the forest and is found in Mbam division, in the area around Bankim. RASED (2006:3) explains that these “Pygmies” known as Medjanti or Bedžang have mixed with the local tribe called Tikar to such an extent that the two are largely indistinguishable from each other nowadays.

Genetic studies have shown that “Pygmy”³⁵ populations constitute what is known in biological anthropology as “outliers” in the sense that their mitochondrial DNA shows that they probably branched off from the rest of the world’s population from a very early period (in other words, Bantu populations are genetically closer to Europeans and Asians than they are to “Pygmies”). Based on archaeological evidence and oral history, it is believed that “Pygmies” inhabited Congo Basin forests long before Bantu populations arrived from the 18th century onwards. It is likely that from that period “Pygmy” populations, who are known for being hunter-gatherers by tradition and have extensive knowledge of the forest, collaborated closely with Bantu populations who mastered agricultural techniques.

Relationships between “Pygmy” and Bantu populations can be broken down into two dimensions. From an economic viewpoint, both populations have been trading with each other for centuries (Bigombe-Logo & Bell 1995), “Pygmies” providing Bantu populations with forest products such as medicinal herbs and bushmeat in exchange for agricultural products and increasingly manufactured goods such as metal tools and tinned food. From a social viewpoint, “Pygmies” have often suffered from considerable discrimination within Bantu societies, although

³⁵ The term “Pygmy” has become very unpopular among indigenist organisations in Cameroon who prefer using the names of the specific societies (Baka, Bagyeli/Bakola, Medjanti) rather than a term that refers to the small stature of these populations. For simplicity’s sake, however, these populations are collectively termed “Pygmy” in this study, the use of quotes reminding the reader of the relativity and sensitivity of the chosen term.

the extent of such practices is highly variable and many members of Bantu populations claim that these accusations are unfounded.

In some areas such as in the area around Salapoumbé and Moloundou, segregation is extreme (both socially and geographically) and some anthropologists have even reported ancestral forms of slavery whereby a Bantu family can “own” a “Pygmy” family (a rule that is passed on from generation to generation). In others, however, despite geographical segregation many “Pygmy” women establish a household with Bantu men, although the other way round is much rarer. In all cases, however, “Pygmies” are the butt of jokes and insults (Abega & Bigombe-Logo 2006:12) as many Bantu populations regard them as “savage” and “primitive”.

In the past few decades, social change has been profound and is threatening the cultural traits that have traditionally characterised “Pygmy” identity in the eyes of outsiders. The most obvious change has been the creation of permanent Baka and Bagyeli settlements, especially along roads, although this trend began before Cameroon even became independent according to local sources.

Likewise, Baka and Bagyeli populations have begun building rectangular mud huts identical to those built by Bantu populations living in forested areas. Their traditional “Mongulu” huts (RASED 2006:42) are still found in many villages but are rare in those closer to main roads or large towns. In line with these changes, diets have evolved from one almost exclusively based on hunting and gathering to one which includes agricultural and manufactured products. These are mainly obtained through barter exchanges with nearby Bantu populations, but some Baka and Bagyeli have resorted to planting their own products which include plantain, cassava, macabo and peanuts.

Above all, however, “Pygmy” populations continue to be characterised by extreme material poverty and very limited access (if at all in most cases) to public resources such as health and education, but also participation in decision-making. Along with everyday segregation of which this lack of access to public resources is part of, these observations have led many authors to claim that marginalisation remains the single largest problem among “Pygmy” populations (Abega 2006, Abega & Bigombe-Logo 2006, RASED 2006).

2.4.2.2. Governmental versus Non-Governmental Policies

Little is known about the history of Cameroonian policies towards “Pygmy” populations since colonisation; archives still exist but their analysis lay outside the scope of this research. From interviews carried out with researchers and professionals on the issue, it has been established that French authorities had set up a “Pygmy domestication policy” (*politiques d’apprivoisement des Pygmées*), indicating that colonial authorities had already recognised them as a target population for specific policies. As Gambeg points out, the use of the term “domestication” (*apprivoisement*) is significant of the vision of “Pygmies”:³⁶

³⁶ The use of terms that usually refer to the divide between wild and tame animals is frequent for other isolated or “indigenous” populations across the world, such as *sauvage* (wild) in French and *manso* (tame) in Portuguese.

These pejorative expressions are not void of meaning. The term “domestication” is only used for wild beasts which must be tamed and turned into less fierce and more familiar, domestic animals. Domestication, however, is far from allowing a complete emancipation of the species because one still has to deal with an animal.³⁷

Gambeg (2006:210).

However, over the decades, policies directed towards “Pygmy” populations appear to have accepted that they were human beings after all, and have focused on “integrating” them. The concept of integration is of course extremely fuzzy but was mainly put forward once it had been observed that “Pygmies” were “marginalised”. This term refers to lack of access both (i) to local economies, which translates into extreme material poverty, and (ii) to public services (education and health notably) and decision-making.

In the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Health and Populations set up a Service for Marginal Populations (*Service des populations marginales*) with the aim of elaborating and implementing a national policy for “Pygmy” populations among others. The difference between a unit for “Pygmy” populations versus one for “Marginal” populations, however, is great: having inherited a French-style notion of integration, the Ministry refused to create a unit along ethnic lines and established it only based on socio-economic characteristics shared by a number of populations across the country.

In 1996, following a long period of inactivity, the Service was dissolved, only to be created a couple of years later again under the same name as a sub-directorate of the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Ministère des affaires sociales* or MINAS). The Sub-directorate has taken up the same scope of work as its predecessor and has further defined “marginal populations” as “populations which for environmental, historical or other reasons are located far from decision-making centres”. The following categories of population fall into this broad definition: (i) “Pygmy” populations; (ii) Bororo (also known as mBororo) populations;³⁸ (iii) mountain-dwelling populations, (iv) populations living along Cameroon’s borders, and (v) populations living on islands and coastal areas with difficult access, such as Bakassi and mangrove areas south of Douala.

Throughout their history, however, the Service and the Sub-directorate of Marginal Populations have only rarely implemented policies on their own due to lack of funding. Instead, they have depended on various non-governmental organisations to carry out projects. In the 1980s, the first

Likewise, “Pygmies” are often compared to animals by Bantu populations, just like Papuans among non-Papuan Indonesians.

³⁷ « Ces expressions tout à fait péjoratives ne sont pas pour autant dénuées de sens. En effet, le terme apprivoisement n’est utilisé que pour des animaux sauvages que l’on doit dompter, rendre moins farouches et plus familiers, domestiques. L’apprivoisement est loin d’autoriser le moindre affranchissement de l’espèce, car on a toujours affaire à un animal ».

³⁸ mBororo populations are nomadic cattle herders found primarily in the North of the country, although their cattle’s movements may sometimes take them into the Eastern Province. Certain provinces have tried to sedentarise these populations by force.

projects directed at Pygmy populations were carried out with the Baka Project (*Projet Baka*) in cooperation with the Catholic Church whose missionaries had been working on converting “Pygmy” populations since colonial times. *Projet Baka* focused on “improving livelihoods of Baka populations”, notably by building wooden houses and communal latrines. However, a 1994 evaluation of the project showed that this “attempt to sedentarise” the Baka had failed: despite the construction of new, more spacious houses, the Baka preferred sleeping in their huts made of leaves which they had set up behind each house. Likewise, their alleged belief that fecal matter could not be mixed for fear of having their spirit stolen prevented them from using latrines.

Since then, the Service and Sub-directorate have both implemented a number of projects with other partners. Several projects aimed at improving the economic situation of “Pygmy” populations, such as an ILO-sponsored project which created a Baka GIC and a community house in the Eastern Province near Lomié. When funds run out in 2005, however, the GIC stopped its activities and the community house was eventually sold to a Church. Other projects have focused instead on capacity building whilst ensuring access to public services, such as those which paid for Baka children to get education in village schools. Again, such projects have not always been successful as the dropout rate is considerable, especially after the hunting season has begun and Baka parents expect their children to follow them into the forest.

In recent years such projects have multiplied and focus on access to public services such as education, health and obtaining ID cards – an essential requirement for travelling beyond the village as police checks are frequent on Cameroonian roads. Both local NGOs (*e.g.*, RAPID, CEPFILD in the Kribi-Akom II area) and international NGOs (*e.g.*, Plan International in Dimako) have implemented such projects. Some “Pygmy” settlements such as that of Awomo near Akom II in the Southern Province have attracted so much attention that some of its inhabitants now have three ID cards and have had their pictures plastered across France thanks to “documentaries” which describe them as “living in harmony with the forest”. Yet the result of all this attention remains subject to debate.³⁹

The mitigated results of some of these projects and the outright failure of others has prompted many observers to question whether the marginalisation of “Pygmy” populations has been self-imposed rather than coming from the outside, as is usually claimed. It is obvious that marginalisation has been interiorised to a certain extent by “Pygmies” themselves, as has the perception of inferiority of “Pygmy” culture and lifestyle, deemed “primitive” and “savage”. As one Baka person expressed it in Dimako, “We Baka don’t even have life”⁴⁰ (Interview dated 16 March 2008). Yet it is difficult to expect anything else from “Pygmy” populations when even recent government documents use phrases which underline this inferiority of “Pygmy” *vis-à-vis* Bantu society, as illustrated in this extract of a 1997 white paper on policies for marginal populations:

³⁹ A documentary based on an “expedition” to Cameroon in company of French comedian Muriel Robin was aired in 2005 on French public television and gives a rather reductionist view of a Bagyeli settlement, Awomo, located near Akom II north of Campo-Ma’an National Park. The documentary and its website (http://www.france5.fr/en_terre_inconnue/W00458/4/128277.cfm) make rather unsettling implicit comparisons between the Bagyeli and the chimpanzees encountered during the “expedition” – a strong reminder that the colonial perception of “Pygmies” needing to be “domesticated” has not totally fallen out of fashion.

⁴⁰ « Nous les Baka on n’a même pas la vie ».

There are several types of marginal populations, such as the mentally ill, tramps, drug users and other populations that are of interest to us here. However, unlike the categories mentioned above, the specificity of these so-called marginal populations lies primarily in the primitive character of their lifestyle. They appear to resist to the dominant lifestyle. This is probably why they can equally be called “indigenous peoples” or “autochthonous populations”.⁴¹

Ministère des affaires sociales et de la condition féminine (1997:4)

In short, a number of organisations have been involved in the indigenous issue with their own approach and policies:

1. The state through the Sub-Directorate of Marginal Populations at MINAS has established a policy to “integrate” “Pygmy” and other “marginalised populations” with no distinction of race. However, in practice government policy adopts the form and perspective set up by the donor or the partner who generally leads projects in which the Sub-Directorate takes part;
2. The Church – both Catholic and the different Protestant denominations – have always played a major role in “Pygmy” issues. Missionaries have been set up (as in Dimako) that focus on providing welfare and supporting Baka populations whilst encouraging them to convert to Christianity. Missionaries have the great advantage of being involved with targeted populations over much longer periods (up to several decades) than individual projects led by government or other organisations. Yet many have questioned the ethical motivations behind conversion to Christianity given the well-known effects that this may have on “Pygmy” society. The loss of political structures in societies who change from their own systems of belief to one imposed or originating from the outside has already been well documented.
3. National and international NGOs and donors alike have carried out a flurry of projects, especially in recent years given the growing importance of indigenous issues on the global forestry agenda. To name only a few, CED (Centre for Environment and Development) have carried out several projects to promote the rights of Baka and Bagyeli populations, notably the Bagyeli settlements north of Campo-Ma’an National Park. Plan International has established a project that focuses on schooling Baka children and providing infrastructure such as houses, wells and latrines in places such as Dimako. The Belgian cooperation has also set up a project with Baka populations surrounding Djoum in the Southern Province.

However, it is probably the World Bank which has best promoted the indigenous issue on the political agenda. Given the organisation’s policy to compensate indigenous populations in particular for any potential damage caused by projects funded by World Bank loans, the

⁴¹ « Il existe plusieurs types de marginaux. Il en est ainsi des malades mentaux, des clochards, des drogués. Il en est également ainsi des populations qui nous intéressent ici. Mais contrairement aux catégories mentionnées plus haut, la spécificité des populations dites marginales réside essentiellement dans le caractère primitif de leur mode de vie. Elles apparaissent comme des réfractaires au modèle dominant de mode de vie. C’est probablement la raison pour laquelle on les désigne également par les expressions de « peuples indigènes » ou encore « populations autochtones ». Note that the reasoning is inverted to as to strengthen their primitive character: it is because they are primitive and refuse a “modern” lifestyle that they can be called “indigenous” rather than the other way round.

Bank has paid great attention to “Pygmy” populations that might be affected by the construction of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, for instance. As a result, populations near Lolodorf, close to Kribi, have been the subject of particular scrutiny, as have those of Akom II on the border with Campo-Ma’an National Park, which was created as an environmental compensation for the construction of the pipeline. It is probable that other donors and NGOs then followed suit, thus contributing to raising the indigenous issue on the political agenda.

The main difference between the approach adopted by government and those of NGOs and international donors is that the former makes no racial distinction between “marginalised” populations (although in practice it appears happy to) whereas NGOs and donors clearly target a number of policies towards “Pygmy” populations specifically.

4. A sign of the raise of indigenist policies on the national agenda is the multiplication of NGOs and “community-based organisations” which claim to represent “Pygmy” populations themselves, such as the Self-Promotion Project for Pygmies in Eastern Cameroon (*Projet auto-promotion des Pygmées de l’Est-Cameroun* or APPEC) and even the Federation of Pygmies in Central Africa. This might appear surprising, especially when one considers that “Pygmy” societies do not have any obvious or clear-cut political structure. The fact that these organisations that claim to be the own making of Pygmy populations with no prior history of involvement in politics or even with each other is a sign that the rise of this issue on the agenda has contributed to political mobilisation of the target population itself.
5. Finally, logging companies are often in contact with Baka populations in particular and although none of them had ever set up specific policies in this field, FSC certification requires that a certain number of measures be taken. In particular, it requires that Baka individuals be employed by the company, which many are happy to do given their legendary knowledge of the forest as they make excellent prospectors (those who identify tree species ahead of logging activities). However, when asked about FSC requirements concerning “indigenous populations”, the representative of a large timber company confided that

FSC is very specific on social issues. For the Pygmy problem, for instance, they want us to integrate them, but they themselves don’t want to be integrated! They also talk about them in Gabon and Congo, everywhere it’s the same thing (...). Now we are forced to use them when carrying out faunal inventories, but to sedentarise them is altogether another job. It’s the same thing in Djoum. We are unlucky – we have them in all our FMUs!⁴²

Interview with the representative of a large timber company dated 2 April 2008

Overall, indigenist policies still appear to take place on a piecemeal, *ad hoc* basis rather than forming a coherent whole. Mainly because of its lack of funds, the Sub-Directorate of Marginal Populations remains unable to follow its own policy and instead tags itself on projects led by

⁴² « FSC est pointu au niveau social. Par exemple pour le problème des Pygmées, ils veulent les intégrer mais eux-mêmes n’aiment pas être intégrés ! Ils en parlent au Gabon, au Congo, ce sont tous les mêmes (...). Maintenant on est obligés de les utiliser sur les inventaires fauniques, mais pour les sédentariser c’est une autre paire de manches. C’est la même chose à Djoum. On n’a pas de chance, on en a dans toutes nos UFA ! »

donors and NGOs who have emerged as the principal engines of Cameroon's indigenist policies. In many cases, however, projects either overlap with each other uselessly, as illustrated by the example of Bagyeli with three ID cards each, or contradict each other. Whilst some advocate a sedentary lifestyle to integrate Cameroonian society more successfully, others staunchly defend the right of "Pygmy" populations to their own culture and identity which is inevitably linked to a nomadic and hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Cameroon has yet to establish a coherent policy which will solve such problems.

2.4.3. Conservation Policies

Rather like its indigenist policies, Cameroon's conservation policies appear somewhat piecemeal and *ad hoc* rather than forming a coherent whole. The history of the country's conservation policies are witness to the fact that measures were usually taken as a response to existing threats than as part of a national scheme to protect the country's natural assets.

Africa's colonial powers began carrying out nature conservation measures almost as soon as the continent had been carved up at the Treaty of Berlin. In Belgian Congo, the first forest elephant reserves were created in 1889 and the mountain gorilla received complete protection as early as 1912. Likewise, Uganda's first hunting reserves were set up in 1902 and in London the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire (now known as Flora and Fauna International) was founded the following year. In French Africa, however, the first hunting reserves were only created in 1925 in Oubangui-Chari (today's Central African Republic). In Cameroon, the faunal reserves (*réserves de faune*) of Campo and Douala-Edéa saw the light of day in 1932 and that of Santchou a year later (Vande Weghe 2004:284).

As all these measures show, conservation policies focused almost exclusively on fauna in the first half of the twentieth century, and particularly on large mammals. The aim was not necessarily the same as they are today – to minimise human interference on fragile ecosystems or species – but rather to prevent large mammals such as gorillas and elephants from being hunted in excess. Hunting was merely regulated in these reserves, and little attention was paid to the rest of the ecosystem, especially if the presence of large mammals was unaffected by changes in vegetation.

Attention was also paid to certain types of vegetation, mostly forests, for the same reasons: the creation of forests belonging to the crown in Uganda and of the state's ownership of "vacant land with no master" (*terre vacante et sans maître*) in French Africa both showed the will of the colonial powers to control forest-related activities and particularly timber production. On top of this, a number of forest reserves were created in Cameroon and elsewhere, but the concept of reserve was very relative as most activities, including logging, were authorised.

When Cameroon reached independence, it had seven protected areas – Campo, Douala-Edéa, Sanaga, Santchou, Dja, Korup and Kalfou – all of them being faunal reserves which totalled less than 2 million ha. Dja, by far the largest protected area in the country with over 500,000 ha, had been created in 1950 (ECOFAC 1998). By 2000, the number of protected areas had grown to 11

including six national parks (four which had been created in the meantime, plus Korup and Campo-Ma'an which had been upgraded to national parks in 1986 and 1999 respectively; Korup had been the country's first national park).

By 2008, this figure had shot up to 26 protected areas and 61 hunting zones representing almost 8.4 million hectares (AFTEN 2008:3), which stands witness to the growth in importance of conservation issues in Cameroon. On top of this, another 11 protected areas exceeding 700,000 are currently under consideration at the time of writing, including the country's first marine national park south of Kribi. The fact that the 1994 Law commits Cameroon to placing 30 percent of its surface area under protection (one of the world's highest proportions according to AFTEN [2008:3]) has probably strongly contributed to this. As a result, "on the 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), which assessed the capacity of 146 nations to protect their natural resource endowments over the coming decades, Cameroon ranked 50th, with an index of 52.5 out of 76" (AFTEN 2008:4) – an impressive feat for a developing country such as Cameroon when one bears in mind that creating protected areas is hardly a lucrative business.

Two reasons may be put forward to explain why Cameroon ranks favourably in terms of conservation. First, when compared to Brazil and especially Indonesia, Cameroon's forests are facing much less pressure from land-hungry industries such as timber, oil palm, pulp and paper, cattle rearing and soy. Under such circumstances, the creation of additional protected areas comes at less of a cost than in other parts of the world. Secondly, the presence of a large number of international NGOs and donors in the country's forest sector has encouraged the multiplication of protected areas, the percentage of surface area under protection being a major indicator of policy success in the eyes of many donors.

However, all is not rosy in the sector. Despite the tremendous increase in the surface area under protection and as mentioned above, Cameroon's conservation policy continues to take place on a piecemeal basis rather than as a coherent whole. The forest administration (MINFOF) is equipped with a unit for wildlife and protected areas (*Direction de la faune et des aires protégées*); yet management of protected areas in the field is determined to a much greater extent by the foreign organisation funding its management than the local MINFOF unit: the case-study of Campo-Ma'an National Park below is a clear illustration of this, although in theory WWF's Kudu-Zombo programme is "only" supposed to provide funding and technical advice and support to the local MINFOF Conservation Unit.

Most protected areas in Cameroon and all of the country's high profile areas (notably national parks) benefit from funding by an international NGO or donor which effectively acts as a sponsor. By far the largest donor for protected areas is WWF which, as in many other countries around the world, has extensive field operations throughout the country. Among other projects, WWF is involved in the following:

1. Korup National Park, which WWF has been working in since 1984. Since the early 1990s WWF has been carrying out one of its largest integrated conservation programmes there that includes activities ranging from scientific research and park management to rural development and environmental education.

2. Campo-Ma'an National Park, whose management WWF has been involved in since 2003. In 2007 the Kudu Zombo Programme was established and focuses both on fighting poaching inside the park and promoting alternative sources of income for surrounding populations, such as community forests. These issues are described in greater detail in the section below on Campo-Ma'an National Park.
3. WWF is also collaborating on the management of two tri-national areas rich in protected areas. The first of these is known as Tridom (*Trinationale Dja-Odzala-Minkébé*), the latter two lying in the Republic of Congo and Gabon respectively. The management of this large area is also funded by CARPE (Central Africa Regional Programme for the Environment), USAID's only project in Cameroon's forest sector.
4. The second tri-national area which WWF is involved in is called *Trinationale de la Sangha* and is located in the southeastern tip of Cameroon and across the border in the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo. It encompasses the recently created Lobéké National Park which is managed by WWF.
5. WWF recently launched the Jengi Initiative, named after a Baka spirit which WWF claims represents the forest (WWF 2007). This project covers some 2.7 million ha in the southeastern corner of the country, including Lobéké, Boumba-Bek and Nki National Parks.
6. Outside the forest zone of Cameroon, WWF is leading a project known as Northern Savannah Conservation which seeks to conserve the biodiversity of the northern Sudanian ecosystem in and around three major national parks – Bénoué, Faro and Boumba Ndjida.

Although WWF is undoubtedly the leader in conservation issues in Cameroon, a number of other organisations are involved in conservation issues around the country. ECOFAC (*Ecosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique centrale*) is a regional programme of the European Union to manage a network of protected areas in the Central African sub region. In Cameroon, ECOFAC selected the high profile Dja Faunal Reserve which had been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. The reserve's first inventories were carried out when the programme was launched in 1993 and since then Dja has arguably become Cameroon's best studied protected area.

IUCN is another major international actor in the conservation domain in Cameroon. Its activities which include mostly transnational and regional initiatives (such as TRAFFIC, CFBP and collaborating in the management of the Sangha Trinationale area) are described above in the section entitled "A Plethora of National and Regional Organisations". Likewise, activities of WCS – once one of the most important international NGO in Cameroon – are mentioned both in the section on national and regional organisations, as well as in the box below on bushmeat trade.

As this brief description of the sector shows, MINFOF only plays a minor role in Cameroon's conservation policies: on the ground, they continue to be determined by the foreign organisation which effectively manages each protected area. This situation is largely similar to the country's indigenist policies and the distribution of roles amongst MINAS' Sub-Directorate for Marginal Populations and the different international organisations that carry out projects in the field.

Despite this *ad hoc* approach to elaborating and implementing Cameroon's conservation policies, three major historical trends can be identified. The first of these is an early shift from conserving species to conserving ecosystems, which is largely illustrated by the trend moving away from megafauna conservation (*e.g.*, through the creation of faunal reserves) to protecting entire ecosystems (notably through the creation of national parks where all species are protected from exploitation rather than a select few).

The second trend took place from the late 1980s onwards and has since been denounced by a small number of biologists such as Oates (1999) who are often branded as “hardline” or “pure” conservationists. This genuine paradigm shift views local populations no longer as a threat to conservation but as potential stewards of the environment they live in. This trend has been marked by a shift away from “fortress conservation” practices whereby natural environments are detached from their human context, towards one where “integrated projects” and a “landscape approach” are adopted. This has been described many a time (*e.g.*, Singer 2007) and has been observed around the world – it is not specific to Cameroon.

The third and most recent trend which dates from the 2000s is a move towards global environmental services. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol set the basis for the emergence of new markets for standing forests to supply global environmental services, an event which has favoured debates on a range of different types of payments for environmental services. One of these, known as conservation concessions, has been championed by US NGO Conservation International as a new tool for conserving rainforests. This consists in conservation NGOs (or any other organisation) submitting a demand to manage a concession on the same basis as any logging company, except that during the period of lease, the organisation would manage the concession as if it were a protected area rather than carry out logging operations. However, as AFTEN points out,

The opportunity cost for establishing conservation concessions rather than timber concessions (...) is likely to be high. Karsenty (2007) estimated the net cost to be up to € 14-15 per hectare per year, reflecting the fiscal revenue sacrificed by leaving the forest out of production and including compensation for lost employment opportunities. NGOs cannot pay these prices. According to *The Economist*, conservation NGOs would have considered even US\$ 2 per hectare, the amount supposedly mentioned by a high-ranking Ministry official, to be too high.

AFTEN (2008:42).

By 2001, however, the Cameroonian government had already gone for this option and declared to have set aside 13% of its forest production estate for conservation concessions. The nine FMUs concerned, covering some 870,000 ha, are located in the Ngoïla-Mintom area of southeastern Cameroon. This area was not selected randomly, as it has the potential of creating forest corridors from Dja Reserve to Odzala and Minkébé National Parks in Congo and Gabon, thus contributing greatly to consolidating Tridom (see above).

Since then, the fate of Ngoïla-Mintom has been uncertain. In the face of the evidence presented above by AFTEN (2008:42), it should not come as a surprise that the area has not been

earmarked yet as a block of conservation concessions. In the meantime, it has fallen prey to poachers and illegal loggers, prompting WWF to propose alternatives for the area such as the creation of a wildlife sanctuary. Alternatively, AFTEN suggests that this area could be a prime target for the mechanism to reward the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) whose bases were laid at the 2007 Bali Conference on climate change.

Definite trends are thus emerging in the field of conservation in Cameroon, although as this last example shows, policies continue to be based on specific geographical zones and protected areas rather than attempting to reach a united structure at the national level. Greater coordination at the central level with MINFOF would thus be required for Cameroon's conservation policies to form a more coherent whole.

Box III **Bushmeat Trade in Cameroon**

One of the biggest threats to the integrity of Cameroon's ecosystems is bushmeat trade, which for cultural reasons specific to Central Africa far exceeds its importance in other parts of the world such as Brazil or Indonesia.

Central Africa's rainforests are characterised by a high animal biomass and the presence of megafauna in high densities. Large animal species include primates (especially gorillas, chimpanzees and middle-sized primates such as colobines), ungulates (notably duikers, wild boar and elephants, although the latter are decreasing in numbers) and other species such as porcupines, crocodiles and snakes. Unlike other parts of the world, Central African populations have few or no dietary taboos and consumption of bushmeat is not only an essential source of protein for forest-dwelling populations but also increasingly a delicacy for urban classes of the region's growing cities and expatriate populations beyond.

Hunting bushmeat remains a largely artisanal occupation, although the use of home-made or manufactured rifles is now widespread. However, the chain of custody is a complex one whereby traders (usually women) living in cities close to the forest scour the countryside buying bushmeat off local populations and selling them in urban markets. The meat then ends up in plates across the country and some of it is seized every now and then in European and North American airports, proving that bushmeat trade often has markets in developed countries, although these are usually limited to expatriate communities.

Bushmeat hunting for subsistence means is legal (although in theory hunters must get a permit from the local MINFOF unit for every animal caught) and is widespread throughout the forest-rich areas of Cameroon. Bantu and "Pygmy" populations alike have traditionally relied on this form of subsistence which constitutes a fundamental social role. However, the growing taste for game meat outside these areas represents a major threat for a number of species under pressure, especially the larger animals such as apes and elephants. In Campo Ma'an National Park, for instance, village elders claim that elephants used to trample their fields several times a week, whereas nowadays visitors are considered lucky if they even find elephant droppings inside the park. Pressure is such that the populations of these animals has fallen dramatically in certain regions over the past few decades. Only in the southeastern tip of Cameroon are gorillas and elephants still frequently sighted.

In the past few years, MINFOF has increased road checks along the main axes leading out of the forest. Observers have claimed that this policy has decreased the volume of bushmeat drained from forest-rich regions, but the author's personal experience of public transport in forested regions seems to show that MINFOF road checks were completely ineffective in preventing bushmeat from reaching the country's main urban centres.

Logging companies have often been accused of condoning bushmeat hunting by their staff and families who are brought deep into the forest without any adequate food supply (e.g., Vande Weghe 2004:321). Concessionaires have thus undoubtedly played a major role in "opening up" forests to hunting. Those companies seeking certification are

thus required to take a number of measures to fight this trend, including banning log trucks from carrying any form of game and offering alternative sources of protein to employees and their family. Wijma, for example, has set up a chicken farm and has promoted education in animal rearing among local populations.

Conservation NGOs have used different means of fighting this threat. Bushmeat being the single largest threat to the integrity of Campo-Ma'an National Park which is famous for its megafauna, WWF's Kudu-Zombo programme has introduced a range of measure to fight bushmeat trade in the region. The organisation has devised a two-pronged approach which (i) fights against hunting directly by facilitating and supporting patrols in the forest by MINFOF guards, and (ii) tries to establish alternative sources of income for villagers around the park who have traditionally relied on bushmeat hunting and trade as part of their livelihood.

Other NGOs have established projects aimed at tackling bushmeat trade down the line, such as WCS which launched a project in 2001 in cooperation with MINFOF and CAMRAIL, Cameroon's railway company which runs trains from Ngaoundéré to Yaoundé and onto Douala (WCS 2008). Because of the multiplication of road checks, the railway which runs close to the northern edge of the country's forested region has been used as a route for evacuating bushmeat. This project has set up MINFOF patrols in the train and at the main stations to prevent bushmeat from travelling by this means. According to WCS representatives, quantities that travel by rail have decreased thanks to the project, although the trade has adapted to this new situation by hiding the meat inside suitcases and covering the overpowering smell with spices.

These examples show the difficulty in fighting bushmeat trade which is thriving despite the variety of measures taken. Unlike illegal logging, it is more difficult to be caught red-handed with bushmeat which is much smaller in size and easily disposed of; moreover, it is so culturally engrained in Cameroonian society – especially among forest-dwelling populations – that it is likely to be decades before it is successfully contained. Whether the populations of megafauna will have survived until then is another matter.

2.4.4. Agriculture

This section provides a brief description of Cameroon's agricultural sector by focusing primarily on its articulation with the forest sector. It relates the evolution of certain crops which are mainly grown in humid conditions and thus in forest-rich areas, notably cocoa and robusta coffee as the two principal cash crops, and cassava, maize, yam and cocoyam as the main food crops grown in these areas.

2.4.4.1. The Evolution of the Agricultural Sector

Agriculture has always been a crucial sector of Cameroon's economy. Although its importance has decreased in recent decades, it still accounts for 25 to 30% of the country's exports and for 60% of the population in terms of employment. However, unlike Cameroon's timber industry, the agricultural sector and governmental policies in the field have varied historically mainly as a function of the fluctuating prices of agricultural products but also oil. As Ndoeye puts it, "the driving forces of agricultural development in Cameroon are the availability of oil as an alternative source of income, and the existence of favourable conditions in the international markets for the traditional cash crops[, notably] cocoa and coffee" (1997:50). The history of the agricultural sector can thus be divided according to Cameroon's main economic periods: the pre-

oil boom era (1960-76), the oil boom era (1977-86), the economic crisis (1986-93) and the period since devaluation (1994-today).

According to Ndoye, one of Cameroon's first exports after it had become a German colony was that of cash crops such as cocoa (which was introduced in 1886 and gained importance in the South after 1924), and coffee, introduced again by the German authorities in the early 20th century. Throughout the colonial period, agriculture formed the backbone of the country's economy and this continued well after independence: in 1977-8, cocoa and coffee exports represented three quarters of total exports (Amin 1996:14).

The Cameroonian government thus incorporated agriculture into its five-year plans until they came to an end in 1986. During this period, agricultural policy was characterised by strong state intervention, mainly in the form of large public companies which specialised in a particular agricultural product, such as SODECAO for cocoa. The first four plans focused on increasing productivity and income for farmers whilst promoting agricultural transformation prior to export.

However, as Tobie (2006:11) points out, by 1980 studies showed that this policy has failed to reach its objectives, mainly because of the lack of efficiency of the main public companies and the failure to invest in agriculture, whether in terms of products (notably fertiliser) or research. Probably as a result of the failure to invest in ways of intensifying agricultural techniques, the increase in agricultural production, notably that of cocoa, robusta coffee and food crops, was only achieved through expansion of area cultivated (Ndoye 1997:13). This in turn led to deforestation around forest edges and in areas where forests had already been fragmented.

In the early 1980s, with the state benefiting from a sharp increase in revenue thanks to oil exports, the fifth and sixth five-year plans (1981-5 and 1986-7) focused instead on the welfare of rural populations and encouraging investment in the sector, mainly in the form of research. This in turn favoured intensification of agricultural techniques, allowing an increase in production whilst cultivated area actually decreased. The main reason for this was a rise in rural to urban migration because oil revenues had caused a contraction in traditional exports. In other words, these observations support Wunder's (2003) claim that oil exports actually contributed to reducing deforestation, although it is recognised that the Dutch Disease (the main mechanism causing this) was not felt as strongly in Cameroon as it had been, for instance, in Nigeria (Aerts *et al.* 2000, Ndoye 1997:19).

The economic crisis of the second half of the 1980s brought about fundamental change in the sector. The crisis was caused primarily by a fall in the international price of oil, but also of several key agricultural products (including cocoa and coffee), all of which Cameroon had crucially depended on for its economic success. Villagers interviewed recall this period as one where coffee and cocoa trees were either abandoned or pulled up across the countryside.

The government's decision to seek support from the World Bank and the IMF signed the death warrant of the state's tradition of strong intervention in the sector. Following the implementation of the "New Agricultural Policy" (*Nouvelle politique agricole*), by the early 1990s most public companies in the sector (which had gained notoriety for being vastly inefficient) were sold off.

Likewise, the distribution of fertilisers and pesticides was privatised and the state pulled out completely of cooperatives, many of which collapsed as a result (Tobie 2006:17).

During the period prior to the implementation of the SAP, cash crops such as cocoa decreased whilst coffee increased, but in both cases cultivated area decreased, thus further reducing pressure on forests. Yet once the SAP was introduced and investment in agriculture again began declining with the state pulling out, the cultivated area once again increased (Ndoye 1997:50): in other words, Ndoye claims that the introduction of the SAP negatively affected forests by encouraging the state to reduce its role in the agricultural sector.

According to Tobie, the period since 1994 has been marked by a gradual increase again in production, mainly due to the privatisation of public agricultural companies and the development of cooperatives which was facilitated by several laws passed in 1992 and 1993. Agricultural policy in the 2000s has been characterised by a minimal role played by the state and a recent increase in cocoa and coffee prices which has encouraged villagers in forest-rich areas to begin growing cash crops again.

2.4.4.2. Agriculture and Forests Today

In a country where the forest sector is more threatened by forest degradation due to logging than deforestation *per se* (deforestation rates are smaller than in Brazil or Indonesia), agriculture only has a minor impact on Cameroon's forests. Ever since the colonial period, most of the country's large plantations have been located in areas where forest cover is relatively weak, such as in the Southwestern Province. In the Southern and Eastern Provinces where forest cover is much greater, small-scale agriculture can have an impact on forest cover, although it appears not to have been significant in recent years due to fluctuations in the sector described above.

Where small-scale agriculture does constitute a threat is in densely populated areas such as in the Anglophone provinces. In these areas, forest fragments are regularly encroached on by village crops, in particular oil palm. This constitutes the main threat to certain forests such as the future Takamanda National Park where the situation has been exacerbated by the knowledge that the forest could be gazetted in the years to come, which appears to have prompted villagers to secure as much land as possible by cultivating it (Assembe 2008:51; Nathalie Van Vliet, personal communication).

Yet overall the threats posed by agriculture to forest cover in Cameroon are nowhere near reaching the levels observed in Brazil (with the expansion of soy fields and pastures) or Indonesia (with the growth of the palm oil and pulp and paper sectors). This is at least partly explained by the fact that a large proportion of Cameroonian agricultural products continue to be grown on a small scale, which has so far protected the country's forests from aggressive expansionist policies of the agricultural sector of the other two countries studied.

This in turn probably explains why the articulation between the agricultural and forestry sectors is so understudied in Cameroon, Ndoye (1997) providing the only study known to the author on the subject. Likewise, unlike Brazil or Indonesia where the main agricultural actors have been

required to at least acknowledge the impact of their sector on the environment, in Cameroon it continues to be largely ignored: MINADER's⁴³ 89-page white paper on agriculture and rural development devotes less than half a page to "sustainable management of natural resources" in which land use and water availability are briefly discussed, but forests are not even mentioned (MINADER 2006:11).

2.4.5. Energy, Mining and Infrastructure

The energy, mining and infrastructure sectors differ from agriculture in the way they interact with the forest sector. Whilst the articulation between agriculture and forests has been relatively unexplored, the relationship between forest cover and management on the one hand, and the construction of infrastructure for transport and heavy industries such as mining has been studied and taken into account in policy making. However, again this has taken place primarily on an *ad hoc* basis rather than in an anticipated and holistic fashion.

The appearance on the political agenda of the articulation between these sectors and that of forestry is relatively recent. This is mainly explained by the chronology of the construction of infrastructure in the forest-rich regions of Cameroon: the Eastern and Southern Provinces benefited from very limited infrastructure development until the early 1990s. The bulk of the main roads that had been built through the region dated from the German colonial period or the first years of French occupation, and these roads were merely maintained in the following decades. Logging companies completed the network from the 1960s onwards with a set of secondary roads which were often abandoned when logging activities came to an end. Well into the 1990s, the construction of additional roads by logging companies was perceived as a positive move that contributed to local development.

In the 1990s, however, the tide began to turn. At the height of the post-Rio fever to conserve Africa's rainforests, the World Bank decided to fund the controversial Chad-Cameroon pipeline which would evacuate oil from fields in southern Chad and travel some 800 km through Cameroon before being exported from an offshore construction. When it was revealed that the pipeline would go through forested areas of southern Cameroon inhabited by Bagyeli communities, a number of NGOs such as CED launched a large-scale campaign against the project.

In response, the World Bank set up a complex programme of environmental and social compensations to mitigate the pipeline's potential damage on the environment and local populations. These included, among others, the creation of two new protected areas, Mbam & Dejerem and Campo-Ma'an National Parks, which were created in 1999. The range of environmental and social compensations implemented as part of this project set as precedent as it was the first time that such an ambitious mitigation programme had been undertaken as part of a large-scale infrastructure project.

⁴³ MINADER stands for *Ministère de l'agriculture et du développement rural* (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development).

By the late 1990s, therefore, the construction of other types of infrastructure, notably roads, was attracting the attention of environmental NGOs. The completion of the road between Campo and Ma'an by logging company HFC (La Forestière de Campo) in the late 1990s, for example, inflicted considerable negative publicity on the company – especially as the road had been built across the proposed Campo-Ma'an National Park.

Likewise, when the EU announced the launching of a € 54 million programme to rehabilitate Cameroon's roads – including those of the Southeast, a coalition of NGOs including UK-based Rainforest Foundation and German-based Rettet den Regenwald reacted swiftly by submitting a 30,000 signature petition to the German Ministry for International Development (BMZ). The concern was that the rehabilitation of the road network would facilitate access for both illegal loggers and poachers to some of the most "pristine" forests in the country (Rainforest Foundation undated). The campaign shook the European Commission which had so far been unused to such negative publicity and the programme was eventually postponed.

Since then, programmes to develop the road network in the Eastern and Southern Provinces have been very hesitant, although some of them are in the process of being sealed. Today, the road running from Yaoundé to Oyem (Gabon) through Ebolowa and Ambam is completely sealed, mostly because of its importance for northern Gabon (which communicates more easily with Yaoundé than Libreville). Moreover, through a Road Fund known as PERFED II, the European Union is supporting the sealing of the road from Ayos to Bertoua, the stretch between Yaoundé and Ayos having been sealed in 1994. The Yaoundé to Bertoua road does not go through primary forest and acts as the major artery to the entire Eastern Province and onto the Central African Republic through Garoua Boulai and Gari Gombo. The advantages for development thus far exceed the potential damage this project could have on the environment.

The same cannot be said, however, of recent infrastructure projects which according to some are marking the dawn of development for Cameroon's forested region. In the western part of the Southern Province, after years of hesitation, it appears that two projects will finally be underway in the years to come after having recently secured financing. One of the projects consists in the construction of a dam on the Ntem at the level of Memve'ele Falls, close to Nyabizan (west of Ma'an). The other is centred around the construction of a deep sea port in Kribi which would be only the second of its kind in Cameroon after Douala. Both projects are briefly described at the end of the section on forest-related policies in Campo-Ma'an.

However, the most controversial project is the construction of one of the world's largest cobalt and manganese open pits a mere 30 km from the Dja Reserve that straddles the Eastern and Southern Provinces. GeoCam, a Cameroonian company, 60% of which is owned by Toronto-based Geovic Mining Corporation, recently obtained a mine permit totalling 125,000 hectares. Within this concession, seven cobalt-nickel-manganese deposits have been located and the first one, known as Nkamouna, should start being exploited in 2010. On top of this a railway project is currently being considered that would link the mine to Kribi.

This large-scale mining project – the first of its kind in Cameroon, is raising considerable concern among several actors. An anonymous whistleblower known as Arnaud Labrousse, who denounces illegal activities and shady dealings in the forest sector in the Congo Basin, recently

made public a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Geovic and WWF. Yet according to WWF, this MoU was abandoned after an environmental impact assessment of the mining project showed that the Dja Reserve could be threatened by exploitation of the open pit (Labrousse 2008, Some 2008).

However, this mining permit has also set a precedent in the access to land and the creation of concessions, as it remains unclear who would take precedence if a mining permit were to overlap with a forest concession. Logging companies have consulted with MINFOF staff over this issue and it is likely that the problem will need to be solved between the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development (*Ministère de l'industrie, des mines et du développement technologique*).

2.4.6. Who's Who in Forestry Research

As a forest-rich country with a vibrant forestry sector, Cameroon is relatively well-equipped with research facilities in the forest sector compared to its neighbours, although the situation is nowhere near as developed as in Brazil.

Faced with the need to form staff for its forest administration, the French colonial authority decided to create a technical school⁴⁴ in Cameroon for forestry and water management. The school, known as the National Forestry and Hydrology School (*Ecole nationale des eaux et forêts* or ENEF) was eventually set up in Mbalmayo (Linjouom 2008:138) and was loosely based on its French equivalent, Nancy Forestry School (now known as ENGREF). Likewise, a technical school for fauna was set up in Garoua (*Ecole de Faune de Garoua* or EFG). In the 1980s and 1990s, its programme – which had changed little since the 1950s – was adapted to include new concepts such as community and social forestry and sustainable forest management.

ENEF provides education only at a technical level; to become fully-fledged foresters, students had to go to France to obtain a forester's diploma (*diplôme d'ingénieur forestier*) at ENGREF. In the 1970s, however, the National Upper School for Agronomy (*Ecole supérieure nationale d'agronomie*) was founded at Dschang University, in the Western Province, that began delivering the first Cameroonian diplomas in forestry. To this day, Mbalmayo and Dschang remain the only two places in Cameroon where one can study forestry.

In 1993, The University of Yaoundé split into two, with Yaoundé I focusing on arts, humanities and sciences and Yaoundé II on law, political science and economics. Yaoundé II has thus since produced a number of students specialised in forest-related issues from legal, political and economic viewpoints which complement the scientific education offered at Mbalmayo and Dschang. In particular, Yaoundé II's IRIC (*Institut des relations internationales du Cameroun* or Cameroon Institute of International Relations) has produced several studies on the country's forest policies and has emerged as a centre for forest policy analysis in its own right.

⁴⁴ The term "school" is understood in the American sense of the term, *i.e.*, as applying to post-secondary education as well.

Furthermore, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), which was founded after the Rio Conference and is based in Bogor (Indonesia), established an office in Nkolbisson near Yaoundé. CIFOR-Cameroon is arguably home to the largest group of specialists in forest-related issues in Cameroon and has produced a wide variety of studies, reports and data on many issues relating to the country's forests.

Outside Cameroon, several French universities and research centres also have a long history of producing data and studies on the country's forests. France's Tropical Forest Technical Centre (*Centre technique forestier tropical* or CTFT) which merged with CIRAD in the 1980s has undoubtedly been a leading organisation researching Cameroon's forests, as witnessed by their central role in the French Ministry of Cooperation's projects in Dimako (see relevant section for further detail). However, the number of researchers at CIRAD working on forestry issues in Cameroon has fallen in the last decade.

The National Rural Engineering School for Hydrology and Forestry (*Ecole nationale du génie rural des eaux et forêts* or ENGREF) has long been an international centre of excellence in forestry issues, including for Cameroon. Likewise, the University of Montpellier, which enjoys close ties with CIRAD, the Institute for Development Research (*Institut de recherche pour le développement*) and the Paris-based National Natural History Museum (*Muséum national d'histoire naturelle* or "Muséum") have all produced significant research on the subject. Outside of France, however, research centres working on forestry issues in Cameroon are far and few between: University College London's Anthropology Department has produced a limited number of studies, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor has recently launched a large-scale project to compile data on Central African forests, known as CAFI (Central African Forests Initiative).

In the meantime, a number of other organisations have begun producing considerable amounts of data on Cameroon's forests. NGOs have played a crucial role in the sector, notably by publishing often sensitive information on events that took place on the ground which would not have been made public otherwise. Whistle-blowing reports written up by NGOs such as CED, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and other groups or individuals (including Arnaud Labrousse, François-Xavier Verschave) have greatly contributed to increasing transparency in the forest sector, often at the risk of creating open conflicts with the logging industry in particular (*e.g.*, Labrousse & Verschave 2002). Since its inception, the Independent Observer has also contributed to this phenomenon: both independent observers to day (Global Witness and REM) have a wealth of publications on their respective websites. Other NGOs, notably Global Forest Watch (GFW), have attempted to provide less controversial reference material, as illustrated by GFW's Atlases of Cameroon's Forests.

The donor community, through a range of consultants it employs, has also produced an array of publications on many different aspects of Cameroon's forest sector, and especially on issues of interest to donors such as community forestry and the timber industry. Since the 1980s, there have been dozens of reports providing overviews of the country's timber sector, including AFTEN (2008), CTFT (1987), Fomété *et al.* (2000), Karsenty (2001), Karsenty *et al.* (2006),

Laurent (1985), Obam (1992) to name but a few. A bewildering number of consultancy reports have been produced on many more specific domains of the forest sector.

Whilst some of these sources are of great quality and have been used extensively for this study, others display a certain lack of background knowledge, notably on the historical, social, economic and political contexts of Cameroon's forest sector. This is mostly due to the fact that consultants have a very limited time during which to carry out their research, which forces them to focus on a single issue at the expense of the context. The result is a somewhat myopic vision of many consultancy reports which despite having gathered considerable knowledge on a specific issue at a particular point in time fail to link it in with the "bigger picture". Likewise, official data and figures are often taken at face value and their reliability is not questioned. This contrasts strongly with other types of research where inconsistencies between data of different sources are pointed out and discussed (*e.g.*, Karsenty *et al.* 2006:32, Cerutti & Tacconi 2006:11).

3. FOREST POLICIES IN DIMAKO

When I was a little boy, I was in charge of delivering post to Mr Saubatte, the [French] director of SFID. Every week I would bring him a pack of envelopes and slip them through the railings of the verandah that ran all around his wooden house on stilts. He would sit in a rattan chair reading his post and nibbling on some gouda, while I stood in the grass below, and every time he would cut a piece of cheese off with his penknife and throw it over the railings to me. That's how I got to like cheese.

Interview with an elder of Dimako, 21 March 2008

Dimako has all but become a textbook case of forestry in Cameroon for three reasons. After having been home to the Eastern Province's first timber company for over half a century, it also witnessed France's largest and longest-standing foreign aid project in the forest sector before seeing the country's first council forest (*forêt communale*). Despite all of these interventions in what continues to be one of Cameroon's most promising sectors, Dimako remains among the region's poorest towns.

3.1. BACKGROUND

The *commune* (council) of Dimako, located 26 km west of Bertoua, the capital of Cameroon's Eastern Province, lies on the main axis from Yaoundé to the Province. The town straddles the limit between evergreen rainforest to the south, and mixed bush to the north and is thus situated on northwestern boundary of the Congo Basin rainforest. It is populated with three main "ethnic groups", the Bakoum being the largest group in Dimako. Like the Bakoum, the Pol are also a Bantu group, but the third group, the Baka, are physically and culturally distinct from the Bantu as they are classified as a "Pygmies". However, they only live in four of the council's 18 villages and their numbers are said to total a mere 3,000 out of the council's 16,000.

Out of this, only 5,000 live in the town itself which grew around French logging company SFID's basecamp, also known as *base-vie*. SFID selectively logged timber in Dimako's large forests to the south of town but pulled out in 2002, leaving Dimako with no other economy than small-scale agriculture and a small informal timber and furniture sector. Since the departure of SFID, agriculture has picked up somewhat as an alternative source of income for local populations, the main products being corn, plantain bananas, macabo, peanuts and cassava. Local populations, including those in town, also rely heavily on bushmeat as livestock is rare, although large game is getting increasingly rare in the region.

Today, once again Dimako appears to be little more than a stop on the dusty road from Yaoundé to Bertoua and Yokadouma.

3.1.1. “The Company as the Foundation of the City”

However, Dimako had not always been an impoverished council having to rely on meagre agricultural production. This was once a heavily forested region populated with Bakoum and Pol peoples who had settled near Baka settlements from two centuries ago. Dimako and other settlements such as Petit-Pol and Toundgrelo were hamlets until the Germans built the road to the East in a bid to fix the border with French settlements in the Congo and Oubangui-Chari (now the Central African Republic).

In 1947, at a time when Cameroon’s Eastern Province was still largely off limits, the first logging company established itself in Dimako. This French company, called SFID (*Société forestière et industrielle de la Doumé*), chose to settle in Dimako mainly because of easy access, the village being on the main road to Yaoundé and surrounded by primary forest. Within a couple of decades, the company became the centrepiece of a growing village. A sawmill and a plywood factory were soon built in Dimako near the basecamp, which attracted labour from all over the country.

Dimako, once a Bakoum village, gradually grew into a town and commercial centre on the increasingly busy road to Bertoua. Labour poured in from the rest of the country whilst people from as far away as Togo and Niger moved in to open shops to cater for the growing population and get a share of the salaries that SFID paid its four to five hundred workers every two weeks. By 1968, Dimako had become a district within its own right; ten years later, it was upgraded to the status of *commune* and was equipped with a local council, a *gendarmerie* (military police station) and a town hall. At the height of its size, Dimako was nearing 20,000 inhabitants including some 7 to 8,000 in the town of Dimako alone.

SFID was not only the town’s economic motor; it also provided a wide array of goods and services to the growing town. First, it built new roads, notably to the south where the bulk of its operations were located. In 1974, the road to the Pol village of Petit-Pol was opened, putting an end to the long hours of walk along forest paths that villagers had to undertake to get to Dimako. Furthermore, as one inhabitant recalls,

Our school was financed by SFID – it’s solid and still stands today. Our clinic was also built by SFID. Our parents lay traps [for forest animals]; the company’s trucks would take them into the forest. They would camp out there and come back with plenty of game – deer, antelopes, monkeys and so on. They facilitated transport for hunters, and then we could sell the meat to the workers (...).

The roads were well maintained thanks to SFID. Our football club – that was also financed by SFID. Some of the company’s workers lived in Bertoua, but that wasn’t a problem because a coach would go to fetch them. The factory worked 24 hours a day. There were three shifts. The company also threw away its timber waste near the lake, and we would pick it up to sell it on or use it for our houses. SFID even provided Dimako with electricity: the generator used for the factory lit up almost the entire town (...).

People's lives were ruled by SFID. At 10pm, 6am and 2pm the bell would ring for the shifts to turn, and also maybe at 12 noon and 5 pm too. We were conditioned by SFID.⁴⁵

Interview with an inhabitant of Dimako, 14 March 2008

On top of retail trade, SFID attracted a range of other businesses to Dimako, including a transport company to evacuate the company's products to Douala, and therefore garages. For several decades, SFID, became the centre of the town's social and economic life as the settlement built itself around the company's activities.

Yet many also remember several problems that SFID caused in town. First, it would often recruit teenagers during summer holidays for temporary jobs and encourage them to stay on even after term started. As a result, the town suffered from an important dropout rate from local schools and to this day education standards in Dimako are well below those of neighbouring towns, despite having had earlier access to education thanks to schools built by SFID. Secondly, and more recently, the concentration of single male workers has encouraged prostitution and the proliferation of HIV/AIDS. To this day, Dimako remains one of the locations with the highest rates of HIV in the country (more than 15% according to Mongui, undated:3) – a figure kept up since SFID's departure by timber lorry drivers on their way to and from Mbang where SFID's sawmill is located today.

Working conditions were also difficult, especially until operations started becoming mechanised in the early 1970s, as one former SFID employee remembers:

I lived in the old system: we cut trees with axes, then two people sawed the logged with long saws. There were many, many accidents because branches would fall onto us. Many men died. When a tree falls, the lianas pull back some of the branches that kill people. We then ordered some chainsaws. The chainsaws arrived around 1970. One single site had some 80 people working at the axe, but with the chainsaw things became quicker and easier (...).

⁴⁵ « Notre école était financée par la SFID. Elle est solide, elle tient encore aujourd'hui. Notre dispensaire était aussi construit par la SFID. Nos parents tendaient des pièges, les camions de la SFID les emmenaient dans la forêt. Ils y campaient, et ils rapportaient beaucoup de gibier : des biches, des antilopes, des singes, etc. Ils aidaient les braconniers dans le transport, et ensuite on leur vendait la viande (...). Les routes étaient bien entretenues, ça c'était la SFID. Notre club de foot, il était aussi financé par la SFID. Il y avait des employés qui vivaient à Bertoua mais c'était pas un problème, il y avait un car pour aller les chercher. L'usine marchait 24 heures sur 24. Il y avait trois rotations. La société jetait aussi ses déchets près de l'étang, et on les ramassait pour les revendre ou pour nos maisons. La SFID fournissait aussi l'électricité à la ville, le groupe électrogène alimentait presque toute la ville(...). La vie des gens était réglementée par la SFID. A 22h, 6h et 14h la sirène retentissait pour les rotations, et aussi peut-être à midi et 17h. Nous étions conditionnés par la SFID. »

Before getting a 528,⁴⁶ we would tie the log and pull. It was like slavery, but what else did we know? All the French loggers were from the military. It was like forced labour – many people died, broke limbs, etc.⁴⁷

Interview with an elder of Dimako, 15 March 2008

Likewise, it was not until 1994 that trade unions first appeared in Dimako:

Trade unions appeared in 1994; that's when we got a employment convention – the document which includes all conditions such as work-related accidents, births, holidays, etc. Before, the white people knew everything. He could decide to punish you and it wasn't even worth going to see the authorities about it. Salary scales also opened the eyes of workers who didn't know what their rights were. [White people] decided everything; our eyes were closed (...). [In 1994] they came to open our eyes because until then, only the boss knew his rights.⁴⁸

Interview with an elder of Dimako, 15 March 2008

Despite these problems, most inhabitants of Dimako recall the SFID days with great fondness. In a paper in which he describes the relations between logging company CIB and the Congolese town of Pokola, Jean-Christophe Carret (1998) compares the relationship to some form of symbiosis. Although such an analogy might be somewhat idealistic, the fundamental role played by CIB in the functioning of Pokola was not unlike that of SFID in Dimako.

In 1985, however, seeing that timber was growing increasingly scarce around Dimako, the company moved its sawmill to Mbang, some 30 km south of Dimako, closer to where timber was being produced. In 2002, after 55 years of operations, SFID closed its plywood factory in obscure conditions, thereby ending its presence in the town it had all but given birth to.

Many rumours still circulate as to the reasons of SFID's closure. According to some, 2002 was the year the free trade zone of Dimako came to an end; to avoid paying taxes, SFID simply pulled out. Others claim that the region had run out of timber, but this does not explain why the company still operates in Mbang. The most convincing argument, however, is that the "local population's mood" (in the words of an inhabitant) was the main cause of their departure. In

⁴⁶ One of the types of heavy machinery often used in logging operations.

⁴⁷ « J'ai vécu l'ancien système : on coupait à la hache, on déboutait à la longue scie à deux personnes. Il y avait beaucoup, beaucoup d'accidents parce que les branches nous tombaient dessus. Il y a eu beaucoup de morts. Puis on a commandé des tronçonneuses. Les tronçonneuses sont arrivées vers 1970. Sur un seul chantier, 80 personnes travaillaient à la hache, mais avec les tronçonneuses c'était plus rapide, plus facile (...). Avant d'avoir une 528, on attachait la bille et on tirait. C'était comme de l'esclavage, mais qu'est-ce qu'on connaissait d'autre ? Tous les exploitants français étaient d'anciens combattants. Un travail forcé. Beaucoup de morts, de fractures, etc. »

⁴⁸ Les syndicats sont apparus en 1994, c'est là qu'on a eu une convention collective de travail, le document qui renferme toutes les conditions : accidents de travail, accouchements, congés, etc. Avant, le Blanc connaissait tout. Il pouvait décider de sanctionner, c'était même pas la peine d'aller voir les autorités. Les grilles de salaire, ça a ouvert les yeux aux ouvriers qui ne savaient pas ce auquel ils avaient droit. [Les Blancs] décidaient tout, on avait les yeux fermés (...). [En 1994] on est venus nous ouvrir les yeux car le patron seul connaissait ses droits.

2002, trade unions organised a major strike that turned violent and which ended in some of the factory's material being damaged.

Conflicts allegedly led to the police arresting seven men. Whilst strikes were frequent, this event caused physical damage to a factory whose machines were already out of date. One observer pointed out that the strike was a mere pretext and that they had been thinking of leaving for several years already. It is said that the company waited until the beginning of holidays before packing up and leaving. Workers who returned after their holiday found the factory empty.

The consequences of SFID's departure on Dimako were disastrous. For all the reasons mentioned above, the town depended completely on the company; the latter's departure left the former like an empty shell. Interviewees used a range of anatomical metaphors to describe the trauma the town went through in the years following the closure of the factory: "Dimako lost its lungs", "SFID had been Dimako's lungs", "the town died that day", and "the town was reduced to rubble", thus referring even to a state of war.

The impact of the closure of SFID's factory is still strongly felt today. According to former workers, the company employed 457 workers at the time of its departure. When they were made redundant, the majority of those who had migrated to Dimako from other parts of the country returned home or moved to larger cities in search of a job. Although no reliable census has been carried out, it is believed that Dimako lost between 2,000 and 3,000 people in a single year.

Within a couple of years, shops had closed, the market was all but empty and the town reduced to a mere stop on the road between Yaoundé and Bertoua. Trade collapsed within months: with fewer consumers and no regular influx of cash in the form of salaries, there was no longer any money to be made in Dimako, especially as the town had no other industry to rely on. The lack of education of SFID's local workers – who had skipped school to get a job at the factory – only made matters worse as the town's workforce lacked the skills to find alternative jobs.

The only sector that flourished was small-scale agriculture. In a strategy for survival, those who had family in the villages of Dimako returned to the land and cultivated subsistence crops. Many workers, however, had never worked in the agriculture sector in their life and the first years were difficult, as the head of the local unit of the Ministry of agriculture (MINADER) remembers. However, by 2008, cash crops – notably coffee and cocoa – were on the increase, partly thanks to the rise in the prices of these commodities. Again, no figures are available to illustrate this trend or the effects of the development of agriculture on patterns of land use, but observers acknowledge that land being cultivated at the moment is roughly twice that of what it was a decade ago, suggesting that forests nearest to the villages might have been cleared. This would need to be confirmed with a quantitative analysis of forest cover in the area.

The local council at Dimako, however, had a major trump card and potential means of pulling the town out of poverty. In 2001, following two local long-term projects carried out by the French Foreign Aid Agency, Dimako was equipped with the country's first council forest (*forêt communale*) – a forest which the council could log selectively for timber. The evolution of Dimako Council Forest is described in a third part after a brief account of the French forestry projects in the next section.

3.2. TWO FRENCH FORESTRY PROJECTS

Until the late 1980s, forestry never benefited from any foreign aid on a systematic basis. It was only with the emergence of an international debate on forests in the second half of the decade that the governmental donor community began showing interest in curbing deforestation. In 1988, Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced her government would allocate £100 million to forest conservation worldwide. The French government also emphasised its commitment to "saving forests" following the 1990 Ministerial Conference in Libreville (Gabon) on "Valuing and Sustainably Managing Forests in Central Africa" (*Mise en valeur et gestion durable des forêts d'Afrique centrale*).

By 1991, both Britain and France had set up their own projects to conserve the rainforest in Cameroon (Singer 2004), the former in Mbalmayo, where ENEF⁴⁹ was located, and the latter in Dimako with a project known as *Aménagement Pilote Intégré* (API) or "Pilot Integrated Management". API lasted until 1996 when it was wound down, before it was followed up two years later with a second French project, *Forêts et Terroirs* or "Forests and Village Lands".

3.2.1. API Dimako

The French body responsible for ODA at the time was the Ministry of Cooperation; in this particular case, it merely funded the work carried out by the French Research Centre for Tropical Forestry, CIRAD-forêt. The initial aim of API Dimako was to set guidelines for managing⁵⁰ tropical rainforests in a way that would be economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable. At a time when tropical timber boycotts were all the rage in Northern Europe and America, the French forestry community emphasised their particular solution to deforestation:

In today's world, saving a natural resource may only be ensured if a large majority of people give it a certain value, *i.e.*, if it can provide revenue to a group in one form or another. In other words, the best way of protecting tropical forests is to benefit from its products, notably through logging.⁵¹

Faure 1993 (quoted in Durrieu de Madron *et al.* 1998 :104).

⁴⁹ ENEF stands for the *Ecole nationale des eaux et forêts* or National School for Water and Forests. For more information on ENEF please refer to the section on forest policies in Cameroon.

⁵⁰ The correct term here would be *aménagement* which loosely translates as forest management but in fact which focuses on selective logging activities. The French science of *aménagement forestier* goes back several centuries to the creation of the National Forestry School in Nancy, modelled on the nascent German science of forestry. Since then, French orthodoxy has always focused much more on timber production than Anglo-Saxon perceptions of management.

⁵¹ « Dans le monde actuel, la sauvegarde d'une ressource naturelle ne peut être assurée que si une large majorité de personnes lui reconnaît une certaine valeur, donc si elle est susceptible d'apporter des revenus à une collectivité sous une forme ou une autre. Autrement dit, la meilleure façon de protéger la forêt tropicale est d'en tirer des produits, notamment par l'exploitation forestière. »

What appeared as an outright contradiction at first (logging to protect forests) was denounced by a large number of international NGOs who advocated a boycott of all timber products coming from the tropics. Yet the project went ahead despite a further outcry when it was found that the project's main partner would be none other than SFID, one of the French logging companies in Cameroon which was already starting to attract attention because of its logging practices.

The reasons for selecting Dimako were several. First, Dimako was conveniently located at the entrance to Cameroon's largest forested province, the *Province de l'Est*, only a few hours away from Yaoundé with a four-wheel drive. Secondly, the town lay at the limit between savannah and forest: it was therefore an ideal candidate which would enable CIRAD's researchers to compare both ecosystems. Last, but not least, it was one of the rare places where industrial logging had taken place for several decades: it thus constituted an ideal life-size laboratory ("laboratoire grandeur nature", Durrieu de Madron *et al.* 1998:106) both for the effects of logging both on forest ecology and the interactions between logging activities and those of local populations over the long term.

Yet this project must also be situated in the context of the debates in the early 1990s which focused on the role of the timber sector in tropical deforestation. To many at the time, logging was the main culprit of deforestation; the fact that the French government, officially in a bid to fight deforestation, should actually set up a project that appeared to promote French logging companies in Cameroon, outraged many among international NGOs. The project thus stirred considerable controversy and attracted a regular flow of criticisms and campaigns throughout its existence. To SFID, however, API Dimako was a golden opportunity to display a "greener" image both of the company and timber production more generally, but it would also a means of collecting quality data on the areas it was logging that would eventually be useful in writing up a management plan.⁵²

The project had two principal components, hence its "integrated" aspect: first, a forestry component (*volet forestier*) in collaboration with SFID focused on studying the effects of various logging and planting practices on forest ecology. The aim was to identify the practices which would ensure the greatest reconstitution of the timber stock whilst minimising the impacts of logging on forest ecology, including biodiversity and hydrology.

Secondly, the rural development component (*volet développement rural*) in collaboration with local populations aimed at promoting more intensive means of cultivating crops in a bid to prevent further deforestation or forest degradation through traditional slash-and-burn practices. Pilot sites were established to experiment with novel forms of agriculture and the introduction of new, more productive varieties. This component was also in charge of preparing the creation of a community forest at Bimba, just outside the town of Dimako (and was required to set up a local association or GIC to this effect).

⁵² In the early days of API Dimako, a management plan was not a compulsory condition to get a license to log; it only became so with the 1994 Law, and even then it remained uncommon until the early 2000s.

The longer term aim, in cooperation with the forestry component, was to establish the boundaries between (i) the agroforestry zone, (ii) forests for local populations and/or government, and (iii) public forests for industrial logging. This aim was fulfilled earlier than planned with the zoning project set up by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) across southern Cameroon in the early 1990s.

By the first mid-term evaluation, however, the rural development component was said to be going astray: instead of focusing on agricultural productivity, researchers had widened their social data collection to all types of livelihoods (Luc Mendouga, personal communication). As Durrieu de Madron *et al.* (1998:106-7) point out, whilst objectives appeared to be clear in the mind of those who had set up the project, their operationalisation remained vague and stuck at the stage of research and data collection. This slowing down, coupled with the fact that the forestry component kept to a specific road map throughout the project's existence, led to the two components being decoupled. The project thus lacked overall coherence and it was only at the end that components eventually managed to connect with each other.

Furthermore, the rural development component was to focus on intensifying agriculture in a bid to put an end to slash-and-burn agriculture. In other words, traditional agricultural practices had been identified as one of the culprits of deforestation. It is needless to point out today, after researchers such as James Fairhead and Melissa Leach have successfully proven that slash-and-burn agriculture has been wrongfully accused of causing deforestation, that the logic behind the rural development component was inherently flawed.

3.2.2. *Forêts et Terroirs*

Faced with the mitigated success of API Dimako, the French Ministry for Cooperation proved very hesitant to approve a follow-up project. It was thus two and a half years before the follow-up project, *Forêts et Terroirs*, was set up. This project inherited all of API Dimako's physical legacies in the *commune*, namely a 500,000 ha area of forest which had been fully inventoried, along with all of the project's local infrastructure including offices and equipment. However, forest inventories were outdated by the time *Forêts et Terroirs* was established because of the long period before Dimako's concessions were allocated again to logging companies:⁵³ in the meantime, illegal logging activities had led to the removal of considerable volumes of timber (SOFRECO 1999:21).

Likewise, the project inherited much of API Dimako's outlook on solutions to deforestation (see above), although project managers also learned from mistakes made in the first project and set up clearer objectives which avoided the classic and somewhat constructed divide between the biological and social sciences. The new project's overall goal was to provide means of

⁵³ As Karsenty points out (1999:3), timber concessions in Cameroon were allocated later than planned following the 1994 Forestry Law because of a conflict between the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MINEF) and the World Bank. In fact, the allocation of the first wave of concessions had not kept to the transparent procedure which had been set out by the 1994 Law; this in turn had led to complaints by the World Bank and a moratorium on concession allocation until the very end of the 1990s.

implementing the 1994 Forestry Law. To fulfil this goal, the project had two main aims: (i) provide institutional support to all actors involved in establishing the management plan, and (ii) create guidelines for the demarcation (*classement*) of different land types and for writing up management plans.

From the beginning, *Forêts et Terroirs* ran into a series of delays, first because inventories had to be carried out again following illegal logging activities, and secondly because of the late recruitment of national staff. In practice, therefore, the project only began gathering speed in 1999, two years before it was wound down (Collas 2001:3). The project was eventually successful in providing background data and methodologies for writing up management plans. Likewise, it also succeeded in creating Dimako Council Forest (*forêt communale de Dimako*), the first of its kind in the country, although it was not established without local controversy (see next section).

However, the various projected community forests never saw the light of day, despite considerable efforts, notably in the case of Bimba. Some observers explained this failure in light of the lack of interest among local populations in cooperating to set up such forests. Karsenty (1999:5) suggests that the revenue generated from logging activities and handed over to local populations represented much more easily gained income than community forests which would only generate revenue with considerable planning and effort.

The benefits to local populations from industrial logging activities had indeed increased sharply in the late 1990s. In 1997, the Ministry of Environment and Forests established a rule that all logging sales (*ventes de coupe*)⁵⁴ should pay FCFA 1,000 to local populations for every cubic metre produced. At a time when the allocation of concessions had been suspended, logging sales were increasingly common, covering over 300,000 ha in Dimako alone in 1998. Local populations thus saw a sudden and unprecedented – although only temporary – influx of money into villages. By comparison, it is thus logical that the perspective of income from community forests appeared both distant and negligible. It was not until March 2008 that Dimako's first community forest was approved by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF).

3.2.3. *Legacies*

Overall, observers agree that *Forêts et Terroirs* was more successful than API Dimako, if only because objective and road maps were better established from the outset. However, the project ended in conflict: SFID's request to access the data collected by CIRAD researchers to help the company write up its own management plan was refused on the grounds that French ODA could not give such an advantage over its competitors.

API Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* left a major legacy for the French community of researchers in tropical forestry. Over the decade in which CIRAD was involved in Dimako, over a dozen researchers carried out fieldworks and/or studies in the town, forming all but a mould, a

⁵⁴ For more information on different types of logging contracts with the state, please refer to the section on forest policies in Cameroon.

compulsory rite of passage for many of those researchers who still work at CIRAD today. Its second long-term effect on CIRAD-forêt was to shift attention away from Ivory Coast, which the research centre had focused on for several decades, to Central Africa, where the bulk of CIRAD-forêt's studies are currently located. As a result of this, Dimako (along with French Guiana) has become one of the best-known case-studies of tropical forestry, at least in the French-speaking world. A whole range of publications emerged from studies carried out during both projects which are still used when implementing forest management elsewhere in the tropics.

However, in Dimako, the legacy of these projects is somewhat less visible. Today, virtually nothing remains of the projects apart from a rusty sign on the main road leading to an extravagant yet run-down wooden construction surrounded by tall grass. This U-shaped building made entirely out of timber once housed the offices of the project, of which nothing remains apart from heaps of papers strewn across the veranda.

Those who had set up *Forêts et Terroirs* had ensured that a relay structure (*structure de relai*) would be established to carry on with the project's research and draw lessons from it. In 2000, the Provincial delegation of the Ministry of Environment and Forests set up a technical operation unit (*Unité technique opérationnelle* or UTO) covering Dimako and Doumé. This enabled staff of *Forêts et Terroirs* to hand over all its data, materials, infrastructure and equipment to a successor whose objectives nevertheless remained vague apart from being the guardian of the ex-project's goods.

The UTO – headed by staff who had previously worked for the projects – turned out to have little effect in the field. The mayor of Dimako, on top of his own two logging companies that operated nearby, took over the management of the newly created council forest. Criticisms of the forest's management by UTO staff set their relationship off on a bad footing. According to UTO staff, the mayor saw nothing more in the UTO than the eyes and ears of the Provincial Delegation of the Ministry of Environment and Forests with whom he also had a conflictual relationship. Eventually, the activities of the UTO were wound down and came to an end in 2005 when the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife stopped funding it.

Today, therefore, nothing remains of the French Cooperation's projects in Dimako, with the notable exception of the council forest (*forêt communale*) described in the following section.

3.3. DIMAKO'S COUNCIL FOREST

The topic of council forests in Cameroon has evolved to such an extent in recent years that one often forgets the fundamental role that French Cooperation played in its promotion well before it became a popular tool for forest management. The 1994 Forest Law provided two ways of devolving forest management to local authorities: community forests (*forêts communautaires*) can be established in the non-permanent forest domain (*domaine forestier non permanent*) and run by an association (GIC) representing a village (*chefferie de troisième degré*). Council forests (*forêts communales*), on the other hand, can be set up within the permanent forest domain and – as their name suggests – are to be managed by the local council (*commune*).

3.3.1. History

At a time when community-based natural resource management was immensely popular among donors and NGOs alike, community forests immediately sprouted up across Cameroon, notably in the southeast where NGOs such as SNV were promoting the idea. Council forests, on the other hand, started up much more slowly, the first such forest only seeing the light in 2001 in Dimako.⁵⁵ Had the French Cooperation not focused on experimenting with this new type of forest, council forests might have remained on paper to this day. French foresters, however, had always been more reluctant to hand over forest management to non-governmental organisations such as associations; in their eyes, local councils seemed to be a much more likely candidate for managing forests at the local level. Collas, for example, tries to explain that council forests are less individualistic than community forests:

The support to the council forest project in Dimako (...) allows the implementation of the principle of villagers taking part in forest management based on the idea that several communities (Dimako has 16 villages) have to transcend their individual interests to participate in a more global project (unlike community forests which involve only one community at a time).⁵⁶

Collas (2001:5)

However, Collas (2001:13) also recognises that the implication of local “communities” was jeopardised from the outset. Several villages on the southern edge of the proposed forest saw in its creation a means for the mayor (as the owner of two logging companies) a means of carving a private forest for himself out of the public domain, at a time when many of those villagers were also involved in illegal logging activities. But this conflict of interests did not manage to prevent the creation of the communal forest which began in April 1999 and was eventually approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in May 2001, shortly before *Forêts et Terroirs* was wound down.

The newly created council forest covered some 16,000 ha south of the town itself and included a 600-ha “agroforestry” zone which was to be planted with oil palm and also managed by the local council. *Forêts et Terroirs* also equipped the council with a complete and officially approved management plan for the council forest (Mekok 2001).

⁵⁵ Given that council forests are the property of the council, the land needs to be purchased by the council from the central state. In this case, the land covered by the council forest covered cost some FCFA 300 million (€ 460,000), yet to this day the council has not paid the state yet, the mayor claiming that the council is too poor to be able to afford such an amount.

⁵⁶ « L'appui du projet à la constitution de la forêt communale de Dimako (...) permet (...) de donner vie au principe de l'implication des villageois à la gestion des forêts sur un exemple où plusieurs communautés (la commune rurale de Dimako comporte 16 villages) doivent transcender leurs individualités pour participer à un projet plus global (à la différence des forêts communautaires qui ne mettent en jeu qu'une communauté à la fois). »

Dimako's council forest lies across two former "licenses" (concessions), SFID 1352 and SFID 1445, logged in 1958 to 1974 and 1965 to 1983 respectively. SFID concentrated on extracting the forest's most valuable timber species, notably sapelli (*Entandophragma cylindricum*) of which there are few individuals left today, especially compared with those less valuable species such as ayous (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*), fraké (*Terminalia superba*) and lotofa (*Sterculia rhinopetala*). In the mid-1990s, the forest was inventoried at a rate of 0.99% as part of the forestry component of API Dimako.

However, despite the fact that the council forest appeared to get off initially on a good footing, another three years were to go by before logging activities actually began. In fact, the local council was confronted with several hurdles. First, the revenue generated by SFID in the form of a 1% local tax (*centime additionnel communal* or CAC) provided the council with sufficient income without having to focus on managing the council forest. However, when SFID pulled out of Dimako, alternative forms of revenue suddenly became a major issue as the council was left all but penniless. As Poum Bimbar shows, council revenue fell from FCFA 50 to 15 million in six years (see Figure I).

Secondly, before logging activities could begin in the council forest, two problems had to be solved. Heavy machinery such as bulldozers and chainsaws were necessary to carry out any logging operations; and customers had to be identified. Following failed negotiations with SFID which showed little interest in the allegedly mediocre quality of the council forest's products, Alpica, an Italian company operating close to Dimako, accepted to lease some of its equipment to the local council for two years. During the next two years, equipment was leased by the mayor's own company. Yet despite these loans, representatives of the local council have repeatedly blamed low production figures on the lack and bad quality of available equipment.

A further difficulty which the council forest has had to contend with is the administrative delays at the Ministry of Forests (MINEF/MINFOR). Each year, the local council needs to have an annual operation permit (*permis annuel d'opération*) approved by the Ministry before starting logging operations; yet delays in the approval of this document has meant that logging activities only begin several months into each year. In 2006, the permit was never approved and the local council was unable to log the forest that year.

In terms of labour, Dimako council and *Forêts et Terroirs* had agreed to employ local workers as much as possible. In this respect, Dimako again benefited from SFID's legacy in that the council found a large workforce within the *commune* which had already acquired experience in logging activities of all types. In order to benefit the greatest possible number, a rotation system has been devised whereby potential staff from each of Dimako's 17 villages is registered takes turns to work in the field. In total, there are 15 to 30 people in the field at any one time during the logging season (administrative delays such as those described above, along with bad weather during the rainy season, means that logging activities can only be carried out for 4 to 6 months a year). Non-local staff is only recruited for skilled positions, notably the head of field operations (*chef de chantier*) and the head of the forestry unit at the local council (*chef de cellule de foresterie communale*).

3.3.2. *The Benefits of the Council Forest*

The Council forest's benefits have been considerable, especially for the council itself. As Figure I shows, council revenue hovered around FCFA 50 million (€ 115,000) at the height of SFID's activities which contributed to council revenue through the CAC tax (*centime additionnel communal*). However, by the late 1990s, SFID's operations already seemed to have started winding down as council revenue fell to beneath FCFA 20 million (€ 45,000), reaching FCFA 15,590,000 (€ 35,000) at its lowest point in 2002-2003. However, Figure VI also illustrates the sudden increase in council revenue from the first year of logging (2003-2004).

Admittedly, figures given are gross and as Mongui (2005) points out, the expenses related to logging activities⁵⁷ need to be deducted from the massive FCFA 270,000,000 (€ 613,000) received in 2004. Yet even when all these amounts are deducted, the council was left for 2004 with revenue of over FCFA 71,000,000 (€ 161,000) from the council forest alone (plus another FCFA 24,000,000 from other sources of revenue according to Poum Bimbar 2006:19).

Likewise, the percentage of council revenue that came from the council's own activities, which remained under 1% in SFID's heyday in the 1990s (notably 1997-1998 and 1998-1999), shot up from 14% in 2002-3 to 83% in 2003-4 (Figure VII). As Poum Bimbar (2006) correctly points out, Dimako council went from virtually total dependence on income produced by SFID in the 1990s to a situation in which it was almost completely autonomous from a financial viewpoint from 2004 onwards. In other words, the council forest has reached the goal that decision-makers had in mind when passing the 1994 Law creating this category of forest management, namely to increase the power and autonomy of local governments.

⁵⁷ According to Mongui (2005:3), these included (i) renting three heavy machines (FCFA 94,000,000), (ii) additional material and fuel (FCFA 33,000,000), wages (FCFA 17,000,000) and purchasing equipment (FCFA 2,500,000).

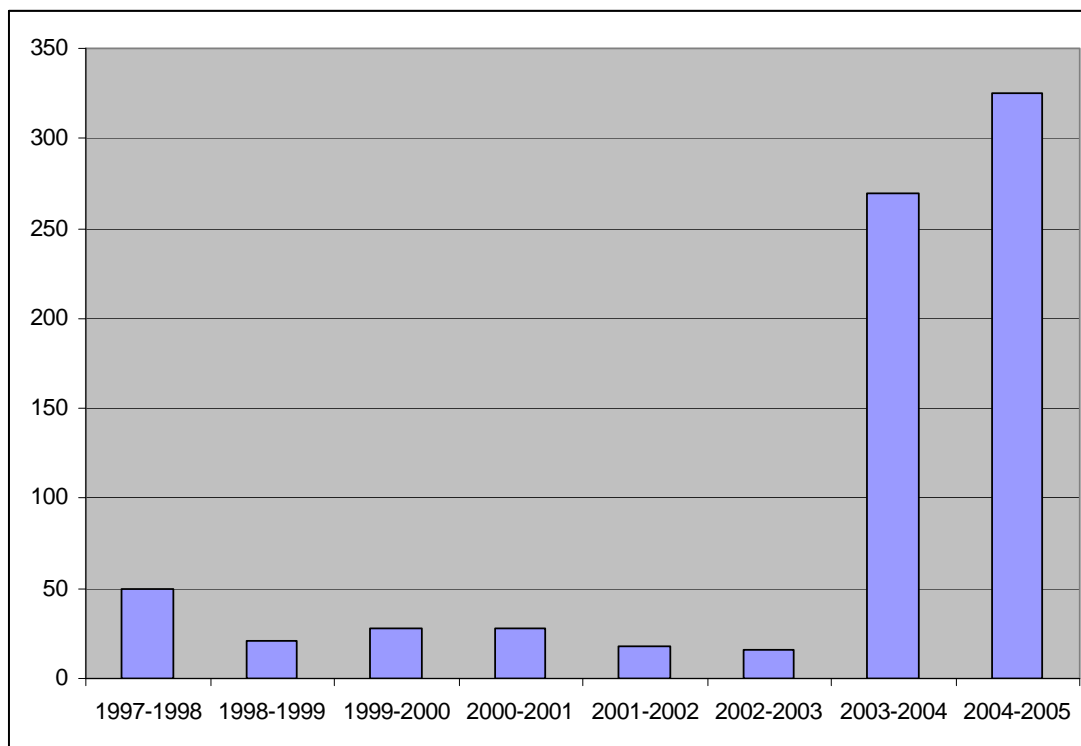


Figure VI. — Local Council revenue between 1997 and 2005 in millions of FCFA (data based on Poun Bimbar 2006:14). Data show that SFID's activities had already begun slowing down before it finally pulled out in 2002. Data presented are gross figures: for 2004 and 2005 notably, considerable expenses were made as part of the management of the council forest. According to Mongui (2005), net revenue for 2003-2004 was approximately FCFA 71 million, which is still a 40% increase compared to council revenue during SFID's heyday in 1997-8 and a 4.5-fold increase since 2002-3.

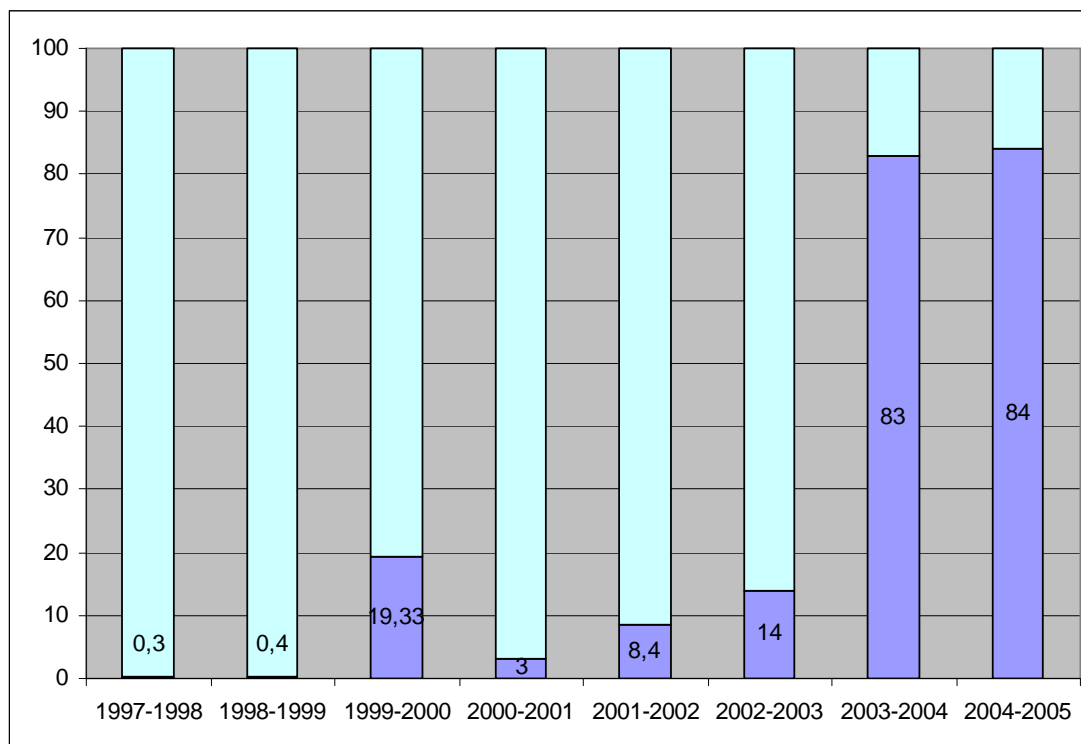


Figure VII. — Percentage of Dimako council revenue coming from the local council's own economic activities (after data provided by Poum Bimbar 2006:14, 18).

According to Mongui (2006), in 2005 the funds were spent in a variety of ways to the benefit of the inhabitants of Dimako:

1. FCFA 7 million (€ 16,000) was handed out in loans to 15 agricultural associations across the *communes* to improve agricultural practices (which by then had become the main source of private income for the inhabitants of Dimako). However, the mayor has since complained that in three years none of these associations has paid the money back to the council: "They haven't changed in 20 years. They always want to receive and give nothing in return – a true spirit of 'assistanceship'"⁵⁸ (Interview with Janvier Mongui, 18.03.08).
2. The market square by the bus stop has been rebuilt, although at the author's time of visit the open structure needed repair. Again, this is part of promoting Dimako's agricultural sector as the bulk of what is sold on the market is food products. Dimako's own market square provides its inhabitants with a certain degree of autonomy from the "buy'em sell'em" traders who buy cheap produce in Dimako before selling it at a higher price in Bertoua.
3. The bulk of the expenses, however, has gone into promoting local education through a number of projects: (i) 15 people received grants in 2005 to take driving lessons; (ii) the local council funded the construction of an additional classroom in the town's only secondary school (*lycée*) whose management is usually ensured by the Ministry of Secondary Education

⁵⁸ « Ils n'ont pas changé en 20 ans. Ils veulent toujours recevoir pour rien. Un véritable esprit d'assistanat. »

in Yaoundé; (iii) 12 of the town's best pupils got scholarships to study at university in Yaoundé; and (iv) grants were handed out to primary school pupils and schools received additional equipment such as books and furniture.

It should be pointed out that grants to individuals such as pupils and students is reserved for the two main local ethnic groups, namely the Bakoum and Pol. This ethnically discriminating policy has received much support because many Bakoum and Pol have complained (ever since the arrival of SFID) of the influx of members of other ethnic groups who "diluted local culture" (interview with an inhabitant of Dimako, 17.03.08). Yet this also means that despite having lived been in Dimako for over a generation, some families continue to be denied these privileges on the grounds that they belong to other ethnic groups.

Likewise, the same policy is applied to another direct benefit of the council forest, that of employment. As mentioned above, a rotation system ensures that the maximum possible number of people benefit from the temporary employment opportunity provided by logging activities. However, the mayor (along with the local council) has gone one step further and proposed the creation of a council sawmill called FIAD (*Forestière Industrielle et Agricole de Dimako S.A.*).

In 2008, the mayor succeeded in getting support from SFID which still owns the disused factory that lies on the western edge of town: the company agreed to rent the factory out for a symbolic one franc and provide machinery for 30 months. Having "authorised the mayor to make decisions on behalf of the *commune*"⁵⁹ (Janvier Mongui, 21 March 2008), the local council has all but handed over the future management of FIAD to the mayor as well as guaranteeing that the local council would provide the sawmill with timber from the council forest. Again, this should create further employment opportunities for the inhabitants of Dimako, many of whom already have considerable experience in this particular field.

3.3.3. *Unresolved Issues*

However, a number of problems still need to be overcome should the council forest contribute significantly to local development and welfare. Above all, production has been extremely variable from one year to the next, although data have been very difficult to locate and remain unreliable. Figures provided in Figure VIII are therefore underestimations, notably for the years 2004 and 2005 whose results are based on sales rather than production *per se*. In 2006 no timber was produced because the plan was never approved. Moreover, results for 2005 and 2007 show a 60% fall in production over just two years.

The reasons given for the high variation in production from one year to the next were (i) administrative delays preventing logging in the first months of the year (in 2007 logging activities only began in April due to the late arrival of the permit approval from the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife); and (ii) limitations in terms of equipment (in 2007 only one bulldozer was

⁵⁹ « Le conseil municipal a passé autorisation demandant au maire de prendre des actions au nom de la commune ».

available). Finally, results presented in Figure IX are based on timber production for 2007 and show the predominance of ayous in the council forest's products.

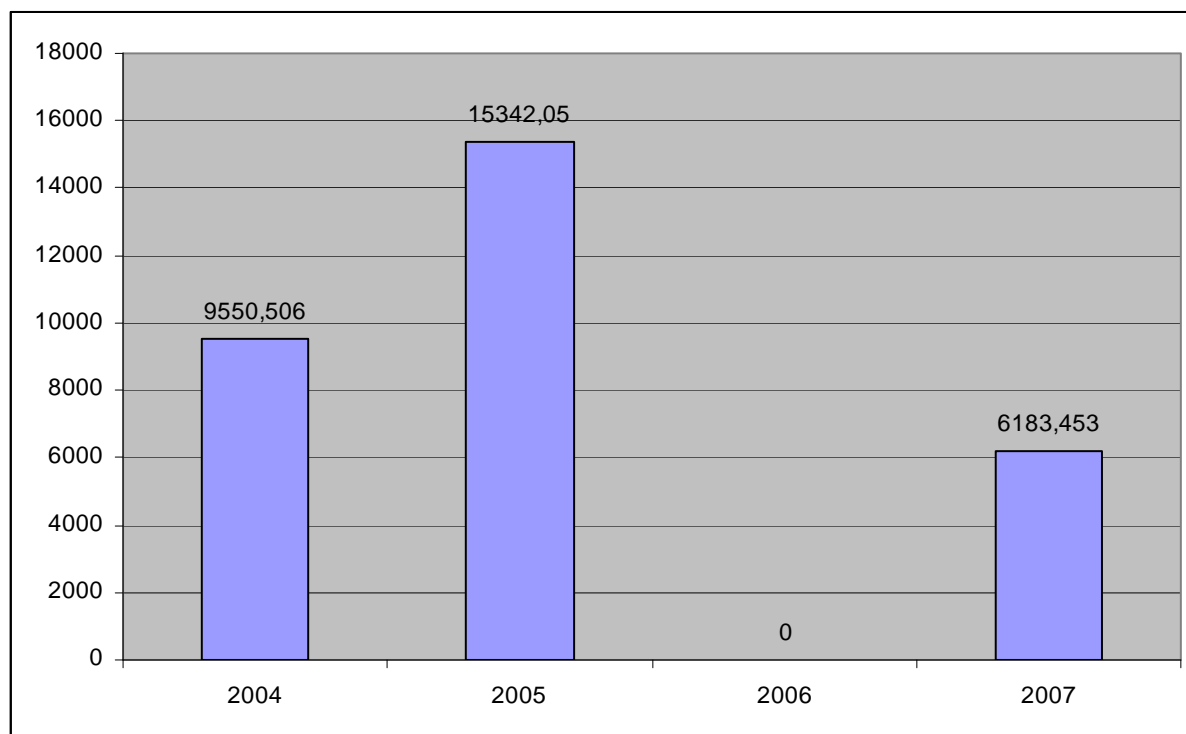


Figure VIII. — Minimum production figures for Dimako Council Forest since the beginning of logging operations. Data based on official documents provided by the local council on (i) sales to Alpicam and Grumcam for 2004 and 2005 (Forêt communale de Dimako 2005, Commune de Dimako 2006), and (ii) actual production figures for 2007 (Mongui 2008).

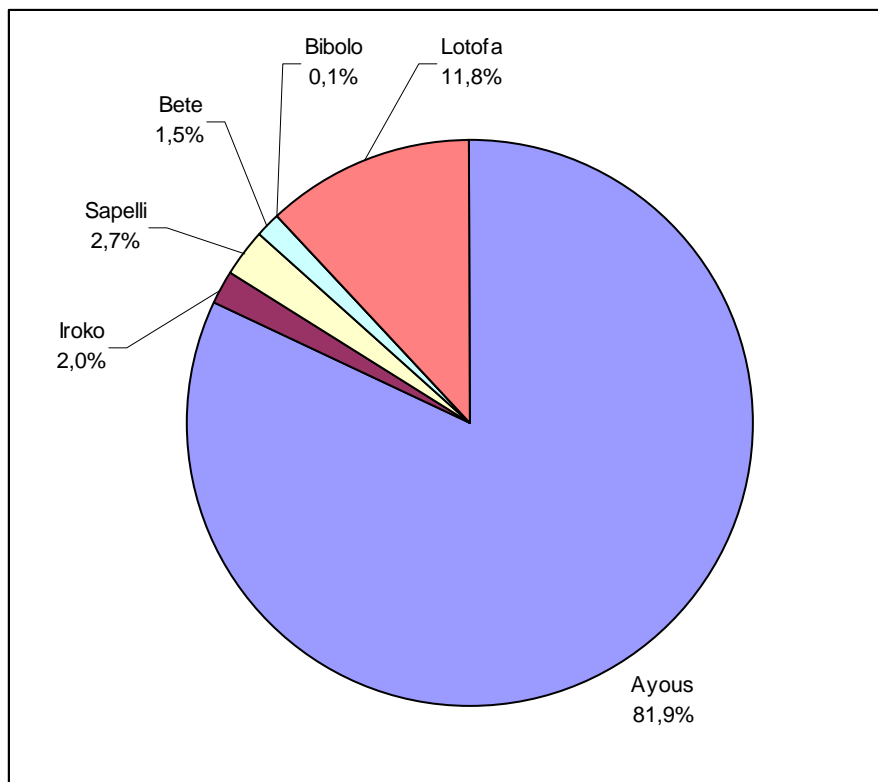


Figure IX. — Timber production in Dimako Council Forest in 2007 by species (based on Mongui 2008).

Likewise, it remains unclear as to how much the rented equipment cost the council. According to one source (Mongui 2005), during the first year of operation (2004) the cost of rented equipment totalled some FCFA 93 million (€ 142,000), yet according to certain interviewees, the equipment was leased for free in exchange for the exclusive contract with Alpica.

Documents on the accounts of the council forest also seem to contradict each other. In a recent presentation given in Yaoundé, the mayor claimed that the balance was negative in the first two years of operation, yet in a report on the first year of operation, the mayor states that there was a positive balance of FCFA 71 million (€ 108,000). Furthermore, Mongui (2005:2) claims that the council's revenue from logging operations for 2004 totalled FCFA 218,365,374 (€ 333,000). But in his Bachelor's Dissertation, Poum Bimbar (2006:19) notes that the council's revenue from the council forest for 2004 was FCFA 224,277,118 (€ 342,000), leaving an unaccounted gap of some € 9,000 for 2004 alone.

Further issues concerning logging activities in Dimako Council Forest have attracted the author's attention. In 2006 a new management plan was issued despite the fact that the plan approved in 2001 was still legally valid. Official reasons in the introduction to the 2006 management plan stated that

In order to harmonise the plan with existing laws, the administration responsible for forests requested that [the first] management plan be reviewed so as to take into account new information contained in Letter 116/L/MINFOF/SG/DF/SDIAF/ SISDEF dated 28 December 2005.⁶⁰

Anonymous (2006:2)

A comparison between the two management plans reveals that the minimum management diameter (*diamètre minimum d'aménagement* or DMA)⁶¹ has been lowered for a significant number of species, as shown in Table IV. This table shows that out of the six species exploited in 2007 according to Mongui (2008):

- Four species remained at the same DMA as the 2001 management plan, namely Lotofa, Bibolo, Sapelli ad Bete, representing 16.1% of production in 2007;
- Two species saw their DMA lowered by 10 cm (Ayous and Iroko, representing 83.9% of production in 2007), thus allowing more trees to be felled; and
- None of the species effectively logged saw their DMA raised.

In other words, DMAs from the 2006 management plan saw a significant increase in the volume of timber that could be logged in the forest. The only reason given for changing the DMAs in the new management plan was as follows:

It must be noted that because of the decrepitude of the machines left over from the *Forêts et Terroirs* project, as well as the type of data analysis, it was difficult to analyse the data directly using TIAMA [the new software required by recent legislation]. Data were transferred using ACCESS which was the original software, but minor insufficiencies were noted. However, the distribution curbs of diameters were used to determine DMAs and to calculate possibilities [sic]. Given all of the above, a fastidious computing exercise had to be undertaken on Excel to keep to the principles mentioned above.⁶²

⁶⁰ « Pour des besoins d'harmonisation avec les textes en vigueur, l'administration en charge des forêts a demandé que [le premier] plan d'aménagement soit revu en prenant en compte des nouvelles données suivant lettre n°116/L/MINFOF/SG/DF/SDIAF/SISDEF du 28 décembre 2005. »

⁶¹ The DMA (*diamètre minimum d'aménagement*) is the minimum diameter at which a tree can be felled for commercial purposes. A legal minimum is set for every species at national level, known as DME (*diamètre minimum d'exploitation*). DMAs are specific to a concession or council forest as they need to take into account the rate of reconstitution of every logged species: if predictions based on logging all trees of a certain species above the DME show that the exploited species will not show a reconstitution rate over 30 years of at least 50%, then the DMA has to be raised until the 50% level of reconstitution rate is reached. DMAs are thus based on predictions of the future trends of existing timber stocks and are supposed to be one of the key elements of sustainable logging.

⁶² « Il convient de noter que du fait de la vétusté des machines laissées par le projet Forêts et Terroirs, et du type de traitement des données, il a été difficile de réaliser le traitement direct avec le logiciel TIAMA. Le transfert a été réalisé avec l'application ACCESS de départ, mais des insuffisances mineures ont été observées. Néanmoins, les courbes de distribution des diamètres ont été utilisées pour la détermination des DMA et le calcul de la possibilité. Compte tenu de tout ce qui précède, il a fallu se livrer à un fastidieux exercice de calcul de la possibilité sur le tableur Excel en respectant les principes donnés plus haut. »

Anonymous (2006:41)

In an interview, however, it was revealed that a new inventory was carried out that showed that the inventory carried out during API Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* had overestimated the stock of certain species, notably ayous (which is the main species logged, as shown in Figure IX) – although this does not explain why DMAs of certain species were lowered. After an official request submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, it was decided that a new inventory and management plan should be issued.

As a consequence of the DMAs being lowered for ayous and iroko, there remained an additional 3,000 m³ of timber to be logged in the areas that had been exploited in 2004 and 2005. According to one interviewee, a volume equivalent to this was extracted in 2007 on top of the 6,183 m³ logged that year, yet no document was found that corroborated this allegation; the only official document for 2007 figures (Mongui 2008) makes no mention of it.

Another salient aspect of the management of Dimako Council Forest concerns the areas exploited in 2004 and 2005. Just like in FMUs (forest management units), council forests are divided into 5-year logging areas known as Forest Logging Units (*Unité forestière d'exploitation* or UFE). Each UFE is further divided into five annual logging areas (*assiette annuelle de coupe* or AAC) for which a permit has to be obtained every year. In 2004 and 2005, however, a complete UFE was logged in a mere two years. Local council representatives explain this by the fact that the first UFE was supposed to have lasted from 2002 through to 2006. Given that permits were obtained only for two years, five years' logging were concentrated into 2004 and 2005 alone. In 2007 UFE no.2 was started, although the local council has since requested to inverse the order of AACs for the 2007-2011 period, officially to prevent building additional roads and bridges because of the complex geographical configuration of each AAC.

Species	DME (fixed by law)	DMA in 2001	DMA in 2006	Difference
Acajou à gr. Folioles	80	80		
Amouk Mambode	50	50	80	+30
Aningré R	60	80	80	0
Aningré A	60	100	90	-10
Avodiré	60	60	60	0
Ayous	80	100	90	-10
Bété	60	60	60	0
Bilinga	80	80	80	0
Bossé clair	80	100	80	-20
Bossé foncé	80	80	80	0
Diana Z	50	50	70	+20
Dibétou (Bibolo)	80	100	100	0
Emien	50	110	70	-40
Eyong	50	50	60	+10
Fraké	60	80	70	-10
Fromager	50			
Iatandza	50	60	60	0
Ilomba	60	60	60	0
Iroko	100	110	100	-10
Kapokier	60	120	80	-40
Kondroti	50	50	60	+10
Kotibé	50	50	50	0
Koto	60	60	70	+10
Kumbi	50	90	80	-10
Lati	50	90	90	0
Longhi	60	90	80	-10
Lotofa / Kanang	60	70	70	0
Niové	50	50	70	+20
Padouk Blanc	50	50	70	+20
Padouk rouge	60	60	70	+10
Sapelli	100	110	110	0
Tali	50	90	80	-10
Tola	100	100	100	0

Table IV. — DMEs and DMAs for exploitable species in Dimako Council Forest according to Mekok (2001) and Anonymous (2006).

3.3.4. *The Risk of Elite Capture*

The issue is a taboo subject in Dimako, but outsiders readily talk about it. “The council forest is his own garden!”,⁶³ one observer once admitted about the mayor (interview in Yaoundé, 20.02.08). As Collas (2001:9) points out, villagers already feared that the council forest was being created in nobody’s interest but the mayor’s. Time and time again, interviewees external to

⁶³ « La forêt communale, c’est son jardin ! »

Dimako have underlined what they perceive as attempts by the mayor to control the management of the council forest – and of Dimako at large:

The mayor is the only one who controls these things [*i.e.*, the management of the council forest]. This man organises everything. Everything is for him, and nothing remains for the rest (...). He keeps everything to himself and leaves populations in the dark. One cannot know what goes in or what comes out (...). He chooses his own local councillors – this isn't a good thing. The local council eats out of his hand.⁶⁴

Interview in Yaoundé, 26 March 2008

All the people interviewed who were external to the local council yet who tried to collaborate with the council over issues both related with and independent from the council forest have similar ways of describing the mayor:

I discussed things with the mayor but he is often busy. When revenue comes in it is just shared with his family. There needs to be a legacy, a posterity. The council needs to enter partnerships when other organisations. It is a big obstacle – we can't get through to them (...). With his political affiliations,⁶⁵ responsibilities are only given to certain people.

Interview (in English) outside Dimako, March 2008

When a council meeting is held, they need our expertise but we are never invited (...). The mayor relies a lot on his deputies (...). We would like to give our viewpoint but we are hardly listened to. We would have wanted to be more strongly implicated to provide our own expertise. We do not ask to manage their budget – only to participate.⁶⁶

Interview outside Dimako, March 2008

In the case of the council forest, a structure known as the Management Consultation Committee (*Comité consultatif de gestion* or CCG) has been established, composed of members of the local council and representatives of the town of Dimako and surrounding villages. Its aim is to ensure that logging activities are being done according to legislation, and it is aided by a Monitoring

⁶⁴ « Le maire est le seul qui contrôle ces choses-là [la gestion de la forêt communale]. C'est l'homme qui organise tout : tout pour lui, rien pour les autres (...). Il garde tout pour lui et laisse les populations dans le noir. On ne peut pas connaître ce qui rentre et ce qui sort (...). Ils choisit ses conseillers municipaux : c'est pas bon. Le conseil municipal est dans sa poche. »

⁶⁵ The mayor is known to be a high-ranking member of the RDPC, President Biya's political party, and a close friend of Chantal Biya, the First Lady. In fact, Dimako has benefited from the gift of a school from Chantal Biya and its secondary school was recently equipped with a computer lab thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Secondary Education (one of the three schools in the country to have benefited from such a grant, the other two being in Yaoundé).

⁶⁶ « Quand ils tiennent un conseil municipal, ils ont besoin de notre expertise, mais on n'est jamais invités (...). Le maire s'appuie beaucoup sur ses adjoints (...). On voudrait donner notre point de vue, mais on est peu écoutés. On aurait souhaité être fortement impliqués pour apporter notre propre expertise. On ne demande pas à gérer leur dotation budgétaire, juste à participer. »

Commission (*Commission de suivi*) – composed of a deputy mayor and members of the CCG and local council – whose members go in the field on a regular basis. The first CCG was elected for a period of five years, until 2007, when it was replaced by a second CCG which was still valid at the time of writing.

As the mayor points out, these structures fulfil the functions of an independent observer; yet upon closer inspection, it turns out that the second CCG which was elected in July 2007 had not yet convened by March 2008. As for the first CCG, Mekok mentions “the mayor’s observation that the Management Consultation Committee for the previous mandate [2002-2007] has not functioned properly”⁶⁷ (2008:4). One interviewee even claimed that the mayor had originally offered to be the head of the Management Consultation Committee; it was only after a lively debate that the offer was rejected. The general impression of control of information on the council forest issue was corroborated by the near-absence of any reliable quantitative data about timber production,⁶⁸ as well as the withholding of information by the local council as witnessed by the author.

Although when in Dimako these issues are hardly ever talked about, some interviewees mentioned the discontent in town at seeing the discrepancy in wealth between the mayor and the rest of the population. The mayor has occupied his current position since 1987 and has headed two logging companies before one filed for bankruptcy during the crisis that many smaller logging companies underwent following the 1994 Law and the sharp increase in taxes. His two large properties in Dimako and Bertoua and his recent purchase of a car using funds from the council forest (Mongui 2006:1) have only further contributed to a general feeling of unease among the population of Dimako.

Yet despite the recent increase in revenue from the council forest, Dimako itself remains one of the poorest *communes* in the Province in terms of the development criteria used by US NGO Plan International. Running water is non-existent, electricity is limited to the centre of Dimako town and not a single road is paved. Even public services remain in a state of disrepair, such as a primary school near the town centre whose roof had been torn off for two weeks in March 2008 – children had simply not gone to school during that time. Likewise, the health centre has an operating theatre which lacks even the most rudimentary drugs, despite the fact that the health profile of Dimako is desperate due to the high rate of HIV.

The mayor and the local council thus concentrate a number of resources which, according to a number of observers, they are reluctant to share with other parties: (i) legal authority over the management of the council forest through the CCG and Monitoring Committee, whose members are mostly composed of councillors and deputies; (ii) information, whose distribution and publication is minimised, as mentioned above; (iii) financial resources, as none of the interviewees outside the local council had access to either information or decision-making procedures over the allocation of funds from the council forest; and (iv) expertise, as the mayor is the only person with experience in managing logging operations. The lack of transparency and

⁶⁷ « Le constat du Maire selon lequel, le comité consultatif de gestion du mandat communal écoulé n’a pas fonctionné » [sic].

⁶⁸ According to a representative of the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife, the Ministry has not received any data despite a number of requests.

risk of elite capture in the form of control of information and activities by members of the local council may therefore constitute major threats to the success of Dimako council forest in reducing poverty and bringing about development at the level of Dimako.

Box IV
Baka Pygmies in Dimako

A brochure entitled “Rendez-vous to Dimako” [sic] boasts the presence of several Baka settlements in the section on tourism potential in Dimako. In fact, the *commune* is home to four Baka villages (Mayos, Nkoumadjap, Nkolbikon and Lossou), totalling an estimated 3,000 Baka, but it is not clear when they first arrived. According to some interviewees, Baka Pygmies had always lived in the forests of Dimako; according to others, they were brought over from Abong Mbang as labour to work in fields.

In many parts of Cameroon, especially in the south east, relations between Baka and Bantu populations are fraught with tension, the Baka having been all but enslaved in certain parts of the country. In Dimako, the relationship seems to be much more balanced and “mixed” marriages are very common, although as many observers point out, the Baka continue to be discriminated against and denigrated on a daily basis.

In recent years, with the growth of interest in “indigenous” peoples of Central Africa, the Baka populations have benefited from a range of projects carried out by various organisations. Local NGO APPEC (*Initiative d’auto-promotion des populations de l’Est-Cameroun*) pulled out in 2006, but US NGO Plan International has carried on promoting the welfare of Baka populations in several ways. First a Baka cultural centre was opened and handed over to the local council in 2007; wells have also been built, along with concrete houses.

The construction of houses, however, has been criticised by a number of observers. Baka Pygmies have traditionally lived in small spherical constructions (known as *Mongulu* in Baka) made of leaves and twigs with a single opening and in which a fire would be lit to cook food. In recent years, however, the Baka have tended to build larger, rectangular houses in mud and branches with windows (called *Ndapoto* in Baka) which are much more similar to traditional Bantu constructions. Yet the Baka still use this type of house with the same functions – cooking and eating. They attempted to pursue these same uses in the large, concrete houses (*Ndananjanajo* in Baka) built by Plan International, but the waterproof roofs prevent smoke from being evacuated and the houses end up being unliveable – at least in the way the Baka use their houses. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that many of these houses ended up being sold to Bantu families who were only too happy to upgrade their home at minimal cost.

The other major actor to have taken a recent interest in the Baka is WorldTeam, a group of missionaries belonging to the Bamenda-based Cameroon Baptist Convention. Two American missionary families are currently posted near Mayos, one of the Baka settlements, with the aim of promoting local development through economic initiatives as well as Christianity. “I see myself as an anthropologist”, one of the missionaries explained. “I see every culture as having good and bad; one good thing [among the Baka] is that they always share, but some take advantage of this because of the sin that is inside every man. I can to help them to change their own culture guided by the spirit of God” (Interview with a missionary, 16 March 2008). However, their lack of contact with any local authority (local council or military police) has raised many suspicions among local inhabitants and visitors alike, some suggesting that they are even prospecting for forest drugs for pharmaceutical companies, especially as one missionary is a botanist. Such rumours remained unfounded at the time of writing.

As for the council forest, unlike claims from the local council that all villages are included, representatives of the Baka community in Mayos pointed out that they had never been consulted on the issue of the council forest. As one Baka interviewee said, “the mayor wants to log the forest that is right against our village. We have the right to go in but the logging has chased all the animals out, plus the workers eat all the honey and never give us anything”⁶⁹ (21 March 2008).

3.4. CONCLUSION

More is at stake in the success of Dimako council forest, however, than the welfare of the inhabitants of the *commune*. As one of the interviewees working on the council forest admitted, “it isn’t easy here because we are guinea pigs: the world is watching us”⁷⁰ (13.03.08). Dimako was the first council forest to be created in Cameroon; since the scandal about corruption in community forests broke out around 2004, donors have turned their hopes of seeing decentralised forest management succeed towards council forests. In the last couple of years, a dozen other council forests have been created across the southern half of the country in what appears to be a growing admiration for this type of forest.

A five-year project was even set up in December 2007 with French funds to support council forest initiatives in collaboration with the National Federation of Forested Councils of France with the aim of further promoting council forests in Cameroon.⁷¹ This growing interest in Dimako council forest in particular has been witnessed locally as the number of visitors to the council forest has been increasing steadily in the past few years. In 2008, 15 French mayors – including the President of the Federation of the Mayors of France – visited Dimako.

Despite being the first of its kind, Dimako council forest is still in its early stages and has yet to produce any results in terms of forest management and local development. It has the definite advantage over community forests of having attracted less attention and therefore negative publicity since the 1994 Law was passed (although this phase might be yet to come); yet it is difficult to pinpoint its advantages over FMUs (timber concessions) apart from the fact that it provides local councils with greater financial autonomy, as Poum Bimbar (2006) pointed out.

In fact, it appears that Dimako council forest and its management share many features in common with a timber concession. First, the council forest as it stands today is a geographical area of forest set aside for timber extraction purposes, much like a timber concession. Secondly, it is logged according to a management plan that is bound to virtually identical rules to management plans for FMUs:

⁶⁹ « C’est le maire qui veut exploiter la forêt qui est tout à côté de notre village. On a le droit d’entrer mais l’exploitation a chassé tous les animaux, en plus ils mangent le miel et ne nous laissent jamais rien » (words from a Baka to French interpreter present during the interview).

⁷⁰ « Ici c’est pas facile parce qu’on est des cobayes. Tous les regards sont braqués sur nous. »

⁷¹ For more information on this project please refer to the section on forest-related policies in Cameroon.

- (i) The forest is divided into five-year units (UFE), each of which is further split into annual logging zones (AAC);
- (ii) The management plan is based on inventories and logging activities are regulated through DMEs and DMAs and specific methods of timber extraction – so much so that the council forest has to rely on machinery rented out by private companies which manage concessions of their own;
- (iii) Finally, the management plan and annual logging permits (*permis annuel de coupe*) are submitted to approval by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) before any logging activities can begin.

Thirdly, it should not come as a surprise that Cameroon's first effective council forest is located in a town whose mayor already heads a logging company – much of the expertise required to run a private company operating in concessions or logging sales (*vente de coupe*) is the same as that which is necessary for running Dimako's council forest. Fourthly, in this particular case the similarities between private logging companies and Dimako local council have gone beyond those of forest management *per se* with the project to set up a council-owned sawmill called FIAD. In other words, Dimako council seems to be following on the footsteps of private logging companies in the verticalisation of their operations. In this case, FIAD is obviously following the tracks of SFID to the extent that it will be renting out the company's old factory.

When asked about the similarities between Dimako council and SFID and whether the former is trying to replace the latter, council representatives deny the comparison by pointing out that the council is much smaller in size and resources and could not pretend to compete with a large company such as SFID. Moreover, they correctly underline the difference in nature between the council which is elected and public in nature, and SFID, a private company that never aimed to be answerable to local populations.

At first, therefore, it seems that the similarities between the council and council forest on the one hand, and SFID and the concession system on the other hand, come from existing legislation. Many of the points in common between council forests and concessions are set by existing laws, notably the requirements linked to the creation and approval of the management plan.

Yet upon closer inspection, one cannot help but notice that the similarities between the two systems have actually been internalised by many inhabitants of Dimako (who inevitably compare the council and SFID), including those who are involved in the management of the council forest. On several occasions, the author noted revealing Freudian slips in interviews: the council forest was regularly referred to as “our FMU” (“notre UFA”) and FIAD was even mispronounced “SFIAD” by two interviewees.

Forest policies in Dimako thus remain dominated by a “concession paradigm”. Even years after SFID put an end to its operations in the area, forest management continues to be perceived in terms of timber production and income, thus standing as a witness to the importance of the concept of concessions in Cameroon's forest policies at wide.

4. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN CAMPO-MA'AN NATIONAL PARK

Campo Ma'an landscape, a complex set of land use types that includes the National Park (CMNP), two large agro industrial concessions, tens a multi-purpose use zone (buffer zone) in planned to host community forest initiatives and various community livelihood activities, has now become a classical African conservation case-study. Researchers and policy-makers from across the world alike have been pouring into this corner of Cameroon to look at this increasingly high profile national park. Its historical links with the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline have only further contributed to it being in the limelight.

As a result, the Campo Ma'an landscape has greatly benefited from both considerable cutting edge research and funding, especially in comparison with other conservation units in Central Africa. It thus constitutes an ideal case-study of conservation policies from which lessons can be applied to Cameroon and the African continent at large. This paper traces the history of the interactions between policies of different sectors in the Campo Ma'an region before identifying current problems and putting forward recommendations for conservation-related policies in Campo Ma'an and beyond.

4.1. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The Campo Ma'an UTO totals some 771,000 ha in the southwestern corner of Cameroon and runs along the Atlantic Ocean and the border with Equatorial Guinea. It overlaps with three administrative constituencies or *or subdivisions in the Cameroonian administrative jargon* – Océan, Vallée du Ntem and Mvila and covers a large core of uninhabited dense tropical rainforest which constitutes the National Park (264,000 ha). The actual Park itself is relatively hilly with peaks reaching 1000 metres in altitude, although the coastline also has a few geological landmarks such as the Monts Mammelles and Eléphant. The forest's megafauna is characteristic of lowland Guineo-Congolian rainforests and is composed of the "big six": elephants (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*), buffalos (*Syncerus caffer nanus*), gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*), chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), panthers (*Panthera pardus*) and giant pangolins (*Manis gigantea*). De Kam *et al.* (2002:17-19) also claim that the Park is home to 29 primate, 249 fish and over 300 bird species.

Around the Park are several small towns (Campo, Nye'ete, Akom II and Ma'an notably), strings of small villages running along the main communication axes (Campo-Kribi, Kribi-Akom II-Ebolowa and Ebolowa-Ma'an) and two large industrial plantations in the northwest corner where the bulk of the landscape's human population (approximating 60,000) is located. Logging activities are centred around timber concessions, namely UFA 09-025 at Ipono near Campo and UFA 09-021, 09-022, 09-023 and 09-024 all in the vicinity of Ma'an in the southeastern corner of the landscape.

The human density in this area was estimated in 1987 at some 10 inhabitants/km² – a figure considerably higher than for most protected areas of the Eastern Province – and the ethnic makeup is a complex one with seven different “tribes” represented in the landscape. The Batanga and Iyassa who live along the coastline are traditionally characterized as sea-oriented groups who rely primarily on fishing as a means of subsistence. Further inland, the Mabea and Bulu live along the Kribi-Ebolowa axis, the latter society being one of Cameroon’s larger ethnic groups, whilst the Mvae and Ntumu are located along the southern edge of the Park, both east and west (for the Mvae) and into Equatorial Guinea (for both). The Mabea, Bulu, Mvae and Ntumu are all more forest-oriented, hunting playing a major role both as a means of subsistence and in their respective cultures, although fishing remains a very common activity, especially among the Mvae and Ntumu. Finally, the Bagyeli (also known as “Pygmies”), although nowadays sedentarized in villages peppered across the region, still commonly travel through to forest over great distances for up to a few weeks and continue to rely mostly on hunting and gathering.

Throughout the UTO small-scale agriculture remains the main means of subsistence of rural populations, whether in villages or small towns, although surplus is often used as a source of revenue. Cash crops are also commonly found, notably cocoa and palm oil. Depending on the locality, other sources of income include (i) employment in one of the region’s main industries (notably logging and rubber and oil palm production), (ii) hunting and logging which occur almost exclusively on an informal basis and (iii) trade, especially across the border with Equatorial Guinea.

4.2. HISTORY

Two leagues beyond the mountain of Fernão do Pôo, to the Northeast, is a river called *Rio dos Camarões* where fishing is good. We have not yet traded with the Negroes of this region. Along this coast are many storms accompanied by strong winds; to remedy this problem, ships encountering such weather should make good use of their sails.

From the mouth of the *Rio dos Camarões* to twenty leagues South and a quarter Southeast, there is another mountain known as *Guerreira*⁷² which is about a league long, and only about half a league from the shore. All this land is heavily wooded; it is distant from the latitude of the Equator towards the North Pole by 3°36”.

Duarte Pacheco Pereira (1506). *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, Book II, Chapter 10

When the Portuguese first set their eyes on Central Africa and established a trading port on the mouth of the River Ntem in the early sixteenth century, the Bantu ethnic group known as the Yassa were already settled along the coastline, from the Wouri to the Ntem rivers and well beyond. The Portuguese called their port *Campo* (settlement) and the Ntem became known as *Rio Campo*, and both were handed over to the Spanish when they took over Equatorial Guinea in

⁷² It is believed that the author is referring to the heights surrounding Kribi, notably the *Monts Eléphant*, *Alouette* and *Mammelles*.

1777 in exchange for concessions to the Portuguese in South America. However, in practice the Spanish neglected the area and focused instead on the immediate vicinity of Bata until the Treaty of Berlin in 1885 established the Ntem as the boundary between Spanish Guinea and German Kamerun. The village of Campo became known as Kampo and a German border patrol was established there.

Until then, the forests of the interior beyond the coastline between Campo and Kribi were inhabited by nomadic Bagyeli communities and various Bantu groups, notably the Mvae, Ntumu, Bulu and Batanga. By the late 1880s, American Presbyterian missionaries had set up camp in the Batanga area and were the first to venture into the interior, well before the Germans ever did, thus opening up the first footpath from Kribi to Ebolowa. The German army “conquered” local populations only a decade later, moving south from Yaounde (then known as Jaunde) not without fierce resistance from the Bulu tribe of which m’Ebobo, better known as Martin Paul Samba, has become a national hero.

The arrival of German colonial rule had a drastic effect on local Bantu populations. As paths were opened through the forest and contact established with traditional chiefs, populations were forced to settle along the main axes of communication such as the Kribi-Ebolowa and Ebolowa-Ma’an roads, thus only leaving Bagyeli communities roaming around the forests. However, given the remoteness of the area, trade with the colonial power was limited to ivory and the forests of southwestern Kamerun remained mostly untouched, except for an oil palm and rubber tree plantation established on Dipikar island near the mouth of the Ntem river.

The First World War saw the handing over of German Kamerun to the British and French who successfully pushed German armed forces back into Spanish Guinea in 1916 and 1917 – trenches dug by the Germans both at Campo Beach and in the town of Ma’an still bearing witness to Cameroon’s early colonial wars. The French takeover saw little change in the region other than the re-drawing of certain roads (notably the Ebolowa-Ma’an road which was moved southwards) and the widening of others to accommodate motorized vehicles (notably the Kribi-Ebolowa road). One major milestone of the interwar period, however, was the creation of the *Réserve de Campo* in 1932 along the coastline, roughly from a few miles south of Batanga down to Kribi, forming a V-shape heading deep into the interior.

Nowadays, the elderly still recall having to organize *battues* or collective hunts to push elephants and other large animals back into the forest to prevent them from raiding crops. Although villagers were forcefully kept out of the *Réserve de Campo*, this rule did not seem to apply to logging activities since the first allocation of timber rights within the reserve dates back to 1948 (De Kam *et al.* 2002:7). In 1968, the government of the newly independent Federal Cameroon allocated some 249,000 ha (most of which was inside the Reserve) as a concession to a French company, *La Forestière de Campo*.

Over the years, the concession expanded eastwards as the company ran out of valuable tree species – a trend only halted by the arrival of new conservation projects in the 1990s. In the meantime, further north towards Kribi, national rubber and palm oil companies HEVECAM and SOCAPALM were attributed plantations in 1975 and 1980 respectively. By the mid-1990s, the region thus encompassed a wide range of potentially conflicting land uses, including

conservation, logging, industrial plantations, and – last but not least – small scale subsistence agriculture and hunting.

4.3. CONSERVATION POLICIES

4.3.1. A Complex Institutional History

As mentioned above, the earliest official attempt to introduce conservation policies in the Campo Ma'an region goes back to 1932 with the creation of the Reserve, although the concept of conservation was a relative one since this classification did not exclude selective logging activities. In the late 1970s, French scientists revealed the importance of beaches in the Ebodjé area in terms of reproduction of sea turtles and launched an ecotourism project which has lasted to this day.

However, it was only in the 1990s that conservation policies took a more holistic approach to the region. A Reserve manager or *Conservateur* had been in place to manage the Reserve since 1985 but conservation activities began gaining pace with the creation of the Tropenbos Cameroon Programme (TCP) in 1991, run by a Dutch NGO, Tropenbos International, which specializes in research in tropical forests. TCP benefited from funding from a wide range of organizations, including ITTO and the EU, to carry out a wide range of research projects in the Campo-Ma'an region between 1991 and 2002, which strongly contributed to the area ranking as one of the most studied in the country.

A few years later, in 1996, The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) along with the Global Environmental Fund (GEF) and the Government of Cameroon set up the Campo Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project (CBCMP) which first proposed the re-zoning of the entire region to protect the conservation interests of the core forest area by suggesting the creation of a new conservation unit. In the project proposal which built on TCP's initial research findings in terms of the forest's ecology, Ebregts (1994:54) suggested a protected area with two core zones, Dipikar Island and a vast area south of Akom II, linked together by a corridor between Mvini and Nyabizan.

Plans to expand the proposed protected area picked up again when two initially independent projects came together. On the one hand, both TCP and CBCMP, spearheaded by Dutch conservationists and diplomats, had been galvanizing support in the course of the decade to promote the conservation of the region's natural resources. In the meantime, a consortium was being set up between oil companies Exxon and Shell to exploit oil resources in Doba (southern Chad) and build a pipeline to the Cameroonian coast to evacuate the oil produced, with the help of a massive World Bank loan (Dkamela 2002:2).

In the face of considerable opposition from environmental and human rights NGOs worried at the prospect of the ecological and social damage this would incur, the World Bank decided to set up a comprehensive mitigations package which included the establishment of a Trust Fund for the conservation of two areas in Cameroon. When the preferred route of turned out to end in Kribi (World Bank 1999a:7-14), the proposed Campo National Park was selected and a total sum of US\$ 1.4 million earmarked to finance its creation (World Bank 1999a:7-14). Moreover, the World Bank established a Trust Fund known as FEDEC to finance the management of the Campo Reserve area, the Mbam-Djerem area (the other selected protected area) and the Indigenous Peoples Development Component.⁷³

After CBCMP and the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline projects had met, events suddenly gained pace. On 6th January 2000, Decree 2000/004/PM created Campo-Ma'an National Park; five months earlier, on 6th August 1999, Decree 054/CAB/PM had created the Campo Ma'an Technical Operation Unit (UTO) with the main aims of managing the National Park and promoting sustainable management of the region's natural resources in coordination with all stakeholders. Although CBCMP had already begun field activities in 1997, it was officially launched in 2000 with the distribution of roles as followed:

1. The head of the National Park's conservation unit, the *Conservateur*, was given the project's conservation component;
2. Tropenbos International was to lead the Studies and Forest Management component; and
3. The Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) was to be in charge of "eco-development", *i.e.*, development projects that would be ecologically sustainable.

Partly because of the hurry in which the creation of the National Park took place, local populations were not sufficiently consulted and involved in the decision-making process. Most villagers interviewed recall being informed in 2001 or 2002 during public meetings organized by development NGOs. Some villages were even consulted and asked whether they would support the creation of the National Park, but according to data obtained through interviews, these consultations took place in 2001, *i.e.*, after the creation of the Park. To this day, the vast majority of villagers and local public authorities continue to see the National Park as an imposition and openly voice their opposition:

Nobody knew what had really happened although we heard rumours that the State had taken all of the forests of the South. When we were told this, many shouted, 'you are trying to kill us!' (...). The National Park was created as a compensation for the construction of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline, but is anyone here to compensate for *our* loss of resources due to the fact

⁷³ Several Bagyeli villages had been identified on the Lolodorf-Kribi stretch of the pipeline route which might be affected by the project; given the World Bank's clauses on protecting indigenous populations, compensation measures towards Bagyeli populations was identified as a key priority along with the management of both conservation units.

that we can no longer hunt, fish or cultivate in the forest? Who is this compensation for? For Cameroonians or for the West?⁷⁴

A villager of Akom II (interviewed 11 April 2008),
putting forward an argument echoed throughout the region

This in turn sparked a new wave of criticism from a number of NGOs, not least by the Centre for Environment and Development (CED) based in Yaoundé which managed to corner the World Bank by proving that the National Park was actually restricting the traditional means of livelihoods of Bagyeli populations along the northern edge in the vicinity of Akom II. This prompted Park managers to reconsider rights of local populations and Bagyeli individuals were eventually granted the right to hunt inside the park using “traditional” means (*i.e.*, without the use of firearms). However, CED has continued to criticize the management of the Pipeline compensation projects and as late as 2007 released a report in collaboration with other national NGOs providing further evidence of the lack of participation of local populations, in particular Bagyeli groups.

For five years, SNV focused on developing alternative sources of livelihoods among local populations such as promoting community forests and animal rearing as well as building local capacities. This included the creation of a large number of village-based NGOs, especially in the run-up to SNV’s change of strategy in 2002, after which it decided to promote projects only through local NGOs rather than directly. From 2002, SNV and Tropenbos began elaborating a management plan, this time basing their work on close consultations with all stakeholders, including local populations. In 2003, WWF took over as facilitator of the Campo Ma’an UTO and thus inherited from a complex situation. The NGO immediately launched the 4-year Central Africa Forests and Poverty Alleviation Programme in collaboration with IUCN and Friends of the Earth International on Campo Ma’an and other priority areas, namely Yabassi and Mount Kupe in Cameroon and the Gamba Complex in Gabon. WWF also successfully completed the elaboration of the management plan shortly before CAFAP came to an end in 2007, a year when WWF’s Campo-Ma’an team was renewed twice.

The current team thus dates from 2007 when WWF’s programme was officially renamed Kudu-Zombo Programme (referring to the turtle and mandrill in local languages, two flagship species in the area), as a sign of demarcation of WWF’s future work which was to place greater emphasis on social issues which had so far led to mitigated results. Likewise, once CAFAP had been wound down, the Linking Futures Programme (LFP) and Community-Based Forests Enterprises project (CBFE) were launched with a strong focus on social themes.

Nowadays, WWF works in tandem with the local branches of the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF). MINFOF’S Unit for Wildlife and Protected Areas (*Direction de la Faune et des Aires Protégées*) is represented by a local Conservation Director or *Conservateur* who heads a team of 38 “ecoguards” for the entire National Park. The ecoguards are distributed in each

⁷⁴ “Personne ne savait vraiment ce qu’il s’était passé mais on entendait des rumeurs selon lesquelles l’Etat avait pris toutes les forêts du Sud. Quand on nous a dit ça, on a crié : ‘mais vous essayez de nous tuer !’ (...). Le parc national a été créé comme une compensation pour la construction du pipeline Chad-Cameroun, mais qui nous compensera nous pour la perte de nos ressources car nous n’avons plus le droit de chasser, pêcher ou même cultiver dans la forêt ? Cette compensation, elle est pour qui ? Pour les Camerounais ou l’Occident?”

administrative sub-division (Campo, Nye'ete, Akom II and Ma'an) and carry out patrolling and monitoring activities of the park's borders and fauna. MINFOF is also directly represented in each sub-division by a local Forest Service or *Poste Forestier* whose staff are responsible for monitoring all forestry activities – whether in terms of conservation or timber production activities. In Campo and Ma'an in particular, *Poste Forestier* staff thus focus primarily on checking the legality of timber production for the local logging companies; however, their responsibilities overlap somewhat with those of the ecoguards, which enables the two to team up in case of a large-scale operation or for collecting information.

Staff interviewed at various *Postes forestiers* complain of the limited funding which, they claim, leaves them either without fuel or without an operational vehicle and thus unable to carry out their duties in rural areas where large distances need to be covered regularly. WWF's Kudu Zombo programme thus plays an essential complementary role as a facilitator: local WWF staff regularly assist Minfof teams in carrying out monitoring and patrolling operations, both with vehicles and equipment on the one hand, and by providing qualified technicians and students on the other to carry out inventories of the Park's fauna as well as ecological follow-ups in certain areas where the fauna is threatened by poaching. To some extent, however, the zeal with which WWF staff carry out these tasks has led to a reversal of roles in the eyes of some, according to whom WWF "manages" the park with the help of local MINFOF staff.

4.3.2. Poaching: The Park's Greatest Threat

By far the greatest threat to the Campo Ma'an National Park is poaching and the risk of extinction of local megafauna.⁷⁵ With the partial exception of the Yassa and the Batanga ethnic groups, hunting and daily reliance on wild game is a fundamental element of local culture and diets alike. Given the current rarity of the park's main flagship species (elephants, panthers, gorillas, chimpanzees and giant pangolins), the main hunted species are the mid-sized ones such as ungulates, monkeys, porcupines and pangolins (see Figure X). Hunting activities would probably have remained on "sustainable" levels (*i.e.*, harvest rates would probably have not exceeded natural rates of regeneration of the main hunted species) had it not been for several factors that have contributed to poaching being a major threat on the Park:

1. The growth in size of human populations surrounding the Park as a result of even minimal access to health care has increased the demand for subsistence hunting over the past century, hence several "pressure" spots where poaching activities are greater, such as the region of the park closest to Akom II and along the Ma'an-Nyabizian road;

⁷⁵ Despite being a major problem in other areas, logging inside the National Park is all but unheard of. Small-scale logging which usually takes place in other parts of the country is extremely labour-intensive as the sawn timber has to be carried out of the forest on foot. The fact that there are no roads within less than 5 km of the Park in most places, along with the bad quality of these unpaved roads, have probably made this type of activity economically unviable and unable to compete with local industrial logging activities. The informal logging sector is described in greater detail in the section on timber production.

2. The increase in commercial hunting results not only from easier access to the Park over the decades (due to road maintenance), but also from greater access to technology (notably rifles) and the development of an urban market for bushmeat in local towns, small and large (Nye’ete, Akom II, Campo, Ma’an but also Kribi and Ebolowa) and even the country’s main cities (Douala and Yaoundé);
3. The establishment of labour-intensive plantations on the northwestern edge of the Park prior to its creation has attracted not only a large number of workers but also their immediate and sometimes extended families. Many workers who lose or abandon their jobs in the plantations have converted to poaching as a highly lucrative activity, leading to the region of Nye’ete being the single most threatened part of the Park; local MINFOF staff claim that on every patrol at least half a dozen poachers are found within the Park’s boundaries;
4. Last but not least, the fact that the border between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea runs along the southern edge of the Park has made it prone to poaching and even illegal logging from Equatorial Guineans who enter the Park all the more freely as (i) the border is unmanned, except for patrols by ecoguards, and (ii) they are unlikely to face the consequences of harvesting timber and bushmeat once they are back on Guinean soil.

In fact, trade networks have long been established whereby individuals (usually enterprising women from Kribi or Ebolowa) known as “Buy’am Sell’am” spend several days a week scouring villages buying bushmeat off local populations – often also providing them with rifles – to sell the meat on markets in the region’s or country’s main cities.

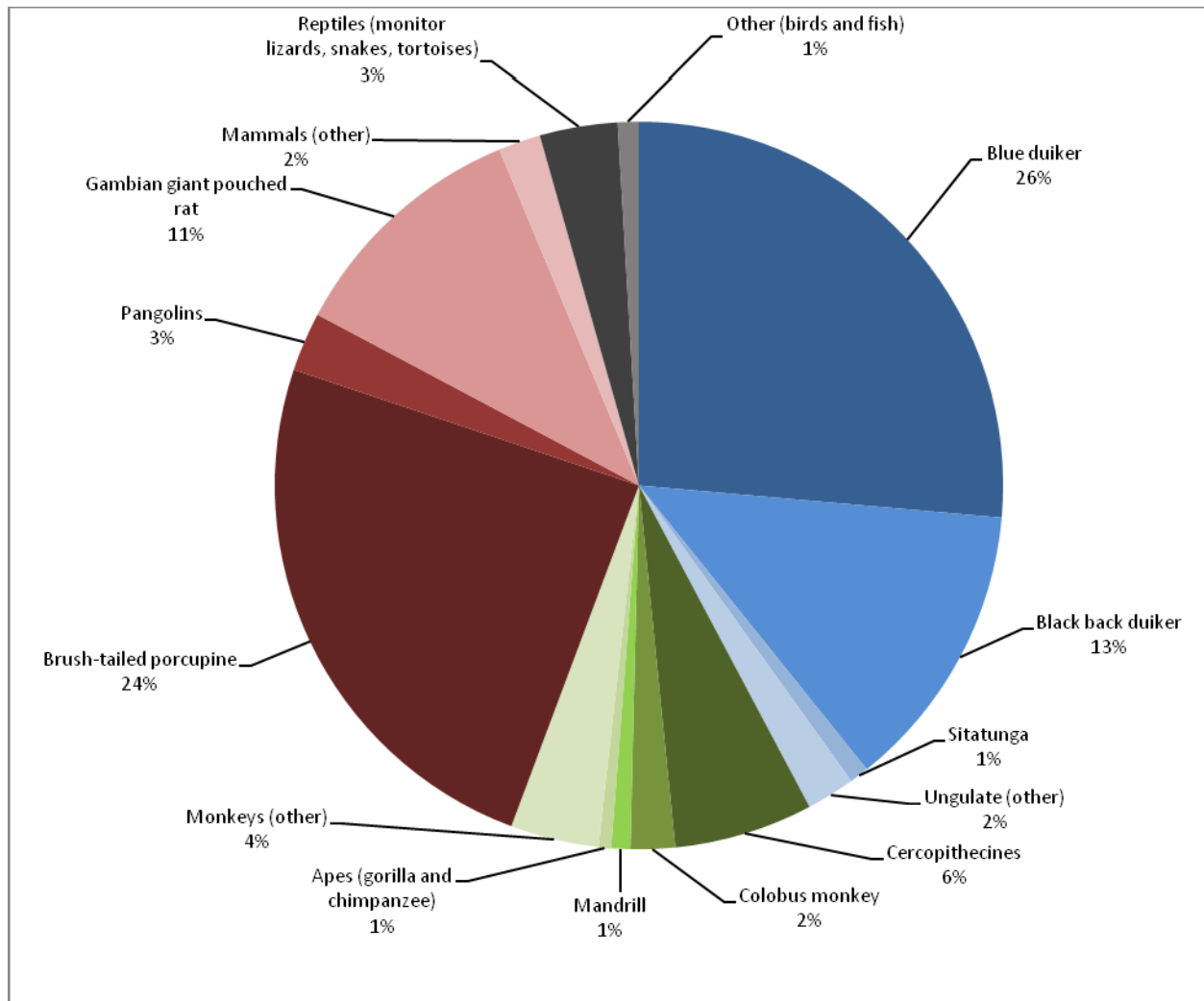


Figure X. — Wild game by species intercepted by Campo Ma'an National Park Conservation Service staff (*Service de Conservation*) between January 2007 and February 2008 (based on data recorded by the Campo Ma'an Conservation Service).

4.3.3. Carrot and Stick

On the ground, WWF and MINFOF have adopted a two-pronged approach to tackle issues that affect the integrity of the National Park, notably that of poaching. First, WWF provides technical, financial and logistics support to MINFOF teams for the implementation of a number of measures to fight poaching directly:

1. Encouraging research in hunting by villagers (Tsafack & Ngah Obama 2001, Ngandjui *et al.* 2002, Foguekem 2005, 2006) has provided considerable amounts of data on the reasons why villagers hunt and the locations where such activities are carried out most frequently;

2. Building capacity among MINFOF's local Forestry and Conservation Services has included technical support as well as training in order to increase the efficiency of the Services' joint patrolling activities. These include (i) mobile patrols both inside and out of the forest, notably in markets and on main road axes; (ii) fixed road patrols located in strategic spots of bushmeat transport; and (iii) raids (*opérations coup de poing*) carried out jointly with the police (*gendarmerie*) on individuals suspected of bushmeat trade. Sanctions for poachers caught in the forest have also been applied recently with several prison sentences already pronounced;
3. Pro-active measures have also been implemented, notably information and sensitization campaigns in villages where poaching is believed to be frequent. Many of the staff involved in such campaigns point out that their presence and message are generally met rather coolly by local populations who continue to resent what they claim to perceive as the sudden removal of their ancestral rights over the forest.
4. Likewise, rallying support among the Technical Operation Unit's main stakeholders has sometimes been challenging. WWF staff note that Wijma, a Dutch-owned company operating in the landscape southeastern region and which has certified two of the FMUs it is working in has been very cooperative in implementing anti-poaching measures (which were essential in the certification process in any case); however, among other companies such as SCIEB and HÉVÉCAM, cooperation has been much slower, as developing partnership with such economically powerful private sector actors proves to be a serious challenge. However, both WIJMA and SCIEB currently pay the salaries of two ecoguards each (a measure originally developed by HFC before it pulled out).
5. One of the main bones of contention has remained the actual demarcation of the National Park. Many villagers complain that they cannot know when they are inside the park and when they are not; yet to this day demarcation has yet to be carried out.

Secondly, WWF – which inherited from Tropenbos' studies and forest management as well as SNV's "eco-development" components, has retained a wide scope of activities that focus on alternative sources of incomes for villagers as a complementary means of tackling the bushmeat issue. The rationale for this is based on the recognition that the National Park cut many villagers off from the natural resources they were relying on for their livelihoods. As compensation, therefore, but also as a way of promoting environmentally sustainable forms of rural development, WWF – along with a range of local NGOs – has encouraged several income-generating activities, notably the establishment of (i) community forests, (ii) agricultural extension and support projects, and (iii) an ecotourism initiative. These activities are discussed in the relevant sections below.

In the same way that the zoning plan identified a core conservation zone (the National Park) and a buffer (the rest of the landscape), one can therefore oppose the stick (fighting poaching inside the park) and the carrot (encouraging forms of environmentally sustainable rural development) which WWF – along with MINFOF's local services – are implementing.

4.4. ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE LANDSCAPE

As a witness to the paradigm shift in conservation according to which the concept can be applied beyond the borders of a protected area to include harmonization with surrounding economic activities and actors, the Campo-Ma'an landscape is also home to a range of other activities. These all need to be taken into account as the management of the National Park and nearby activities are intertwined in more ways than one.

4.4.1. Timber Production

4.4.1.1. Timber Companies

The history of timber production activities on an industrial scale goes back some sixty years, when a first concession was allocated in the region in 1948. Twenty years later, *La Forestière de Campo* or HFC began operating in a concession overlapping with the *Réserve de Campo* and immediately established a sawmill at Ipono. This concession had two major advantages: first, it had never been logged, and secondly, it was located right by the sea, providing easy transport of timber products by boat from Ipono to Kribi and onto exports markets, notably in Europe. However, in 1972, HFC also built the first road from Campo to Kribi, bringing to an end the isolation of Cameroon's southern coastal areas.

The older inhabitants of the Campo area remember HFC with obvious nostalgia. The conditions in which logging activities took place in the area were initially very difficult – with no machinery and minimal security measures, the rates of injury and even death were considerably higher than they are today; yet by the 1970s logging had become mechanized and the company had brought in chainsaws and heavy machinery to lighten working loads. Despite being a dead end in geographical terms, Ipono quickly became a major trading centre whose pulse was determined by the workers' bi-monthly pay days:

In those days Ipono was full of life; we all went there to drink and trade. Today, Ipono is a cursed⁷⁶ town; it's a ghost. Every two weeks women from Campo would go to trade there, and even the prostitutes from Kribi knew they could make money there. Everybody came over and we drank and had fun. Ipono was a source of life for the entire region.⁷⁷

An elderly villager of Campo, interviewed on 8th April 2008

⁷⁶ This is actually a play on words, as "Ipono" in Yassa language means "cursed". The locality was allegedly given this name after a bout of sleeping sickness killed much of the village's population in the early twentieth century.

⁷⁷ "A cette époque Ipono était plein de vie, on y descendait tous pour boire et pour commercer. Aujourd'hui Ipono c'est la ville maudite, c'est un fantôme. Tous les quinze jours les femmes de Campo allaient vendre leurs produits et même les petites de Kribi savaient qu'elles pouvaient trouver de l'argent, tout le monde venait, on buvait, on s'amusait, Ipono était une source de vie pour toute la région."

Other villagers, both in Campo and in Nyabizan and Ma'an where they operated in the late 1990s and early 2000s also distinctly recall the ways in which company officials interacted much more with local populations than today's SCIEB and Wijma do:

[The company manager] would always say hello to us and give us lifts in his car. Whenever somebody needed money for a funeral or a wedding, they only needed to write a letter to [him] and he would give them money. [He] was a friend of ours and would always help us out.⁷⁸

A village chief on the road between Ma'an and Nyabizan, interviewed 30 April 2008

Over the years, as HFC worked its way through the most valuable timber species, its concession grew so as to allow it to access more timber. In the 1990s, however, it was stopped on its tracks eastwards by plans to create a protected area between Mvini and Nyabizan; this did not deter the company, however, from acquiring a newly gazetted FMU near Ma'an (09-024) in 2000. At a time when all eyes were set on the region, HFC took advantage of delays in the creation of the National Park to build a road through the reserved area to link Nyabizan, where the company had a base to operate in FMU 09-024, with its sawmill and loading dock in Ipono, thus putting the World Bank and other actors in favour of the creation of the Park before the *fait accompli*.

However well this new road was received by local populations who welcomed the end of their geographical isolation, it contributed to spelling the end of HFC on the long run as it attracted negative coverage by international environmental NGOs which supported the creation of the National Park. In 2001, HFC began discussions with Tropenbos and WWF in a bid to acquire FSC certification for its operations (Forests Monitor 2001:54), but these hopes were soon curtailed. Between 1999 and 2004, HFC's activities were increasingly scrutinized by NGOs, which greatly affected Bolloré's (of which HFC was a subsidiary) public image in France. When the Independent Observer discovered that HFC was logging inside the Campo Ma'an National Park, there was such an outcry that HFC simply filed for bankruptcy, following Vincent Bolloré's alleged comment, "Cameroon represents 1% of our turnover and 90% of our troubles".⁷⁹ To local actors, however, the reasons for HFC's bankruptcy continue to remain obscure (Boum 2007:10).

It turned out that there was actually an overlap between FMU 09-025 and the Park and that HFC had been operating within the limits of its FMU, but the harm had been done and FMUs 09-025 and 09-024 were auctioned off to SCIEB and WIJMA respectively. As for the road, it was of little use to either company as WIJMA used the Ma'an – Akom II – Kribi route it had been using since it had acquired FMU 09-021 near Ma'an. After a bridge collapsed inside the National Park, it was closed, much to the dismay of local populations.

SCIEB, a Cameroonian company created in 1986, inherited HFC's entire estate west of the National Park, including FMU 09-025, the sawmill and loading dock and all the company's staff

⁷⁸ "[Le gérant] nous disait toujours bonjour et nous emmenait même dans sa voiture. Quand on avait besoin d'argent pour une dot ou un enterrement, on [lui] écrivait une lettre et il nous donnait une enveloppe. c'était notre ami qui nous aidait tout le temps."

⁷⁹ "Le Cameroun, c'est 1% de notre chiffre d'affaires et 90% de nos emmerdements".

housing in Ipono and along the coast, and even the company's markets in Europe and finally its management plan for FMU 09-025. In terms of sustainable forest management, however, SCIEB lags far behind WIJMA, one reason being its insufficient investment capacity.

As Boum (2007) points out, despite the fact that SCIEB fulfils legal requirements for its management plan, it continues to rely on inventories carried out by ONADEF in 1999 which are therefore out of date. Moreover, it falls short even of legal requirements in terms of social aspects as none of its contributions to public infrastructure (such as road and path maintenance and building schools and health centres) which were stated in the management plan has been completed (Boum 2007:36). Also, when SCIEB took over the management of its FMU from HFC, a committee had been set up to oversee SCIEB's "friendly commitments" (*engagements amicaux*) towards local populations; however, due to lack of funding, this committee only ever met twice and was therefore never able to check on the fulfilment of SCIEB's contributions to the FMU's surrounding villages (Boum 2007:31). Finally, the company has yet to create a forest management unit (*cellule d'aménagement*) which would focus on improving the quality of the FMU's management plan, both on paper and on the ground.

In a bid to help SCIEB embark on the road to certification, WWF staff are multiplying *rapprochements* with the company but with little success to date. One of the reasons put forward for this is the economic difficulties SCIEB is believed to be currently undergoing, which would prevent the company from being able to invest sufficient funds in the certification process – especially as it currently falls *very* short of many of FSC's requirements. Another reason that might account for this slow responsiveness is that SCIEB is always compared with its neighbour WIJMA – the first logging company in Central Africa to have been certified according to FSC standards. As observers in the logging industry point out, WIJMA and SCIEB are like "day and night".

WIJMA Douala SARL, the Cameroonian subsidiary of Houthandel Gebroeders Wijma & Zonen BV (GWZ), was established in the country in 1967 and began managing FMU 09-021 (north of Ma'an) in 2001 after its local partner COFA was allocated the FMU through an auction by MINFOF. WIJMA has traditionally focused on one species in particular, ironwood (*azobe*), which is found in abundance along Cameroon's coastal regions. It also happens to resist better than most other materials to sea water, thus making it a favourite building material for polders and locks in the Netherlands, hence the demand for this species of timber from the Dutch public authorities.

In the early 2000s, however, WIJMA quickly became one of the most targeted logging companies in Cameroon for campaigns by environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace (Greenpeace 2002a, 2002b, 2003). The company's association with several local operators of ill repute such as Hazim, coupled with its weak communications department, meant that NGOs would often focus on WIJMA to denounce illegal activities in Cameroon's forests:

Evidence compiled by Greenpeace reveals that both Wijma's own logging companies (GWZ, CFK and STIK) and many of its suppliers – including Boitex, Panagiotis Marelis, MMG, CUF, SEPFCO, DNK and Hazim – have recently been involved in repeated illegal forestry activities in Cameroon. Offences range from felling outside allocated cutblocks, and other forms of

unauthorised logging, to failing to pay stumpage fees. Although many of the illegal and environmentally destructive logging activities of Wijma's suppliers are widely known and well documented in Cameroon, the company continues to buy from the operators concerned. Meanwhile, Wijma customers contacted by Greenpeace seem convinced that they are being supplied with timber from responsible forest management operations.

Greenpeace 2002a:4

Just like many other European companies in Cameroon at the time, Wijma and environmental NGOs adopted a confrontational stance towards each other; when HFC pulled out of FMU 09-024 allegedly following an environmental scandal in 2004, WIJMA moved in and shifted its *base-vie* (field office) from Meyos-Centre to Ma'an. The following year, WIJMA's partners Gau and Patrice Bois were allocated FMU 09-022 (to the east of Ma'an) and subcontracted its management to WIJMA. By then, however, sales in the Netherlands had been strongly affected by NGO campaigning and the subsequent shift in Dutch public procurement policy – in a country traditionally conscious of environmental matters – led the Government to pressure its timber sources to seek FSC certification. This helps explain why WIJMA became the first timber company in Central Africa to embark on an FSC certification process as early as 2005.

By 2006, WIJMA obtained FSC certification for FMU 09-021. Many NGOs, feeling cheated in the process as they had not been consulted (which is a normal step of the certification process), pursued their campaigns against the company and successfully identified several issues (notably conflicts with local populations over the limits of the concession) which attracted enough public attention for the Director of FSC to visit the site in person. Following this visit, a number of major corrective action requests were issued and not only was WIJMA's certification suspended for FMU 09-021 and its sawmill in Bidou near Kribi, but the accredited company which had delivered the certification (Bureau Veritas or BVQI) was also suspended in February 2007.

It was a year before WIJMA recovered FSC certification for FMU 09-021 and acquired it for FMU 09-024 (on 17 April 2008 for the latter). In the meantime, much of the WIJMA Douala team was renewed and staff at the management unit (*cellule d'aménagement*) increased sharply. In fact, the turn-around had been so swift that FMU 09-021 was certified without any major corrective action requests – a first in the region. This is not to say that all problems have been solved, in particular in relation to social aspects; considerable animosity remains among many villagers, yet open conflicts have now been resolved and many recognize the efforts that WIJMA has put into solving such issues.

Today, collaboration between WIJMA and WWF – a staunch supporter of the FSC certification process – has greatly improved especially in comparison with SCIEB. Fields of collaboration have recently included contributions from WWF to identify vulnerable timber species according to their rate of reconstitution, faunal studies inside Wijma's FMUs located inside the UTO and an action plan on non-timber forest products. In October 2007, WIJMA also joined the Central Africa Forest and Trade Network (CAFTN), a WWF-led initiative that acts as a forum of discussion on sustainable forest management issues for timber companies operating in Central Africa.

As mentioned above, villagers claim that both SCIEB and Wijma interact with them on a less frequent basis than HFC once did. This might be the result of a national shift towards a new type of relationship between timber companies and local populations, whereby companies contribute to local welfare and development by paying taxes (in this case *Redevances Forestières Annuelles* or RFA) rather than taking part directly in development projects. To many villagers, however, it appears that companies have simply pulled out of their responsibilities towards local populations as they no longer see the companies investing in local infrastructure or providing local elites with financial support. This view is exacerbated by the fact that funds from the RFA (local revenue from logging activities) often fail to be allocated in local development projects, giving the impression that companies pay no taxes at all.

4.4.1.2. Community Forestry

Large-scale logging companies are not the only actors to be involved in the timber sector. As mentioned above, several initiatives have been undertaken to promote community forestry in a bid to provide local populations with alternative sources of income. In fact, since SNV initiated the process in a number of different areas, a total of 32 community forest projects are underway in the Campo Ma'an landscape, although only three have made any significant advance:

1. *Akak*. The village of Akak, located in the municipality of Campo and sandwiched between the two halves of FMU 09-025, initiated the process of setting up a community forest in 1999 with the help of SNV. The Community Forest was reserved in 2000 and the Simplified Management Plan (*Plan simple de gestion*) was completed by 2005 after having being sent back twice by MINFOF because it did not conform with all of the Ministry's regulations. By February 2006, the last step of this long process – the signature of the management agreement (*convention de gestion*) – took place and by August that year logging activities began thanks to WWF team who had facilitated partnership between the Akak Community and a buyer (Belgian-owned company ParquetCam). Every year, however, a logging permit needs to be issued by MINFOF; in 2007, it was released in September, which only allowed the village to produce 8 m³ of *padouk*.
2. *Biboulemam*. Situated a few kilometers east of Akom II on the road to Ebolowa, the village of Biboulemam also benefited from considerable assistance by SNV followed by WWF to set up its community forest. This forest had the novelty of associating the nearby Bagyeli settlement of Awomo in the process, although their effective participation has remained minimal. The management agreement was finally signed in 2007 and logging activities were supposed to begin in 2008, but the villager in charge of management (*responsable gestionnaire*) allegedly signed an agreement with a logging company without the agreement of the other villagers involved in the management of the community forest, sparking off conflict within the village.
3. *Tya'Assono*. The village of Tya'Assono is located some 20 kilometers east of Ma'an. Since the early 2000s, the village has been assisted by SNV, local NGO SAGED (based in Ma'an) and WWF to set up a community forest. In this case, the main hurdle was the 200-hectare overlap with Wijma's FMU 09-021. This was only one of the conflicts which Wijma faced

over the demarcation of this FMU and despite Wijma's claims, the community forest's limits were accepted by MINFOF a few months before those of FMU 09-021. The conflict was only resolved when Tya'Assono community forest leaders accepted FCFA 2 million in compensation for the loss of the overlapping zone to the FMU – a sum which eventually went towards the establishment of the Simple Management Plan. To date, Tya'Assono is still currently looking for markets on which it could sell its timber before it can start logging.

These three case-studies only provide some of the examples of obstacles faced by villages wishing to set up community forests. In the words of a member of one of these villages,

In the late 1990s SNV carried out small seminars on community forestry, explaining that community forests were forests that villagers could manage in order to develop their village and community. There was a lot of enthusiasm and we thought it would be easy, but what with the reservation inventories, management plan, socio-economic inventories and writing up, it has cost us FCFA 10 million and so far brought in FCFA 300,000.

A villager involved in a community forest, interviewed 16.04.08

Hurdles have been numerous and include (i) the need to find partners both willing to invest in setting up the community forest and to buy the final product; (ii) the need for training among villagers wishing to manage and log the forest (thus both in management and logging skills); (iii) physical access to the forest and practical issues related to logging in a community forest given that the use of machines is prohibited by law in community forests; (iv) relations within village members, as illustrated in the case of Bibou Lemam. In another nearby community forest, villagers – with the help of a local NGO – manage to expel a local member of the elite (a former director of several national companies who had happened to have grown up in this particular village) following attempts to link community forest management with his own private businesses.

However, by far the biggest problem is the “red tape” that community forests have to go through before they become fully operational. Time and time again, villagers and NGO staff working on community forestry in Campo Ma'an UTO have complained of the length of time which MINFOF takes to process each community forest application. Industrial companies are also known to undergo such problems, but unlike community forests, companies have the staff and resources to remain in contact with MINFOF staff until the process is complete. According to local NGO CEPFILD, delays are sometimes so lengthy that some of the community forests supported by this NGO waited five years (2003 to 2008) to get a response from MINFOF validating their dossier.

All these issues explain why, out of 32 community forest projects in Campo Ma'an UTO, only three have made it to the final stages; yet even out of the three, none of them is economically viable to this day.

4.4.1.3. Informal Timber Production

Neither FMUs nor community forests are capable of providing produce to local markets that nevertheless are in need of timber for furniture and housing, since the former are primarily export-oriented and the latter have yet to produce any significant quantities of wood. One exception is the timber waste from SCIEB's sawmill which is usually sold off at low prices on local markets, but as one local carpenter pointed out, the sawmill sometimes remains out of operation for several months and is therefore unable to cater fully to local demand.

Partly as a result of this, some individuals have resorted to informal logging in the “agroforestry” zone, *i.e.*, the area reserved for local populations and subsistence agriculture. In theory, permits are required from MINFOF's local services to fell any tree, but in practice this rule is rarely enforced and villagers owning a chainsaw often provide local markets with much-needed timber. Quantities of informally logged timber are difficult to estimate although the fact that a trading network exists between local chainsaw owners and Campo's three carpenters, for example, suggests that this could easily be studied. Some also claim that logging companies operating in the landscape FMUs sometimes purchase informally logged timber, although this claim has never been verified.

4.4.2. Agriculture and Agroforestry

The third main type of land use in Campo Ma'an UTO is agriculture and agroforestry, which divides into two main categories – industrial plantations and agriculture/agroforestry by villagers.

4.4.2.1. Industrial Plantations

Campo Ma'an is home to two neighbouring industrial plantations, namely SOCAPALM (*Société des Palmeraies du Cameroun*), a palm oil company which manages a 16,000 hectare concession south of Kribi, and HEVECAM, a rubber company which occupies a 41,000 hectare concession southeast of Kribi, in the municipality of Nye'ete (Akwah Neba *et al.* 2007:72). Due to the staff that they employ, this northwestern region is the most heavily populated part of Campo Ma'an landscape with an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 people living inside and around the concessions. Although many of them are company employees, the majority are not, because former staff often stay in the area and current staff regularly invite their extended family to stay over: for example, although HEVECAM only employs some 6,500 staff, 20,000 people live inside the concession.

Because of its greater size and proximity to the National Park, the case of HEVECAM is of more relevance and is described in greater length in this paper. The company obtained this concession in 1975 (when it was still a national company) for a 99-year period and the settlements present in the area were relocated on the outskirts, including Bagyeli populations. Following a decade of economic crisis, it was finally privatized in 1997 and sold to an Indonesian company based in

Singapore, GMG International, which has gone onto being one of Africa's greatest rubber producers (Ngoufo *et al.* 2007:74). Only 15,000 hectares were in cultivation in 2007, much of the rest still being covered with its original natural vegetation. On top of the question of loss of natural forest cover entailed by future expansion of rubber plantations, the onsite treatment of the rubber has already led to partial soil and river pollution. However, the biggest threat that HEVECAM poses to the natural environment is an indirect one – poaching by employees (present and past) and family members inside the nearby National Park.

Conscious of the environmental dimension of the company's operations, HEVECAM managers created a Department of Environmental Monitoring (DEM) in 2003 to focus both on environmental and security issues. In practice, DEM staff are in charge of checking on the fulfillment of regulations by the rest of the staff, a position that some have described as policing, especially as “the environmental question has yet to be appropriated by HEVECAM staff”⁸⁰, as one interviewee expressed it.

However, although DEM members sensitise staff on matters relating to forest management inside the concession, they do not work on issues relating to the National Park. WWF recently approached HEVECAM to set up joint sensitization programmes on the threats posed by poaching inside the Park and the consequences that poachers could face if caught, but a formal agreement and joint action plan are yet to be reached and implemented.

4.4.2.2. Small-scale agriculture

The bulk of the villagers surrounding the Park rely heavily on small-scale individual agriculture, both as a means of subsistence and as a limited source of cash income. According to research carried out by the agriculture service in Ma'an, the most commonly cultivated crops locally are (in descending order of volume produced) cassava, peanuts, plantain banana, cucumbers, macabo and maize. Reared animals include chickens, pigs, goats and sheep, although in many cases the latter two are often used as a currency rather than for consumption *per se*. Small-scale commercial agroforestry is also present in all the villages and is dominated by cocoa trees and oil palms, although avocado, orange, mango and kola trees are also very common. In some cases, all of the produce is for personal consumption; in many cases, however, surplus is sold on local markets, and a few crops, notably cocoa, is exclusively grown for commercial purposes.

This dependence on cultivated land was acknowledged in the zoning plan for Campo Ma'an UTO: by creating an agroforestry strip on both sides of the UTO's main roads, decision-makers were ensuring that villagers might have enough space for cultivation purposes. However, villagers themselves claim to see the picture from a different perspective. Even in the areas where the “agroforestry strip” (*bande agroforestière*) is widest (*i.e.*, up to 10 kilometers on either side of the road, although it is more generally around 5 or 6) local populations complain that they have no space to cultivate and that fresh produce is hard to come by. In some areas, notably in the region around Ma'an, the strip often narrows down to a mere two or three kilometers on

⁸⁰ “La question environnementale n'a pas encore été appropriée par le personnel d'Hévecam”.

either side of the road; and in some cases villages are no further than 500 meters from an FMU such as around FMU 09-024 to the south of Ma'an.

In implementing its “ecodevelopment” component of the Campo Ma'an Project, Dutch NGO SNV was fully aware of the central role that small-scale agriculture played in local livelihoods and thus trained many locally-based NGOs to carry out projects in this field. Since then, many of these NGOs have kept up a small number of activities to promote agriculture among local populations, including organizing meetings on best agricultural practices, providing villagers with equipment such as machetes and seeds, and following up on crops to train people on planting and harvesting.

Such projects have been met with mitigated success. According to many, agriculture has been largely ignored by NGOs, both as a type of land use and a type of livelihood income, at the expense of conservation (*i.e.*, the National Park) and community forestry notably. Funds have thus not been available on the scale that would be needed for such projects to succeed. However, other observers have questioned the approach taken to tackling the issue by asking if the “community” paradigm which is prominent in donor-funded projects is the most appropriate for the cultures of the ethnic groups of southern Cameroon. Many have evoked cultural differences between the most politically structured societies of western Cameroon (*e.g.*, the Bamiléké) as opposed to the more fluid, acephalous societies of the Southern Province where the political institutions are not as fixed and clear-cut as in other parts of the country. By making such a distinction, some observers suggest that societies native to Campo Ma'an landscape are better adapted to projects that favour individual rather than community-based entrepreneurship.

Other analysts point out that several decades ago “communes” (*i.e.*, fields cultivated commonly with produce sold individually or commonly) were a common phenomenon, but the gradual introduction of monetary types of exchange in the second half of the twentieth century have favoured an individual approach to agriculture. According to them, a consequence of this trend has been the social differentiation of a local elite that concentrates resources of different kinds, whether they be access to outside organizations (*e.g.*, NGOs or companies) or of a financial nature.

In giving priority to projects that favour a community-type structure where a group of households of a given geographical area collaborate for the greater good, NGOs might have been responding more to donor demands than actual efficiency on the ground. This is not to say that community-based projects are inherently unable to succeed in this part of the country, which would be a crude culturalist (and racist?) assumption; yet it might be useful to be open to types of projects which do not necessarily fit inside the community paradigm.

4.4.3. The Indigenous Component

Given their relatively weak population size (*i.e.*, less than 10,000 in the entire UTO), the Bagyeli – one of the three ethnic groups in Cameroon traditionally known as “Pygmies” – have benefited from considerable attention in the management of Campo Ma'an UTO. Although they were once

nomadic, living in temporary settlements only a few months at a time before moving on, they are now almost all settled in a number of villages all around the park, except for the Ma'an-Nyabizan region. However, nowadays they are largely sedentarized in a number of settlements located near the road or Bantu villages, although extensive travelling between these settlements continues to take place.

In terms of livelihoods, Bagyeli settlements differ from those of the Bantu in that the former rely much more heavily on the forest as a means of subsistence; partly for this reason, they are known as experts of the forest and generally have extensive knowledge of their natural environment which allows them to largely live off it (through both hunting and collecting), although barter with nearby Bantu villages for agricultural and manufactured products is increasingly common. Secondly, the Bagyeli generally live in much greater material poverty than their Bantu neighbours and suffer from lack of access to public services such as health and education.

Attention paid to the fate of the Bagyeli has increased in recent years as NGOs have become increasingly focalized on this specific issue. The case of the village of Awomo is the perfect illustration of this. Shortly after the creation of the National Park, Cameroonian NGO CED (Centre for Environment and Development) carried out a study on the use by the Bagyeli surrounding Akom II of their natural environment. This study showed that although none of their settlements was actually located within the Park, they continued to hunt well within its boundaries; its creation had therefore impeded on their traditional livelihoods as they still depended on the forest for survival. This discovery prompted World Bank staff in Yaoundé to push for a revision of the Park's management plan to include the rights of "indigenous" communities to use natural resources within the Park for subsistence purposes. This idea is still being discussed, as it is feared that Bantu villagers might encourage the Bagyeli to commercialize bushmeat.

More generally, the settlement of Awomo has been subject to development and research projects of all kind, including a failed oil palm grove, a failed school project and even a visit by a French TV crew who spent two weeks making a documentary on "isolated peoples". Research fatigue is clearly visible among the inhabitants of Awomo – as observed by the author. Yet according to those interviewed, one project did succeed: that of ID cards. Because of their lack of access to public institutions, the Bagyeli are not actually registered as Cameroonian citizens; yet in order to travel, have access to public services and even just travel to nearby Kribi, an ID card is necessary. This is why a number of NGOs have embarked on setting up projects to help the Bagyeli get ID cards, a move which has been deemed successful by the recipients themselves of these projects, although in some cases projects from different NGOs overlap and some individuals end up getting up to five different ID cards from different projects.

Globally, in the landscape as elsewhere in Cameroon, the indigenous issue can be much more sensitive and contentious than it might appear at first, mainly because the Bagyeli are subject to two very different perspectives set by two groups of actors. On the one hand, the donor and NGO communities generally view the Bagyeli as a society which has been marginalized throughout history and discriminated against by their wealthier, more populous Bantu neighbours.

This perspective is certainly linked to the typical worldwide image of the indigenous community that has been strongly inspired by the Amazonian Indian model. As a consequence, the World Bank, for example, always has to include an indigenous component where necessary to all of the projects it carries out, not least the Chad Cameroon Pipeline project where Bagyeli communities, notably in the Lolodorf-Kribi area, benefited from specific attention. This special focus on Bagyeli groups is often justified by the fact that projects need to focus on the most impoverished and marginalized (and therefore most in need) fringes of local society; yet it often creates resentment on the part of neighbouring Bantu villagers who see such projects as discriminatory, hence the decision by some NGOs to enlarge their Bagyeli projects to the poorest Bantu households as well.

On the other hand, Bantu villagers themselves (and Cameroonians at large) hold a very different discourse on Bagyeli communities. Whilst external observers suggest that the Bagyeli are discriminated against by the Bantu, the latter claim that their relationship with the Bagyeli is actually based on mutual respect and that it is external actors (donors and NGOs notably) who are discriminating between the two ethnic categories. As Akwah Neba *et al.* (2007:76-77) explain, the fact that Bantu and Bagyeli physically live in separate villages is only due to the fact that the Bagyeli themselves are unwilling to mix. Moreover, the same authors claim that the image that external actors have of this discrimination of the Bagyeli by the Bantu mainly comes from the former's "duplicity" game where "the doubling of the [Bagyeli] identity (...) is characteristic of the Pygmy as he adopts the attitude which will best please the person he is talking to"⁸¹ (2007:76).

It is difficult to establish what is what in such a complex issue. The external perspective on the Bagyeli is undoubtedly influenced by both romantic images of the Noble Savage and the global image of the marginalised indigenous community – itself modelled on visions of Amazonian Indians. In many cases, Bagyeli representatives are well aware of these social constructions and could well play on them in their favour, as Akwah Neba *et al.* (2007) suggest. The relationship between "Pygmy" and Bantu societies also differs between regions in Cameroon; whereas some observers have reported a state of near-slavery in the southeastern tip of the country, in the case of the Campo Ma'an landscape marriages between Bagyeli and Bantu are common and both societies are intertwined in such complex ways that reducing the relationship to one of power is oversimplistic.

However, it would also be naive to assume that the relationship between Bagyeli and Bantu is one based exclusively on mutual respect; Bantu interviewees themselves, including those located in the Campo-Ma'an landscape, still frequently refer to the neighbouring Bagyeli as "thieves", "paupers" and even "animals who live in the forest" – expressions which reveal more than many are ready to admit. The truth thus lies "somewhere between the two" and in such a polarised debate it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish the true nature of the relationship between the two "communities".

⁸¹ "Le dédoublement d'identité (...) est trait caractéristique du pygmée qui sait adopter l'attitude qui plaira le plus à son interlocuteur (*sic*)."

4.4.4. Ecotourism

Although still in early stages, a couple of ecotourism projects have already been set up by local villagers in close collaboration with WWF whose staff perceive these activities as an alternative source of income (on a par with agriculture and community forestry). In Ebodje, a village north of Campo on the Atlantic coast, a turtle-spotting ecotourism project has been up and going for several years; more recently, several inhabitants of Campo Beach (the village located on the mouth of the River Ntem) set up an association (GIC) to manage an “ecolodge” on the beach to house tourists visiting Campo Ma’an National Park.

In the case of Campo Beach, WWF was instrumental in providing financial investment for the project, although many villagers also physically contributed. The ecolodge was inaugurated in December 2006 and has since enabled to (i) equip the village with a public water pump, (ii) repair the village motorbike used for local errands, (iii) improve the road between Campo Beach and Campo, and (iv) provide funding for local education and health services.

Despite such short term success, ecotourism in the Campo Ma’an landscape is limited by two factors. First, as is well known, tourists rarely go off the “beaten track”, which means that those areas which can benefit from potential ecotourism remain geographically very restricted. In the case of the Campo Ma’an landscape, the “beaten track” is limited to the Kribi – Campo – Mvini and Campo – Campo beach axes; any ecotourism projects set up anywhere else are therefore unlikely to succeed. Secondly, in comparison with other parts of the country, Campo-Ma’an as a whole is generally off the beaten track – in other terms, as representatives of Campo Beach pointed out, tourists are far and few between, especially foreign ones.

Despite such setbacks, the Campo Ma’an landscape retains a very strong potential for developing ecotourism, especially of the higher standard kind. The region’s key attractions – deserted beaches and a forest populated with flagship species such as gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants – are a unique association in Cameroon. Moreover, some of the infrastructure for luxurious ecotourism already exists, such as high standard accommodation that once belonged to HFC expatriate staff, both in Ipono and along the coast, as well as an airstrip, although both now belong to SCIEB.

However, a packaged tour which combines accommodation on the beach, a visit to the forest (which includes sighting habituated gorillas) and flights to or from Ipono with views of the forest and coastline could be set up, providing large funds that could be reallocated into development projects. The only element missing is the institutional arrangement which would require both the creation of a professional organisation capable of setting up such a package and running it, and close collaboration (i) with SCIEB and (ii) with local populations who could then benefit from the revenue.

4.4.5. Infrastructure

Campo Ma'an is equipped with minimal public infrastructure which is mostly limited to roads (all unpaved) and an incomplete electricity grid that hardly extends beyond Grand Batanga, Campo and Ma'an (where electricity runs from 6 pm to midnight, depending on whether the generator is in a working condition). However, plans exist that might change the face of the landscape in the future. Three projects are currently underway that might affect the region:

1. In the Eastern Province, close to the border with Congo, an iron ore mine is due to begin construction in 2009 on condition that the Government of Cameroon signs an agreement with Australian company Sundance Resources Ltd. which obtained the right to mine in the area of Mbalam in 2005 (Okole 2005). Construction of a railway has also been included in the project to evacuate the iron ore from Mbalam to Kribi along a 450 kilometer route passing through the landscape north of the National Park.
2. A project is also being set up to build a deep sea port for Kribi in Grand Batanga, only 10 kilometers south of the city (which is located within the landscape). This project which is estimated at FCFA 282 billion is considered both part of (i) the "Mbalam integrated project" which also includes the construction of the iron ore mine and the railway mentioned above (Okole 2008), and (ii) a regional transport plan for Central Africa which would link Kribi port with locations as distant as Ouessou in Congo and Kisangani in the DRC (Tchakam 2008). Estimations for the completion of the port differ from 2011 to 2013.
3. The construction of a dam on Memve'ele falls on the River Ntem near Nyabizan (at the entrance to the National Park) has been talked about since 1992. However, it appears to have gone a step further recently with the signature of a deal in August 2007 between the Government of Cameroon and the British state-owned power generator company Globelec. This project would involve building a hydropower station and a dam at Memve'ele, a paved road to the site and electricity transmission lines to link it to the national grid.

These projects are likely to have tremendous consequences on the Campo Ma'an landscape, notably the national park, both in social and in ecological terms; however, they are at too early a stage to establish what mitigating components they will include to prevent environmental damage - notably for Memve'ele Dam, which is likely to affect the fragile hydrological processes that regulate the lower Ntem which is critical to the ecology of the southern part of the Park. Likewise, it is not known what benefits local populations might get from these large-scale, top-down projects. In any case, stakeholders concerned with the integrity of the National Park and the welfare of the landscape rural populations will need to defend their role as legitimate stakeholders in all three projects.

4.5. TOWARDS A GLOBAL POLICY

The case-study of the Campo-Ma'an landscape shows that conservation policy has definitely moved on from the days when it focused solely on the ecological integrity of and the exclusion of any human "interference" from protected areas. Both SNV and today WWF have gradually moved towards a holistic vision in which conservation policy must move beyond the geographical borders of protected areas to include other sectors closely related to the fate of the protected area itself. These include the private and public actors as well as the local populations located in the vicinity of the area. In fact, this new integrated approach can be declined into two complementary perspectives:

1. On the one hand, from a geographical perspective, this corresponds to what has become known as a *landscape approach*. This concept has been analysed by Singer (2007) who, based on a number of definitions collected in the literature, defines the expression as "an analytical and/or normative perspective that is based on the interaction between people and nature. It explores the relationships between past and present natural and social processes that contribute to shape a contiguous area of high social, biological, and/or aesthetic value. This approach is universally applicable yet emphasises the identity of each landscape through the unique configuration of the processes involved" (2007:51). A landscape approach is a strategy aiming at integrating and managing different (and very often conflictual) land use types within the framework of master plan supplemented by specific management plan for each land use category. The landscape approach is potentially a strategy to address land use conflicts by integrating economic and ecological functions in the land planning and management process.
2. On the other hand, from a policy perspective, this approach is equivalent to the creation of a single *policy network* which has been defined as "the result of more or less stable and non-hierarchical cooperation between organisations that know and recognise each other, negotiate, exchange resources and may share norms and interests" (Le Galès & Thatcher 1995:14). Networks can be visually represented as a web of actors who are all interrelated through the exchange of resources of different kinds (political, informational, financial, etc.). They are termed *policy networks* when the main objective of their existence is to solve a collective problem (*i.e.*, by implementing new policies).

Although these actual expressions have not necessarily been used in this particular case, each of the concepts is equivalent to an institution that has already been created in the region. The landscape approach has been embodied in the concept of Technical Operation Unit, an instrument set up by the then Ministry of Environment and Forests (Minéf) which is simply defined as a priority geographical area for forest management. In the case of the Campo Ma'an UTO (created in 1999), the *Préfet* of the *Département* of Océan was designated as the director, mainly as a virtue of the personal involvement of the individual at the time of the UTO's establishment.

The decree creating Campo Ma'an UTO stipulates that its roles are to (i) supervise the creation of Campo Ma'an National Park, (ii) ensure the Park's management, (iii) set up a means of

sustainably managed forest resources both in the park and its surroundings, (iv) develop a process enabling the sustainable management of its coastal area, (v) promote the participation of local populations in biodiversity management, (vi) coordinate monitoring of hunting activities and (vii) facilitate ecotourism activities. Given such a comprehensive role, it is hardly surprising that the UTO never took off.

As for attempts to establish a global policy network, the Model Forests project has already created a precedent, although it is currently in a dormant state. Model Forests have been described as a “forum for dialogue”, an “interface for production and exchange of knowledge” and a “voluntary partnership set up on a diverse landscape” that aim at managing forests and forest resources on the long term (50 years or more). Originally a Canadian initiative, the Model Forests concept was introduced to Cameroon in the early 2000s and was spearheaded by CIFOR researchers. Out of ten candidate sites for Model Forests, the Campo Ma'an landscape was finally selected as one of the country's two pilot sites in virtue of the diversity of actors and existing knowledge on the area. Unlike the UTO, the leading position of the Campo-Ma'an Model Forests initiative has been given to the mayor of Nye'ete, the municipality located on the northwestern edge of the National Park. Model Forests are composed of a number of “platforms” representing different sectors of stakeholders, such as the private sector or women.

However, in recent years, the Model Forests initiative has come to a standstill due to various issues, including changes internal to CIFOR. As a result, Cameroonian model forests have suffered from shortage of funds for some time which has prevented any meetings (and thus progress on the issue) from taking place. Yet the Cameroonian initiative is part of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) and therefore enjoys sufficient visibility to enable it to benefit from renewed attention by donors in the near future.

Although the concepts of UTO and Model Forests share many elements in common, Model Forests stakeholders are generally quick to distinguish between the two by pointing out that whilst the UTO is a state-run initiative and therefore adopts a top-down approach, Model forests is based on a bottom-up perspective. This, however, does not exclude the two from being complementary – one using the state's resources and defining the issue from a geographical viewpoint, the other giving more room to dialogue among all stakeholders whilst adopting a policy viewpoint.

Unfortunately, both institutions are currently underused. Whilst Model forests have hardly evolved over the past few years, the UTO today is little more than a colourful map with different land uses, as epitomised by the fact that none of the stakeholders interviewed knew who the director of the UTO was. Both the UTO and Model Forests thus constitute important institutional resources that could easily be revived and tapped into in order to establish an integrated approach to managing the Campo Ma'an National Park and its periphery.

Based on both these institutions as fundamental elements to constructing a global policy for the Campo Ma'an landscape, actors could envisage a three-step logical approach:

1. First, actors would need to agree on the identification of a core set of collective problems to be solved, namely (i) the main threat to the integrity of the National Park (*i.e.*, poaching),

and (ii) rural poverty among surrounding local populations. The modern integrated approach to conservation allows us to see these two problems as a single one, in which rural poverty is the key cause leading to poaching as an unsustainable form of income for local populations.

2. Secondly, following the identification of these collective problems, actors could work on identifying collective solutions. The obvious solution to rural poverty would be the creation of projects setting up alternative, sustainable sources of income for local populations. Currently, three such types already exist - community forestry, small-scale agriculture and ecotourism. To this "carrot", however, one must add the "stick", *i.e.*, law enforcement through effective monitoring of the National Park and fines and/or prison sentences for individuals poaching inside the Park. These solutions are complementary and cannot be separated from each other. WWF and partners are already doing these and this constitute the core of the ongoing program, though the process may not be so fluent and may need more learning and adaptation from the implementing agencies.
3. Once problems and solutions have been collectively identified among the stakeholders of the region, one additional step is necessary: identifying the resources, needs and problems of each stakeholder so as to identify potential sources of collaboration to work together on the collective solutions. This fundamental step has been described by French sociologist Callon (1986) as *intéressement*, which could be defined as a process whereby all stakeholders are encouraged to find an interest in collaborating. It is only by including all stakeholders in this process that a global and effective policy network can be established to solve the collective problems identified above.

Table V below summarises the resources, needs and problems of each of the legitimate stakeholders within the landscape, notably WWF, local NGOs, local public authorities, local Minfop services, private companies, local populations (both Bantu and Bagyeli) and the World Bank. Some actors do not necessarily have a direct interest in solving the collective problems mentioned above, such as private companies. However, specific market mechanisms such as certification can easily be identified so as to include them in the step of *intéressement*.

From this table one can envisage a role of *facilitator* for WWF which could collaborate with stakeholders whose resources are complementary to its own. WWF (in comparison with other stakeholders) is well endowed in funds and expertise, which are complementary, for example, with NGOs and local populations who often have neither *but* have access to both poachers and the National Park itself. Likewise, WWF could interest private companies such as SCIEB, Wijma and Hévécam who both have access to potential poachers (who often work for these companies) but do not necessarily have the expertise to tap into "green" markets or embark on the certification process. Collaboration with Wijma has already gone a long way and has proven to be effective both in achieving certification and in reducing hunting by Wijma staff in the region of Ma'an. Finally, WWF's and public authorities' resources are also complementary in that the latter have political power but often lack financial resources and in some cases, expertise.

4.6. ALMOST THERE

In comparison with other protected areas in Central Africa, the Campo Ma'an landscape is blessed with several advantages - (i) a rich and well-protected flora and fauna in the National Park, (ii) a high national and international profile which is likely to help the region benefit from continued access to funding, research and decision-makers at the highest level in the years to come, and (iii) already existing structures for collaboration between stakeholders, such as the UTO and Model Forests.

In other words, Campo Ma'an is already equipped with all the potential components to establish a global policy network. If stakeholders keep to a three-step logical approach such as the one described above, all the elements might be united for both greater ecological integrity of the region's unique natural resource and the improvement of the welfare of local populations surrounding the National Park.

Legitimate stakeholders	Resources					Needs / Problems
	Financial	Expertise / knowledge	Official authority / political power (or access to)	Physical access to the forest	Access to local populations, including poachers	
WWF	+++	+++	+ (as partner)	++	+	- Conserve the Park's resources - Reduce poverty
Local NGOs (CEPFILD, RAPID, CADER, SAGED, etc.)	0	++	0	0	+++	- Lack of funding - Severe competition
Local Minfof Services (Service de conservation and Poste forestier)	0	+	+++	++	0	- Lack of funding - Lack of knowledge and/or motivation
Private companies (Socapalm, Hévécam, SCIEB, Wijma)	+++	+	0	0	++	- Access to green / certified markets
Public authorities (mairie, sous-préfecture)	+(RFA)	0	++	0	++	- Lack of funding - Lack of expertise
Local populations (Bantu)	0	++	0	+++	+++	- Poverty - Lack of viable alternatives to bushmeat
Local Populations (Bagyeli)	0	+++	0	+++	+++	- Extreme poverty - Lack of viable economic alternatives to bushmeat
World Bank	0	+++	+++	0	0	- Fulfil conditions for project implementation (conservation, poverty reduction etc.)

Table V. — Resources, needs and problems according to legitimate stakeholders of Campo Ma'an UTO. This table should help identify potential sources of collaboration between stakeholders based on complementarity between the needs or problems of one and the resources of the other.

5. FOREST-RELATED POLICIES IN MA'AN

La bouche qui mange ne parle pas.

Cameroonian Proverb

Social policies in timber concessions in Cameroon are in a state of flux. Once perceived as outposts of the state in far-flung regions of the country's Eastern and Southern provinces, concessions are now considered an integral part of the solutions both to environmental degradation and to economic development at local and national levels alike. The arrival of new actors in the field of forestry, including international NGOs and donors, has had a profound effect in shaping the relations between concessionaires and local populations: whilst they used to be characterised by systems of patronage, these relations have now evolved into more complex and ambivalent forms under the influence of contradictory factors such as policy reforms and market adjustments.

5.1. TIMBER CONCESSIONS IN CAMEROON: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

A concession is defined by the FAO's Land Tenure Thesaurus as a bilateral or unilateral legal act by which an authority grants a private or public person a right of use or a privilege (2003:8). Concession-based systems are thus based on an agreement between the state and a private company (unlike timber production on private land by private companies or on public land by public companies). In a comprehensive study of forest concessions around the world, Gray correctly points out the dual nature of a concession:

Forest concession contracts can be of two kinds: forest utilization contracts, allocating harvesting and/or use rights to public forest lands; and forest management services contracts, which are procurement contracts for forest management services. Forest utilization contracts may give the holder rights to harvest timber or other forest products or to hunt. They also may entitle the holder to use forest services, such as watershed protection, or to profit from biodiversity or tourism.

Often forest concessions contracts involve both types of contracts, granting concessionaires harvesting or use rights, but also requiring them to undertake forest management activities, reforestation, and/or environmental protection. Forest concessions in many countries are of this dual nature.

Gray (2002:10)

Throughout the concessionary history of Central Africa, private companies operating in concessions have been required by the state to provide welfare and public infrastructure to local populations (see for instance Coquery-Vidrovitch 2001). Yet as is well known, concessionaires have only partly fulfilled this role, if at all: to this day, social aspects of concessions remain this type of land tenure's weakest spot.

5.1.1. *Historical Origins of Social Policies in Concessions*

In fact, this problem is as old as European colonialism itself. The Portuguese Crown's main justification for funding the numerous expeditions to Africa and the East Indies in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was to find the kingdom of Prester John, both to protect them from the threats of heathens but also to convert to Christianity the people found along the way (a move which was perceived as charitable and altruistic). As the centuries wore on and the means of conquering and dominating overseas territories became more complex, the philanthropic dimension of colonialism remained surprisingly similar to what it had been originally.

In Africa, the history of forest concessions can also be traced back to a common type of colonisation by European powers which consisted in granting trading rights to chartered companies over a given geographical area in exchange for securing the area for the state whose patronage the company was under. Such companies were most successful among British colonies. Early examples of this practice include the British East India Company (founded 1600), the Hudson's Bay Company (1670) and, for the Dutch, the Dutch East India Company or VOC (1602).

In exchange for granting these rights, the state would demand that the chartered company "develop" these regions. In the rush to colonialism, this form of delegation to the private sector was a practical form of preventing the state from overstretching whilst providing a solution to the economic and ethical issues involved in colonisation. Even at the height of the scramble for Africa's remaining territories in the late nineteenth century, anti-colonial lobbies were powerful enough for European governments still to feel the need to justify their states' adventures abroad as a form of philanthropy (hence the *mission civilisatrice*) as well as being economically profitable. De Brazza himself, one of the main proponents of the concessionary system, was quoted as saying that trade was both a "weapon for penetration and a vector of civilisation"⁸² [*sic*] (quoted in Coquery-Vidrovitch 2001:31).

In Central Africa, French colonies reached a turning point in the early 1890s when the era of "explorations" had come to an end and territories started being carved up into huge concessions as France's main instrument of colonisation. Among other companies, the *Société du Haut-Ogooué*, the largest concessionaire, was granted a massive territory of some 11 million hectares:

⁸² « Arme de pénétration et vecteur de civilisation ».

The introduction of the concessionary system, advocated as early as 1890 but sketched out only in 1893-5 (with the creation of the *Société du Haut-Ogooué* and the *Société d'Etudes du Congo Français*), was finally confirmed in 40 decrees between 1899 and 1900. These decrees translated the adoption of a coherent economic doctrine in the Congo based on companies with a monopoly on exploitation which was destined – at least in principle – to assume the investments which the state refused to take on. However, this programme was hampered by the long-standing indifference of large-scale French capital to the idea.⁸³

Coquery-Vidrovitch (2001:14)

As might have been foreseen, however, none of the companies ever invested sufficiently in building even minimal public infrastructure inside their concession, to Brazza's greatest dismay. Not only did many of these companies take advantage of their dominant position to impose their terms on trade with partners; but around the turn of the twentieth century, a number of reports revealed the horror of the treatment reserved for those "natives" who refused to take part in the production of goods which the concessionaire was supposed to benefit from. In 1906 and 1907, twenty investigations are carried out in a number of concessions, leading Coquery-Vidrovitch to state that concessions only survive "through the use of violence (...), sequestration, pillaging, putting fire to villages and murder"⁸⁴ (2001:226) and conclude that

The results of the concession regime turned out to be negative. This system was riddled with severe cases of abuse and led to trouble and revolts as well as being economically inefficient, and was ultimately incapable of undergoing reform. It immobilised for twenty to thirty years, depending on cases, most of the colony's territories.⁸⁵

Coquery-Vidrovitch (2001:224).

These observations were made for French Congo. In Cameroon, German authorities encouraged a couple of companies in the 1890s in a bid to launch an equally ambitious concession system, but one pulled out within a few years and the other one's contract was revoked in 1910 when the concession was found to be inactive. However, the French expanded their own system to Cameroon after the First World War and by the end of the Second World War, the first concessions opened up in the forest-rich province of the East (with the foundation of SFID at Doumé and Dimako in 1947).

Over the decades, concessions were gradually reduced in scope, starting with restriction to the trade of specific products such as ivory or timber in the 1910s and 1920s (unlike earlier concessionaires who enjoyed a monopoly over all trade within a given area). During the same

⁸³ « L'instauration du régime concessionnaire, préconisé dès 1890, mais ébauché seulement en 1893-5 (création de la Société du Haut-Ogooué et de la Société d'Etudes du Congo Français) et entériné finalement par les quarante décrets de 1899-1900, traduisait l'adoption au Congo d'une doctrine économique cohérente – celle des compagnies à monopole d'exploitation destinées, en principe, à assumer les investissements dont l'Etat refusait la charge. Mais l'indifférence durable du grand capital français entrava ce programme ».

⁸⁴ « que par l'emploi de la violence [...], les séquestrations, le pillage, l'incendie des villages et le meurtre ».

⁸⁵ « Le bilan du régime concessionnaire fut négatif. Vicié par de graves abus, générateur de troubles et de révoltes, économiquement inefficace, le système s'avéra impossible à réformer. Il immobilisa pour vingt ou trente ans, suivant les cas, la plupart des terres de la colonie ».

period the size of concessions was also reduced to a million hectares or less, and the right of concessionaires to levy taxes from local populations was abolished (Karsenty 2007:6).

5.1.2. Forest Concessions Today

Despite strong historical continuity since the colonial period, concessions as they are known today have been fundamentally transformed through successive waves of reforms introducing increasingly stringent regulation, effectively forcing concessionaires to fulfil required duties towards local populations. In Cameroon, the latest – and most important – reform to date is the 1994 Forestry Law which laid the basis for modern forest management units (FMUs or UFA in French) as they are known today.

FMUs⁸⁶ as defined by the 1994 have a number of important differences with licenses, which is the form that concessions took prior to the new law. First, the allocation of FMUs is no longer carried out in a discretionary manner: each FMUs is submitted to an auction and bidding system. This rule was introduced to promote greater transparency and put an end to the agreements between companies and public authorities which plagued the system. However, over the years both sides have repeatedly attempted to avoid the bidding system:

5. In 1996 and 1997, the Ministry of Forests (MINEF) openly broke the rule by allocating a total of 12 FMUs in a discretionary fashion, effectively ignoring the new law. After complaints by international observers, the allocation of FMUs was suspended until 2000.
6. Since then, more discrete ways of getting around the law have been observed. For instance, although each company's bid should remain confidentially placed in a sealed box, the box is broken into and the highest bid identified a few days ahead of the deadline. This gives enough time for another company in collusion with members of the Ministry to make an extra bid a mere 50 francs higher (the minimum increment) than the highest bidder, which allows it to win the auction.
7. Likewise, those managing the auction take advantage of the complexity of forest legislation concerning management and logging practices to discard all bids for an FMU on technical grounds except for one which therefore wins the bid without going through the expected process of competition.
8. Likewise, FMUs abandoned by a company are in effect passed onto another company through a mutual agreement, without the FMU having to go back through an auction process. Many FMUs – including Wijma's FMU 09-021 – were obtained through this means which uses a loophole in Cameroonian legislation.

In all these examples, collusion between the Ministry of Forestry and selected companies remains despite what originally appeared as a waterproof law that would enforce greater transparency and introduce competition.

⁸⁶ Although the distinction between the two remains blurry in the eyes of most actors, concessions differ from FMUs in that a concession is a singly managed unit that may contain one or more FMUs. Concessions may not exceed a surface area of 200,000 ha.

Secondly, a number of taxes have been imposed on logging activities in a bid to enable the state to benefit from what has turned out to be an extremely lucrative sector – the rationale being that a new tax system was the main instrument whereby forests would be able to contribute to development and poverty reduction. The most famous of these taxes is known as RFA which stands for *Redevances Forestières Annuelles* or Annual Forest Revenue, an area fee which is used in the bidding system and begins at FCFA 1,000 (€1.50) per hectare. RFA typically varies between FCFA 1,050 and 3,000 and represents the largest tax imposed on logging companies. The tax has been devised so as to promote local development: whilst half of the RFA goes to the central state, 40% is destined to the local council (*commune*, i.e., at the level of towns), and 10% is earmarked for community development projects but is channelled through the council.

When the law was passed, this new tax system caused an uproar among logging companies which claimed that the tax levels demanded were going to drive them out of business. Many smaller companies did indeed disappear or were forced to set up partnerships with larger companies; yet those companies which had been most vociferous are also those which remain active to this day.

Thirdly, FMUs are required by law to have a management plan (*plan d'aménagement*) which must be approved at the latest three years after the FMU has been allocated, marking the end of the initial three-year *convention provisoire*; yet in practice management plans only started becoming commonplace in the 2000s. From a social perspective, management plans are a legal commitment to carry out a number of activities in coordination with and in favour of local populations – a frequent sticking point in concessions in Cameroon.

Regarding social aspects, several legal texts concerning management plans require a number of provisions for local populations in the plan, notably (i) the need to carry out a socio-economic study as a basis for the management plan (Arrêté 222, article 6), (ii) identification and census of neighbouring populations (*populations riveraines*) (GEPA 2.1), (iii) a presentation of the subsistence and commercial activities of these populations that are linked to the forest, and (iv) the creation of conflict-solving mechanisms (Vandenhoute 2006:50-1).

As to date, only little more than half of the allocated FMUs in Cameroon have an approved management plan, although those most recently allocated (notably in 2006) are not required by law to have one approved before the end of their three-year *convention provisoire* (i.e., 2009). Yet even among those plans which have been approved, all the legal requirements are still far from being fulfilled. In a study based on an evaluation of 20 Cameroonian management plans, Vandenhoute (2006) graded the plans according to their conformity with legal requirements: barely 25% of the plans studied got marks above 100/200. The author concluded that

The study shows that the quality of certain management plans is well below the acceptable minimum because some basic parameters have not been respected. In this context, it is obvious that certain management plans would have needed corrections prior to their approval, some of them potentially requiring the concessionaire to carry out further studies in the field.⁸⁷

Vandenhaute (2006:41).

In terms of the management plans' social aspects, Vandenhaute was even more scathing:

The socio-economic dimension of management is often mentioned out of mere principle. As a consequence of the lack of precision of legal constraints, we found relatively few concrete implications in the results of socio-economic studies. These often appeared incomplete, notably in relation to the boundary of village land – an essential step in collaborative resource management. Few elements are provided as to agriculture; sacred spots are rarely identified – and even when they are, access to them is not defined; the main NTFPs are not mapped inside the boundaries of village lands; the implementation of specific management measures concerning species for which local populations might compete with the concessionaire is rare; etc. The creation of forest farmer committees [*comités paysan forêt*] is still specified by law but one may question to what extent these committees are functional and what role they play in collaboration [with the concessionaire].⁸⁸

Vandenhaute (2006:44).

Today, all of the country's 110 FMUs have been allocated, representing some 7,000,000 hectares of concession in the country (Karsenty 2007:12; Mertens *et al.* 2005:15). As Karsenty (2007:13) points out, the Cameroonian forest sector is dominated by European and Asian companies, Vicwood-Thannry (originally a French company sold in 1999) being the largest group with almost 650,000 ha of concessions. French company Rougier and Italian company Alpi come next with 550,000 and 265,000 ha respectively. Other companies (total area given with their respective partners) include French company Pallisco (303,000 ha) and Italian company SEFAC (387,500 ha). Despite a smaller surface area in terms of concessions, Wijma (245,000 ha) stands out of the crowd as it was the first company to receive an FSC certificate in Cameroon and second in Central Africa since Leroy Gabon's unhappy experience.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ « L'étude montre (...) que la qualité de certains plans d'aménagement se situe bien en-dessous du minimum acceptable, certains paramètres de base n'ayant pas été respectés. Dans ce contexte, il est clair que certains plans d'aménagement auraient nécessité, avant approbation, des corrections qui pouvaient amener l'attributaire à reconduire des études sur le terrain. »

⁸⁸ « Le volet socio-économique de l'aménagement est bien souvent abordé par principe. Les contraintes légales étant peu précises, on retrouve finalement assez peu d'implications concrètes issues des résultats des enquêtes socio-économiques. Ces dernières paraissent souvent incomplètes notamment par rapport à la délimitation du finage villageois, étape essentielle pour une gestion concertée des ressources. Peu de séries agricoles sont définies, les lieux sacrés sont rarement identifiés assortis de droits d'accès particuliers, les PFNL principaux ne sont pas cartographiés dans les limites du terroir villageois, la mise en place de mesures de gestion spécifiques concernant les essences concurrentielles entre l'exploitant et les populations est rare etc. La mise en place de comité paysan-forêt (CPF) est toujours prévue mais, à nouveau, on peut se demander dans quelle mesure ces CPF sont aujourd'hui fonctionnels au titre de structure de concertation ».

⁸⁹ In 1996, Leroy Gabon succeeded in getting FSC certification for one of its concessions in Gabon, sparking outrage among environmental groups which had failed to be consulted. Following a bitter campaign by NGOs, Leroy eventually lost its certification when the company was found logging inside a protected area. FSC did not certify another concession in Central Africa until December 2005. For more information on this episode and certification in Cameroon more generally please refer to the section on forest-related policies in Cameroon.

5.2. FMUS 09-021 AND 09-024: A CASE-STUDY

Ma'an is home to Central Africa's first FSC-certified forest management unit (FMU, known in French as UFA). As forest certification has spread across and beyond Cameroon in the past few years, two FMUs managed by Dutch company Wijma and located in Ma'an, namely 09-021 and 09-024, have come to the forefront of discussions on forest management in the region.

5.2.1. Geography

The town of Ma'an is little more than a commercial street on a crossroad (Ma'an meaning "junction" in the local Ntumu language) in the middle of a vast expanse of forest. The *commune* (administrative area headed by a council) of the same name is centred on the town and nestled in a cul-de-sac between the main axis from Yaoundé to Gabon to the east, Equatorial Guinea to the south, and Campo Ma'an National Park to the north and west. It is home to two Bantu "tribes", the Ntumu and the Mvaé who are both ethnically close to the Bulu and have mutually intelligible languages.

The main axis, a dirt road which runs through the *commune* in a northeast to southwest fashion, connects the area to the sealed road running from Yaoundé to Ambam and beyond, to the small town of Ma'an (4,000 souls) and the large village of Nyabizan, some 60 km to the west. Between these settlements, strings of villages are strewn along the road. To the west of Nyabizan, a controversial road built in 1999 linked Ma'an with Campo on the Atlantic coast, but the creation of the National Park later that year and the departure of the Forestière de Campo (the local logging company) led to its closure in the early 2000s.

The numerous branches of the Ntem river run mainly south of this axis until they meet a couple of kilometres shy of Nyabizan. The Ntem acts as a considerable barrier to communication as no bridges exist in the area. To the west of the *commune*, close to the border with the National Park, a ferry built by the Forestière de Campo and now owned by Wijma (the second logging company to have operated in the area) carries the company's employees over to its concession. To the east, a road also exists from Ma'an that crosses the four branches of the Ntem to reach the isolated villages south of the river; yet these can only be crossed with canoes.

With a total surface area of 36,500 hectares, Forest Management Unit (FMU) 09-021 is stuck between the Ma'an-Nyabizan road to the south and the National Park to the north. With a surface area of 75,600 ha, FMU 09-024 is over twice the size, and is wedged between the Ma'an-Nyabizan road to the north, the National Park to the west, and the border with Equatorial Guinea to the south. Further east lie another two FMUs: 09-022, leased to Gau Services and managed by Wijma; and 09-023, leased to Bubinga, which lie beyond the object of this study.

On either side of the road to Ma'an and Nyabizan, villagers have a few kilometres of "agroforestry zone" (as defined in the 1993 zoning plan for southern Cameroon) in which agriculture and plantations are authorised; beyond this strip lie FMUs and protected areas (namely the National Park and a protection zone covering the forest between the branches of the Ntem river), in which human activities are either restricted or banned by law. Agriculture is restricted to a few cash crops (notably cocoa) and a range of subsistence crops (cassava, peanuts, plantain, cucumber, macabo, corn, avocado, citrus fruit, mangoes, and kola nuts).

Whilst hunting has traditionally been the only source of animal protein for the Ntumu and Mvaé, access restrictions to the forest and a growing population have encouraged the slow development of animal rearing which nevertheless remains very limited in comparison to other regions (chicken, pigs, goats and sheep being the main animals reared). Overall, despite its importance to the subsistence of villagers, on the level of the *commune* the agricultural sector is dwarfed by forestry which contributes up to 80% of the local council's revenue. Other (non-declared) sources of income for villagers include bushmeat hunting and smuggling manufactured goods and petrol across the border with Equatorial Guinea.

5.2.2. Early History

Local oral history has it that the Ntumu and Mvaé tribes came to the region from Gabon in search of the sea. By the late 1880s, however, the pressure of colonialism began to be felt as the Germans successfully conquered the Bulu tribes centred around Ebolowa (to the northeast) before pushing down to the border with Spanish Guinea and French Gabon. The arrival of the German colonial authorities was marked by the construction of a path (locally known as the *piste allemande*) which ran north of Ma'an in a south-westerly fashion, and is now located inside Campo Ma'an National Park. As elsewhere in the forests of Cameroon, the construction of a transport axis was accompanied by forced sedentarisation of local populations in a bid to control the latter more easily.

In 1917 the Allied forces, spearheaded by the French, pushed the German army back into Spanish Guinea. Where trenches were dug on a battlefield at a junction between two forest paths, a local Ntumu chief was asked by the French to found a town which was named Ma'an. The occupying French forces then consolidated their power in the region by forcing all the villagers settled on the *piste allemande* to resettle along the new road they built through Ma'an which ran to Nyabizan.

The French colonial period (1917-1960) witnessed (i) the arrival of missionaries, notably American Presbyterians from Kribi; (ii) the appearance of collective education – first religious, in Ambam, then secular, with the construction of Ma'an's first school in 1948, of which the ruins are still visible today; and (iii) the growth of cash crops from the 1920s onwards, including cocoa and palm oil. The construction of a customs house on the footpath that now runs through FMU 09-024 to Evouzok, Nsengou and onto Spanish (now Equatorial) Guinea is witness to the importance of Ma'an on the old trade route to the Spanish colony.

5.2.3. HFC and the Beginnings of Industrial Logging

Even once Ma'an had broken off from Ambam and gained the status of *commune*, it remained very much an isolated hinterland until the arrival of the *Forestière de Campo*. Also known as HFC, this subsidiary of French company Bolloré had been logging in the vicinity of the village of Campo, on the Atlantic coast since the 1960s, gradually pushing inland as it exhausted its sources of commercially valuable timber (notably azobe).

By the 1990s, however, discussions were underway about protecting the forests of this southwest corner of the country, eventually leading to the creation of Campo Ma'an National Park to the east of HFC's existing concession in 1999. The company managed to avoid the barrier that this area had imposed on its migration eastwards by gaining a concession to the east of the Park, FMU 09-024, located within the commune of Ma'an, thus catapulting the then village into the era of industrial forestry.

HFC only ever operated in the western third of the FMU and based its workers and operations in Nyabizan. To the delight of local populations who suddenly gained access to markets in Campo and Kribi, HFC anticipated the creation of the National Park by building a road connecting both its management units (09-025 and 09-204) and allowing timber to be evacuated to its port in Ipono. Despite the benefits it brought to the villagers, this road was very unpopular among conservation circles as it effectively sliced the National Park in two, and once HFC left the road was abandoned (its bridges have since collapsed, making it unpassable). Inhabitants of Nyabizan and its surroundings remember the "HFC years" with great nostalgia:

The social enterprises of the *Forestière* [de Campo] were a serious business. That's why we don't like Wijma today. Everything was spotless: this road was the best and had no potholes. Everything was well done. They also helped for schooling, made coffins for funerals, and we could even hop onto their trucks [for transport] without any problem. The person at the *Forestière* responsible for local populations always helped us.⁹⁰

A local chief near Nyabizan, interviewed 29.04.08

HFC had a seemingly generous policy towards local populations. Not only did it employ a person in charge of relations with villagers, but it also handed out food to villages and cash to chiefs and other local dignitaries (*notables*), along with additional funds in case of a funeral or a wedding. In other words, HFC appears to have successfully rallied the support of the local political elite, if not of the entire population, by displaying generosity more on an *ad hoc* than a systematic basis. A further reason why villagers of Nyabizan compared Wijma with HFC in favour of the latter is that for a short period of time, Nyabizan had become the area's economic centre thanks to HFC at the expense of Ma'an; with the arrival of Wijma in Ma'an and the closure of HFC, the situation has since reverted and Nyabizan has once again gone back to being a village at the end of a cul-de-sac.

⁹⁰ « Les œuvres sociales de La Forestière [de Campo], c'était du sérieux, c'est pour ça qu'on n'aime pas la Wijma aujourd'hui. C'était impeccable : cette route était la meilleure, il n'y avait pas de mare. Tout était correct. Ils aidaient aussi pour la scolarité, ils fabriquaient des caisses d'enterrement, et on montait dans leurs camions sans problème (...). Le chargé de La Forestière des populations locales nous aidait toujours. »

An additional factor contributing to HFC's local popularity was the company's intention to build a sawmill in Nyabizan for the timber produced in nearby FMU 09-024. However, HFC's plans to expand their activities suddenly came to an end when Bolloré pulled out of Cameroon almost overnight. Many rumours still circulate as to why HFC suddenly filed for bankruptcy, but one of the reasons might be the hefty fines and negative image that the company had attracted after it was found logging inside Campo Ma'an National Park in 2001. The company director is believed to have said during a meeting in Paris, "Cameroon represents 1% of our turnover and 90% of our troubles",⁹¹ referring both to the company's operations outside Cameroon and the negative publicity it suffered at the hands of environmental NGOs.

5.2.4. *The Early Years of Wijma Douala SARL*

On the other side of Ma'an, Wijma Douala SARL (commonly known as Wijma), a subsidiary of Dutch company Gerrit Wijma en Zonen (or GWZ), took over the management of FMU 09-021 from a company called COFA which had originally won the bid. Wijma had first begun logging in Cameroon in 1967 in a 50,000-ha concession in the southern Province, and has concentrated its activities on one main timber species, namely azobe or ironwood (*Lophira alata*). This species, which was once found throughout the coastal forests of Cameroon (and until some 100 km inland), still exists in abundance in primary forests such as those surrounding Ma'an, where logging on an industrial scale only began in 1999. Azobe wood is known for absorbing minimal humidity and thus resisting to wet weather conditions; it is commonly used for constructions on seafronts and in canal locks, which explains why the Netherlands represents one of the largest markets for this species.

Wijma originally established its *base-vie*⁹² at Meyos-Centre, close to Ebolowa, but when it won the bid for the management of FMU 09-024 in 2004 following HFC's filing for bankruptcy, the *base-vie* was moved to Ma'an where it is currently located. The following year, Gau Services (as the concessionaire) and Patrice Bois (as a partner) won the bid to manage FMU 09-022, to the east of Ma'an; a partnership was immediately established with Wijma which has been managing logging activities in the FMU since then.

Throughout the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s, Wijma was repeatedly accused of infringing Cameroonian law and abusing the rights of local populations by environmental NGOs. The importance of its Dutch market – one that was sensitive to accusations of environmental degradation – and, according to many, the weakness of its PR department made it a primary target for campaigns against European companies logging in Cameroon. In

⁹¹ « Le Cameroun, c'est 1% de notre chiffre d'affaires et 90% de nos emmerdements. »

⁹² A *base-vie* is a local basecamp set up by a logging company in the vicinity of the FMU which it operates in. These basecamps, which are generally considered as outposts by the company whose headquarters are either in Douala or in Europe, are home to a small number of European staff posted there for several years on a rotational basis. These camps are usually cordoned off from the rest of the settlement in which they are located; they are equipped with all the facilities required to meet an expatriate's living standard: running water, electricity, computers nowadays, spacious homes and in the case of larger camps a bar, a tennis court, swimming pool and even an airstrip. As a consequence of raising the quality of life in a bid to attract European expatriates, these basecamps thus often appear like an oasis of modernity and wealth in a sea of forests and impoverished rural populations. In sociological terms, they have often been denounced by observers as colonial relics because the relationship between wealthy expatriates and local staff is somewhat reminiscent of racial segregation prevalent among colonial society.

2002, Milieu Defensie, also known as Friends of the Earth Netherlands, listed Wijma as one of the 11 companies with a Dutch market operating illegally in Cameroon (Stroot & Van Dorp 2002). The company had reportedly been accused of logging outside its concession (in nearby concessions and protected areas), felling trees below the authorised diameter and transporting timber without legal documents. Moreover, Wijma had established partnerships with a range of other companies, both Cameroonian and foreign, many of which were notorious for their illegal activities, including Lebanese-owned Hazim which was repeatedly dragged into court in Cameroon in the early 2000s and has since left the country.

Greenpeace has also published several reports with evidence incriminating Wijma's operations in Cameroon (Greenpeace 2002a, 2002b, 2003):

Within the last 12 months, Wijma has been caught in the act of committing fraud at least three times. And as recently as July 2002, researchers from Forests Monitor and Greenpeace have documented further evidence of the company's illegal activities. These joint field investigations have revealed that Wijma has used its legally allocated cutting permit, VC 09-02-132, to log illegally in a much larger area, well outside the official limits of this permit. Using Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates, the Forests Monitor/Greenpeace investigations have provided irrefutable evidence of an illegal road network, log ponds and abandoned logs cut up to five kilometres outside the limits of Wijma's legally allocated cutting area.

Most of these illegally cut logs were found to have been fraudulently marked with Wijma's legal logging title VC 09-02-132, which is a clear method of laundering illegal timber into the international marketplace. The investigations also revealed that Wijma's illegal logging operation was both destructive and highly wasteful, causing significant ecological, economic and social damage to the Cameroonian government, to another logging company, and to local communities.

Greenpeace (2002b:1)

Local villagers interviewed recall how disgruntled local populations used to be with Wijma, to the extent that physical conflict took place on several occasions. Complaints by local populations in the first half of the 2000s were several. First, many villagers never accepted the limits of FMU 09-021 set by Wijma (an issue which continues to create discontent in the eastern half of FMU 09-024, as mentioned below). In many cases the limits were set within a few kilometres of settlements, allegedly giving villagers little space to cultivate. By law, concessionaires are required to carry out consultations in the first three years of winning the bid to an FMU (a period known as *convention provisoire*) to fix the limits of and demarcate the FMU. However, villagers often complained that they were unable get their voice heard during these consultations, as illustrated in the case of the village of Tya'Assono (see box V).

Box V
Tya'Assono or the Difficulties of Community Forestry

The village of Tya'Assono lies some 20 kilometres east of Ma'an on the road to Ambam and Ebolowa. Since 2000, when Dutch NGO SNV encouraged the creation of community forests surrounding Campo Ma'an National Park, a community forest project has been underway. Following the departure of SNV due to changes in its strategy, a number of local NGOs have been created, including ONED (in Nyabizan), SAGED and CEPFILD (in Ma'an) to set up environment and development projects in the *commune*. Out of the three NGOs, SAGED has remained the most active locally and in the past years has upheld the creation of four community

forests in the area, of which only one was finally approved by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (Minfof); the projects for the three others were rejected on the grounds that their proposed limits overlapped with adjacent areas, notably with FMUs.

In 2003 a local association or GIC (*groupement d'intérêt commun*) called AFSONO was set up to organise village meetings in a bid to raise awareness among villagers of the community forest project. Meetings also took place with neighbouring village representatives to fix the boundaries of the community forest to the west and east. Eventually, the boundaries were submitted to MINFOF and approved in a letter of reservation dated 26 April 2004.

However, according to NGOs SAGED and Milieu Defensie, MINFOF also approved the boundaries of FMU 09-021 as requested by Wijma a mere three days later (Van Oijen 2007a), thus putting an end to the three years of *convention provisoire* and fixing the limits of the FMU for the next 27 years. It soon transpired that the FMU and Tya'Assono's community forest overlapped by some 200 ha. According to Wijma, the FMU was gazetted before the community forest, whereas Tya'Assono villagers and SAGED representatives claim that it had been gazetted several days *after* the community forest's letter of reservation was issued. A bitter battle of words ensued in which Wijma also provided proof of its consultations with local villagers in fixing the FMU's boundaries; whilst it is admitted that the head of Tya'Assono village took part in one such consultation, it is also recognised that this person was far from fluent in French and was thus unable to follow the meeting properly.

Eventually, in a bid to put an end to local discontent and quash a story which environmental NGOs had picked up on by then, Wijma accepted to pay AFSONO FCFA 2 million (€3,000) in September 2006 – the amount necessary for the association to establish a legally required management plan (*Plan simple de gestion* [AFSONO 2006]), without which it would not be allowed to log the forest. Since then, the *Plan simple de gestion* has been approved by MINFOF, but AFSONO is still waiting for its first annual logging authorisation (*Certificat annuel*) to begin logging. As SAGED members pointed out, even in the most successful case, the road to community forestry is a slow one.

Secondly, villagers complained that Wijma hardly ever recruited local people and always brought in employees from other parts of the country on the grounds that local labour lacked necessary training and skills to carry out logging operations. This has been a common complaint among local populations throughout southern Cameroon, and in the process towards certification Wijma has increased its share of local staff to some 40% of its personnel, although the vast majority of these are temporary. Recruiting staff from other parts of Cameroon often contributes to creating conflict with villagers, as is described in greater detail below.

This recruitment policy was one of the reasons for the uprising of a number of villagers in Bidjap in November 2004. Located by the main entrance to the western part of FMU 09-021, members of the village of Bidjap claim that they have seen hundreds of trucks leave the FMU loaded with valuable timber, without ever getting anything in return. One morning, a crowd gathered around the entrance and blocked the access of Wijma staff to the FMU. The conflict was only resolved when Wijma resorted to requesting help from the police and military to clear the entrance. Such barrages have occurred since on a number of occasions, both in FMUs 09-021 and 09-024.

Last but not least, Wijma adopted a very different stance towards local populations from that of HFC to which many of the villagers had rapidly got used to. When asked to describe both companies, local populations inevitably compare Wijma unfavourably. Unlike HFC, Wijma incarnated a new type of relationship with local populations whereby expenses that were

usually considered as contributions to local welfare (*œuvres sociales*) were replaced with annual forest revenue (*Redevance forestière annuelle* or RFA).⁹³

5.2.5. RFA and the Management Committee

From the first year of operations in 2001, Wijma paid large sums of money to the *commune* and deemed this contribution to local development and welfare sufficient, thus deciding not to invest in additional social enterprises (*œuvres sociales*). However, Wijma also failed to set up any policy towards local populations who – in the absence of any development projects by the *commune* despite the regular influx of RFA funds – saw little more of Wijma than timber trucks rushing past their village and local staff whom they deemed impolite. Wijma's image thus stood in stark contrast to HFC which broadly benefited from local support thanks to a member of staff in charge of relations with villagers as well as a range of carefully selected *œuvres sociales*.

In the face of complaints by villagers that they were not benefiting from the profit made in the forests surrounding them, Wijma held a meeting informing them of the amounts of money that had been paid to the local council in the form of RFA as a legal requirement to carry out logging activities. This in turn sparked riots against the mayor and his team who were accused of failing to inform the inhabitants of Ma'an of this sudden increase in local revenue.

Local authorities had indeed been very slow in communicating the funds they had been benefiting from since the early 2000s, and despite a few constructions in recent years – many of which are unfinished – the allocation of RFA funds remains a taboo subject in Ma'an. Both the mayor and his staff on the one side, and the local elite on the other, dare not bring the issue up for fear of retaliation from the other party.

As per law, 10% of RFA (*i.e.*, a fifth of what the council receives from logging companies) is to be allocated to local development projects established by “communities”, *i.e.*, villages (*chefferies de troisième degré*). For each active FMU, a “management committee” (*comité de gestion*) has been set up to study the projects submitted by the villages. The mayor sits as the president of the committee, whilst 6 of the committee's 11 members are representatives of the villages bordering the FMU. Projects accepted in the committee's annual meetings have to fit a number of criteria such as having being collective and contributing to local development. If this sum fails to be allocated in its entirety due to the absence of projects, the remainder is kept by the council as additional revenue.

Unfortunately, despite the vast amounts paid by Wijma and Bubinga (concessionaire of FMU 09-023), the council has seen very few additional public works in the 2000s. Likewise, outcomes of the 10% of the RFA allocated to “communities” have been few and far between. The most frequent type of project submitted is the construction of *corps de garde*,⁹⁴ many of

⁹³ RFA was a new form of taxation introduced in the late 1990s that was supposed to provide local *communes* with 50% of the area fee paid by logging companies. Among the *commune*'s share, a fifth was to be allocated to development projects of local communities. In the eyes of logging companies who had suddenly seen their tax levels shoot up, RFA thus represented an alternative to *œuvres sociales* as it was also supposed to promote local development. For more information on RFA please refer to the section on National forest-related policies.

⁹⁴ This term, which literally translates as “guardroom”, refers to open constructions in a public space in villages, where villagers meet up for drinks, discussions or for more official events such as meetings.

which can be observed from the road at varying degrees of construction, the builders having run out of materials and funds before the buildings could be completed. Wijma representatives also often point out certain of the committee's initiatives which defied all logic, such as the construction of toilets for a village primary school that was never built – all that remains now is a set of outdoor toilets in the middle of a field. Moreover, villagers who have attended the management committee's annual meetings often complain of the lack of transparency in deciding which projects are approved and which are rejected:

Micro-projects are imposed upon us and they refuse to give us chainsaws. The member we had elected [to represent us at the management committee] was turned down with the complicity of others. The mayor asked us to leave the room: he said, "please leave, you must not hear what will be said". We have been living with this complicity in our backs for four years now.⁹⁵

Head of a village near one of Ma'an's FMUs, interviewed 7 May 2008

Overall, therefore, Wijma's contributions to local welfare – both direct (in the form of *oeuvres sociales*) and indirect via RFA – remained minimal in the first half of the 2000s, sparking both unrest among local populations and strong criticisms among environmental NGOs. It thus came as a complete surprise when Wijma was approved FSC certification in December 2005 for the timber produced in FMU 09-021 and the company's sawmill in Bidou, in the vicinity of Kribi.

5.2.6. The Shaky Beginnings of FSC

In fact, Wijma had already taken a number of measures in favour of local populations in preparation for FSC certification. The campaigns led by CED in Cameroon and Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth in Europe, particularly in France and the Netherlands, had strong consequences on Wijma's sales whose markets were threatened by increasingly environmentally aware customers. In particular, the Dutch government – one of Wijma's largest customers given the country's public infrastructure in terms of canals and polders – was strongly pressured to establish a public procurement policy restricted to FSC-certified timber. By 2004, it had become clear that Wijma needed to steer its production towards certification if it wanted to keep its share of the Dutch public market.

Until then, logging companies in Central Africa and notably Cameroon had rejected FSC on the grounds that the conditions posed were too stringent and ill-adapted to an African context; instead, they actively endorsed one of FSC's "competitors", PAFC (Pan-African Forest Certification). Moreover, Leroy Gabon's FSC experience in 1996 had left bitter memories among Central Africa's concessionaires. Finally, observers have also claimed that the language barrier was an additional reason why FSC had not managed to gain ground in Central Africa: the label had been set up and promoted mainly by English-language organisations, and accredited companies (*i.e.*, those responsible for carrying out audits prior to

⁹⁵ « On nous impose les micro-projets, ils refusent de nous donner des tronçonneuses. Le membre qu'on avait élu [pour nous représenter au comité de gestion] a été refusé avec la complicité des autres. Le maire nous a demandé de sortir, il nous a dit « sortez, il ne faut pas que vous entendiez ce qu'on va dire ». Ca fait quatre ans que nous vivons avec cette complicité derrière notre dos. »

certification) also worked in English, thus creating a barrier for the bulk of Central Africa's large logging companies where French remains the main language.

The decision of Bureau Veritas Certification (formerly known as Bureau Veritas Quality International or BVQI), a subsidiary of French company Bureau Veritas, to become an FSC-accredited company constituted an unprecedented step forward for FSC in Central Africa. Almost overnight, at a time when European markets were becoming increasingly demanding from an environmental viewpoint, French-speaking logging companies suddenly found FSC within their reach. Geneva-based SGS (Société Générale de Surveillance) has also jumped on the bandwagon since then; logging companies in Central Africa now have two French-speaking accredited companies to choose from when seeking FSC certification.

However, back in 2004 the majority of Cameroon's logging companies were still highly sceptical of FSC certification; Wijma was still very much an exception as it implemented measures which one by one would fulfil FSC's principles and criteria for FMU 09-021. A large number of technical measures were introduced the ecological impact of logging practices; many of these were simply aimed at fulfilling the legal requirements of logging practices (thus meeting FSC's first principle, "compliance with all applicable laws" [FSC 2002]) – which many believe were hardly ever implemented at the time. Likewise, Wijma also brought its staff and recruitment policies to national legal requirements, providing the company's personnel with social security and contracts.

By simply complying with Cameroon's laws, in 2004 Wijma already obtained an OLB⁹⁶ certificate for FMU 09-021. The following year, *i.e.*, four years after the FMU had been transferred from Wijma's partner COFA, the concession's management plan was approved by MINFOF, thus fulfilling FSC's 7th principle ("Appropriate and continuously updated management plan" [FSC 2002]). The most challenging principles and criteria to meet, however, were those relating to the relationship with local populations, notably:

- Principle 3 ("Recognition and respect of indigenous peoples' rights");
- Principle 4 ("Maintenance or enhancement of long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities and respect of worker's rights in compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions"); and
- Principle 5 ("Equitable use and sharing of benefits derived from the forest") (FSC 2002).

As mentioned above, relations with local populations had reached an all-time low in 2004, when open conflict had broken out in several places with villagers. Wijma's daunting task was to turn this situation round as quickly as possible if it was to obtain FSC certification. From a theoretical viewpoint, the company was already contributing to local welfare and development through the RFA taxes: in 2007 alone, for instance, the *commune* of Ma'an received FCFA 31,475,000 (€47,000) for FMU 09-021 and 172,500,000 (€259,000) for FMU 09-024, on top of the RFA from FMUs 09-022 and 09-023 (Etienne Kuzong, personal communication).

⁹⁶ *Origine et légalité des bois* or OLB is a certificate delivered by Bureau Veritas Certification which certifies the compliance of logging activities with the laws of the country in which they operate. OLB is thus often delivered as an intermediate step on the way to FSC certification. Its "equivalent" at SGS is known as TLTV (Timber Legality and Traceability Verification).

However, in practice, very few funds actually trickled through the council to local populations (see above), prompting Wijma to introduce an alternative means of contributing to local development. In an unprecedented move, Wijma thus brought in an additional, self-imposed tax on its production: for every cubic meter produced in FMU 09-021, the company would place FCFA 1,000 (€1,50) in a kitty to be managed by a special committee known as the *Comité de suivi du plan d'aménagement* ("Monitoring committee for the management plan").

This monitoring committee, set up in 2004 for FMU 09-021, is composed of 25 representatives elected locally among the neighbouring villages; the town hall and Wijma are considered "associate members" and local NGOs "facilitating members". Associate members retain a right to veto projects if they were not to conform to a certain number of criteria such as being non-religious, collective and sustainable over the longer term. The monitoring committee meets at least three times a year and to be headed by a president from the local villages and elected by its members.

The monitoring committee thus has a double role. First, it acts as a communication channel between villagers and Wijma so as to prevent, or at least minimise, outbreaks of violence; the company also appointed a member of staff to deal solely with issues relative to the management plan, including social issues, thus creating a position which had existed in HFC before it pulled out. Secondly, the committee examines local development projects submitted by villagers through their representatives, and selects which ones may benefit from funding through the FCFA 1,000/m³ "tax".

In December 2005, all of these initial measures, along with Wijma's displayed will to improve relations with local populations, convinced Bureau Veritas Quality International to deliver Central Africa's first FSC certificate since 1996 to Wijma's management of FMU 09-021 and the company's sawmill in Bidou (certificate BV-FM/COC-051201).

5.2.7. The FSC Controversy

The certification of FMU 09-021 came as a shock to many environmental NGOs which had long been campaigning against Wijma's practices. Furthermore, unlike what had been expected in a certification procedure of this type, these NGOs – notably CED, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth – had not been consulted as potential stakeholders. As a result, all three NGOs launched a joint campaign to denounce what they regarded as complacency in the allocation of the FSC certificate whilst other NGOs closer to FSC, notably WWF, refused to take a specific stance, possibly for fear of jeopardizing what could turn out to be a promising *début* for FSC in Central Africa.

Throughout 2006 the three NGOs accused Wijma notably of failing to consult local populations in the demarcation process of FMU 09-021 and infringing certain technical rules of logging. The second accusation was upheld by the Independent Observer REM when it revealed in July 2006 that it had found Wijma to (i) declare less timber than had actually been produced and (ii) abandon non-registered timber inside the concession (Resource Extraction Monitoring 2006:20). In response to these accusations, BVQI representatives were quoted as stating that "[t]he noted offences are not the result of a deliberate desire to circumvent the law [but] are due to the company's organisational set-up, which is ill-adapted to some of the

regulations' provisions; these are difficult to apply in some cases on the ground" (quoted in Chibani-Jacquot 2006).

A formal complaint was even lodged by CED, Greenpeace International, the Forest Peoples' Programme and Milieudefensie which listed in detail the issues that made Wijma's FSC certificate questionable (Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement *et al.* 2006). Likewise, the NGO coalition – with information provided by valuable local relays such as local NGO SAGED – made public the controversy over the 200-ha overlap with the proposed community forest of Tya'Assono as an illustration of the difficult relationship with local populations (Van Oijen 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

The conflict was eventually resolved when Wijma accepted to grant FCFA 2,000,000 (€3,000) to AFSONO, the local association responsible for managing the community forest. To Wijma, this was a grant to promote community forestry; to the inhabitants of Tya'Assono, however, this represented a compensation for the loss of 200 ha to the FMU 09-021.

In response to these accusations, a first audit in FMU 09-021 by ASI (Accreditation Services International GmbH, responsible to evaluating the audits carried out by FSC-accredited companies) had concluded that the FSC certificate should not be suspended despite six ongoing major CARs and a further eight minor ones.⁹⁷ ASI's report, for instance, pointed out in response to accusations of conflicts over the limits of the FMU that "interviews indicated that the issues had been adequately dealt with by the company and that appropriate procedures and consultation had been followed" (Eba'a & De Bonafos 2006:4). In October 2006, BVQI conducted a new audit (one year after the one that had approved certification), stating that

Wijma successfully demonstrated its capacity to respond to the action requests with rapidity, efficiency and pragmatism. The elements checked in this audit have enabled us to confirm that the company has maintained the level of conformity required and may thus continue to benefit from the right to use the FSC trademark.⁹⁸

Bureau Veritas Certification (2008:66)

However, this quote was followed by a rather ominous section 7.15 called "Certification Decision" which was limited to the following word: "Decision ???" (*sic*).⁹⁹ This appeared to announce the audit of April 2007 which followed up on BVQI's sudden announcement that Wijma's certificate for FMU 09-021 and Bidou sawmill was going to be suspended (taking effect on 30 May 2007), following the alleged visit of the head of FSC-International himself. The April 2007 audit concluded that

⁹⁷ CARs or corrective action requests are conditional demands made by an accredited company to a certified company that must be fulfilled within a year if the certified company is to retain its certification label. CARs can be classified as either major or minor according to the importance of the correction to be made.

⁹⁸ « L'entreprise Wijma a su démontrer sa capacité à répondre aux actions demandées avec rapidité, efficacité et pragmatisme. Les éléments vérifiés lors de cet audit nous permettent d'affirmer que l'entreprise conserve le niveau de conformité exigé et peut donc continuer à bénéficier du droit d'usage de la marque FSC ».

⁹⁹ « Décision ??? » (Bureau Veritas Certification 2008:66).

After a rich discussion, the committee accepts to follow the auditors' opinion and to suspend forest management certificate BV-FM/COC-051201 for Wijma Douala. The 5 major CARs pointed out by the monitoring audit have shown that the company has failed to maintain the level of performance required by FSC.¹⁰⁰

Bureau Veritas Certification (2008:79).

For the coalition of NGOs that had denounced several of Wijma's activities following its FSC certification, this was a victory; however, this decision dealt a blow not only to Wijma itself, but also to BVQI whose FSC accreditation was suspended following what appeared to many as a scandal. ASI's June 2006 audit had mentioned that "ASI audit team considers that at time of the FSC surveillance audit, the certification body had not adequately evaluated compliance of the certificate holder with the following FSC certification requirements" (Eba'a & De Bonafos 2006:10). This, along with NGOs' formal complaints on the performance of Bureau Veritas in the field of FSC certification ultimately pushed FSC (upon ASI's advice) to suspend the company's accreditation in February 2007.

BVQI eventually recovered its accreditation in June that year after ASI had carried out a new evaluation in April 2007 which concluded that "[b]ased on the work done by the BV audit team to address the issues raised by ASI and the outcome of this ASI audit, the ASI auditor recommends reinstating accreditation for Bureau Veritas Certification in Cameroon" (Accreditation Services International 2007:13).

However, it was a full year before Wijma's FSC certification suspension came to an end. During that time, Wijma worked on achieving its CARs, most of which were of a technical nature (relative to high conservation value sites and reduced impact logging practices), but some of which also concerned internal policies towards the company's staff (including prevention of on-site injuries and comprehensive coverage for medical treatment). Likewise, attention was also drawn by the auditors to the management of the Monitoring committee (whose issues are discussed in the next section).

It was during this time of crisis that most of the staff at Wijma Douala SARL was renewed and the forest management unit (*cellule d'aménagement*) grew with the recruitment of several new members of staff, including an expatriate. A whole series of new measures were introduced in the management of FMU 09-021 throughout the year 2007, the bulk of which were centred on fulfilling outstanding CARs. When re-accredited Bureau Veritas Certification carried out a new audit in January 2008, it found that Wijma had successfully fulfilled all five outstanding major CARs and three of the minor CARs. It concluded that despite the addition of a minor CAR,

¹⁰⁰ « Après une riche discussion, le Comité accepte de suivre l'avis des auditeurs et de suspendre le certificat de gestion forestière Wijma Douala BV-FM/COC-051201. En effet, les 5 DAC majeurs mises en évidence par l'audit de surveillance montrent que l'entreprise n'a pas maintenu le niveau de performance que requiert FSC ».

Following the examination of the audit report RPCF 060101 version 6.0, the Forest and Timber Certification Committee has unanimously decided that Wijma Douala has attained the level of requirement necessary to lift the suspension of certificate BV-FM/COC-051201.¹⁰¹

Bureau Veritas Certification (2008:97).

Wijma also decided not to repeat its “mistake” of getting one certificate for both FMU 09-021 and its Bidou sawmill, which cost them the Chain of Custody Certificate for the sawmill when the certificate of FMU 09-021 was suspended; these certificates have since been separated. Wijma lost several public bids in the Netherlands throughout 2007 and the first half of 2008 as it was unable to guarantee FSC-certified timber for the construction of public infrastructure; the company’s main competitor TRC (Transformation Reef Cameroon, also a Dutch company – see box below) took the lead thanks to the certification of its FMU 00-004 in February 2008, a month before Wijma recovered its own certificate for FMU 09-024.

However, in April 2008, Wijma’s demand for FSC certification for FMU 09-024 was also approved, except for the strip of the FMU that runs along the border with Equatorial Guinea (totalling 25% of the FMU’s surface area). This is because (i) the border with Equatorial Guinea – and thus the southern boundary of the FMU – have yet to be demarcated, and (ii) cross-border activities which include smuggling, bushmeat hunting and illegal logging carry on to this day, mainly as a result of insufficient border patrols by the relevant Cameroonian authorities.

5.2.8. All Better?

There is overwhelming recognition – even among several stakeholders who remain very critical – of the progress that Wijma has made, especially in social aspects of forest management such as human resources policy and in improving relations with local populations. Physical conflict with local populations has been all but unheard of in the past couple of years; and many of the NGOs which once took part in campaigns against Wijma are now in speaking terms with the company.

Moreover, Wijma has expanded its contributions to the development and welfare of its staff and local populations (*œuvres sociales*) to a range of activities, such as:

1. Providing all of the villages along the road from Nyabizan through Ma’an and beyond with modern road signs in accordance with current Cameroonian legislation, indicating churches and schools, entrances to villages, bends in the road, etc. The proliferation of these road signs – all of which bear the company name and logo – has earned several villages in the area the nickname of *village Wijma* (“The Wijma villages”), to the annoyance of some local inhabitants. Interestingly, side-roads off the main axis have not benefited from any signposting (such as the short road leading to the village enclaves in the eastern part of FMU 09-024 such as Aloum II and Evouzok), despite the fact that they are also neighbours with the FMU.

¹⁰¹ « Suite à l’examen du rapport d’audit de référence RPCF 060101 version 6.0, le Comité de certification Forêt – Bois estime à l’unanimité que l’entreprise Wijma Douala a atteint le niveau d’exigence requis pour lever la suspension du certificat BV/COC-051201 ».

2. Creating a library and providing local schools with stationery for the most needy in a programme known as “School Caravan” (*caravane scolaire*). Moreover, scholarships have been handed out to top-ranking pupils in Ma’an.
3. In recent months, a new programme has been set up to promote animal rearing in the vicinity of FMUs 09-021 and 09-024. So far a course for animal rearing has already been carried out to which representatives of each village were invited, although some local inhabitants have complained that these representatives have failed to disseminate this newly acquired knowledge to their fellow villagers. Further workshops and other components of the programme are planned for the coming years in collaboration with the head of the Zootechnical Centre for Sanitary Veterinary Control in Ma’an (*Centre zootechnique et de contrôle sanitaire vétérinaire de Ma’an*), a local unit of the Ministry of Animal Breeding, Fisheries and Industries. This is being set up as part of the fight against bushmeat hunting which remains an extremely common activity in Ma’an.
4. For the company’s own staff, a shop (*économat*) has been set up where staff can buy produce, both fresh and tinned. The *économat* is located in Ma’an inside the *base-vie*. As part of this initiative, a chicken breeding programme has been established with some 300 animals, in collaboration with the Zootechnical Centre and also located in the *base-vie*.
5. Again, for its staff, Wijma has funded the construction of a new room in the local health centre/clinic which caters exclusively for staff and their families. Medical assistance is provided free of charge for Wijma staff and their families, although any medicine is at the individuals’ expense (except if the illness or injury is work-related). HIV testing and information is provided by Wijma which also covers tritherapy treatment for its own staff.¹⁰²
6. Thanks to the petrol tanks and garage that the company has set up on its *base-vie*, Wijma has also fixed petrol allowances for a certain number of public figures (including the head of military police or *gendarme*, the mayor and the staff of the local MINFOF unit) and allows them to get their vehicles repaired locally. Likewise, given the quality of accommodation available in the *base-vie* as opposed to the rest of Ma’an, Wijma often offers to accommodate public figures visiting the area such as the Prefect (*Préfet*) inside the *base-vie*.
7. Every year, Wijma gives out packages of food to each village over the period between Christmas and New Year.
8. Wijma – like most other logging companies which operate in places with difficult access – also contributes to maintaining roads in a passable state. Although this measure is much appreciated by villagers, it must be admitted that the main objective of road maintenance is to evacuate timber from the FMUs.

¹⁰² In Cameroon a month of tritherapy treatment costs approximately FCFA 3,000, *i.e.*, some € 4.50. In Ma’an as in other places where logging companies operate, rates of HIV infection vary between 15 and 20% of the population. The concentration of male workers who live far from their families and receive regular wages encourages a twice-monthly influx of prostitutes from nearby cities (in this case Ebolowa and Ambam) which coincides with the times at which wages are paid. In a country where people have received insufficient education on the modes of HIV transmission and where condoms remain expensive, heterosexual prostitution (rural and urban alike) remains the main source of HIV infection.

9. Last but not least, Wijma has equipped the town of Ma'an with an electricity generator which works from 6 p.m. to midnight, although it often breaks down following bad weather and is not repaired for several weeks. The company's *base-vie* is equipped with electricity and wi-fi 24 hours a day.

However, unlike HFC's practices in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Wijma does not provide any funds for private events such as weddings and funerals; neither does it give lifts in its vehicles to villagers, much to the annoyance of the latter who use these examples to complain that Wijma is not doing all it could to help out local populations. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the section below on models of social policies in concessions.

Likewise, the Monitoring Committees of FMU 09-021 and 09-024 have successfully implemented a number of projects which have benefited from funding through Wijma's self-imposed tax.¹⁰³ Regarding FMU 09-021, beginnings were erratic as Wijma accepted to fund building materials for public buildings such as *corps de garde* and relied on villagers as labour. When applied to the village of Bidjap which was among the first to benefit from this new tax back in 2004, this system resulted in building materials being distributed among villagers before construction even started.

Since then, projects need to include both the cost of labour and materials. Around FMU 09-021 a range of projects have been carried out, including schools, wells and numerous *corps de garde*. Yet many of these projects are still criticised by local villagers. In the case of one school, despite the fact that a brick school was completed several years ago, children still attend the temporary bamboo construction next door as villagers claim that the new school is structurally unstable and could collapse any day. Concerning one of the wells, just like every other development project funded by Wijma it was adorned with a signpost that read *Don Wijma* ("Gift from Wijma"). Yet local inhabitants managed to have the sign changed to *Réalisation sociale Wijma* ("Social enterprise by Wijma") after claiming that

Wijma wanted to write "Gift from Wijma", but I demanded that they write instead "Social Enterprise by Wijma". They did understand in the end. The term "gift" is very humiliating! We are partners; we are not assisted. After all, the forest belongs to us.¹⁰⁴

Interview with a villager east of Ma'an, 24 April 2008

As for *corps de garde*, some villagers have complained that they do not necessarily fulfil the requirement of a "collective good" – one of the criteria that development projects must fulfil if the Monitoring Committee is to approve them. At first sight, *corps de garde* are by definition for collective use; yet upon closer inspection, one finds that a single village may have up to three such buildings, each of them happening to be located in front of the house of

¹⁰³ Whilst this tax has been fixed at FCFA 1,000/m³ for FMU 09-021, Wijma decided to pay a lump sum of FCFA 4.5 million per year to the villages neighbouring FMU 09-024 because the FMU is considerably larger (over double the size of FMU 09-021) whilst there are only 9 villages surrounding the FMU (approximately 1,000 inhabitants) as opposed to the 35 villages (10 to 12,000 inhabitants) located in the vicinity of FMU 09-021. One observer pointed out that FCFA 4.5 million was the price of one large azobe tree.

¹⁰⁴ « Wijma voulait mettre « don de Wijma », mais j'ai exigé qu'on écrive « réalisation sociale avec Wijma ». Ils ont fini par comprendre. Le don, c'est très humiliant ! On est des partenaires, pas des assistés. Après tout, la forêt nous appartient. »

a local elite. These buildings thus seem to be used as status symbols between competing elite in the same village. This criticism is valid for all *corps de garde*, whether they be the result of funding through the Monitoring Committee or the Management Committee.

Around FMU 09-024, the main contribution of the Monitoring Committee to local welfare has been the construction of elevated footpaths (*ponceaux*) and canoes to facilitate local transport. Communication with villages surrounding FMU 09-024 continue to be hampered by the numerous branches of the Ntem, and in the case of the path leading to the villages along the FMU's eastern border (Aloum II, Evouzok, Nsengou and Abong) footpaths go through marshes at several points. The Monitoring Committee thus decided to set funds aside to build (i) canoes to cross the Ntem both on this eastern axis and west of Nyabizan, and (ii) several elevated footpaths leading to the isolated villages east of the concession mentioned above – thus making a trip from Ma'an to one of those villages little more than a morning's stroll through the forest (at least during the dry season).

Yet despite these investments villagers have continued to complain about the insufficient contribution that Wijma provides to local development in compensation for their foregone access to the forests surrounding them. In the villages east of FMU 09-024, local populations continue to demand to be “disenclaved” (*désenclavé*), *i.e.*, that a passable road be built to access these villages. Again, Wijma compares unfavourably with HFC which had not only built and maintained new roads in the region, but also promised to build a road on the southern edge of FMU 09-024 (along the border with Equatorial Guinea) to connect with those villages – although it obviously never kept its promise and pulled out before any work was done.

The small number of environmental NGOs who still oppose Wijma have criticised the company's social enterprises on the grounds that they are being carried out with the sole aim of getting certification approved rather than out of genuine concern for local welfare. At first sight, this criticism does not seem to hold as FSC and local welfare appear to converge in all points. However, upon closer inspection, the vast majority of Wijma's social enterprises are located right along the main road axis to Ma'an and Nyabizan. The sheer proliferation of Wijma's blue logos, both on road signs and on the company's development projects, comforts the visitor's impression that Wijma is contributing in all ways possible to local welfare.

Yet – as illustrated by the absence of signs on the road to Aloum II and Evouzok (see above) – very few of Wijma's projects are located further inside the villages out of sight from the main road (one notable exception being the footpaths leading to Aloum II and Evouzok). Likewise, despite calls by the local unit of the Ministry of agriculture (MINADER) to invest in agricultural products such as seeds and fertiliser, the Monitoring committee continues to validate almost exclusively projects which involve constructing buildings or infrastructure, *i.e.*, setting up physically palpable objects. It could therefore be suggested that the location and nature of Wijma's projects has at least partly been decided in function of the maximisation of their visual impact on the traveller/visitor (including the auditor), occasionally giving the scenery from a vehicle the looks of a show.

Problems also exist in the current makeup of the Monitoring Committee, especially that of FMU 09-021. As one observer described it, “the Monitoring Committee is afflicted with a terrible disease – its President”.¹⁰⁵ Ever since the president was elected in 2004, several

¹⁰⁵ « Le comité de suivi de la 09-021 est affecté par une maladie terrible : son président ».

complaints have come to surface concerning the Committee's president's attempt to control the allocation of funds. Although an isolated problem in this case, this example illustrates the difficulties with which such committees have to contend with in situations where capture of such processes by the local elite at the expense of the rest of the population remains a genuine threat.

The relationship between ordinary villagers and the Monitoring Committee whose members are required to hold regular village meetings to communicate the minutes of the Committee's decisions, is another weak spot. On several occasions, villagers have complained that the Committee members supposed to represent them are never in touch with villagers who have expressed frustration at knowing little of the activities of the Committee.

Another controversial issue concerns the selection of villages to benefit from the funds available each year. Every year funds are not sufficient for every village to benefit from its own development project; a complex scheme has been devised whereby each village gets its turn every few years. In FMU 09-021, the villages closest to the area of annual allowable cut or AAC¹⁰⁶ get to benefit from the funds. Since the FMU is divided into 30 AACs and given its shape (long and thin with a broadly east-west orientation, and bordered by a road dotted with villages), Wijma has divided the road (and thus the villages) using north-south lines on a map fixing which villages benefit from the funds produced by the logging of each AAC.

Unfortunately, this system has sparked jealousy between neighbouring villages as some benefit from funds only one year, whereas others located near two or more AACs may enjoy two or three times more funds, spread over an equal number of years. Likewise, the village of Mebem, located on the eastern tip of the FMU, was once very close to the FMU but since its demarcation it lies further away from it, meaning that it does not benefit at all from funds channelled through the Monitoring Committee. Village leaders filed a complaint in April 2008 which Wijma was examining at the time of writing. As for FMU 09-024, the selection of villages to benefit from each year's funds is less subject to controversy as the 9 villages are geographically concentrated in two distinct groups known as Ntem Meanders I and Ntem Meanders II (Boucle du Ntem I & II): each group benefits from the funds every other year.

It must be pointed out, however, that all these problems are relative. Whilst some local development projects have been heavily criticised and some institutional details are often questioned (see box on "Boucle du Ntem II" notably), it remains that the Monitoring Committees for both FMU 09-021 and 09-024 have at least partly fulfilled their objectives. First, their existence has undoubtedly contributed to building a cooperative relationship between Wijma and local populations, thus preventing unrest and helping problems to be resolved collectively through dialogue rather than confrontation. Secondly, all stakeholders agree that the Monitoring Committee has been much more efficient than the Management Committee in implementing development projects, even in spite of much more limited funds.

However, one major issue that the Monitoring Committees have been unable to solve is the difficult relationship between villagers and Wijma staff. A number of complaints have been voiced by local populations concerning Wijma staff who have been accused of failing to pay back their creditors and having affairs with local married women: "We have a problem with their staff", a villager point out. "They touch other people's women and give them

¹⁰⁶ AAC or Annual Allowable Cut (*Assiette annuelle de coupe*) refers to the fragment of FMU which is to be logged in a specific year. Given that FMUs are allocated to a company for 30 years, they are each divided into 30 AACs with a maximum of 2,500 ha each, beyond which additional rules may apply.

diseases”.¹⁰⁷ Many of these accusations happen on a case-by-case basis and can in no way be generalised to all of Wijma staff, but the fact remains that such events embitter the relationship with disgruntled local populations.

More importantly, members of staff themselves have also claimed that workers’ rights have not been respected. A closer look at these claims reveals that Wijma staff benefit from all the rights provided by law and expected by FSC, including individual security gear (*équipement de protection individuel* or EPI) in the field, safe means of transport (trucks with benches), wages above the legal minimum and comprehensive medical coverage (as mentioned above) – such bonuses being extremely rare in practice in Cameroon. Yet much of the human resources used by the company also come from a subcontracting company called Bongtang Frères whose staff has access to none of the benefits that Wijma staff enjoys. Likewise, subcontracted guards claim to earn some FCFA 20,000 a month (€30) for daily 12-hours shifts.

Box VI

Boucles du Ntem II: the Case of FMU 09-024’s Enclaves

Since its demarcation in 2006, the eastern edge of FMU 09-024 looks a bit like Swiss cheese. The reason for this is five villages (*chefferies*) surrounded by forests are located inside what should have been the FMU: Abang, Aloum II, Evouzok, Mekondom and Nsengou. Wijma, in a bid to limit its concession to forested areas, excluded these villages from the FMU, which also enabled the company to reduce its RFA taxes as these are area-based. However, the company’s wish was to include as much forest as possible, and as a result, these villages are often surrounded by the FMU which runs no further than 500 metres from the villagers’ houses.

As a result of being a day away on foot from the nearest road, the inhabitants of these villages continue to lead a more traditional lifestyle than on their counterparts on the nearby road axes and depend more on local produce (whether cultivated or collected from the forest) than manufactured goods. The most lucrative business has now become smuggling goods over the border from Equatorial Guinea, especially petrol for which prices in Cameroon are three times those across the border. As a result of greater contact with Equatorial Guinea than the rest of Cameroon, many villagers speak better Spanish than French. Yet villagers also complain that they are isolated, and a brief look into their history shows that their population size has gradually decreased over the past few decades due to the young emigrating to urban centres. Today, they claim that the decision to turn the forests they used to depend on into an FMU is both stifling their livelihoods and jeopardising all future chances of seeing their villages grow again.

The relationship between these villages and Wijma has a chequered history. Contact between the two began in 2005 when Wijma staff were first sent to the villages to inform them of the demarcation of the FMU and the creation of the Monitoring Committee for FMU 09-024, to which each village was to send two representatives. The villages rapidly benefited from Wijma’s activities through the construction of a series of elevated footpaths on the path leading to Ma’an, although local development projects by the Monitoring Committee have since been temporarily halted in favour of the four other villages in the Ntem Meanders II sector (see main text above).

Further contact between Wijma and the villages only ever took place through the Monitoring Committee which would meet three times a year, or through SAGED whose staff visits the area regularly. According to villagers of Aloum II, early in 2006 Wijma staff visited their village (while the chief was out) to assess the potential boundaries of the FMU. In July that year, as required by law, a public consultation meeting was held in Ambam (the capital of the district or *département* which Ma’an is located in) to discuss the limits and demarcation of FMU 09-024. Village chiefs claim that they received the invitation to attend the meeting three days after it had been held and none of them was thus able to attend the event. The issues raised at the meeting were related to them by an inhabitant of Evouzok who happened to be in Ambam because he had just received medical treatment. He claimed to have demanded that an agroforestry buffer zone of 5 km be established all around the villages and that the authorities had replied that they would ensure 3 km.

¹⁰⁷ « Nous avons des problèmes avec le personnel. Ils touchent les femmes d’autrui et leur transmettent des maladies » (Interview with a villager, 2 May 2008).

It thus came as a shock to the local populations to find Wijma staff putting up signs as part of the demarcation process which were sometimes no further than 500 metres from some of the settlements (notably Evouzok and the hamlet of Aloum Akol). In August, a meeting was held in Ma'an during which a complaint was filed to Wijma, asking the company to reduce the FMU by 4,000 ha in order to provide the villages of *Boucle du Ntem II* with a larger agroforestry zone. Since then, the file is still pending, despite regular reminders sent by the inhabitants of these enclaves such as the one below:

“We have found that (a) the transects¹⁰⁸ go through our subsistence and cocoa plantations; (b) these transects go very close to the village; and (c) our sacred sites are entirely located inside FMU 09-24. Given the demographic situation (...) we risk running out of cultivable space. This is why we demand that (1) transects demarcating FMU 09-024 in Evouzok go beyond our plantations and fallow fields; and (2) that our sacred sites be located entirely outside FMU 09-024”¹⁰⁹ (Letter from the village chief of Evouzok to the Environmental Delegate of Ntem District, dated 14 December 2006).

In practice, it is often difficult for an untrained eye to see where fields end and the forest begins. In forested areas, slash-and-burn practices and rotating field systems remain very common, where land is left fallow for a decade or so before being cultivated again. During this time, secondary growth has enough time to grow in what at first looks like a forest; only the absence of the largest trees shows that the area in question was recently clear-felled. In many cases, therefore, villagers are better able to tell than the staff of logging companies where village land (*terroir*) ends and the forest begins, hence the need for participative demarcation.

Today, many of the inhabitants of these enclaves fear that the FMU's demarcation has fixed the area of cultivable lands to levels which cannot sustain the local population; given that these villages rely even more than elsewhere on local produce, their dependence on agricultural land is all the more critical to the survival of these settlements. According to them, the demarcation of the FMU is only further contributing to the gradual suffocation and inevitable disappearance of their villages.

5.2.9. Institutional Proliferation

Wijma is one of the rare cases where additional, self-imposed taxes are paid to local populations on top of existing RFA. In other words, and in theory at least, local populations benefit from logging activities (i) through RFA, 40% of which is paid to the local council, and 10% of which is destined for development projects among local populations; in the latter case, funds are managed by a *comité de gestion* (management committee), as described above; and (ii) through the “self-imposed taxes” whose rules differ according to the FMU (FCFA 1,000/m³ [€ 1.50] for 09-021, a lump sum of FCFA 4.5 million [€ 6,750] for 09-024) but the funds of which are managed by a *comité de suivi* (monitoring committee).

In theory, a third entity is supposed to exist at village level, known as *comité paysan-forêt* (forest farmer committee), whose objective is to monitor logging activities and act as a channel of communication between local populations and MINFOF. Each of these committees is described in Table VI below.

¹⁰⁸ The boundary of FMUs in Cameroon must be marked both by transects and red signs posted on trees.

¹⁰⁹ « Nous avons constaté que (a) les layons passent dans nos plantations vivrières et cacaoyères ; (b) ces layons passent non loin du village ; (c) nos sites sacrés se trouvent entièrement dans l'UFA 09-024. Compte tenu des raisons démographiques (...) nous risquons de ne plus avoir l'espace cultivable [sic]. C'est pour cette raison que nous sollicitons que (1) les layons de la délimitation de l'UFA 09-024 à Evouzok passent au-delà de nos plantations et au-delà de nos jachères ; (2) les sites sacrés soient pleinement hors de l'UFA 09-024. »

This complex institutional configuration – which fails to follow the principle of parsimony, to say the least – is obviously the product of existing divisions and disagreements between organisations rather than a common search for efficiency. The ministerial schism that exists in Cameroon since 1998 between MINFOF, responsible for forest management, and MINEFI, which manages forest revenue, has obviously translated locally into the creation of two distinct forest organisations, namely forest farmer and management committees respectively. On top of this, Wijma pushed for the creation of a third forest committee, the monitoring committee, after it concluded on the lack of efficiency of the Management committee in allocating RFA to local development projects.

This institutional entanglement has both created confusion – especially among villagers who regularly mistake one committee for the other – and competition between committees, notably between the management and monitoring committees, the members of which each denounce the problems and handicaps of the other. For instance, Wijma regularly publicises the amounts of money paid each year through RFA to the local council to raise awareness on the funds available to the Management committee (partly to show the latter's lack of efficiency). Moreover, the overlap between the composition and objectives of each of these organisations means that in practice the institutional configuration varies from one place to another. A brief account of FMU 00-004 managed by TRC is a good illustration of this (see box VII below).

	<i>Comité de gestion</i> (Management Committee)	<i>Comité de suivi</i> (Monitoring committee)	<i>Comité paysan forêt</i> (Forest farmer committee)
Originally created by	A decree from the Ministry of Finance (MINEFI)	Decision by Wijma	A decree from the Ministry of Forestry (MINFOF)
Funds managed	10% of annual forest revenue (RFA)	Wijma's "additional" taxes (FCFA 1000/m ³ and 4.5 million)	None (except for FMU 00-004 where it manages TRC's "additional" taxes)
Level of operation	FMU	FMU	Village
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select development projects for local "communities" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable communication between Wijma and local populations Select development projects for local populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a channel between populations and MINFOF and monitor logging activities In the case of FMU 00-004 (TRC): select development projects for local populations and enable communication with TRC
Composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 president (the mayor) 1 auditor (village member) 1 recording secretary (usually the head of the local MINFOF unit) the municipal tax collector 6 village members any other relevant person (usually the town hall's secretary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 president (elected by the committee every 3 years) 1 vice-president (elected by the committee) Representatives from each village (1 per village for 09-024, 2 per village for 09-024) 2 associate members (Wijma & local council) facilitating members (local NGOs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 president (Village chief) 1 member of each of the following: the village's development committee, the domestic elite, the outside elite, the women's association, the planters' association, and of youth 1 representative for other GIC and associations (TRC 2007:87)

Table VI. — The three types of forest committee in Ma'an.

Box VII **TRC's Social Policies in FMU 00-004**

Wijma is often compared to its main competitor TRC (Transformation Reef Cameroon), a Dutch company which has been operating in Cameroon since 1999 and has an important share of the public markets in the Netherlands. Just like Wijma, it also focuses primarily on the production of azobe which it has been logging since 2002 in FMU 00-004, located on the border between the Central and Littoral provinces of Cameroon.

Given that both companies aspire to occupy the same niche in terms of markets, TRC was also pressured to invest in FSC certification for its Cameroonian timber products. Faced with the same problem that the RFA the company was paying did not appear to translate into local development, TRC devised a similar system to Wijma based on a self-imposed tax of FCFA 500 (€0.75) per cubic metre of timber produced which would be channelled towards funding local development projects.

However, the institutional configuration created to channel these funds differs significantly from the one observed in Ma'an. In Ma'an, when asked why forest farmer committees never saw the light of day, many villagers claim that Wijma created an alternative structure to prevent the forest farmer committee from fulfilling one of its main functions – monitor logging activities. In the case of FMU 00-004, however, TRC actually used

forest farmer committees created in 2006 as a means of (i) communicating with villagers and (ii) selecting local development projects funded by TRC's additional tax. Forest farmer committees in 00-004 have thus taken on the role of Monitoring committees in FMUs 09-021 and 09-024.

Since February 2008, Transformation Reef Cameroon has benefited from an FSC certificate for FMU 00-004.

5.3. SOCIAL POLICIES IN CAMEROON'S TIMBER CONCESSIONS: THREE MODELS

Based on this brief study of concessions in Ma'an and comparisons with other case-studies, one may draw up three distinct models of the relationship between concessionaires and local populations. These three models are tendencies rather than accurate descriptions of the relationship between a concessionaire and local populations. Every case observed is thus composed of elements of the three models, although generally all cases tend towards a specific model.

The most striking feature in the relationship between a company managing a concession and neighbouring local populations in Cameroon is the discrepancy in wealth between the two: on one side, the company often generates considerable amounts of money from the use of natural resources (whether they be timber, minerals or any other product). Moreover, in the case of Cameroon, the company includes among its staff a certain number of expatriates who require high standards of living as an incentive to live and work in the field (as described in the footnote on *base-vie*). On the other side, rural populations are characterised by limited access to public services such as communication, education and health, and except for a tiny elite minority would be living in conditions below the World Bank's "US\$1 a day" threshold were it not for the high exchange rate of the Franc CFA.

Each of the models described below of the relationship between a concessionaire and local populations thus focuses on coping with this hiatus which – as Marxist theory correctly predicts – creates a serious source of potential tension and social conflict.

5.3.1. *The Flying Saucer*

As mentioned above, throughout history chartered companies and concessionaires have been required to contribute to the development of the zone which they manage, at least partly to the benefit of local populations. In practice, however, lack of enforcement of the terms agreed upon and "clientelist" relations between the state and concessionaires have maintained this type of activity to a minimum, allowing the concessionaire to focus on productivity and maximise its margin of benefits. In this sense, concessionaires often take the form of a flying saucer in the sense that despite the discrepancies between concessionaire and local populations, the relations between the two remains minimal.

The flying saucer analogy is appropriate in more ways than one. Not only does it underline the discrepancy – in this case in terms of wealth – between a concessionaire and the

concession's immediate environment, but concessions are often managed by foreign companies, which only further contributes to the shock between the company's culture and of some of its staff on the one hand, and local populations on the other. Furthermore, the company's personnel often rely on supplies brought in from outside and many concessions are equipped with an airstrip for small aircraft to this effect. Finally, just like a flying saucer, concessionaires pack up and leave after the concession contract has come to an end (30 years in the case of forest concessions in Cameroon).

The *base-vie* or basecamp for expatriate staff is a good illustration of the tendency of most of Cameroon's concessions' to resemble a flying saucer. The camp is generally fenced off and guarded from the surrounding village or settlement. Likewise, the boundary between a concession and surrounding agroforestry zones is materialised in the form of a transect (*layon*) and signposts warning intruders of restrictions of activities inside the concession. In both cases, boundaries are physically marked so as to minimise contact between the two groups of actors.

In a number of cases, this model is taken to an extreme: in a bid to avoid physical contact – let alone conflict – with local populations, some companies resort to employing private militia. Several companies in Cameroon have included such components, although to a much lesser degree than a few famous cases elsewhere, such as that of Freeport in Indonesian Papua.

PT Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of US company Freeport McMoRan, operates one of the world's largest copper mines in the world located near Timika, in the southern highlands of Indonesian Papua. Despite the secrecy surrounding the company's activities, its name is notoriously associated with human rights abuses and forcing the local Amungme and Kamoro people of their land (*e.g.*, Leith 2002). Freeport is also believed to have benefited from the Indonesian armed forces (ABRI) during Suharto's regime to keep local populations at a distance that would not jeopardise their activities.

Local people's discontent at the situation regularly led to outbreaks of violence, culminating in the murder of three schoolteachers inside the Freeport compounds in 2002, although it is not known whether it was Papuan nationalists or the Indonesian army who perpetrated the crime. Since then, however, Freeport has spent several millions US dollars on promoting local development. Freeport certainly remains an extreme case which nevertheless shares a set of characteristics with a number of timber concessions in Cameroon. Yet despite strong criticism by certain NGOs, they still lag far behind Freeport in their tendency to isolate themselves from their environment.

From a historical perspective, the Flying Saucer model is strongly reminiscent of the colonial era. After all, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term "colony" as "a number of people of one nationality residing in a foreign country; the quarter thus occupied" (Onions 1983:369). In a Cameroonian context where logging companies are often registered in Europe or Asia, the resemblance can sometimes be striking. Yet concessions are not the only types of forest or land management which retain such a colonial flavour: those managing protected areas have also been confronted with the issue of isolating a specific geographical area from surrounding (and even resident) populations. Until a couple of decades ago, what we now call "fortress conservation" was the main conservation paradigm in relation to local populations, whereby the latter were systematically kept out of conservation units, even if this occasionally meant resorting to violence.

Yet just like protected areas, timber concessions could not be totally sealed off from their environment and surrounding villagers, the use of violence towards the latter being the best illustration of this point. Social policies in concessions have always acknowledged this fact and have attempted to minimise or regulate this contact instead, either through forceful or collaborative means. The Flying Saucer model, based on total absence of contact between concessionaires and local populations, thus remains a tendency, a model, rather than a category of social policy that might be found “out there”.

Another reason why Flying Saucers might be difficult to find in the field is that it is increasingly difficult to implement such a model nowadays for two reasons. First, in an era of heightened environmental and social awareness, such a tendency is increasingly frowned upon both by policy makers and public opinion (and thus consumers). In the past two decades, unprecedented pressure has come to lie on timber concessionaires and their ecological impact on the forest, but also in their role in contributing to the development of some of the world’s poorest countries. Moreover, with the advent of market-based instruments such as certification, this pressure not only comes through new policies, laws and NGO campaigns, but also from the market.

In fact this pressure has existed throughout the history of colonialism – as mentioned above, chartered companies and early concessionaires were also expected to contribute to local development. Yet the main difference between then and today was that concessionaires could get away with almost anything because of the lack of means of communication. Today, cameras, GPSs, radios, phones and the growth of transport have prevented concessions from being as hermetically sealed as they once were. As an ex-employee of a logging company in Cameroon’s Eastern Province once pointed out when describing working conditions in the 1980s,

Back then we knew nothing of workers’ rights and never knew that we were entitled to minimum wages and the right to strike. Today I would only need to speak to my cousin in Douala on the phone to know what to do in case the company tries to trick us into something.¹¹⁰

A retired employee from a logging company in Eastern Cameroon,
interviewed 17.03.08

5.3.2. The State within a State

From the earliest examples onwards, chartered companies and concessionaires have resorted to solving the issue of wealth discrepancy with local populations by redistributing part of the profits gained in ways that often resembled those of a modern state. Of course, chartered companies took this logic to an extreme since as per their agreement with European powers, they represented the state in the territories they colonised. Most of them, if not all, were notably equipped with an army, thus attempting to control the monopoly of legitimate violence – a trait usually reserved to the state. Entire regions were controlled in this way, such

¹¹⁰ A l’époque on ne connaissait rien des droits des employés, on ne savait pas qu’on avait droit à un salaire minimum et le droit de grève. Aujourd’hui il suffirait que j’appelle mon cousin à Douala pour savoir ce que je dois faire si la société essayait encore de nous rouler.

as the Dutch East Indies until the dissolution of the VOC (Dutch East India Company) in 1799 and the subsequent takeover of the colony by the Dutch state itself (although historians agree that the governance of the Dutch East Indies hardly changed following this takeover [Ricklefs 2001:144]). As Braddick points out, chartered companies were a form of “delegation and government by licence” (1998:286).

In many ways, early concessionaires shared this characteristic with chartered companies. As Coquery-Vidrovitch (2001:51) points out, none of them in French Congo ever received any sort of delegation of sovereignty, notably as a means of ensuring that colonialism remained a patriotic affair, at least in France. However, the same author also admits that:

1. Debates on concession-based systems in the French press of the 1880s centred around colonisation by private companies as an alternative to colonisation by the state (2001:27);
2. These companies had the task of developing means of communication and transport inside their concessions (telegraph wires, steamboats and railways notably) (2001:51-2); and
3. These companies were given the right to collect taxes from local populations (2001:27-8). This right was lost in the 1910s when sweeping reforms were introduced to control concessionaires in the French Congo.

The rights of today’s concessionaires are fundamentally different as they do not enjoy the rights over local populations that their early counterparts once did, such as tax collection. Instead, the state often requires them to carry out a number of social enterprises such as building schools or clinics. Likewise, the state and local populations alike expect them to contribute to building public infrastructure including roads and local electricity grids. In fact, infrastructure such as the last two examples mentioned comes to little additional cost to the company as it already needs to build it for itself (or it would not be able to have functional offices in the field or be able to evacuate its timber products).

Many of the towns found in Cameroon’s forested regions grew around a concession and its *base-vie*, including the town of Dimako in the Eastern Province, which was little more than a hamlet when French company SFID was established there in 1947. As an inhabitant of Dimako described it, “SFID was everything: the village was built thanks to and around SFID” (interview, 18 March 08). Likewise, villagers often use family-related analogies when describing the impact of the closure of SFID’s sawmill in Dimako in 2002, claiming that “we are now orphans” and that “our father left us” (interviews with villagers, 15 and 17 March 2008).

The most classic example of a timber company playing the role of a state, however, lies across the border in the Republic of Congo. The 6,000 people-strong town of Pokola in Congo’s remote northern region of Sangha was founded and is all but managed by timber company Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB). In an article entitled “The company as a foundation for the city”, Carret (1998) relates the way in which CIB virtually runs the town. He describes notably how the company finances and/or manages a video library, two local football teams, primary and secondary schools, a hospital, a hotel, an airstrip and even a jail. The company also provides electricity and running water to part of the town and even controls all influx of currency into the town (1998:11). The author interprets this relationship between the company and the village as a convergence of interests:

One may indeed consider that the doctor is mainly supposed to see to the health of the workers rather than improving the living conditions in rural Congo; that the hotel was built to sign administrative papers more rapidly rather than facilitate the stay of civil servants. However, villagers also use these facilities – which were built by the company within a production logic – for different ends (...). The geographical “interlocking” between the production site and the village, their relations in the context of existing institutions, through obligations and currency control, show that in order to attain the objective of timber production the company “logically” undertakes functions which strictly speaking are not part of its field of competence.¹¹¹

Carret (1998:8-13).

Carret thus concludes by comparing the situation rather naively to some sort of functionalist equilibrium – an “interlocking” (*imbrication*) of the company’s and the villagers’ “logics” to the mutual benefit of both parties. This seems to be contradicted by subsequent claims by NGOs of abuses by the company militia towards “indigenous” people [Forest Peoples Programme 2005], suggesting that the relationship might not be quite as harmonious as Carret might have originally depicted it.

Although once again the case of Pokola might be an extreme example where the concessionaire has invested in virtually all of the functions usually reserved to the state, illustrations of such tendencies are numerous in the Eastern and Southern provinces of Cameroon. What one also finds linked to this “State-within-the-state” model is some form of patronage between the company and local public authorities, whereby the company openly displays a range of forms of generosity in a bid to show its contribution to local populations. This is what Hardin, in her study of concessionary politics in Bayanga (Central African Republic), aptly describes as “symbolically laden forms of gift giving” (2002:17). Such generosity may take on many forms, including:

1. Providing funds for life events of villagers or local elites, *e.g.*, for weddings or funerals. This is what Carret refers to as CIB’s “family obligations” (1998:9);
2. Giving out packets of food to villagers on special occasions: for instance, Hardin quotes a villager describing the logging company’s CEO: “On holidays, he buys us cases of beer and slaughters a cow and we all eat meat” (2002:17); and
3. Allocating petrol allowances to a small number of individuals among the local elite, which (as mentioned above) is allegedly a form of gift giving practised by Wijma.

Although gift-giving and parastatal behaviour by a company are very different in nature, they fulfil two same functions, namely (i) to display generosity (even symbolically, as Hardin points out) towards the local population, and thus (ii) to give a positive image to the

¹¹¹ « On peut en effet considérer que le médecin est chargé de veiller prioritairement à la bonne santé des ouvriers et non d’améliorer les conditions de vie en milieu rural au Congo ; que l’hôtel est construit pour que les papiers administratifs soient signés rapidement et non pour agrémenter le séjour des fonctionnaires. Mais les villageois se servent de ces lieux, installés par l’entreprise conformément à sa logique de production, à d’autres fins (...). L’imbrication géographique entre le site de production et le village, leurs rapports au sein des institutions, à travers les obligations et le contrôle de la monnaie, montrent que, pour atteindre son objectif de production de bois, l’entreprise prend « logiquement » en charge des fonctions qui ne relèvent pas à strictement parler de son domaine de compétence. »

concessionaire who is likely to foment less discontent among local populations. This partly explains why companies readily list their *œuvres sociales*, yet such social enterprises are double-edged as they often come at a considerable cost to the concessionaire. When accused of not contributing enough to local development, concessionaires thus turn the situation around by claiming that after all, they are companies and cannot fulfil the functions of a state.

The State-within-the-State model has one considerable advantage over the Flying Saucer model: it actually contributes (often significantly) to raising the living standards of local populations – at least those living immediately in the vicinity of the company's operations. As many observers point out, concessionaires acting like states within the state are particularly valuable (i) in far-flung regions such as the Congo Basin which the state cannot reach, and (ii) in countries with a weak state which is unable to fulfil its functions. In such situations, concessionaires act as a valuable *ersatz* to the state in contexts where the latter would be incapable of operating. Were it not for concessions, a large proportion of rural populations in forested regions of Cameroon and elsewhere would probably not have access to basic facilities such as health and education.

However, there are obvious limits to a concessionaire acting as a state. First, a concessionaire is not democratically elected and is therefore not answerable to local populations. As a result, local populations have no means of keeping the company to a minimum degree of transparency or accountability; nor do they have the means of influencing its behaviour other than by resorting to physical violence. This probably partly explains why strikes and other forms of symbolic or physical violence remain the most common repertoire of action among local populations *vis-à-vis* concessionaires.

Secondly, whereas a state is supposed to be present indefinitely, a concessionaire is free to leave when the concession contract comes to an end, *i.e.*, after 30 years for Cameroon (in practice, concessions are often abandoned even earlier). The departure of a logging company that has fulfilled – at least partly – some of the state's functions has been known to have devastating consequences on local populations, such as in the Cameroonian town of Dimako. After French logging company SFID closed its sawmill in 2002, the town allegedly lost about a third of its populations within a year whilst inhabitants and observers alike claim that Dimako is a mere ghost of its former self.

Thirdly, a private company – let alone one registered in the former colonial power such as many of those found in Cameroon – which behaves like a state within and around its concession inevitably raises ethical issues of national sovereignty. Cameroonian legislation restricts the number of concessions available to foreign companies, although the latter usually work their way round it by establishing partnerships with Cameroonian companies (Wijma being no exception). In Brazil, where national sovereignty over the Amazon is a particularly thorny issue, the 2006 law on Public Forests which introduced concessions in the Brazilian Amazon banned all foreign companies from managing concessions, although once again they may be able to establish partnerships with Brazilian companies. However, despite such measures, sovereignty and anti-colonialism remain popular arguments against the concessionary system.

In recent years, the State-Within-the-State model has somewhat lost popularity among concessionaires. The advent of new taxation systems, notably that of RFA, following the 1994 Forestry law, accounts for much of this change, as is described below.

5.3.3. *The Professional Model*

Policy-makers involved in writing up the 1994 Forestry Bill in Cameroon were faced with a problem: how could the current concession-based system of forest management contribute to local and national development? Faced with criticisms by members of the National Assembly who denounced the Bill claiming that “Whites are stealing our forests”¹¹², the State-within-the-State model was decidedly to be avoided. Moreover, another of the Bill’s major objectives was to minimise collusion between the state and private companies, especially in the allocation of timber concessions. Both objectives led to the conclusion that the role of companies had to be depoliticised and restricted to a mainly economic one.

As mentioned above, the 1994 Law not only imposed transparency on the allocation of timber concessions, but also increased taxation sharply on timber production. 50% of the main tax (annual forest revenue or RFA) was to go directly to the local council and “communities” to promote development at the local scale. Logging companies, which bitterly complained at this sudden raise of taxes, reacted by minimising their existing social enterprises and other direct contributions to the welfare of local populations.

In other words, the change in the tax system which came into effect in the late 1990s created a model shift in the relationship between concessionaires and local populations. From an approximate State-within-the-State model whereby companies acted (at least symbolically) as the state in certain regards, a new “Professional” model appeared where logging companies contributed to local development through taxes, notably RFA.

This switch from a State-within-the-State to a Professional model is largely illustrated in the difference between the behaviour of La Forestière de Campo (HFC) and Wijma in Ma’an. Wijma took over the management of its first FMU in the area (09-021) in 2001, at a time when RFA were already up and running; it is possible that the company’s decision makers considered that their contribution to local development through RFA was sufficient not to have to invest in *œuvres sociales* and other “symbolically laden forms of gift giving”. In doing so, Wijma genuinely fulfilled a “Professional” role (at least in terms of what the company saw as contributing to local welfare) in that any direct social enterprise – and even contact with local populations – had been replaced with taxes. The fact that Wijma did not even recruit staff responsible for relations with local populations (unlike HFC) shows that the company took this logic to an extreme.

Yet in the case of Wijma, such behaviour towards local populations was only sustained for three years, for two reasons. First, local populations – starting with the elite itself – immediately showed discontent at such behaviour, comparing it to that of HFC whose staff had allegedly been much more generous towards villagers. In the absence of any reply from Wijma (whose *base-vie* was located at Meyos at the time, *i.e.*, relatively far from the locus of much of the populations surrounding FMU 09-021), discontent only grew and led to sporadic outbreaks of violence and several strikes.

In reality, Wijma had already been paying substantial amounts of money to the local council since 2001, yet the lack of transparency and accountability within the local council meant that local populations were neither informed of these new taxes or saw any impact. When Wijma

¹¹² « Les Blancs nous volent la forêt ». Interview with a former member of the National Assembly, 25 February 2008.

finally communicated the amounts it was paying the local council during a meeting with local populations, riots broke out against the council which was obliged to confirm that it had been benefiting from a huge increase in revenue for several years. Despite this increase in transparency, however, expenditure of the local council's new revenue has been fraught with numerous corruption allegations whilst a general veil of taboo has been laid over the entire issue to this day.

The second main source of pressure for Wijma to change the nature of its relationship with local populations comes from FSC. The certification label's Principles 4 and 5 require the "maintenance or enhancement of long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities (...)" and the "equitable use and sharing of benefits derived from the forest" respectively. Yet despite the fact that Wijma was already paying a high level of taxes to the local council, the company had no substantial or concrete evidence proving that it was fulfilling either of these principles.

It is mainly as a consequence of this that Wijma introduced an additional, self-imposed tax to promote local development – the famous FCFA 1,000/m³ described at length above. Since then, the company has also been encouraged to expand its range of contributions to local populations, including some enterprises that could be viewed as a shift towards a State-within-the-State model, such as (i) petrol allowances for members of the local elite and (ii) providing accommodation for travelling dignitaries and high-ranking civil servants. Likewise, the company's role in the Monitoring committees of FMUs 09-021 and 09-024 has inevitably contributed to its growing role in local politics. Among other effects, its implication in this issue emphasises the competition between the Monitoring committee (created by Wijma itself) and the Management committee, headed by the mayor and supposed to allocate funds to "community" projects.

The Professional model as it was drawn out by the policy makers of the 1994 law, and as it appeared at the turn of the 2000s, appeared to spell out a new dawn in the relations between concessionaires and politics. It announced an era in which concessionaires would restrict their activities to timber production rather than playing a role in local politics or trying to replace the state, yet one in which they would contribute substantially to local development by funding it through taxes paid to local councils. Such a change was perceived both (i) as a way of avoiding any issues of national sovereignty whilst encouraging the reinforcement of local councils, and (ii) as a means of ensuring local development on a systematic basis rather than the case-by-case basis that the State-within-the-State model had encouraged.

Yet those who hoped for the success of such a model had seriously underestimated the lack of transparency and accountability of local councils and their capacity to make vast amounts of revenue disappear almost overnight with minimal contribution to local development. After almost a decade after the effective introduction of RFA, the first accusations of embezzlement by local councils are only now coming to light, notably with the charges brought against the former mayor of Yokadouma (*e.g.*, Tadjon 2008). However, as the example of Ma'an shows where the issue remains taboo, it might be years before this alleged corruption within local councils is significantly reduced. The Professional model is thus unlikely to succeed or gain additional support until this issue is resolved.

Model	Flying Saucer	State within the State	Professional
Description	The relationship between concessionaires and local populations is kept to a minimum. In case of any conflict between the two actors, concessionaires may resort to the use of physical force to isolate one actor from the other.	The concessionaire complements or replaces the state in and around its concession by fulfilling a number of roles usually limited to the state, notably by providing public infrastructure. In its minimal form this model takes the form of symbolic generosity and patronage.	The role of the concessionaire is depoliticised and restricted to its economic dimension. The concessionaires contribute to local development by paying taxes to local councils rather than through direct involvement in the form of <i>œuvres sociales</i> .
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PT Freeport Indonesia (Timika, Indonesian Papua) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIB (Pokola, Republic of Congo) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wijma (Ma'an, Southern Cameroon), especially in the period 2001-4
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables the concessionaire (i) to maximise its benefits so long as the use of force is not too costly, and (ii) not to get entangled in local politics or social policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables local populations to benefit from public infrastructure in isolated locations which weak states are unlikely to have access to; Attempts to solve the problem of local poverty by promoting development and public infrastructure, especially as companies are often more efficient at this than governments themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthens local governments by providing them with funds to promote local development and public infrastructure; Attempts to solve the problem of local poverty by providing funds for development and infrastructure; Provides for a systematic way in which concessionaires can contribute to local development.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of force can be extremely costly not only in terms of direct expenses but also with regard to markets if consumers are socially and environmentally aware. The model is ethically questionable as it does not address issues of equity. It does not even attempt to solve the problems of local development and poverty reduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concessionaires' contributions to local development remains on a case-by-case basis Unlike local councils, concessionaires are not democratically elected: they are not answerable to local populations Concessionaires operate in a concession for only a finite amount of time, often leaving local populations devastated once they leave The model raises issues of national sovereignty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local populations and their elite who have been used to various forms of patronage are reluctant to see concessionaires shift to this model; The model is doomed to failure as a means of promoting local development if the issue of corruption is not tackled at the local level; FSC only recognises tangible contribution to local development, which this model has so far been unable to fulfil.
Recent trends	In a world characterised by easy access to transport and communication, and where economic operators in developing countries are encouraged to contribute to local welfare, this model is increasingly untenable and unrealistic.	The potential conflict with the principle of national sovereignty has made this model unpopular among decision-makers but its positive and tangible effects on local development have led to a recent return due to demand by local populations and the rush to certification.	Recent legislation (especially RFA) has encouraged concessionaires to shift to a Professional model. Yet the model's effective failure to contribute to development because of corruption among local councils has encouraged a partial return to a State-within-the-State model.

Table VII. — The three different models of the relationship between timber concessionaires and local populations.

5.3.4. *Where Are We Heading?*

Each of the three models described above, summarised in Table VII, depicts a different configuration that the relationship can take between concessionaires and local populations. The discrepancy in wealth between these two groups of actors lies at the centre of this relationship and thus of each of these models which tries to cope with this hiatus. First, the Flying Saucer model deals with this issue by attempting to isolate the actors from each other and resorting to force if necessary. This option, whilst attractive to companies which wish to maximise their benefits regardless of the existence of local populations, has largely been denounced as a non-solution, an example of *politique de l'autruche*¹¹³ which neither solves the problem of wealth discrepancy or reduces poverty at the local level.

The second model, that of the State within the State, suggests solving the problems of local poverty and wealth discrepancy between the two groups of actors by encouraging concessionaires to fulfil the role of the state and provide local populations notably with public infrastructure. Whilst this model has been widely practised in the recent past, the 1994 law has promoted a shift in models in favour of the third model known as the Professional one. According to this model, concessionaires limit their activities to timber production and only contribute to local development by funding it through local taxes.¹¹⁴

Yet the most recent trends observed in the field leave unclear as to where the relationship between concessionaires and local populations is heading. On the one hand, recent legislation – especially the new tax system which underpins RFA – undeniably favours the Professional model. However, three interlinked factors are preventing concessionaires from fully abandoning the State-within-the-State model. Alleged corruption within local councils has so far prevented this third model from effectively reducing poverty at the local level. In turn, this phenomenon has led both to (i) local populations and their elite requesting a return to a State-within-the-State model from which they actually benefited more, and (ii) FSC accredited auditors to demand alternative means of contributing to local development.

The rush to FSC certification in Cameroon has therefore led to unforeseen consequences that seem to contradict recent trends in national legislation. As one observer pointed out in an interview, whilst national legislation tries to systematise the way in which concessionaires contribute to local development, FSC appears to encourage a case-by-case basis: while Wijma pays an additional FCFA 1,000/m³ towards local development in FMU 09-021, TRC only pays FCFA 500 and SEFAC¹¹⁵ does not pay any additional taxes.

The capacity of local populations and their elite to shape their relationship with concessionaires is also worthy of a final remark. For over a decade, actors claiming to represent local populations, including a number of NGOs, have portrayed the relationship

¹¹³ This French expression, roughly translated as burying one's head in the sand like an ostrich, refers to a decision to ignore an issue which some actors would want to see appear on the agenda.

¹¹⁴ It is important to point out that national legislation does not necessarily encourage concessionaires to minimise contact with local populations: GEPA 5.1 notably requires concessionaires to “establish mechanisms to solve litigation” (“mécanismes prévus pour la résolution des litiges”, quotes in Vandenhoute [2006:51]).

¹¹⁵ SEFAC, an Italian company which manages a range of FMUs in Cameroon's Eastern Province, was undergoing a certification process at the time of writing.

between concessionaires and local populations as one of large Western companies exploiting natural resources at the expense of impoverished, oppressed villagers.

To a large extent, timber companies do enjoy much easier access to a range of resources (whether political or financial) than local populations, many of whom continue to live well below internationally recognised poverty lines. In the past and until recently, it could be argued that these companies attempted to maximise their benefits whilst largely ignoring the plight of villages surrounding their concessions. Yet as the example of Wijma shows, local populations have the capacity to have their voice included in decision-making and ultimately contribute to shaping their relationship with concessionaires. Their strength in numbers, which has enabled them to organise both strikes and riots in Ma'an, and the rising importance of FSC certification, which has given them a voice in concessionaires' access to markets in Europe, show that they might not be as oppressed as observers once believed.

As Hardin points out, "concessionary politics are not imposed upon unwilling rural residents" (2002:4). It might thus be time to move onto ways of perceiving the relationship between concessionaires and local populations that go beyond a mere dichotomy between "dominating" and "dominated".

5.3.5. Questioning the Community Paradigm in Rural Development

When travelling down the road leading to Ma'an and Nyabizan one cannot help but wonder what went wrong at the sight of the numerous "local development projects" which have failed – schools that are not used, half-built *corps de garde*, disused wells etc. A decade ago, it was fairly clear that logging companies invested insufficiently in local development and welfare, limiting their contribution to scattered projects with little impact. However, all these companies are required by law to pay considerable amounts of taxes to local government – and on top of this a handful of companies pay additional local taxes such as Wijma and TRC. It comes as a surprise therefore to find that the living standards of local populations have hardly changed over the past decade, even in the "best-case scenario" that Ma'an is supposed to represent given the FSC certification of two of the town's FMUs.

Corruption and embezzlement of large proportions of RFA are allegedly commonplace across the forested region of Cameroon, as witnessed by the recent arrest of the mayor of Yokadouma – the country's wealthiest *commune* now that RFA is up and running. Contractors running away with down payments are also often given as an explanation for half-completed structures which dot rural and urban landscapes alike. These explanations certainly account for a large proportion of the money which is supposed to be channelled into local development, yet even those projects which eventually come to fruition do not seem to succeed.

Representatives of villages attending workshops on animal rearing fail to pass on their knowledge to fellow villagers; wells where water costs a franc per litre (0.17 of a eurocent; a negligible amount even to the poorest of Cameroonians) are boycotted; communal fields established with external funding inevitably fall into disuse; and the monitoring committee of FMU 09-021 is hampered by a president who is said to try to control allocation of resources. Why do all these projects seem doomed to failure and rural populations condemned to a life

of poverty? When confronted with this observation many villagers question the basis upon which these development projects have been established:

Work is often collective: for instance, we will work together to make a roof out of palm leave or to kill an elephant. Work often remains collective, yet property is always individual. Our colonisers understood that: each taxpayer had to have their own row of oil palms. Each person harvested his own produce and had his own allotment. But the Cameroonian government wants us to do everything as a group. Same for [Japanese foreign aid] and their water conveyance project – they wanted the project to be run by the community. But in the end, it didn't work, and management was transferred to local government instead.¹¹⁶

A villager interviewed 24 April 2008

Similarly, an inhabitant of Ma'an who migrated there from northern Cameroon points the finger at the individualism which, he claims, is a characteristic trait of forest-dwelling populations:

I have been here for ten years prior to which I had already worked a lot in the South. I had seen that people have difficulty understanding the issue of association. If we create a communal field which then collapses, there are huge fights. People even hunt each other down. But it does work if each person works in his own field. Rotating work systems do exist when each person knows that the fields [he is working on] are private and that property remains private.¹¹⁷

An inhabitant of Ma'an interviewed 30 April 2008

The concept of “community-based development” has remained popular among donor organisations – governmental agencies and NGOs alike – in the past few decades. Yet without safeguards, projects relying on altruistic behaviour among members of a “community” are generally doomed to failure. Both the local unit of the Ministry of agriculture and Wijma understood this when they modified their projects over time, the former putting an end to “communal field” projects and the latter deciding to use professional contractors instead of “communities” to build local development projects.

However, many projects still appear to rely excessively on the idea that collective interest is always favoured above personal interest among rural communities. Recurrent corruption and embezzlement of public or collective funds is one illustration of this, but the risk of elite capture is another. The multiplication of *corps de garde* in front of the houses of members of the local elite, and the domination of committees by individuals who according to some

¹¹⁶ « Les travaux sont souvent collectifs : on travaille tous pour faire un toit en raphia, on travaille tous pour chasser un éléphant. Le travail peut rester collectif, oui, mais la propriété reste individuelle. La colonisation a compris ça : chaque imposable devait avoir sa rangée de palmiers. La récolte, c'était que pour soi, chacun avait sa parcelle. Mais le gouvernement camerounais veut qu'on fasse tout en groupe. Pareil pour [la coopération japonaise] et leur projet d'adduction d'eau : ils voulaient une gestion communautaire, mais ça n'a pas marché. Du coup la gestion a été transférée à la commune. »

¹¹⁷ « Ça fait dix ans que je suis là, et j'avais déjà beaucoup travaillé dans le Sud. J'avais vu que les gens comprennent mal la question d'association. Si on crée un champ communautaire et que ça casse, il y a des bagarres énormes. Ça va jusqu'à la chasse [*sic*]. Mais ça marche si chacun évolue dans son exploitation. On peut avoir un système rotatif de travail si chacun sait que les champs sont privés et que la propriété reste privée. »

observers pursue personal agendas (notably the Monitoring committee of FMU 09-021) are only two instances where, once again, personal interests appear to come on top. Despite the common belief that individualism is a cultural characteristic of Cameroon's southern "tribes", these remarks could easily be applied anywhere else in the country, or for that matter in the developing world, although a debate on the validity of the "community" concept in the field of development is well beyond this paper.

It might be naïve and excessively righteous – especially when coming from Western societies where development was individual before it became collective – to expect rural Cameroonians to place communities above their own, personal interests. Development projects might need to be fully aware of this if they continue to be based on the concept of "community". Or would it be time to begin to think outside of the "community" paradigm?

6. GENERAL CONCLUSION

When comparing Cameroon's forest-related policies with Brazil and Indonesia (the two other countries studied as part of this PhD), two conclusions can be made on the case of Cameroon. First, the forest sector continues to overwhelmingly dominate national forest-related policies. This might not come as a surprise at first but a brief comparison with the other two countries of this study is sufficient to show that unlike Indonesia and especially Brazil, policies intentionally directed at forests continue to determine the fate of the country's forests at the expense of adjacent sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture.

Secondly, Brazil and Indonesia display a similar mode of change to each other whereby forest-related policies remain relatively stable for extended periods of time before undergoing sudden change at critical junctures determined by national regime changes. In Brazil, the 1964 military coup and the return to democracy in the second half of the 1980s constitute the two major turning points in the country's forest-related policies. Likewise, forest-related policies in Indonesia are marked by the two critical junctures of 1965 and 1998 which correspond to the rise and fall of Suharto's New Order.

Cameroon clearly differs from this pattern in that forest-related policies are characterised by continuity since the early 20th century when the bases for the forest sector were laid to focus on concessions and timber production. The only turning point in Cameroon's policies took place in 1994 with the introduction of the latest Forestry Law, which was arguably driven more by the donor community (especially the World Bank) than by national actors. In this sense, therefore, Cameroon differs from the other two countries in that the only critical juncture in the last century was externally driven. These differences are further discussed in the PhD.

Bibliography

- Abega, S.C. & Bigombe-Logo, P. (2006). Ségrégation et marginalisation des groupes pygmées sédentarisés du Cameroun : l'exemple des Baka. Unpublished article, 16 pp.
- Abega, S.C. (2006). Marginaux ou marginalisés ? le cas des Pygmées Baka. In Abega, S.C. & Bigombe Logo, P. (eds), *La marginalisation des Pygmées d'Afrique centrale*. Paris : Africaine d'Édition, pp.23-42.
- Accreditation Services International (2007). FSC Annual surveillance for BV for 2007. Forest management audit for Wijma Douala Cameroon (BV-FM051201). Date of audit: 1 to 5 April 2007. Report available on the internet: <http://www.accreditation-services.com/res/PublicSummaries/asirep54bv2007wijma.pdf> (retrieved 28 July 2008)
- ACFCam, FNCoFor, ONFi & CTFC (2007). Journées de lancement du « programme d'appui aux forêts communales du Cameroun » du 26 novembre au 6 décembre 2007. Unpublished report, 5 pp.
- Achoundong, G. (2006). Végétation. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 64-5.
- Aerts, J.J., Cogneau, D., Herrera ; J., de Monchy, G. & Roubaud, F. (2000). *L'économie camerounaise : un espoir évanoui*. Paris : Karthala, 287 pp.
- AFSONO (2006). *Plan Simple de Gestion : Forêt communautaire de Tya'Assono, Province du Sud, Département de la Vallée du Ntem*. Unpublished document, 105 pp.
- AFTEN (World Bank Environment and Natural Resources Management Division) (2008). *The Rainforests of Cameroon: Experience and Evidence from a Decade of Reform*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 95 pp.
- Agir ici & Survie (1996). *France Cameroun : Croisement dangereux ! Dossiers noirs de la politique africaine de la France n°7*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 96 pp.
- Akwah Neba, G., Nlom, J.H., Assako, J.P., Tessa, S.T., & Enolo, G.A. (2007). Analyse de l'économie politique des dynamiques pauvreté environnement dans la zone Campo Ma'an : Rapport de l'analyse socio-économique. Yaoundé (Cameroun) : WWF, 120 pp.
- Amin, A.A. (1996). The effects of exchange rate policy on Cameroon's agricultural competitiveness. African Economic Research Consortium Research Paper no. 42, 52 pp.
- Anonymous (2006). *Plan d'aménagement, forêt communale de Dimako. Version révisée*. Unpublished document, 86 pp.
- Barume, A., Huot, G., Owada, J.C. & Moujour, S.C. (2006). Rapport de l'observateur indépendant No. 055/OI/REM. Yaoundé: REM – Observateur indépendant au contrôle et suivi des infractions forestières, 23 pp.
- Bigombe-Logo, P. & Bell, J.P. (1995). Relations entre les Pygmées et les non-Pygmées. Unpublished article, 9 pp.
- Boum, R.M. (2007). Evaluation de la mise en oeuvre du plan d'aménagement de l'UFA 09-025 (SCIEB). Unpublished report, 77 pp.

- Braddick, M.J. (1998). The English government, war, trade and settlement. In Canny, N. (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume I: The Origins of Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.286-308.
- Brown, D. & Luttrell, C. (undated). *Review of Independent Forest Monitoring*. Report for the Policy Division at the Department for International Development. London: Overseas Development Institute, 76 pp. Document available on the Internet: http://www.odi.org.uk/fecc/resources/reports/review_indep_fm_final.pdf (retrieved 4 September 2008).
- Burnham, P. (2000). Whose forest? Whose myth? Conceptualisations of community forests in Cameroon. In Abramson, A. & Theodossopoulos, D. (eds), *Land, Law and Environment: Mythical Land, Legal Boundaries*. London: Pluto Press.
- Callon M. (1986). Éléments pour une sociologie de la traduction : la domestication des coquilles St-Jacques et des marins pêcheurs dans la baie de St. Briec, *L'Année Sociologique, numéro spécial La sociologie des Sciences et des Techniques*, 36, pp.169-208.
- Carret, J.C. (1998). L'entreprise au fondement de la cité. In Caisse française de développement (ed), *L'Afrique des entreprises*. Paris: La Documentation française, pp. 271-83. Also available on the Internet: www.cerna.ensmp.fr/Documents/JCC-Entreprise.pdf (retrieved 2 August 2008).
- Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement, Greenpeace International, Forest Peoples Programme & Milieudéfense (2006). Wijma Certification: Formal Complaint. Unpublished document, 9 pp.
- CERAD, ICCO & GECEC (2004). Gestion des redevances forestières. Leaflet distributed across the Eastern and Southern Provinces, 6 pp.
- Cerutti, P. & Tacconi, L. (2006). Forests, Illegality and Livelihoods in Cameroon. CIFOR Working Paper no. 35, 28 pp. Document available on the internet: http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/publications/pdf_files/WPapers/WP-35.pdf (retrieved 2 September 2008).
- Chibani-Jacquot, P. (2006). Wijma still certified, as official observer finds new illegalities. FSC-Watch article available on the internet: http://www.fsc-watch.org/archives/2006/11/05/Cameroon_Wijma_still_certified_as_official_observer_finds_new_illegalities (retrieved 28 July 2008).
- CIAJE (Comité inter-associations Jeunesse et Environnement) (1997). Déclaration expresse : récriminations formelles des ONGs [sic] gabonaises à l'attention des membres du Board et du Directeur Exécutif du FSC. Letter dated 21 February 1997, 2 pp.
- Collas, P. (2001). Rapport final de synthèse du projet Forêts et Terroirs. Report written for the Direction of Forests at the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Republic of Cameroon and the General Direction for Cooperation and Development at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unpublished report, 26 pp.
- Commune de Dimako (2006). Relevé des factures de livraison de bois à divers clients du 1^{er} janvier au 31 décembre 2005. Unpublished document, 2 pp.
- Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. (2001). *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires 1989-1930*. Paris : Editions de l'EHESS (first published 1972), 2 volumes, 598 pp.

- CTFT (Centre technique forestier tropical) (1987). *Cameroun : Exploitation forestière et transport. Mission conjointe interagences PNUD/FAO de revue du secteur forestier.* Document CMR/86/003. Rome: FAO, 119 pp.
- Cuny, P., Akem Ango, A. & Ondoa, Z.A. (undated). Une experience de gestion forestière locale et decentralise au Cameroun : la forêt communautaire de Kongo. Unpublished report, 15 pp.
- De Kam, M., Fines, J.P., Akogo Mvogo, G. (2002). *Schéma directeur pour le développement de l'Unité Technique Opérationnelle de Campo Ma'an, Cameroun.* Wageningen (Netherlands): Tropenbos International, 87 pp.
- Dkamela, G.P. (2002). Economie politique du processus de compensation des dommages dus au projet Pipeline Tchad-Cameroun. Références à la zone Kribi-Bipindi-Lolodorf-Ngoumou. Yaoundé (Cameroon): CIFOR, 15 pp.
- Durrieu de Madron, L., Forni, E., Karsenty, A., Loffeier, E. & Pierre, J.M. (1998). Le Projet Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako (Cameroun) (1992-1996). Série FORAFRI. Montpellier : CIRAD, 161 pp.
- Eba'a, R. & De Bonafos, H. (2006). ASI Surveillance Forest Management Audit of Eurocertifor-BVQI: Forest Management Audit to Wijma Douala (EUR-FM/COC-051201) in Cameroon. Date of audit: June 19 to 23, 2006 (Public summary). Bonn: Accreditation Services International, 12 pp.
- Ebregts, A. (1994). *Republic of Cameroon and Global Environmental Facility: Campo Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project: Project Proposal.* DGIS unpublished document, 94 pp.
- ECOFAC (1998). Petit tour d'horizon de la biodiversité du Dja. *Canopée (Bulletin d'environnement sur l'Afrique centrale)* 12. Article available on the Internet: http://www.ecofac.org/Canopee/N12/N1202_Biodiversite/CamerounDjaBiodiversite.htm (retrieved 11 September 2008).
- Engola Oyep, J. (2006). Economie et commerce extérieur. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun.* Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp.98-9.
- Essama-Nssah, B. & Gockowski, J.J. (2000). *Cameroon: Forest Sector Development in a Difficult Political Economy.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, 123 pp.
- European Commission (undated). Infrastructure Sector. Document available on the Internet: http://www.delcmr.ec.europa.eu/webeu/en/eu_and_cmri/infras_trans.htm (retrieved 13 September 2008).
- FAO (2003). *Multilingual Thesaurus on Land Tenure.* Rome: FAO, 221 pp.
- Faure, J.J. (1993). Comment faire participer les populations locales à la gestion des ressources naturelles en zone forestière africaine ? Le cas de l'aménagement pilote intégré (API) de Dimako (Est-Cameroun). *Arbres, Forêts et Communautés Rurales* 3.
- Foguekem, D. (2005). Conservation de la biodiversité de l'UTO Campo Ma'an : synthèse des résultats des patrouilles mobiles de lutte anti-braconnage dans le Parc National de Campo Ma'an et sa zone périphérique. WWF Unpublished document, 18 pp.

- Foguekem, D. (2006). Suivi des activités de lutte anti-braconnage dans et autour du Parc National de Campo-Ma'an, Sud Cameroun, avec proposition d'un plan stratégique contre le braconnage dans la région. WWF unpublished report, 36 pp.
- Fomété, T., Pinta, F. & Karsenty, A. (2000). *Audit économique et financier du secteur forestier au Cameroun*. Report for the Cameroonian Ministry of Economy and Finance. Yaoundé: MINEFI.
- Forests Monitor (2001). *Sold down the River. The Need to Control Transnational Forestry Corporations: a European Case-Study*. Cambridge (UK): Forests Monitor, 74 pp. Document available on the Internet: http://www.forestsmonitor.org/uploads/2e90368e95c9fb4f82d3d562fea6ed8d/sold_1_.pdf (retrieved 17 September 2008).
- Forest Peoples Programme (2005). Protecting indigenous rights in the Republic of Congo through the application of FSC standards in forest plans: a review of progress made by Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) against principles 2 and 3. Memorandum available on the Internet: http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/africa/congo_cib_prog_rev_jan06_eng.shtml#_edn17 (retrieved 2 August 2008).
- Forêt communale de Dimako (2005). Relevé des factures de livraison de bois à divers clients du 1^{er} janvier au 31 décembre 2004. Unpublished document, 1 p.
- Froment, A. (2006). Composantes du peuplement au Cameroun. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 76-7.
- FSC (2002). The FSC principles and criteria for responsible forest management. Available on the Internet: <http://www.fsc.org/pc.html> (retrieved 28 July 2008)
- Gaillard, P. (1989). *Le Cameroun*. "A la rencontre de" series. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2 volumes, 256+240 pp.
- Gambeg, Y. N. (2006). Les politiques d'intégration des Pygmées dans la société camerounaise. In Abega, S.C. & Bigombe Logo, P. (eds), *La marginalisation des Pygmées d'Afrique centrale*. Paris : Africaine d'Édition, pp.209-23.
- Greenpeace (2002a). *Wijma: Destroying Cameroon's Rainforests. Forest crime file country profile*. Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 2 pp.
- Greenpeace (2002b). *Wijma: Logging Illegally in Cameroon's Rainforest. Forest Crime File: Corporate Profile*. Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 10 pp.
- Greenpeace (2003). *Chainsaw Criminal Wijma. Forest Crime Files, Corporate Crimes, April 2003*. Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 9 pp.
- Grisson, F. (1997). *Assistance technique forestière : la ruée vers le Cameroun*. Working document prepared for the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) at the request of the European Commission's Directorate General for Development. Montpellier: CIRAD, 32 pp.
- Horta, K., Nguiffo, S., Djiraibe, D. (2007). *The Chad-Cameroon Oil and Pipeline Project: A Non-Completion Report*. N'Djamena (Chad): Association for the Promotion and the Defense of Human Rights; Yaoundé (Cameroon): Centre for Environment and Development; an Washington D.C.: Environmental Defense, USA, 28 pp.

- Iyébi-Mandjek, O. (2006). Population, migrations. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 82-3.
- Julve, C., Vandenhaute, M., Vermeulen, C., Castadot, B., Ekodeck, H. & Delvingt, W. (2007). Séduisante théorie, douloureuse pratique : la foresterie communautaire camerounaise en butte à sa propre législation. *Parcs et réserves* 62(2):18-24.
- Karsenty (1999). Projet Forêts et Terroirs : rapport de mission d'appui technique. Stratégie d'intervention sur les enjeux social et fonciers. Report for the Direction of Forests at the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Republic of Cameroon. Unpublished report, 16 pp.
- Karsenty, A. (2001). La dynamique des réformes dans le secteur forestier au Cameroun. Unpublished report, 56 pp.
- Karsenty, A. (2007). *Overview of industrial forest concessions and concession-based industry in West and Central Africa, and considerations of alternatives*. Paper prepared by invitation from the Rights and Resources Initiative. Montpellier: CIRAD, 45 pp.
- Karsenty, A., Roda, J.M., Milol, A., & Fochivé, E. (2006). *Audit économique et financier du secteur forestier au Cameroun. Rapport final*. Economic audit carried out for the Cameroonian Ministry of Economy and Finance, 222 pp.
- Labrousse, A. & Verschave, F.X. (2002). *Les pillards de la forêt : exploitations criminelles en Afrique*. Marseille : Agone, 193 pp.
- Labrousse, A. (2008). Open-pit mine and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Letter from A. Labrousse to B. Hadjadj (UNESCO), dated 20 February.
- Le Galès P. & Thatcher M. (eds) (1995). *Les réseaux de politique publique. Débat autour des policy networks*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 273 pp.
- Leith, D. (2002). *The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 347 pp.
- Lieugomg, M. (2006) Agriculture de rente. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 86-7.
- Linjouom, A. (2008). *L'évolution de la politique, du droit et de l'administration des forêts au Cameroun*. PhD Thesis, University of Paris II – Panthéon Assas, 554 pp.
- Mandjem, Y.P. & Yamou, A. (undated). La "foresterie communautaire" en (éternelle) quête de sens ? Jeux et enjeux de la révision du manuel des procédures d'attribution et des normes de gestion des forêts communautaires au Cameroun. Unpublished report, 20 pp.
- Mangaya, S. (2002). Congo-Brazza : comment protéger les forêts. *African News Bulletin* 443. Available on the Internet: <http://ospiti.peacelink.it/anb-bia/nr443/f02.html> (retrieved 2 August 2008)
- Mbida Mindzié, C. (2006). Patrimoine culturel. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 70-1.
- Mekok, M. (2001). *Commune rurale de Dimako : plan d'aménagement de la forêt communale de Dimako*. Unpublished document for the Ministry of Environment and Forests of Cameroon and the French Ministry of Cooperation, 88 pp.

- Mekok, M. (2008). Forêt communale de Dimako : formation des membres du comité consultatif de gestion et des conseillers municipaux. Unpublished document for Dimako local council, 14 pp.
- Mertens, B., Steil, M., Nsoyuni, L. A., Shu, G.N. & Minnemeyer, S. (2005). *Interactive Forestry Atlas of Cameroon, Version 2.0: An Overview*. Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 48 pp. Available on the Internet: http://pdf.wri.org/gfw_cameroon_atlas_v2_english.pdf (retrieved 1 August 2008)
- Meyer, F. (1968). *Législations et politiques forestières*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 300p.
- MINADER (2006). Stratégie de développement du secteur rural (SDSR) : synthèse du volet agriculture et développement rural. Document de travail. Yaoundé : MINADER, 89 pp.
- MINFOF (2005). *Plan d'aménagement du Parc national de Campo-Ma'an et de sa zone périphérique : Période d'exécution 2006-2010*. Yaoundé (Cameroun) : Ministère des forêts et de la faune, 136pp.
- Ministère des affaires sociales et de la condition féminine (1997). Avant projet de document de politique du gouvernement en matière de populations marginales. Unpublished document, 17 pp.
- Mongui, J. (2005). La commune rurale de Dimako à l'an I de l'exploitation de sa forêt. Unpublished report, 5 pp.
- Mongui, J. (2006). Utilisation des ressources provenant de la FCD : actions réalisées en 2005 ou en cours. Unpublished document, 2 pp.
- Mongui, J. (2008). Exploitation des essences de la forêt communale de Dimako d'après le permis annuel des opérations des assiettes n°I et II. Unpublished document, 1 p.
- Mongui, J. (undated). *Rendez-vous to Dimako : Monographie de la Commune rurale de Dimako* [sic]. Unpublished document, 15 pp.
- Mveng, R.P.E. & Beling-Nkoumba, D. (1983). *Manuel d'histoire du Cameroun à l'usage des classes du cours moyen et du 1^{er} cycle du 2nd degré (C.E.P.E.R.)*. Yaoundé: Centre d'édition et de production pour l'enseignement et la recherche, 249 pp.
- Ndoye, O. (1997). The impact of macroeconomic and agricultural policies on forest condition in Cameroon. CIFOR Cameroon Working Paper no. 3. Yaoundé (Cameroon): CIFOR, 78 pp.
- Ngandjui, G., Bolle, R.K., Cheumani, C.N., Nguenguim, J.R., Nguetsop, J.D., Tsafack, E.M., Ntyam, S.C. & Ondo, B.O. (2002). Etude de la chasse villageoise dans l'UTO Campo Ma'an, Sud-ouest Cameroun. Projet d'aménagement et de conservation de la biodiversité de Campo Ma'an, Cameroun, Document n°3. Yaoundé (Cameroun) : MINEF & Wageningen : Tropenbos International, 44 pp.
- Ngoh, V.J. (1996). *History of Cameroon Since 1800*. Limbe (Cameroon): Presbyterian Printing Press, 371 pp.
- Ngoufo, R., Tessa, B. & Tchala, S. (2007). Etude environnementale stratégique des activités agro-industrielles de GMG Hévécam S.A. en périphérie du Parc National de Campo-Ma'an. Yaoundé (Cameroun): WWF & Cameroon Environmental Watch, 153 pp.

- Oates, J.F. (1999). *Myth and Reality in the Rain Forest: How Conservation Strategies Are Failing in West Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 310 pp.
- Oates, J.F., Bergl, R.A., Sunderland-Groves, J. & Dunn, A. (2007). *Gorilla gorilla ssp. diehli*. In IUCN (ed). *2007 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Document available on the Internet: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/39998/all> (retrieved 21 August 2008).
- Obam, A. (1992). *Conservation et mise en valeur des forêts au Cameroun*. Yaoundé : Editions de l'Imprimerie nationale, 287 pp.
- Okole, S.O. (2008). Cameroun : Exploitation de fer de Mbalam - ultimes négociations avant le démarrage. *Cameroon Tribune*, 12 février.
- Onions, C.T. (1983). *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, on Historical Principles*. 3rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2 volumes, 2,672 pp.
- Pénelon, A. (1997). Community Forestry: it may be indeed a new management tool, but is it accessible? Two case-studies in eastern Cameroon. IIED forest participation series no. 8, 26 pp. Document available on the Internet: <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/7523IIED.pdf> (retrieved 8 September 2008).
- Poissonnet, M. & Lescuyer, G. (2005). Aménagement forestier et participation : quelles leçons tirer des forêts communales du Cameroun ? *VertigO (la revue en sciences de l'environnement)* 6(2):1-6. Article available on the Internet: http://www.pefac.net/pdf/25_for_tscommunales.pdf (retrieved 9 September 2008).
- Poum Bimbar, O. (2006). L'exploitation forestière et l'autonomie financière de la commune rurale de Dimako.
- Rainforest Foundation (undated). Environmental protests makes EU postpone ecologically destructive roads across Cameroon's rainforests! Article available on the Internet: http://www.bushmeat.net/road_campaign_799.htm (retrieved 13 September 2008).
- Resource Extraction Monitoring (2006). Projet d'observateur indépendant au suivi et contrôle de l'exploitation forestière au Cameroun : Rapport trimestriel n°5. Report available on the internet: http://www.fsc-watch.org/docs/OI_Rapport_Trimestriel_5.pdf (retrieved 28 July 2008).
- Ricklefs, M.C. (2001). *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1200. Third Edition*. London: Palgrave, 495 pp.
- Singer, B. (2004). *Entre continuité et flexibilité : l'aide publique au développement française et britannique. Le cas des forêts camerounaises*. Masters Dissertation at the French Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) in Paris, 140 pp.
- Singer, B. (2007). How Useful is the Landscape Approach? In Patry, M. & Ripley, S. (eds), *World Heritage Forests: Leveraging Conservation at the Landscape Level. Proceedings of the 2nd World Heritage Forests Meeting, March 9-11, 2005, Nancy, France*. World Heritage Reports no. 21, pp. 49-55. Document available on the Internet: http://whc.unesco.org/documents/publi_wh_papers_21_en.pdf (retrieved 11 September 2008).
- SOFRECO (1999). *Projet Forêts et Terroirs : Evaluation à mi-parcours. Rapport Provisoire*. Report written for the Direction of Forests at the Ministry of Environment and Forests

- of the Republic of Cameroon and the General Direction for Cooperation and Development at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unpublished report, 154 pp.
- Some, L. (2008). Re: Open-pit mine and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Letter from L. Some (WWF CARPO) to Arnaud Labrousse, dated 21 February, in response to Labrousse (2008).
- Stroot, H. & van Dorp, M. (2002). *Kameroen*. Amsterdam: Milieu Defensie, 36 pp. Available on the internet: http://www.milieudedefensie.nl/globalisering/publicaties/rapporten/binnenboekje_kameroen_def.pdf (retrieved 25 July 2008)
- Tadjon, C. (2008). Cameroun – Opération Epervier II : L'ex-secrétaire d'état aux travaux publics déferé au Parquet hier. *Camer.be*, 14 March. Article available on the Internet: <http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=1614> (Retrieved 4 August 2008).
- Tchakam, S. (2008). Port en eau profonde de Kribi : le projet présenté au secteur privé. *Cameroon Tribune*, 6 mars.
- Tchawa, P. (2006). Relief et hydrographie. In Ben Yahmed, D. (ed), *Atlas de l'Afrique : Cameroun*. Paris : Les Editions J.A., pp. 58-9.
- Tobie, O.M. (2006). Analyse des politiques agricoles mise en œuvre au Cameroun depuis 1960. Paris: OECD, 70 pp. Document available on the Internet: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/36/37472112.doc (retrieved 12 September 2008).
- Tobith, C. & Cuny, P. (2006). Genre et foresterie communautaire au Cameroun : quelle perspective pour les femmes ? *Bois et forêts des tropiques* 289(3):17-26.
- Tsafack, E.M. & Ngah Obama, O.P. (2001). *Etude de la chasse villageoise dans la périphérie nord du Parc National de Campo Ma'an: Cas des villages de Messama I, II et Bindem*. Unpublished Report, 19 pp.
- Van Oijen, D. (2007a). Historique conflit limite forêt communautaire Tya' Assono et 09-021. Unpublished document, Milieu Defensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands), 3 pp.
- Van Oijen, D. (2007b). Milieudedefensie section on Wijma audit certification. Unpublished document by Milieudedefensie, 3 pp.
- Van Oijen, D. (2007c). Relevant findings of mission report Milieudedefensie November 2006. Unpublished document by Milieudedefensie, 4 pp.
- Vande Weghe, J.P. (2004). *Forêts d'Afrique centrale : la nature et l'homme*. Tielt (Belgium): Lannoo, 368 pp.
- Vandenhaute, M. (2006). Etude comparative de 20 plans d'aménagement approuvés au Cameroun. Rapport pour le compte de GTZ/PGDRN (Programme de Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles). Yaoundé : GTZ, 57 pp.
- Verschave, F.X. (1999). *La Françafrique : le plus long scandale de la République*. Paris : Stock, 380 pp.
- WCS (2008). WCS-MINFOF-CAMRAIL Bushmeat Project. Document available on the Internet: <http://www.wcs.org/globalconservation/Africa/Cameroon/38908476> (retrieved 12 September 2008).
- World Bank (1999a). *Chad Export Project: Environmental Assessment: Executive Summary and Update*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Publications.

- World Bank (1999b). *Chad Export Project: Environmental Management plan, Cameroon Portion, Volume 4: Environmental Foundation Plan, Offsite Environmental Enhancement Plan, Indigenous Peoples Plan*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Publications.
- Wunder, S. (2003). *Oil Wealth and the Fate of the Forest: a Comparative Study of Eight Tropical Countries*. Routledge Explorations in Environmental Economics Series. London: Routledge, 432 pp.
- WWF (2007). The Jengi Initiative. Document available on the Internet: http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/africa/where/cameroon/wwf_cameroon_conservation/projects/index.cfm?uProjectID=CM0047 (accessed 11 September 2008).