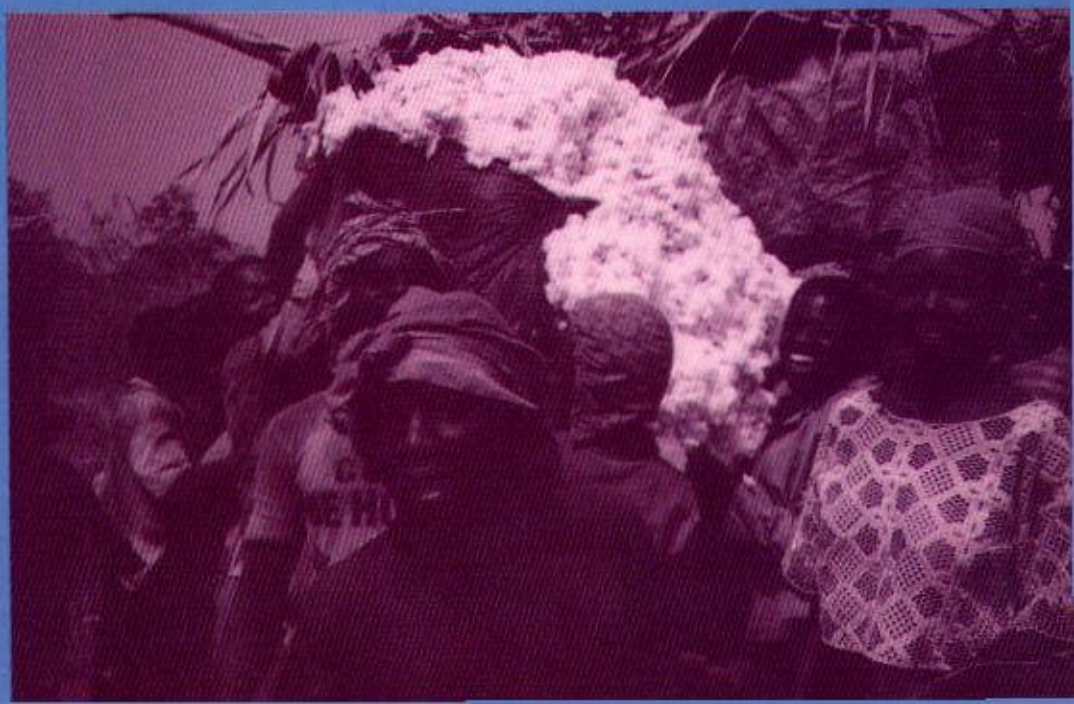
THE APPROPRIATION AND DISMEMBERING OF DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

Policy, discourse and practice in the field of rural development in Benin

Roch L. Mongbo



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Policy, discourse and practice in the field of rural development in Benin

Roch L. Mongbo

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Dedication

To my Father,

You always encouraged me in this enterprise and, most importantly, always prayed for me. You were convinced that I would make it and I believe you would have enjoyed holding this book in your hands.
I hope your Spirit can feel it, and your Soul rejoice in witnessing its completion.
As I know you, Father, you will be expecting that others like this, or even better, will follow.
They will!

Father, may your Soul rest in Peace, in the Lord.

Your son, Roch

Wageningen, 6pm; The 1st of July, 1995

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Ans van der Lande did the typing and lay out of the book and took care of the figures and maps. I very much appreciate her dedication to these tasks.

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The crux of the whole process crystallised in the present book, starting in 1987 when first left for the MSc MAKS course in The Netherlands, was my wife Evelyne Mongbo. She suffered long months of my absence. On top of her professional commitments, she had to meet the various social obligations she and I have towards our families and had to take care of our children. Yet, she always found the moral resources to encourage and support me, even sharing some field experiences with me. At an early stage of this work, she also helped extensively in typing up my field

notes, which made it possible for her to critically discuss them with me. In short, without her guiding influence, it would have been hard for me to pursue this endeavour all the way through to its successful conclusion.

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1 Rural development as a field of social interaction

Introduction

This book tells of a community development programme in a Benin village that formed part of a national programme called *Programme de Redynamisation des Villages* or *Programme de Développement Communautaire* (mid-1989 to 1993), involving five to eight villages in each of the six provinces of the country. In this book I refer to it in its English translation as the 'Community Development Programme'. The story takes us into the everyday endeavours of the actors involved in the programme and shows how and over what matters they interact, the kinds of coalitions, negotiations, struggles and consensuses they engage in, and their attempts to get what they value as the best out of the programme. I analyze how the parties involved in these interface encounters invest the experiences gained in their practices, skills and culture when dealing with each other in relation to development intervention and everyday life situations. In other words, I examine how the social processes at work in these interfaces help to reproduce and transform them and how at the same time they affect daily organisation and interaction in the broader context of social life. But beyond the accounts and interpretations narrated – so commonplace to be hardly worth the telling for those familiar with development projects and village situations – the main concern of this book is to explore the reproduction, rhetoric and practice of what is generally called 'rural development'. How precisely are the realities of 'rural development' constructed by actors at grass-roots level? And in what ways do these processes affect larger institutions – generally considered as leading the game in matters of development intervention?

I argue that, contrary to what policy makers, development practitioners and many social scientists would have us believe, the issues referred to as 'development', that absorb their attention and become the object of their professional preoccupations, do not arise from the realities of so-called 'under-developed' people, nor can they pretend to change significantly these realities since the realities of such people play only a marginal role in the making of the language and practice of development intervention. Instead, I argue that the rhetoric and practice of rural development operates within a relatively autonomous self-reproducing logic,[1] sometimes processing old jargons, but permanently creating its own social realities and problems, which serves its own reproduction and not that of the so-called 'development' it seeks to achieve. The links between these self-reproducing processes and ongoing social change are to be found, not in the written or spoken discourses on

development, but in the actual practices of social actors who dismember the discourses and the material dispositions that go with them, and turn what are sometimes rather marginal aspects into assets that may contribute to the improvement of their own conditions, sometimes even against the will of the intervenors and their plans. I contend that, in this process, roles are not fully determined in advance. Any category of social actor involved (whether from the side of the intervenors or the 'intervened') can take a leading role at any particular time, in steering the affairs of intervention. My point of view is that, within the framework imposed on them by powerful institutions such as the state and by international development policies (e.g. structural adjustment programmes, International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies, GATT Treaties and world market opportunities and constraints), the actors involved in the local scenes of rural development interact in arenas and grounds where neither the 'intervenors' nor the 'intervened' are awarded dominant roles beforehand. They negotiate and fight, expressing conflicting views and interests, and with unequal resources, to shape the processes of intervention. In this process, policy or programme documents and dispositions as a whole may play only a marginal role as far as the stakes of the actors involved are concerned and as compared to the way in which actors, in diverse micro situations, use and digest those parts of the programmes that they find relevant to their interests.

The discussions in the book deal with the concept of *rural development* as a *field of social interaction* between different categories of actors, and explore why and how people acting at development interfaces arrive at consensuses for the reproduction of particular 'rural development' frames of interaction. In the next chapter, I clarify my use of these concepts, including the concept of 'consensus', which from the beginning I emphasise is neither linked to a functionalist explanation of the so-called *status quo* of social order or of equilibrium in the Durkheimian tradition (see Lukes 1973: 139), nor is it to be equated with Bourdieu's (1990: 41) concepts of 'recognition and miscognition', whereby the dominated are brainwashed – a sort of internalisation of submission to a given hegemonic power. From my point of view, consensus accounts for the strategies of actors 'living apart together', in an effort to avoid hampering the intervention process whilst keeping the gate open for further negotiation, or even struggle.

Based on my interpretations of carefully documented daily happenings within the community development programme (in both village and development agency) – happenings as perceived by the researcher but also as interpreted by the actors involved – I give the concepts of 'intervention' and 'rural development' a different meaning from that usually accorded by social scientists and development practitioners. In this introductory chapter, I set the scene by raising the major questions to be investigated and by indicating the methodological approaches used in the field for tackling these questions.

Community Development: a 'new-old' fashion from the black box of 'rural development'

What made me consider it necessary to study and question the notions of 'rural development' and 'intervention'? After all they seem to be as commonplace as 'hello' or 'hi' to the average young Dutch person. But during fieldwork one quickly gets confused by the rhetorical utilisation of the phrase 'rural development' by various people in different contexts, which leads one to question the function of the word in the production of development language and practice. A particular stimulus came from the manipulation of the phrase 'community development' which was supposedly buried three decades ago.

The 'community development' fashion, or back to the fifties

For readers abreast of the literature on development intervention issues (social scientists and development practitioners alike), it is strange to come across a 'community development programme' in the so-called Third World at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s. It is generally accepted in this circle that 'Community Development' projects are now out of date in such countries, having once been the fashion of development intervention in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to some scholars (see Staatz and Eicher 1990: 8) the notion grew out of the Cold War atmosphere of the early 1950s and 1960s, when foreign aid programmes were searching for a non-revolutionary approach to rural change. Its promise to generate permanent political peace and quick economic growth (Holdcroft 1984: 46-7) now seems irrelevant and naïve. It has been successively replaced by approaches such as the Green Revolution (a high pay-off input model, which is a 'non-red' revolutionary way of fighting against hunger and inducing rural development), Integrated Rural Development and Basic Needs projects, and Farming Systems approaches, coupled, since the early 1980s, with macro-policy reforms and market liberalisation tailored by the IMF-WB tandem (see Staatz and Eicher 1990).

However, some recent literature reports cases of Community Development Programmes having been implemented in rural and suburban areas of Britain, the USA, Canada and Ireland. These projects cover various sectors of community life such as education, water supply, housing, health care, domestic waste disposal etc., and are generally said to aim at global improvement of the living conditions in local communities. It has been suggested that the ideas of community development, propounded in the colonies in the 1950s and 1960s in the run-up to independence, probably reached rural Britain (and other European and American countries) in the 1970s via returning colonial staff or development field agents and experts who took posts as directors and executive committee members of rural community councils (Wright 1992: 16; Rogers 1992: 96-104).[2] However, as far as developing countries are concerned, the catch-word 'community development' was largely absent by the end of the 1980s, being relegated to the archives of the language of state intervention in rural areas. Even its simple use in the discourse of so-called Integrated Rural Development was rare, let alone a whole intervention package labelled as such. So why does it suddenly spring up in Benin in 1989? Is it a non-revolutionary device,

from a collapsing revolutionary regime? The basic launching rhetoric of the programme is expressed in the words of the newly-nominated Minister of Rural Development:

> *'The various development programmes carried out to date have failed to drive local entities from poverty to the extent that most of our villages, yesterday flourishing, are now transformed into dying places. Therefore, each of the six CARDERs (Centres d'Action Régional pour le Développement Rural) will directly select a few villages where high and medium level staff volunteers will be sent to live, design and implement projects with peasants. That will give new impetus to, and make the economic and social life of the villages more dynamic'.*

Most importantly, what type of 'rural development' was this supposed to achieve and how were those concerned supposed to relate to it? Are we to assume from the return of this old fashion of development intervention that planners of rural development in Benin had gone full circle and that nothing had changed? Or was it that they had finally found the path to 'rural development', discovering that the old approach was best? On the other hand, might it represent a challenge to the ways in which intervention had been conceptualised, and thus a request for further exploration of the social construction of intervention in order to know more of its nature?

Intervention, 'intervenors' and 'intervened'

Since the early 1950s stories of project failures abound in the field of rural development, internationally and locally. But instead of discouraging intervention, these stories have apparently been used to justify the need for more 'improved' projects with new packaging. Relationships between the staff of development intervention institutions and villagers have generally been ambiguous. Each party complains of the other – the extensionists blaming peasants for being ignorant, stubborn or lazy, while peasants complain of the irrelevance of agents' advice, or their selfish and cheating practices, especially concerning export crops, agricultural inputs and state regulations on natural resources and environmental issues. However, while open clashes between the two parties do exist, they are rather rare. In the Zou Province in Benin, where I did my research, the focal point of mutual criticism by villagers and state agents was the Integrated Rural Development Project, launched and implemented during 1983 by the CARDER, the state regional agency in charge of rural development. Some peasants, especially the leaders, were very violent in expressing their indignation against the practices of project agents, sometimes asserting that as peasants they were more abreast of the farming techniques and other related skills advocated by CARDER than the government officers (village agents) who were supposed to teach them. Peasants claimed that they no longer needed them and that the Government should withdraw them from extension work and settle them on their own farms so that everybody could see what they were capable of. Some critics added that their salaries were being paid from the resources generated by peasant labour, and concluded that this was a waste of money and a mode of exploitation that should stop.

Despite the endless diatribe between peasants and village agents and their complaints about each other, they apparently live on good terms in their everyday life. One such case struck me at the very beginning of my research in the area:

I was seated one day with Topipha, a fifty-five year old peasant, next to the main road that crosses the village. It was a sort of public place where people came for many different things, including games. That day, two men were playing the game called adji, while Topipha, seated at some distance from the players, was fixing his bicycle. I was keeping him company and we were discussing this and that: his duties in the village church, his unwillingness to continue to take care of the wife of his son who had migrated to Nigeria, the wife's becoming more and more capricious like most girls nowadays, the last rain that fell on market day making it difficult for people to do good business etc. In the mean time, the district extension officer passed by in his car and waved his hand. Suddenly, Topipha switched topic: 'Look they are passing, the thieves!' he said. And he went on muttering about how village agents continually cheated peasants, giving examples of cotton cultivation and marketing. He became so vehement in his expressions, that I was scared and wondered how things would turn out should the extension officer happen to arrive at that very moment.

A few minutes later, the extension officer returned and stopped. He got out of his car, walked up to us and shook our hands. Topipha offered him a seat, asked about his wife and children and offered him a beer. They had a rather nice discussion on the troubles Topipha was having with his bicycle and then about cotton issues (fertilizers, marketing etc), Topipha being the one asking about the why, when and how of things in a coaxing voice. Once the officer finished his beer, he thanked the peasant, greeted us again and left. I asked Topipha about his attitude which I considered contradictory to his declarations a few minutes earlier. He replied: 'That's nothing! Showing warmth to someone is not an indication of friendship and does not mean that you do not harbour resentments against him on account of one thing or another. You have red blood within your body and nevertheless manage to spit white. Moreover, you should know that it is no use trying to rape a woman with whom you are sure to share the bed all night long'[2].

How can people complain so much about each other, especially on issues that are supposed to be crucial to their daily lives, and still find ways of chatting together in such a convivial manner? The bed in question here is most probably that of 'rural development', which seems then to depict the cohabitation between peasants and state as a permanent situation, at least in the views of Topipha. The picture which the bed-and-rape metaphor intended to give was that there was little use fighting those one had to live beside. It indicated a preference for softer weapons of negotiation, in contrast to the verbal violence used by Topipha a few minutes earlier. People expressing the denial of friendship towards each other and harbouring resentments, which they want 'outsiders' to see as strong, signifies that despite the conflictive situation they live in, presented as potentially explosive, they manage to find and maintain some common ground for action. How is this common ground achieved? And at what cost? At first sight, Topipha was not obliged to offer the extension officer a beer and, most importantly, he did not have to behave so nicely to him. He had been so angry against him just a few seconds before. This apparent contradiction raises crucial questions: What role do the complaints and criticisms by

the actors on specific occasions play in the process of rural development intervention? Can we still hold to a top-down view implied in the actual use of the concept of 'development intervention', which seems to portray the presence of the state or external institutions as imposed on peasants, leaving them no alternative but simply to accommodate to and play with it? Such a view, if looked at closely, still retains some cargo image of intervention (see Long and van der Ploeg 1989: 230) and prevents us from seeing the changes that are taking place in front of us, i.e. the 'intervened' taking initiatives of 'intervention', over and above those of the 'intervenors'.[4] The failure to adopt such a perspective on the dynamics of intervention prevents us from opening the black box of 'rural development'.

What does the black box of 'rural development' contain?

'Rural development' is a concept that is now used world-wide to describe the process of (state) intervention in rural areas focusing largely on agricultural production and the incorporation of rural producers into the market economy. This process has been linked to the building of 'modern' nation-states in former colonial territories, and to the establishment of state authority over geographical areas shaped arbitrarily, especially in Africa, *au hazard des aventures coloniales.* State intervention in rural areas – now referred to as 'rural development' – has gone through different fashions and has been variously labelled over time as *mise en valeur des colonies,* increased agricultural production, rural modernisation, community development, agricultural development, *animation rurale,* rural extension, etc.

In countries such as Benin, 'rural development' is a strongly technical concept, but is also used for political purposes. Its technical strength is derived from the fact that agriculture is assumed to be the largest and most vital sector of the economy of Third World countries (Johnson and Mellor 1961). Over 80 percent of the population of China, India and Africa live and work on the land (Laite 1984: 197). In Benin, the actions that the state and development organisations (governmental and non-governmental alike) initiate in the name of 'rural development' are said to aim at improving the living conditions of the rural population that make up more than three quarters of the population of the country. These actions are said to concern an agricultural sector that employs more than 70 percent of the active population and produces more than 70 percent of the foreign currency earnings and some 40 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Such information sounds very convincing and incontestable: Is it possible to think of 'developing' a country without starting from the sector that carries all these attributes? Development plans since the colonial period have invariably set rural development at the forefront (see the 1938, 1945, 1963 and 1975 Development Plans of Dahomey/Benin).

But 'rural development' is also a problematic notion, a set of self-reproducing practices that are given very different meanings by the different actors involved in its reproduction. The various kinds of organisations and categories of Ministry officials, politicians, head office staff, district and village extension agents, development experts, representatives of funding agencies, trade union leaders, farmers, traders, and make extensive use of the term, but, depending on their social category and on the specific social time and space in which they live, they have very different

representations in mind when speaking of rural development. For example, protests against the reduction of staff by Government under IMF pressure, claims for salary increases by the trade unions representing agricultural bureaucrats, as well as the attempts of Government to decrease staff members and thus reduce the salary burden on the state budget, are all presented as steps towards the same goal, that of 'rural development'. The same thing goes for traders claiming better trading conditions for agricultural products (often at the disadvantage of rural producers), farmers asking for lower prices for inputs and higher prices for agricultural products (here affecting the interests of traders), and agricultural bureaucrats fighting for better working conditions.

In fact, 'rural development' has become a taken-for-granted concept and its use and reproduction have gone beyond the political arenas indicated above. It has attracted social scientists, first development economists and social geographers, and later rural sociologists who seem to have been knocking insistently at its door since the 1970s (see Copp 1972, and especially Hall and Midgley 1988: 2-5). It is an institution in itself, a subject of teaching and research in university departments and is supposed to be the central occupation of a whole Ministry in Benin as it is in many other Third World countries. It is the main focus of state intervention in rural areas, and the main argument used by state as well as non-state organisations to legitimise their actions in villages. Apart from the semantic problem raised by these multiple representations behind the rhetoric of rural development (even though we should not be looking for uniform meanings), there are some simple practical questions one might ask, which at least troubled me during my fieldwork and since: What is particularly rural about the changes taking place in the context of the Community Development Programme in Togoudo? And in what sense are these changes specific to rural areas?

The Community Development Programme as an anthropological entrée into the field of rural development

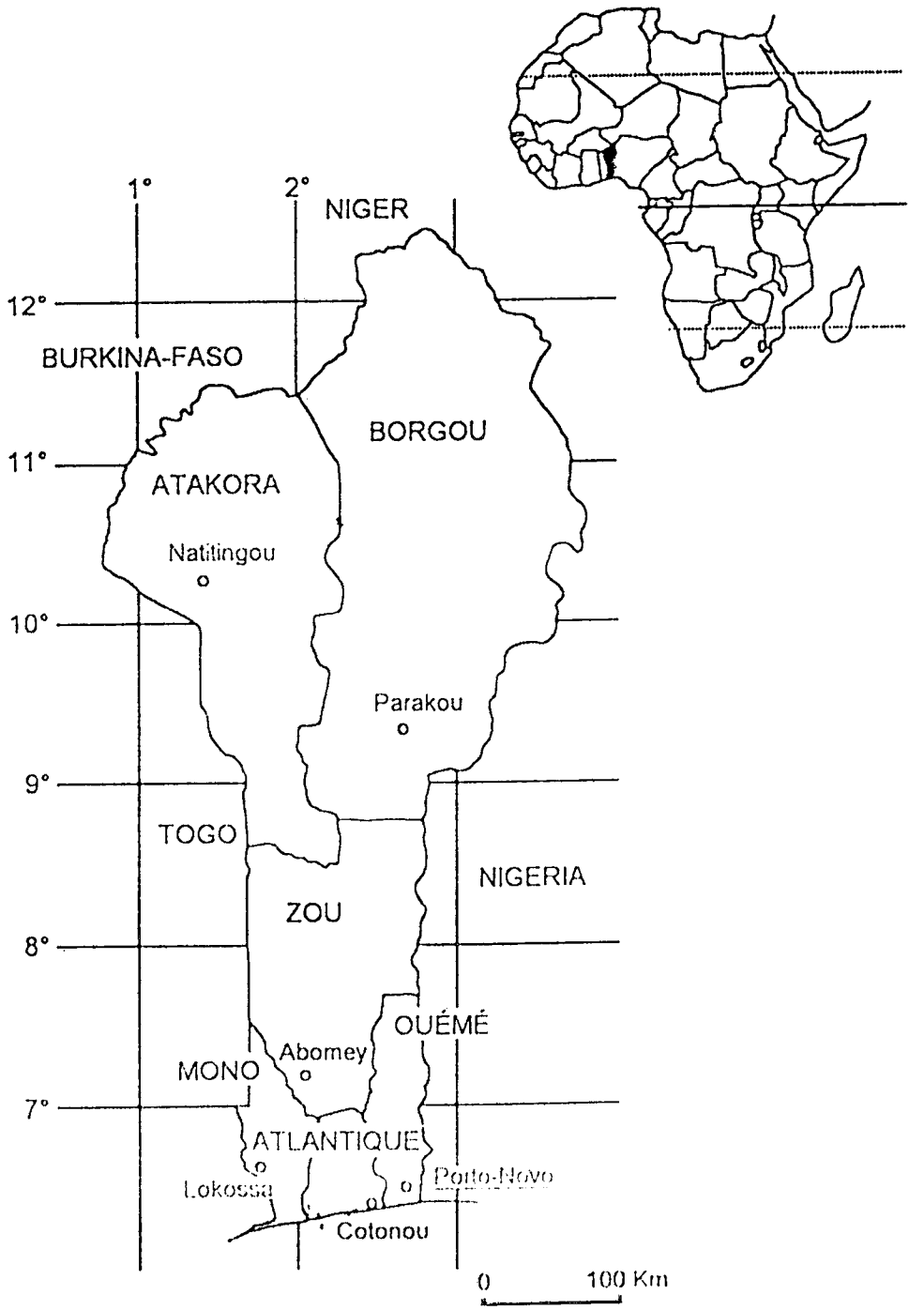
The field research on which these discussions are based was conducted for the main part in 1991-1992, with additional field visits since, and within the frame of the Community Development Programme in the Zou Province, though the programme came to an end in 1993. The project was implemented in eight villages of the province (see Map 2), within each of which an extension agent at Masters degree level was appointed as a community development agent – called *Responsable de Dynamisation du Village (RDV).*

According to the plan, actions within the project were twofold: first were the actions at the village level conducted by the RDV, with occasional technical and institutional support from the head office. He was requested to reside in the village, to design and implement projects with local participation, that would provide new impetus and dynamise the economic and social life of the village. The RDVs received every two weeks or so the visit of a technical assistant from the head office to give them advice and, most importantly, to monitor the programme. They were told that whenever needed, they could request the assistance of the subject matter specialists within CARDER, or any other resource person outside of CARDER. All

RDVs met quarterly at the head office where they reported on their activities and were given instructions by the General Director of CARDER concerning the types of tasks they should undertake. The second block of activities included in the Community Development Programme concerned agricultural training, provided for young school leavers coming mainly from the villages involved in the programme. In the present study I have limited myself to the activities in the villages and to the links between the RDVs and the head office, leaving out the youth training block, which, in any case, was a rather one-off activity.

This book is thus not about a 'big project', with a huge budget allocation by the World Bank or some other important donor agency. We are not concerned here with centrally planned and financed schemes for constructing roads, bridges, schools, health centres etc. Nor are we interested in issues such as pricing policy, market regulations or vaccination campaigns. Comparing those types of projects to 'Community Development', some would say that the latter is no more than peanuts, the *jardin de récréation* of development workers. Even for CARDER staff the programme was not worth mentioning as part of the current activities of the organisation. In any case, during the 1989-1991 period, in the Zou Province there was no big project whatsoever. The period was one of intense political activities and of a waiting attitude from most donors and intervention staff. If I had not come across the Community Development Programme, this book would have been about the strikes and daily political talk of the staff of an intervention organisation sentenced to death by a structural adjustment programme conducted under the control of the World Bank and IMF tandem.

But more than just a case 'in place of any better case', the Community Development Programme was an interesting one for me as a research focus. It was unique in that it did not start with a detailed and centralised project plan. Nor did it start with any budget allocated by a donor agency, though the staff and villagers involved thought the contrary at the beginning. In a sense, it was a kind of 'progressive, open-ended and participatory' type of programme where the problems to be dealt with were expected to be those considered the most important by the so-called clients themselves. Yet, the programme was caught up in the bureaucratic and top-down intervention culture of CARDER, as well as in the project dismembering practices of those involved. It was therefore transformed within CARDER and between CARDER agents and villagers, and became locked into the divergent, even conflictive, interests of the various parties. Pieces of it were used by individuals and groups for achieving objectives that had very little to do with programme aims and activities. The programme provided grounds where various categories of institutions and actors met, debated and negotiated their different and conflicting views and projects of 'rural development' expressing the 'historical imprint, the accumulated experiences of interventions of various sorts and times' (Long and van der Ploeg 1989: 230). At the same time, it provided space for actors to open up new opportunities and to engage in dynamics that stretched far beyond the explicit and implicit scope of the plan and its implementation. The senior staff of Togoudo (see Map 2) – one of the eight villages involved in the programme in the Zou Province – became the most successful because of the enthusiasm of the population and the dynamism of the RDV appointed there. As argued by the staff, within the first nine months of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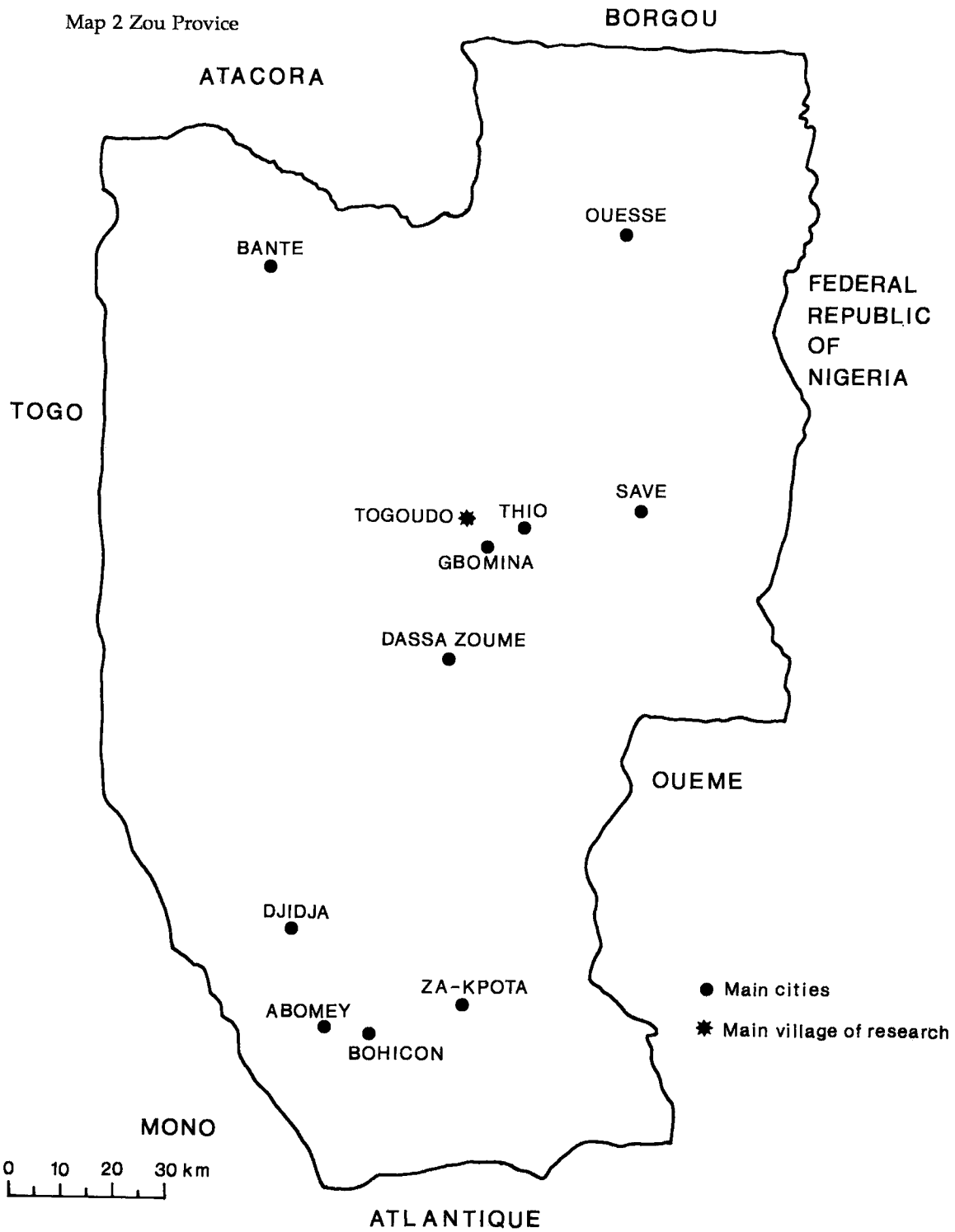
Map 2 Zou Provice



The senior staff of Togoudo (see Map 2) – one of the eight villages involved in the programme in the Zou Province – became the most successful because of the enthusiasm of the population and the dynamism of the RDV appointed there. As argued by the staff, within the first nine months of the programme, Togoudo was the only village where many 'significant activities' were reported by both male and female peasant groups, and also where brick houses were built with the active involvement of the population, one for the school and the other for storing agricultural inputs (mainly for cotton production). I concentrated my investigations in Togoudo, helped by a research assistant who resided permanently in the village.[4] The discussions in this book are based upon ethnographic data, our personal experiences in the village and on relevant events at the district and head office levels of CARDER. Moreover, I contacted officers in the Ministry on the subject and was also given opportunities to interact with staff and villagers in other provinces. For example, in the Atlantic Province in South Benin, I was able to document the formal burial of the Community Development Programme by those involved, which I will use to illustrate the hidden aspects of the manufacturing of state intervention policy. In the process of the research, I ended up building and reactivating (together with the researched and my assistant), social networks with ramifications at village and district levels, but also at the regional head office of CARDER and at the Ministry of Rural Development. My first intention was to conduct a systematic comparison between Togoudo and Dani, a second village with similar ecological and ethnic characteristics but considered to be the least successful of the programmes. But in the actual process of negotiating my way through the daily ventures of the research endeavour, as I elaborate below, I found such an attempt at comparison positivistic and meaningless, or at least unsuited to my overall way of dealing with the field 'realities'. Instead of such a comparison, special reference is made now and then to this village and to others in the programme, in order to discuss the different ways in which actors interpret and make use of what was ostensibly the same intervention asset for rural development. I also sometimes bring in experiences gained in Dani, helping a women's group to acquire implements for gardening, a refrigerator (*Ile omi tutu* or 'the house of cold water' as they called it) for selling ice and cold drinks, and for starting a savings-and-credit group.

Investigating the field of rural development: methodological dimensions

In the foregoing discussions, I hope to have made it clear that the field research on which the present book is based was conducted with an actor-oriented approach (see Long 1984; 1989; 1992 for extended elaborations on the approach). I was interested in understanding what kinds of relationships the individuals, groups and categories of people involved in a specific type of state intervention (in this case the Community Development Programme) built with each other, and what roles these relations played in the logic of the intervention and its reproduction. I did not want to 'teach' people about 'development', nor could I find for myself any legitimacy or competence to pretend to do so. Therefore, I did not start with a preconceived ideal theoretical model, to end up with 'conclusions and recommendations' for

making reality fit better with the model and thereby giving 'development' a better chance to come about. I started the research with my mind set on the fact that within my scope, as indicated above, I would let the social actors faced with the circumstances of action speak for themselves in their own logic, giving their accounts of their everyday life. From this entry point, I assumed that such reflexive accounts of events by social actors would not necessarily, at least not always, lead to 'objective data'. I knew, and further learned through this research, that actors' accounts can be, and mostly are, political (i.e. manipulative) – one of the implications of which is that I did not consider myself as being outside of the events I was researching. Rather, I was part of the game and a central element in the structuring exercises performed by informants when accounting for and rationalising their actions. I realised throughout the research that no matter what theoretical and political background one might have, one becomes an actor in the game, in the dynamic and conflict-generating social interactions that are being investigated. One is attributed roles in various social dramas, according to where you do or do not go, who you visit or talk to, what you do or do not say etc. Before discussing these issues, let me emphasise that my preference for an actor-oriented approach was not an abstract choice between theoretical paradigms, but was the result of personal experience, of previous disappointments when, in earlier research, I had tried to use generic models for explaining and attempting to change reality.

From 'Agricultural Knowledge Systems' theory to the discovery of the actor-oriented approach in the field

Being an agronomist trained within the ideology of 'enlightening peasants for improving their production and standard of living', I became seduced by the idea (mainly developed in the Department of Communication and Extension Sciences of Wageningen Agricultural University) of bridging the gap between trainers, researchers, extensionists and farmers, in such a way that the whole AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Information System) – as it is labelled (see Röling 1988) – operates synergically to bring information to the place where it is needed, so as to enhance 'agricultural development'. In an attempt to apply the AKIS model, I had the chance to conduct fieldwork on a Research and Development (R&D) project whose objective was to bridge this gap by bringing all the partners together in devising, testing and stimulating the use, at farm level, of agricultural technology packages that suited the cultivators' conditions. The fieldwork was conducted in Benin in 1988 and lasted four months, during which time I was integrated into the project team, taking part in all its activities, which included field trials (conducted by farmers with the assistance of field research and extension agents), and evaluation meetings between farmers, researchers and extensionists. At the same time, being a staff member of the Faculty of Agriculture at the National University of Benin, I could visit the villages of the project and have independent contact with the people, since the Faculty had been engaged in relationships with these villages from 1985 through a Farming Systems Research programme. I found this fieldwork an unexpected opportunity to identify communication gaps between the actors involved

(researchers, extensionists, farmers and traders), and then the work out the 'linkage mechanisms' between these different groups as suggested in the AKIS model.

Very soon, I realised that there was indeed a lack of communication between the different parties, groups and hierarchical levels involved in the project, but that these gaps could not be explained as technological gaps that could be bridged by a simple communication device. The structural discontinuities that were the framework of these gaps did not derive simply from the institutions' mandates or from their formal structural organisation. They also resulted from the cultural, socio-professional backgrounds and from the world views of the individuals. They resulted from the ways in which each strategic but casually formed interest group interpreted and used the mandate, and created new and informal structures that cut across formal boundaries in order to achieve different, mostly divergent objectives. When they occurred, communication gaps and ignorance were frequently not accidental, but consciously (intentionally) structured, as part of the strategies deployed by the groups involved in order to achieve hidden as well as contradictory objectives. Most importantly, although they might talk informally about these gaps, the various actors and interest groups involved hated the issue to be brought into the open in formal settings. Discourse, and various resources from the formal and non-operational structures, were used by actors within informally generated structures and networks (in the course of the action) that were instrumental in achieving objectives more in line with the logic of the informal structures than with that of the formal ones (Mongbo 1989a and 1989b).

From there, I began to understand the meaning of what 'systems thinkers' approach from a different perspective and label 'communication gaps'. For me, it became clear that, unless the actual discourse of gap bridging is instrumental to the achievement of objectives other than those formally stated by 'systems thinkers and managers', it was useless trying to bridge the gaps, since by attempting to do so we adhere to the formal structures of the project. Such structures are not the actual frames of action through which actors give concrete life to the project, thus turning it into a series of experienced realities. My discovery in the field (given succour later by relevant literature and discussions mainly in the Department of Sociology of Rural Development in Wageningen Agricultural University, with Norman Long and his scholars) was that if one wanted to understand what the project had become in reality, one needed in fact to deconstruct it and analyze it from an actor-oriented perspective (Long and van der Ploeg 1988). The project has to be conceived as an arena of negotiation between various strategic groups (Bierschenk 1988), and one has to investigate the ways in which different actors (with their differences in culture, world views and interests) use the resources they are able to mobilise from the structural environment of their activities (taking active part in the reproduction and transformation of these structures) to achieve the formally prescribed and/or hidden objectives. One needs also to research the influence which these processes produce on the essence and dynamism of intervention institutions and on the outcomes of their actions.

With the experience gained in this R&D project, I first decided to focus the investigations for this thesis on R&D cases, and to compare the Mono and Zou projects. But once in the field, it was circumstance and the actors who guided me

to the actual focus of the research, which is the Community Development Programme.

Choosing a focus for the research from an actor-oriented perspective

I let myself be guided by circumstances and actors, but I tried, as Law warns, not to celebrate them (Law 1991: 12). I did not just let myself be led by actors, because I had learned that their guidance can be manipulative. Also, in many instances, I was the one taking the decisions as to where to go, whom to talk to and with which subject to start the discussions. In so doing, I often made mistakes (interrupting an account from actors, or failing to fully document an ongoing social event etc), which I regretted at the end of the day. In fact, I was filtering through the flow of events I was experiencing. For example, issues of interest to the unions of agricultural bureaucrats and their networking and political affiliations were uppermost and there were many attempts by their agents to enrol me in order to enlarge their networks. But I did not find these issues to be particularly relevant. I was interested in situations entailing encounters between agents and villagers concerning questions of rural development. I was concerned with contributing to a debate on social actors, intervention, social interface and rural development – a scientific debate taking place far away from the research setting. In some ways, I was forcing my 'informants' to produce for me a discourse on topics in which they themselves might not have been interested. Walking with them, I tried to deconstruct them in such a way that they guided me, but could not lead me just to where they wanted. But this I experienced as a permanent negotiation, the outcome of which I could not predict beforehand. They were always free to stop collaborating. But they also managed many times to embark on their own projects. An illustration here will be helpful.

I started fieldwork in the Zou Province in early 1990. After a few days of discussions with the regional unit of the R&D project in Bohicon, one of the major cities of the province, I expressed my intention to settle in one of the villages of the project. The project head staff had recommended two villages where, as I later understood, they had many problems enlisting villagers but also disciplining some field staff. I decided to settle in one of these villages but kept contact with the regional unit based in Bohicon, where the head offices of the CARDER were located. I soon realised that the field agents and villagers in close contact with them were more preoccupied by whether the funding of the project would continue or not, than by the actual activities of the project concerning agricultural technology development. I answered them, repeating the information I got from the head staff that the project would continue for at least two more years. While I based the assurances I was giving field agents on the information I got from head staff, the latter were using the very fact of my presence in the village to convince field staff that the project would be renewed. I later discovered that the negotiations with the funding institution for continuing the project were much harder than the head staff made me believe. And in that bargain, one argument they put to both field agents and representatives of funding agencies was this: '...The project is very important to the Government and scientists of our country. You see the University is becoming more interested in it than ever before: not only students are coming to the villages for fieldwork, but even the lecturers themselves.'

My assistant and I went through similar experiences in Togoudo. The ritual performed by the RDV when introducing us to village people and to visitors, which included attempts by him to use the situation to try to settle previous conflicts and to convince representatives of funding agencies coming to the village, gave us the chance to know, without asking, the previous realities of the project and their relationship to the present. I consider these experiences as situations where we were, what Fabian has called, 'catalysers' or providers of occasions (quoted by de Vries 1992: 79), which in the end helped us sometimes and fitted well into my analytical framework. On the other hand, my encounter with the Community Development Programme resulted from pure chance and I would not have discovered it if I had limited myself to formal and informal interactions with CARDER agents and the accounts most staff, including the directors, gave me of their current activities.

My encounter with the Village Redynamisation Programme

During the period 1989-1990, if an outsider talked with CARDER agents, three main topics would come to the fore, one of which was the R&D project referred to above. The second topic, ranked higher than the previous one, was the Integrated Rural Development Project that ran between 1983 and 1990. It aimed to 'increase agricultural (in fact cotton) production with a view to improving the level of revenue for the farmers' and the foreign currency earnings for the state'. These two projects were about to end without any clear prospect for other funding. Donors seemed no longer willing to allocate funds to Benin projects unless there were fundamental changes in the supposedly Marxist-Leninist political system. The working atmosphere was one of absenteeism and 'wait-and-see'. In any case, people seemed uninterested in talking about this project (at least with me), and when they did, it was in very negative ways. There were not many activities going on and the staff were more interested in whether there would be another project when the current one finished in the following year.[5] One soon got the point that when there was no 'project', there was nothing much to do. They conveyed the impression of non-activity. Yet, later when I attended staff meetings, I realised from their reports – though exaggerating the achievements and 'difficulties encountered' – that there were things going on in the field. Their reports were not just empty speeches but did in fact reflect concrete activities. On the other hand, neither was the impression of 'non-activity' conveyed to me without some substance. The nuance was that it expressed something different from merely the absence of activity. It reminded me of how Adja women talked about farm work. In 1986, I was interested in when and how Adja women started to become involved in agriculture. The answer of almost all the informants (female) was that 'In the old days, women did not do farm work'. Later I realised that this did not mean that the women did not work on the farm. They did help their husbands in many farm activities (sowing, harvesting, even sometimes weeding). It only meant that the women did not perceive it as 'farm work' as such, since they did not undertake such work on their own account and did not earn cash from it (see Mongbo 1988). In the same way, the perception of 'non-activity' by staff in the absence of projects, as I later understood and

discuss in Chapter 4 and 5 of this book, is part of the historically-built culture of development intervention in Benin.

The third topic which always came to the fore in discussions was national politics and ruminations as to the survival prospects of the CARDER. As I elaborate in Chapter 3, the political atmosphere was very tense around 1989-1990. An IMF-WB structural adjustment programme had started and there were prospects of some funding for the Zou CARDER, though contingent upon dismissal of more than half the staff. At the national level, the economic crisis was severe and salaries were paid very irregularly to all civil servants, with delays amounting from 5 to 8 months. Schools and trade unions were often on strike and street demonstrations were frequently organised. In the offices, discussions were generally about the latest public unrest rather than 'rural development' matters. Not once did I hear the Community Development Programme mentioned as an ongoing activity of the CARDER and I could not have selected this programme as the focus of my research if I had not come across it, almost by accident.

One morning, while I was in Bohicon for a few days and using one of the housing facilities of the CARDER, I met a group of 16 young men (18-20 years old on average). They came from rice producing villages and were on their way to an irrigation scheme to learn about rice production. They slept in rooms next to mine and were attracted by the music of my radio cassette. We talked a few minutes and shared maize porridge and toasted peanuts at breakfast. These young men had very different ideas about the ultimate goal of their training. Some of them were sent by their villages so that, once trained, they could teach their parents back home. Others considered themselves recruited as CARDER staff to teach farmers about rice cultivation techniques wherever needed, while others thought CARDER was intending to give them financial and technical assistance to start an irrigation scheme as 'modern farmers'. Later, the CARDER member of staff (Ekanye, as I refer to him in this book) in charge of the operation arrived and we were introduced to each other.

During our discussions Ekanye explained:'This training session is part of the Village Redynamisation Programme, in which I am in charge of coordination and monitoring. The trainees come from the villages involved in the programme. This is the second step in our training plan. The first was held in the villages on several topics related to crop production, animal production etc., and was of direct profit to many people. The ultimate goal of these activities is to modernise our agriculture through the young people, solving at the same time the problem of migration and unemployment.'

I kept contact with Ekanye and with other staff involved in the programme. I questioned them on the programme, visited the trainees on site and discussed with them their training. I also visited three villages of the programme where I had discussions with field agents and villagers. From all these contacts, I received different, sometimes contradictory, views of the programme. On these occasions, most CARDER staff made extensive use of the rhetoric of community and participatory development, one of the oldest devices in development intervention, but presented here as a new approach that would enlighten and revitalise our villages. But some staff found no relevance in the programme and criticised it as a waste of time, funds and manpower.

The actual investigations: the social networks for the field research

I started to take part in the meetings and activities of the project at head office as well as in some of the villages. I also managed to follow a monitoring mission in all the eight villages of the programme, during which I recorded all the interactions I witnessed between the RDV, the head office official and the villagers. After this tour with the CARDER officer in charge of the monitoring of the programme, I visited six of the villages on my own, in order to have more independent accounts of the RDV's perceptions of the programme and their daily activities. I used various research techniques: observation and systematic recording of events, open-ended and sometimes semi-structured interviews on various issues, extensive documenting and analysis of specific social situations (of encounters between different parties) and cases through time and space.

Then, mainly because of the success the programme was accredited with, and also because of the enthusiasm and optimism of the RDV, I decided to base the research in Togoudo. Nevertheless, I maintained contact with the head offices and with a few other RDVs whom I visited now and then for discussions. I attended most meetings of the programme and managed to interact informally with the various staff involved. In the end, I made close relationships, ranging from the directors to low level staff, staying in their houses in Bohicon, and going out with them on social occasions that had nothing to do with professional matters. I felt that, at some stage during the research, I would need to conduct a survey of the personnel, their ages, gender, qualifications, career, religion, future expectations etc. Such data would have allowed me to build a more situated idea of the staff involved in the Community Development Programme, whose life histories I had already documented. This attempt to conduct a survey, in the bosom of CARDER, failed because most field staff (those at district and village levels), including the union leaders, saw it as a government ploy to get round their resistance to earlier attempts by the Ministry of Rural Development to conduct a census whose objective was believed to be the basis for deciding on who would be made redundant within the structural adjustment programme. I thus had to resort to secondary data. Also, archives, annual reports and key informants were consulted for the history of development intervention in Benin and specifically in the Zou Province.

In Togoudo, where I focused the village work, I deployed no pre-selected samples or pre-established questionnaires. Those informants I interviewed were selected in the light of their participation or non-participation in specific action situations. Apart from his intensive focus on the *Groupement Villageois* (GV) and cotton growers, the Rural Development Worker (RDV) of Togoudo devoted a great deal of attention to women's groups. I recorded all the groups that were formed and I conducted open-ended discussions with them on their daily activities and also on those of the individual members. In some cases, specific activities were identified about which more structured discussions were conducted. These observations and discussions were organised both in formal and informal contexts. Later, random samples of 65 women and 65 men were drawn up, which some female and male informants agreed to classify for me according to their notions of 'well-being'. From this exercise, which I elaborate in Chapter 8, I obtained some major locally-produced

indicators of socio-economic status. Three to five persons from each of the socio-economic categories thus obtained were interviewed in a more structured way on their individual activities and their perceptions of group activities. I documented – more through informal than formal interviews – the ways in which these people try to earn a living, and explored their operationalisation of 'well-being' and what they called the 'opening of eyes'. I also recorded the problems they encountered, their attempts at reaching solutions and, through their life histories, how all these evolved over time. The insights obtained from this investigation were placed within a broader context of the local economy using data I collected in a quantitative survey conducted early in 1995, the details of which are spelled out in Chapter 7 of this book.

The outline of the book: the structure of an argument concerning the field of rural development

I found the village scene to be the most appropriate for experiencing the ways in which 'global' phenomena, including the rhetoric of 'rural development' are dynamically appropriated by people, decoded according to individuals' life-worlds, made culturally, locally and politically meaningful, and incorporated into individuals' and groups' strategic and tactical initiatives for self-achievement, differently referred to as 'ways ahead', 'opening of eyes' (which means to become modern), 'well-being', 'good fortune' and so forth. These processes, involving the individual and collective search for self-achievement, carry with them three main characteristics which lie at the heart of the arguments in this thesis.

First, they are conflict-generating *par excellence*, but at the same time become an object of consensus. In fact, even when actors confront each other on issues related to their life-projects, and especially in the context of a development intervention, they always reach operational consensus, at least provisional or tactical consensus with themselves and with others, so as to proceed with the intervention process and the reproduction of the language of 'rural development', no matter how curtailed and biased the consensus might look. Indeed, people arguing from different perspectives and dealing with different issues end up taking common decisions, and establishing some consensus built out of cacophonic, non-dialogical social interaction. Most important, it seems, is the necessity of keeping enough room to be able to continue struggling for definitions that best fit their own perceptions and interests. By so doing, the actors involved in these social interactions contribute efficiently, though not intentionally, to the reproduction of the field of rural development.

Second, not only are they open to the active appropriation of external opportunities (including so-called external interventions), which actors deconstruct, transform and incorporate into their own projects and plans, they also generate interaction situations where local people, who are supposed to accommodate to external intervention, actually take initiative away from the 'intervenors'. I contend that, in their daily reproduction of the discourse and practice of rural development, actors do not conform to a linear model which depicts development and change as being initiated by state-designed policy, implemented by state agents and backed up by

funding bodies and external experts. In fact, invervention roles and practices are defined, negotiated and established in the process of interaction, as a means for achieving different interests.

Third, they are world-time bound in that they incorporate local interpretations and understandings of global (national and international) political and economic events that set the limits to, or open latitude for, their definition and therefore their room for manoeuvre. But with these interpretations and appropriations of external events, actors take a big share in the construction of the contexts of their actions, contexts that are no longer externally determined but socially constructed.

In order to make this argument, I organize the remaining part of the book, depicted in the table presented below, as follows:

In Chapter 2, I set out the theoretical dimensions of *rural development* as a social field of interaction. I ground this theoretical discussion on a meeting of the cotton growers' organisation of Togoudo, which reveals some concrete manifestations of the *social field*, i.e. the *grounds* and *arenas* on which *social actors* – the *stakeholders* – interact for achieving different sorts of *interests*, using specialised *language* and different *discursive* and *rhetorical* expertise. The chapter discusses the concepts entailed in the notion of the field of rural development. Other concepts are only introduced here and discussed further in the chapters to which they are most pertinent. For example, the concept of *state* is discussed in Chapter 5 and that of *social interface* in Chapter 9.

Elaborating the theoretical framework of the argument based upon the case of the Community Development Programme has the advantage of bringing readers directly into the practical world of the social actors involved, while allowing them to engage in discussions on how one can best make sense of practice. But having completed this discussion, there is the need for a further understanding of this practical world of social actors, by stepping back and viewing the processes through the context from which the Community Development Programme emerged. This is done in Chapter 3, which explores the political and economic contexts of Benin at both national and village level, covering, among other dimensions, the economic crisis, the activism of political groups at local level, and the place of cotton in the local economy. I have avoided presenting this as a static or *ad hoc* context but have looked at it more from a historical and dynamic perspective, thus analyzing the logic whereby the Community Development Programme is conceived as a political innovation of development policy.

This throws up the following questions, which I tackle in the remaining chapters: What is the nature of the institutional framework in which the programme was implemented and how did this framework emerge and evolve? (Chapter 4); Who are the people involved in the actual implementation, what are their life-worlds and future perspectives and how do they conceive rural development? (Chapter 5 for the state agents and Chapters 6, 7 and 8 for villagers); and lastly, How is implementation actually carried out? (Chapter 9).

In Chapter 4, I look at the frame of (state) intervention in rural development as historically rooted in the colonial *mise en valeur* policy that created a bureaucracy and an intervention culture useful for meeting the state's needs to earn currency,

territorial (administrative) legitimacy and eventually for contributing to the well-being of the population.

The bureaucracy of state intervention in rural development is analyzed in Chapter 5, focusing, on the one hand, on the ways in which development intervention language and culture emerge in the context of intervention, where donors and experts play an important role, and on the other, on a discussion of the sorrows and daily search for self-achievement of the staff. To this end, distinction is made between four different categories of agents as broadly defined by the agents themselves in their interactions with each other. As a first step I argue for a deconstruction of the state in the matter of development intervention and for the need to pay more attention to how state power is appropriated or contested in specific situations by the staff to serve personal or group interests that might later be presented as a matter of state policy. I provide an illustration from the Atlantic Province concerning the process by which individual interests of staff members become entangled with technical arguments and vagaries of interpersonal relationships leading to the closure of the Community Development Programme in the name of, what representatives of the funding agency believed to be, state policy, despite their willingness to support the programme.

Chapter 6 opens the discussions on the village context and its significance for the implementation of the programme and the everyday life of the villagers. Here, I discuss the settlement patterns of the different socio-ethnic groups in so far as these patterns (which are more like farm-centred settlements) are relevant for understanding the stakes, stakeholders and the local politics of the present-day social entity that was given the status of 'village' by the public administration in the mid-1960s. Chapter 7 concerns a description of the productive activities of men and women in the village, giving some insight into the local economy as a dynamic and diversified one linked to national and regional markets (Nigeria, Togo and Niger mainly) via Gbomina market. The actual strategies of men and women for self-achievement are discussed in Chapter 8. Prior to this discussion, an emic categorisation of men and women is given in order to provide as large a view as possible of how different categories of local people define and procure self-achievement, well-being, and rural development.

Chapter 9 focuses on the crossroads of the Community Development Programme, where the social actors referred to in the preceding chapters meet. Here, actors merge their complex and divergent preoccupations in various ways, depending on their lifeworlds and life-projects. Centring the discussion on the concept of social interface, I first explore the discrepancies among bureaucrats in order to illustrate how a policy statement becomes locked into the conflictive partisan life in a particular development institution, is transformed into assets for (and sources of) coalitions, as well as conflict, and yet contributes to the reproduction of the institution and to the manufacturing of its image and development rhetoric. A similar analysis is made at village level, where the gap between programme activities and the everyday lives of the people is revealed and analyzed.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 10) looks back over the whole argument of the book and closes with a critical reflection on the rural specificity of the field of social interaction generated in the process of development intervention.

Table 1 The general frame of the book

Blocks	Chapters	Contents	Main topics
1 General argument of the book	Chapter 1	Main questions and methodological dimensions	The problematic, theory and methodological dimensions of the *field of rural development*
	Chapter 2	The *field of rural development* and the CDP*: main concepts	
2 Socio-political context of the CDP	Chapter 3	Local and national rationales of the CDP: a historical perspective	State politics, economic crisis and policy innovation in the *field of rural development*
3 Bureaucrats' frames of interaction	Chapter 4	CARDER and the intervention frame: emergence and evolution	State and bureaucrats in the *field of rural development*: life-worlds, historical background and present-day realities
	Chapter 5	The CARDER staff: actual preoccupations and future perspectives	
4 Villagers' strategies and frames of action	Chapter 6	Togoudo: a residential composite	Villagers in the *field of rural development*: life-worlds, life circumstances and everyday livelihood strategies
	Chapter 7	Togoudo: diversified production activities	
	Chapter 8	Togoudo: differential life-worlds and self-achievement strategies	
5 Development intervention and local realities	Chapter 9	Dismembering of the CDP at the crossroads	Highlighting the *field of rural development*: multiple languages and interests, common grounds and arenas for social interaction
	Chapter 10	Reflecting back on the argument	

* CDP: Community Development Programme

Notes

1 Throughout the text the concept of 'logic' or 'logics' is used in a 'soft' sense and does not imply the existence of dominant structuring forces or central normative frameworks. Here I follow Olivier de Sardan (1988: 216-224) in his discussion of development project logics and peasant logics.

2 A strong call was made to British councillors, administrators and planners, as early as 1966, for community development work in Britain similar to that being carried out at the time in India, Ghana etc (Sautoy 1966: 56). The message seems to have been heard and acted upon, if one takes account of the reports devoted to the issue. See, for example, Amstrong 1993; Smiley 1975; Wadham 1993; and more generally the publications of the Community Development Journal.

3 *Gbe do nu mɛ ko nyi mɛ mòn gbò δe a. Hun kònòn δo mɛ xomɛ cob'ɛnòn t'atan wewe. Lo ò, nyonu e kpo mɛ kpo δo kpò na dò wɛ le ò, e non xwlɛn kan hɛɛ a.*

4 Gerard Verschoor (1994) has also recently used the concepts of 'intervenors and intervened' in a Costa-Rican situation to discuss the gaps between both categories of actors in intervention contexts. Our discussion of this idea took place separately and at roughly the same time. My conceptualisation of 'intervened' is not restricted to the coping of clients with intervention situations, but is used to argue the static roles generally attributed to the different stakeholders involved in the field of rural development.

5 Fagbemy Mouftaou (the research assistant) holds a Masters degree from the Benin University Faculty of Agricultural Sciences in the field of economics and rural sociology. His previous experiences in field research include six months fieldwork for the writing of a thesis on farming systems analysis and resource allocation (see Fagbemy 1988), one year fieldwork on the interactions between village extensionists and peasants in the Atlantic Province (southern Benin), within a Training-and-Visit extension system (see van de Luhe 1991), and three months of ethnographic investigations into the daily activities of a peasant cooperative established in 1963 (see Daane and Mongbo 1991).

6 These attitudes from the staff should be put in proper context. First the political situation in Benin at that moment gave, at least to the staff, more exciting topics for discussion than the ending of the rural development project. Second, I was hardly of any interest to the people concerned. If I had been a white researcher, or an expert from one of the international organisations such as the FAO, UNDP etc. then things would have been different. People would have hosted me in more formal ways and would have fed me with standard rhetoric. I did not regret this situation, on the contrary! I was much more interested in what people normally thought and did, rather than in formal and standard discourse, which I could get any way by attending official meetings or by being in offices when the staff hosted visitors.

2 Stakeholders in the field of rural development at local level: Theoretical perspectives

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the main concepts used to make sense of the ethnography and to explain bottom-up theoretical insights based on some methodological innovations. I treat the concept of 'rural development' as a 'field of social interaction'. I first discuss the concept of 'social field'. This is later broken down into 'social grounds and arenas' where social actors (stakeholders) coalesce, negotiate with and/or confront each other on specific interests and 'stakes'. This brings me to pay particular attention to the concept of 'social actor', distinguishing the agency side of the actor from his acting-contexts, the latter being the situations where acting-agency is exhibited through differential degrees of identification of resources and constraints, and through the enrolment of (and negotiation with) other actors on the scene. The emergent forms and frames of interaction generated by social actors in the acting-context produce social interfaces, which I will briefly introduce in this chapter (but further discuss at the beginning of Chapter 9), prior to an exploration of the concepts of discourse, rhetoric, development language, and brokerage.

The discussion in this chapter is organised through the presentation of a general assembly of a peasant[1] organisation in Togoudo (of cotton growers), a situation typical to the reproduction of the discourse and practice of rural development in Benin. Indeed, my choice for cotton and a peasant organisation as symbolic vehicles for these discussions is not neutral. In Benin, as in many other African countries south of the Sahara, export crops (especially cotton since the mid-sixties in the Benin case) are symbolic of peasant-state relationships, while the act of 'bringing peasants together into groups or organisations' is symbolic for rural development intervention *tout court*, whether the intervention is conducted by government or non-government organisations.

For the state and the peasant growers, cotton as an export crop has reached the status of social object (Blumer 1969: 2), carrying decades of a fluctuating history of interactions, made up of controversies, intended and unintended miscommunication, and struggles within communities between growers, state agents and state-controlled institutions for rural development. Such commodities, important in linking the peasant economy to a world market economy, have also been the basis of different sorts of models on the part of international development agencies, such as the diffusion model, the high-pay off input model, the induced innovation model

(see Eicher and Staatz 1984: 41-44). They have also provoked theorising among scholars and political activists about the so-called dependency of peripheral economies on modern capitalist centres. On the other hand, as we have shown elsewhere for the Benin case since the colonial period (Daane and Mongbo 1991), one can hardly find cases of development intervention in rural areas (and more recently in urban areas also) by state or non-state organisations that do not involve some aspects of, or some discourse on, organising people. Leading on from this, I would say that in the Benin case, cotton as a commodity and peasant organisation as an intervention device lay at the heart of the issue of rural development, and that a meeting of the cotton growers' organisation may be used as a vehicle for a general enquiry into this problematic and into some crucial features of peasant-state relations.

A social situation as an analytical starting point

From the specific social situation of the general assembly of the cotton growers – following the method developed by Gluckman (1940) and Mitchell (1956) in *The Kalela Dance* – I wish to sketch the social fabric of rural development intervention in Benin. But at this particular juncture, I am not after what might be called the essential inner meaning or the definitive structuring element of this fabric. Indeed, as Andrew Long argues, the analysis of social events is not aimed at revealing some fundamental logic or social order, at least not a Levi Straussian type of deep structure behind reality. Within the general structural ecological, socio-political and economic features, the limits or constraints on action are defined by actors themselves in specific contexts, not by some *deus ex machina* (1992: 165). In the same way, resources for action are, more than mere identification, contextually elaborated by actors themselves, where they identify, construct and make use of room to manoeuvre (or otherwise fail to do so). Therefore, my concern here in describing the process of the general assembly of cotton growers in Togoudo is to set out the complexity and ambiguity of the rural development intervention endeavour, as differentially constructed by the individuals and groups involved, and, at the same time, to elaborate a conceptual framework flexible enough to capture these ambiguities and complexities and to account for the various and changing ways in which people deal with them. Therefore, my analysis of this meeting is interspersed with discussions on conceptual and methodological issues. But let me first try to clarify the notion of 'rural development' and its functioning as a social field.

Rural development as a social field

The 'archives' of the concept of 'social fields' lie in the work of the Manchester School of the 1950s and 1960s. The notion was primarily used to conceptualize so-called plural societies characterised by major asymmetries of socio-cultural scale and complexity between their ethnic constituents. In such a context, specific sectors of social life (e.g. politics, economy), together with the relationships between the individuals and groups involved, are conceptualised as social fields, for example,

'political field', 'economic field' etc. (see Swartz *et al.* 1966: 2-4; Long 1968: 9). The concept proved efficient in handling situations where one is not dealing with an integrated cultural system but with one in which quite disparate systems of belief may exist (Long 1968: 9, quoting Mitchell 1960). This basis allowed further elaboration of the concept and its use to depict sets of relationships between actors, including activities, resources and values utilised in attempting to achieve particular goals, which implies a degree of common commitment to rules or values that defines appropriate and inappropriate modes of social action (Long 1989: 243 n7). In other words, one could consider a sphere of social practice as a social field, which Bourdieu, comparing the notion with a game field, describes as the ensemble made up by the area of the game, the rules of the game, the stakes etc. (1980: 112) and I would add, following Palumbo (1987: 32), the 'stakeholders' (not forgetting that all the stakes and stakeholders of a social field are not necessarily physically present at any given concrete situation of that social field). Social fields are therefore historically constituted areas or domains of activity (endowed with objectified and embodied history and language), with their specific institutions and their own laws of functioning (Bourdieu 1990: 87). These laws are not, of course, divine laws imposed on the people involved, nor are they rigid, but continuously constructed, negotiated and manipulated by them within the range of alternatives available to actors within the confines of the general structural features mentioned above. Therefore, if a social field can be equated with a game field (à la Bourdieu), then I would argue that we are concerned here with a game of which roles, rules and meanings, though following some broad and historically established orientations, are not fixed in advance but differently appropriated and renegotiated by the actors involved during different performances and phases of the game. As a conceptualisation of a long and slow process of specialisation, the idea of field of activity remains, as Long puts it:

> *'wider than what we normally mean by economic or political structure [or system] for it refers not only to those institutional arrangements specifically designed to attain economic or political ends, but also takes into account other kinds of relationships and values that may be utilised for the same purpose... (The concept) covers both the important structural features (which to some extent limit the range of choices open to individuals) while at the same time, giving attention to what Firth (1964: 17) has called the 'organisational elements' the processes by which individuals choose between alternative courses of action and manipulate various norms and values in order to justify them.'* (Long 1968: 9).

'Rural development', as a field of human activity, is indeed a historically-constituted area of social activity where quite disparate systems of belief coexist. In this field, as I already mentioned in the introductory chapter, the actual representations that people involved make of 'rural development', vary in time and space, and the struggle over its ideological construction among politicians, policy makers (of funding or intervention institutions, universities or research institutes), researchers and development practitioners sometimes takes the form of an opposition of 'knowledge for understanding' as against 'knowledge for action' (see Long

1992). The major stake of this battle, as shown in the fights over the allocation of teaching and research budgets in universities, is to survive and remain in the field.

But, first and foremost, 'rural development' is a normative concept, expressing a set of policy goals that assume the superiority of Western, 'modern' (or external, urban) norms, values, technologies and organisational patterns, over rural, 'traditional' (or local, indigenous) ones. Contrary to what Hall and Midgley seem to suggest (1988: 2), the formation of these prejudices towards rural people and the subsequent voluntarist attempts to change this state of affairs from outside, i.e. the very act of intervention (which in itself is another prejudice, an assumption that change cannot come from within) did not start with the independence of the former colonies, but much earlier during the colonial period. The declared intention was not initially rural development but the *mise en valeur des colonies* (the development of the colonies). Nevertheless, the logic was quite similar, namely, to bring the dynamic of local initiatives into line with the interests and perspectives of public authorities, and to reproduce the image of the state (or other agencies) as the key to development (see Long and van der Ploeg 1989: 236, and also Daane and Mongbo 1991). It is through the putting into practice (intervention) of such interested and normative conceptions of well-being in rural areas (rural development) that a whole specialised and specific sphere or domain of human activity is generated and continuously reproduced. This, I call *the field of rural development.*

As Edwards (1989) puts it, 'the natural consequence of a concern for technical interpretations of reality is that knowledge and the power to control it become concentrated in the hands of those with the technical skills necessary to understand the language and methods being used'. Similarly, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan treats the 'world of development' as a 'market' on which populism[2] sells lots of goods. 'Development' he writes, 'has become a profession ..., a market. In that profession, in that market, the populist approach ... got largely institutionalised, and has produced an ensemble of rhetoric, practices and institutions which one could call the development populist complex' (Olivier de Sardan 1990: 479). I will later show that specialised language and rhetoric are one of the assets or bases for brokerage in the field of rural development. I will not discuss here the different specialisations that contribute to the reproduction of the field of rural development as this has been largely debated by other authors (see for example Hobbs 1980; Lassey and Lovrich 1985; Cloke 1985; Hall and Midgley 1988; Long 1992). It is worth noting, however, that what emerges from this literature is that rural development, as a field of human activity, is now largely taken for granted and that none of the disciplines of the social sciences wants to stay out of the field or leave it to the development economists alone. The following argumentation illustrates a *coup de coude*, a nudge, from the sociologists to get, or have acknowledged, adequate room for themselves in the field of rural development.

> *'Although sociological involvement in development is limited and based on a poorly formulated notion of practical engagement, ... sociologists do have an important role to play in the formulation, implementation and assessment of development policies. ...(They) have expertise in providing social information for development policy-making, assisting in the determination of the social objectives of the plans... Because of their training, sociologists are particularly sensitive to those intangible social realities which defy*

quantification and objectification. They are also particularly concerned with the neglected aspects of development such as culture, the status of women and the subjective human experience of poverty and deprivation.' (Hall and Midgley 1988: 4).

Not all sociologists interested (or involved) in the field of rural development are concerned with engineering development, with policy-making or assisting in the determination of social objectives of plans, though their works might be used by others in such perspectives. According to Long and van der Ploeg, 'focusing upon intervention practices allows one (the sociologist) to take into account the emergent forms of interaction, procedures, practical strategies, types of discourse, cultural categories and the particular 'stakeholders' (Palumbo 1987: 32) present in specific contexts and to reformulate questions of state intervention and agrarian development from a more thorough-going actor perspective' (1989: 226-7). To some extent, though not completely, the emergent forms of interaction indicated by these authors portray concrete manifestations of what I call *the field of rural development.* Instead of this concept, Long and van der Ploeg prefer the concept of 'agrarian structure'. Let me quote them *in extenso:*

'*... the concept of 'agrarian structure' can be operationalised as composed of a set of interlinked human agencies involved in the 'everyday negotiation of the role-definition and role-enactment of farmers'* (Benvenuti 1985: 225) *and forming part of a wider regional constellation which,... we may call 'a regional system of production'. The latter is a shorthand for the complex system of capital, labour and socio-political linkages that develops historically between various economic sectors and activities and between the social classes and groups that are spawned by them. This system of linkages is dynamic and not simply determined by the actions of one dominant sector. It is continuously being remoulded by the struggles that go on between different individuals and social groups, and of course, affected by the ways in which outside forces impinge upon it.*' (Long and van der Ploeg 1989: 238; see also Long and van der Ploeg 1988: 37).

Basically, two problems with the concept of 'agrarian structure' make it less helpful for me in the present discussion. First, is its limited scope as indicated by the term 'agrarian' (related to agriculture), although the authors recommend that attention be paid to the interaction between different sectors (agrarian and non-agrarian). This puts agriculture and related activities at the centre, making the assumption in advance that they are the most important for people living in the area, and in reference to which other activities are defined (agrarian and non-agrarian) – one of the congenital mistakes (intended, at least at the beginning) of state intervention in rural areas. Hence, one should not consider the concept and its operationalisation without taking into account the context of its production.[3] Also, the 'structure' or 'system' qualification attributed to 'agrarian' does not allow the concept to appreciate fully the flexible and dynamic character of the realities depicted, as clearly intended by the authors. Neither does it indicate that the structures in question result, in large part, at the instance of their emergence and/or reproduction from the interactions of the actors involved.

The second basic problem I have with the concept of 'agrarian structure' is its attempt to set the researcher apart from the scene of state-peasant relations, thereby

neutralising or idealising the researcher's role. The concept does not seem to allow one to consider the researcher as a 'protagonist', not only in the actual processes under way, but also in some sense being responsible for how the other parties might work out their roles in the future. This is especially the case for policy makers and planners, who might, independently of the will of the researcher, use his account of these processes. While one of the major contributions of the actor-oriented approach in investigations of intervention and development situations is to recognise the researcher as a full member of the scene (see Long 1992: 10; Torres 1992: 110), the concept of 'agrarian structure' seems to place the researcher outside, watching the policy-makers, planners, intervention agents and peasants gambling on 'agrarian development'. In contrast, in this book I need a concept that allows me to account for emergent forms of interaction between the particular stakeholders, including the researcher.[4] The concept of 'field of rural development' seems more suitable because it encompasses those concerned with policy models (here I have in mind villagers and intervention agents, planners and policy makers), but also social scientists who claim to produce 'knowledge for action' (i.e. development economists, social geographers, communication scientists, sociologists and anthropologists busy working out tool kits for development intervention such as 'Rapid/Participatory or Relaxed Rural Appraisal' (Chambers 1993) and the like, whether from the policy or planning and implementation side), as well as those concerned with theoretical models aimed at understanding processes of social change and development. I therefore reject the point made by Copp, who suggests that

> '*rural development itself will always remain unanalyzable in a sociological sense and remain apart from any theoretical system. It is a rubric or a code word used by opinion leaders in everyday discourse to refer to a desired goal. It is not and cannot be a scientific term because of its normative nature.*' (Copp 1972: 519).

Contrary to Copp, it is precisely the manipulative and political use of the term *rural development* that makes the *field of rural development* an interesting field for sociological research. As I indicated earlier, my empirical ground for exploring the concept of field of rural development is the local level, in this case, the context of a community development programme. As revealed in the discussions that follow, I do not feel fully satisfied with the concept because of the limiting scope of the term 'rural'. But here, I base the conceptualisation of the 'field' on the language used by the actors involved, be they peasant leaders, village extensionists, high ranking officers in development intervention institutions, politicians, social scientists etc. Towards the end of the book, I will come back to this in the light of the ethnography. For the moment, it helps us to have access to the annual general assembly of the cotton growers' organisation of Togoudo.

The meeting *sous l'arbre à palabre*, the first ten minutes

Togoudo, June the 4th, 1991. The cotton growers' organisation called *Groupement Villageois (GV)* is holding today its annual meeting for the election of a new board, the Administrative Council *(Conseil d'Administration or CA)*. Thanks to the new

development project (Community Development Programme) that started in September 1989 with the arrival of the RDV *(Responsable de Dynamisation du Village)* in the village, this is the second time that the GV is holding an annual general assembly to elect a new board, something that has not happened in the past eight years.

About 150 persons are in the village square, *sous l'arbre à palabre*, arranged in a semicircle. The participants are composed of young and middle-aged men and women, a few old men called *Agba Ilu* (in French *les vieux sages*, or 'wise elders'), and some children. Many of the young men present are said to be members of the local branch of a radical left-wing national political party, the Communist Party of Dahomey (PCD), while among the middle-aged men are the leaders of a few newly-formed small peasant cooperatives for agricultural production, which they call GRVC,[5] and most of the presidents of the 18 cotton markets[6] of the village. Among the *Agba Ilu* are Tolidji and Goudali, two old men, each of whom argues that his grandfather founded the village, and hence that he is the right person to tell the history of the village and to receive the honour due to village founders. Four of the outgoing council members are sitting facing the participants, next to the five state officials present, among whom are the RDV *(Responsable de Dynamisation du Village)*, the C/PACA *(Chef Poste Action Coopérative et Alphabétisation)*, the specialist on literacy training and cooperatives, and the RDR *(Responsable du Développement Rural)*, the district extension officer who arrived after the meeting had already started. There is also the VNU (United Nations Volunteer), a man from Mali based in the village.[7] We (Mouftaou, my assistant, and I) find a seat next to some middle-aged men at one end of the semicircle. We succeeded in resisting the offer made by the RDV and the C/PACA to come and sit with the officials, though they did not insist.

It is 9:50 am. After the usual greetings, the RDV introduces each of the 'officials', each time interrupted by a round of applause by the attendants. Participants even request that the RDV introduces himself, and likewise the VNU and the other agents based in the village or well known to the villagers. This gives the attendants the opportunity to clap and to laugh each time someone is introduced. Then the RDV asks the President of the GV to take the floor and chair the meeting. He says: '*Now, President, it is up to you. This is not our meeting but yours.*' The President of the GV launches the meeting saying:

> '*My people, I welcome you all and thank you, so many, for coming to this assembly. We will report to you on what we have achieved during the last year. Baba, our Secretary, will give you that report....*'

The C/PACA jumps from his seat and says energetically:

> '*Perhaps you are used to doing it another way, but now this is how we will do it: first a report on last year's activities, second a plan for next year, third the election of the new council and finally the miscellaneous.*'

Kossi, a young man, presumed member of PCD (Communist Party of Dahomey), shouts with equally strong conviction:

> '*First, and before any of these things starts, all the other members of the outgoing council must leave the crowd and join the table in the middle. We want to be looking*

them in the face while listening to their (ironically) «report on what they achieved during the past year»'

The reaction comes from one of the *Agba Ilu*. Calmly but firmly he says: '*Do you see there enough place for the 15 members of the GV council?*' To which the RDV replies: '*Kossi is right! The normal way is that all the outgoing council members sit in the middle. Therefore, we ask them to come to the table. Come on!*' The people indicated start moving slowly, a bit reluctantly, but it is quickly agreed that there is not enough room for all of them. Then the RDV says: '*OK, all right. We will leave them at their place. But if any one of them is called or has something to say, he will come to the table. Let us start.*' Then Baba, the Secretary of the outgoing Administrative Council of the GV, gets up and begins: '*We will report to you on the activities we have conducted from the 14th of April 1990 to June the 4th 1991.....*'

Within the first 10 minutes of the meeting, different categories of people present at the *l'arbre à palabre* enter the scene, to whom it is worth paying some closer attention. First is the RDV, who seems to act as the master of the scene. His remarks, that seem to be directed at the peasants, are actually more intended for the officials present. In the past, before the start of the Community Development Programme, a meeting such as the general assembly of the GV was held under the supervision of the AVA (the village extension agent) or the C/PACA (the local specialist on cooperatives and literacy training), and/or the RDR (the district extension officer). That the RDV invites and leads the present meeting is one of the sources of conflict between him and his other colleagues. Telling the peasants that the meeting is *theirs* and that *they* (which means the CARDER staff present there including himself) are only observers, is more to prevent his colleagues from taking leading roles in the meeting. At first glance, this remark refers to the current discourse on participation: 'people holding control over their own affairs' etc. The RDV might mean this. But taking into account his own ways of dealing with peasants and his ways of taking over the direction of their affairs (as will become evident in this meeting), one might rightly suppose that his plea for the peasants to direct *their* meeting is more motivated by his fear that his position in the village will be over-shadowed by the other staff, rather than by a willingness to leave the major role to peasants.

Through his strong intervention, the C/PACA does not bring any bright idea to the meeting, and does not, in my view, intend to do so either. It is more a question of proving one's presence on the scene, and of indicating that he remains *the one* in the district whose job it is to inform peasants on the rules and management of cooperatives.

As for the interventions of the so-called PCD member and the *Agba Ilu*, the motives are quite different. Though both persons address the same GV board, as did the RDV and the C/PACA, the targets are different. The PCD member is launching his strategy in line with the agenda of his political group, which aims to take control of the major institutions of the village. The *Agba Ilu* wanted to obstruct any action initiated by these young men whom some *Agba Ilu* now accuse of wanting to break up the village.

Social actors and battlegrounds of interests

Before I proceed with the discussion, there is a need to break for some clarification: the 'common' concern over which the people seem to be arguing is the cotton growers' organisation. Within my frame of argumentation, does this define a field in the way I have defined the field of rural development? Surely not. The categories of people present at (or more precisely concerned with) this meeting interact over many other issues regarding individual and collective life in or outside the village, all of which merge under the term 'rural development', especially within this Community Development Programme: village infrastructures, problems concerning education, health, drinking water, sanitation, agricultural production, processing, trade, individual careers, etc. Each of these situations represents some concrete setting (as compared to the more fluid notion of field) in which, as we have seen within the first 10 minutes of this meeting, paradigms and/or resources are contested. This is what Norman Long calls *arenas*. He writes: 'although arenas vary in their degree and idiom of 'publicness' and their formality, they always exhibit elements of antagonism (actual or symbolic) and incompatibility' (Long 1989). As a first approach to the problem, therefore, I would use the concept of arena to depict the encounter situations in which the field of rural development takes concrete and manageable forms for the individuals and interest groups concerned. But not all of those situations I have just enumerated necessarily exhibit or even contain antagonism. For that reason, I will use the concept of 'ground' interchangeably to some extent with that of 'arena'. While an arena cannot be but one of struggle (be it open or veiled), a ground, as I will use it in this book, may be one of battle or of coalition between actors. The latter (a coalition ground) indicates complex processes entailing the strategic interlocking of life-worlds and definition of boundaries among a group of actors that establish the interface between a cooperating group and another one, postponing or preparing the struggle until the actual or symbolic encounter takes place. A coalition ground is therefore a potential arena.

Within the field of rural development – and presumably within any other social field – a given ground or arena can veil or hide many others. The present meeting brings us onto the ground of 'peasant organisation' but we will miss the point if we try to understand the processes of the meeting by sticking simply to patterns of peasant organisation. In fact, though the first addresses of this meeting seem to relate to a sort of common concern for establishing ways and means for a 'good' meeting, where peasants might freely discuss their own affairs, the people arguing have very different objectives. For almost all of them, the stakes of the discussions are beyond the actual setting of the *arbre à palabre* and beyond the issues of peasant organisation. The latter seems to serve at this stage of the meeting as the playing arena for different, even conflicting, interests, which the parties in confrontation project and carry into and from arenas completely different from the existing one as far as the stakes, rules and even physical space are concerned. The stakes of this short conversation are not easy to grasp or to read, especially for someone new to the village and to the everyday operation of the Community Development Programme. Only the intonation of the voice of the young man when he said '*their report on what they achieved during the past year*' might raise suspicions. For the rest,

one would be far from thinking that a subtle and insidious fight was going on between the RDR on the one hand, and the C/PACA and the RDV on the other. The stakes here (and therefore the mentally represented/constructed arenas on which these actors have projected themselves while physically present at this particular meeting) are at least two or three, as it appeared to me weeks before the meeting and also afterwards. These are the reputation and job legitimation of state agents within the village, and the resources of the GV. Let me briefly discuss these stakes.

Although reputation within the village and the feigned reverence given agents by the villagers might not seem much of an asset or gain to fight for, it is very important for the reproduction of the status of the extension agent in the village. More than for himself, this legitimating behaviour towards him is a kind of consolation to turn to when faced with disappointing situations vis-à-vis their bosses. For some villagers, the simulated inferiority and docility in front of field agents is mostly played by those who attempt to enrol the agents in their own projects, using them, for example, as intermediaries to gain access to external resources that they cannot get otherwise. This, in turn, might lead the agent to expect some reward (e.g. farm produce after the harvest, a piece of land to cultivate during his stay in the village, the buying of farm and animal products at preferential prices etc.). Let me give one or two illustrations from the cases I have recorded that fall under this unspoken contract between field agents and villagers.

Unspoken contract between peasants and field agents

After we (Mouftaou and I) made our first contact with a village man or woman, we would often visit him or her at some working place where we might spend a whole day, helping if we could, and talking informally to acquire first hand information on the way he or she managed their affairs and interacted with others. At least this allowed us to obtain a deeper insight into people's everyday lives than what we could get from interviews alone. When this took place on a farm, it might happen that a village agent would pass by pass by and stop. Most of the time, the latter would make some technical comments on the specific work the peasant was doing at the moment, or on the state of the crops or storage. We do not really know whether our presence stimulated these interventions, though in many cases the peasant would say, after the agent had left, 'but he has always seen this thing as it is now but has never stopped before to say all the things he has just said. He wants to show his bosses[8] that he is doing his job well'. But these types of statements might well be made to please *us* or to ingratiate the speaker to us; in other words they could represent an attempt to enrol us.

One day in May we were with a peasant called Ekpemi on his farm with his elder wife and four of their children. During the first part of the day, he ploughed a portion of his land which he planted with cowpeas while his wife and children were weeding the maize field, planted one month earlier. Later in the afternoon, they opened one of the three storage bins and started shaking and choosing the maize which they would carry home to eat. At that moment, the RDV passed by.

The RDV had a short discussion with Ekpemi. He first asked about his second wife and made a joke about her being pregnant. Then he took a few maize cobs and

shook them in his hand and asked the peasant about what he sprayed the maize with when storing it. 'Cotton insecticide', the peasant replied. Then, the RDV went into a long explanation about the danger of such a chemical product that contained organic and chlorine material, that peasants have always been told to avoid such practices, and that it is fortunate that the active element of the insecticide he used was not phosphorus, which remains active longer than chlorine and was therefore very dangerous. Meanwhile, the peasant behaved as if he did not know this or had not understood the issue like that before.

The second subject was on the sowing density of the maize field, which the RDV found too little. The peasant had explained to us in the morning that this was a way to manage labour and to cope with the overlapping between the first and the second rainy seasons which provokes high needs of labour at critical periods. Then, the spaces between two maize plots are planted with cotton before the maize is ripe. Therefore, he does not need to plough new land, which would require labour. The RDV knew part of this argument apparently. He said that it was economically wrong, that the peasants are lazy and don't want to work hard. Here again, Ekpemi held the same stance of the ignorant peasant. And when the RDV was about to leave, Ekpemi said, with a nice and respectful voice:

> *'Cheffou'! (Chief) 'Have you remembered my problem? Do you want me to come tonight so that we discuss it?' It was about ox-plough equipment (actually a solution to his labour constraints) which Ekpemi was trying to obtain credit for and was hoping to get the assistance of the RDV.'*

Another case I witnessed concerned unclean drinking water which people used on the farm, and on that occasion, they pretended not to be aware of the dangers of getting guinea worms from drinking it. When the village agent demonstrated how one gets the worms, the few peasants present (in fact a household) simulated great astonishment and admiration, especially the man, with strong expressions on his face while repeating 'Hey!, is that so?, great goodness! etc.' At the very time when this drama was taking place, the wife had just finished boiling water in the hut for her four year old son to drink. After the agent had left, I asked her aside from the husband:

> *'But why do you boil the water before you give it to your child?' I did not expect any answer related to guinea worms and was surprised when she replied: 'I do this for the water I give my children because they might get guinea worms from drinking it. If you had ever had these worms, you would know that it is too painful for a child', which indicates that the relation between drinking water and guinea worms was well known in the household. Later, I heard that there were discussions under way with a USAID project about constructing a few drinking water wells scattered over the farming area. Of course, the closer a well is to one's farm the better.*

To come back to the meeting, not only was the legitimation of the C/PACA in front of peasants endangered by the RDV, but also his position as the specialist on cooperative issues for the whole district, which reveals the contradictory situations created in the organisational structure of the CARDER by the Community Development Programme, including the positions of the AVA and the RDR. This contradic-

tion was at the basis of conflicting situations between RDVs and RDRs in other places. Here in Togoudo, the RDV is a native of the same area as the RDR, which is not closeby. They speak the same mother language and, most importantly, belong to the same church. The former visits the latter now and then, especially during the weekends. All this gives the conflict between job positions a different character in Togoudo as compared to the situation in most other villages of the programme.

As for the young men labelled PCD members, the stake is the resources generated by the GV and controlled by the board, whom they accuse of misusing the GV's revenue. The topic was at the centre of talks for weeks before the meeting, in various situations, and was sometimes turned into jokes at games, drinks and work parties. The intervention of the young man was quite clearly related to the project of a group of young, and slightly older, peasants to overthrow the board members. This was more clear to the participants than it could have been to the RDV or the C/PACA, Less than two years ago, they had already overthrown the Mayor of the commune during an upheaval. This was seen by some *Agba Ilu* as a sort of breaking up of the village, together with increasing the risk that the old men might lose control over important decisions concerning public life.

Finally, the RDV himself was interested in the resources of the GV, since he relies on these resources for what he calls 'development actions' in the village. His strong engagement in the whole process was meant to secure these resources for the actions which he had more or less set in his mind, and that were important for his report to his bosses, rather than for any neutral goal of enlightening peasants with sound principles of cooperative management.

For Bourdieu, 'every field, as a historical product, generates the interest which is the precondition for its functioning,.. in so far as (interest) is what 'gets people moving', what makes them get together, compete and struggle with each other, and the product of the way field functions... The existence of specialised and relatively autonomous fields is correlated with the existence of specific stakes and interests' (1990: 87-88).

What we already suspect, after a close look at the first 10 minutes of the meeting, is that the interests at stake are many, complex, and interwoven in such a way that the boundaries or identities of the stakeholders or interest groups cannot be easily drawn on the basis of some simple and/or fixed categories. Consider, for example, the case of the RDVs, the C/PACAs, the AVAs and the RDRs. Also, as we will later see, it is not possible to group all the young men, or the *Agba Ilu*, into the same categories. Hence, *'social categories'* are not static categories drawn along institutional or organisational boundaries. They are dynamic categories that are hard to grasp, both temporarily and spatially. Labels used locally to identify them are many and fluid: GV members or non-members (indicating peasant producers of cotton and non-producers), wise elders *(Agba Ilu)*, young PCD members, inhabitants of wards x or y, members of patri-families x or y, members of markets x or y, GRVC (cooperatives of farmers), the *akowes* (the educated), the peasants, the CARDER, etc..' The most interesting aspect of these labelling processes is that some people who are attributed a given label use the same label to refer to other persons. Social categories then seem to operate as a stock of available resources used in discourse and also as

a reservoir for the constitution of strategic (but also provisional) groups for pursuing specific interests.

Although within categories there are personal alternatives and strategies, we are almost never faced with only individual interests. Neither are the people voicing these interests just individual actors. They need to be deconstructed into their socio-cultural components and artifices. As argued by Long, 'the strategies and cultural constructions employed by individuals do not arise out of the blue but are drawn from a stock of available discourses (verbal and non-verbal) that are to some degree shared with other individuals, contemporaries and perhaps predecessors. It is at this point that the individual is, as it were, transmuted metaphorically into the *social actor*' (Long 1992: 25). Law goes somewhat further by maintaining that an actor should be seen as an outcome rather than as an inherent individual or as some socio-cultural characteristics of the actor in question (Law 1991: 12). In other words, the actor should be seen in action, which then raises the question as to whether the actor should be defined *à posteriori*, only (or at least partly) when the action is completed. In my view, the actor should be characterised before and after an action. His individual and socio-cultural artifices and components constitute, on the one hand, his agency (i.e. his capability of doing things in the first place (Giddens 1984)), while on the other, we have the circumstances that put him into motion. The first side encompasses the individual, social and cultural origins (or assets) of the actor, which Long refers to in terms of the metaphorical transmutation whereby the individual actor plays a role as social actor. The other side, without which the actor cannot be complete, is made up of all those other materials that make the actor-mix heterogeneous (Law 1991: 12), and thus quite rightly, as Callon puts it, a role is not necessarily fully established in advance (Callon 1986: 210). Basically, these latter constitute the other actors' worlds, those on the scene with our actor, and without whom we would not have been able to identify him as an actor at all. An actor exhibits his acting agency in specific action-contexts, where he defines limits or constraints to action, identifies resources, enrols other actors in negotiated projects or simply fails to do so. The action-context does not allow the actor fully-controlled and rational decision making. It encompasses, on the one hand, factors beyond the control of the actor – the structural features that set limits to the range of alternatives at the disposal of the actor – and on the other, the unpredictability of some outcomes of social interactions and of some individual decisions. In the latter case, there are also spontaneous and simple decisions that end up having a significant influence on the course of events. As Wole Soyinka puts it, criticising Senghor's rather passive philosophy of 'negritude', 'a tiger does not simply roar its 'tigerness': it jumps, with its nails out'. And, I would add, in order to balance the agency-side of the actor, the tiger roars and jumps as it does because it is a tiger in the first place. As for the acting-context, I would say that the tiger can jump as far as it will but can never fly, nor can it fully anticipate the escaping reactions of its prey or the possibility of other predators or hunters hunting the same prey as itself or even hunting the tiger itself. The tiger cannot also be ever fully sure whether any prey is going to walk around in its area in the first place, to provide it with the opportunity to jump and show its tigerness.

In short, an actor is not only defined through his/her acting potential (agency), nor can his action be fully rationalised only in the acting ground/arena. Hence one is required to investigate the ground of the action, at the encounter, but also beyond (i.e. backwards and forwards in time). Defining the actor in relation to the others on the scene and in relation to the stakes involved points to a difficult problem of selecting or limiting the scope of one's research. As I indicated earlier, not all the stakes and stakeholders were present at the physical encounter of the meeting. Nevertheless we can already identify a few grounds related to ethnic origin, institutional affiliation and prerogatives, career, farm practices and labour management, local politics and so forth. In other words, what we have here is, as Bourdieu (1981) puts it, a complex interlocking of histories, 'interactions between agents' dispositions and (their institutional) positions'. The concept of 'field of rural development', I contend, helps to maintain an adequate scope for looking at the complexities of such social realities, while still avoiding artificial and arbitrary delimitations. This indicates, as shown in the present case, that searching beyond the setting of the meeting and the actors present is necessary for a more complete view of issues concerning the field of rural development in the village and within the Community Development Programme.

Interested but absent

Not many people in Togoudo seem to be interested in this particular scene of negotiation over 'rural development' (or 'well-being' as it is conceived of in the village) taking place at that moment under the *arbre à palabre*. In fact, among the 2500 inhabitants of the village, there are about 600 officially registered cotton growers[9] while not more than 150 persons are attending the meeting. Some participants say that such a large crowd is unusual, even for an annual election meeting. According to them, the reason why so many people came is the fact that yesterday, the announcer added that at the end of the meeting cotton seeds would be distributed to growers. This was important at that moment because there was not enough cotton seed available for the village. During the previous three years peasants in Benin had expanded areas cultivated with cotton in order to increase their cash earnings. This ran counter to national policy which emphasised reducing and improving production techniques in order to increase yields, for the sake of the ecology and because of the limited capacity of the SONAPRA factories (the state parastatal company that holds the monopoly of cotton processing and marketing) to process all the cotton produced. This increased during the previous five years (1988-1991) about 70,000-180,000 metric tons and to 280,000 metric tons by 1993 (see Table 5, Chapter 3, p. 67). SONAPRA also has difficulties in selling all the cotton on the international market. Yet despite this, more and more people are interested in growing cotton, and are expanding the area under cultivation, especially in Togoudo. One of the strategies of SONAPRA, as people in the villages understand it, is to limit access to cotton seeds by distributing only a limited amount to every village, and by delaying its delivery. Cotton seeds have therefore become very important to individual peasants. The idea of announcing the distribution of cotton

seeds was the RDV's. He wanted a large audience so that issues concerning the 'development of the village can be properly discussed and as many people as possible would feel responsible for the decisions taken'.

But not all cotton growers could afford to come to this meeting. For many peasants in the village, the period from May to July is a critical one, a period of heavy work, accompanied in many cases by a lack of food. The month of June! This is when maize, beans, and, to a lesser degree, yams are maturing in the fields while the storehouses stand almost or completely empty, depending on socio-economic situation, misfortune in previous months (post-harvest losses, sickness, funerals etc.), and on how successful one has been in coping with these events. There seems to be general agreement that the month of May begins a period of food shortage, to the extent that the Idaca name for this month (*Ohanwio*) is sometimes used as a synonym for starvation. It is also the period when the new cotton plot has to be prepared, either by bedding the current maize field (if one wants to sow the cotton in the shortly to be harvested maize plot – within four to five weeks), or by ploughing a new plot. These land preparation activities go together with weeding and harvesting beans, maize, sometimes peanuts, and weeding yam fields, and in some cases sowing or preparing rice fields.

Some peasants, especially those who are unable to mobilize sufficient family labour but have cash, take the option of hiring labour, but it is not easy to find labourers when they are needed. Even when labour is hired, people need to be there to make sure that they do the work properly. Others, who cannot afford to pay for labour, must do all the work themselves. Many simply do not have enough land and therefore can devote little (if any) to cotton production. They cultivate what little they have with food crops and do various other activities (not always related to agriculture) to meet the needs of their household. In short, this period is a very busy one for some categories of the population. Chocothéo is one of those.

Chocothéo is a 30 year old married man with one wife and two children. He and his wife plough five small plots that altogether make up two hectares which he received from his uncle (his father died while he was still young) and various other persons. Almost every year by June, his storehouse is empty because his farm is too small and the soil too poor to produce enough food for the family for the whole year. Also, he earned too little from the cotton he sold this year to allow him to meet his various needs. His yield of 325 kilogrammes earned less than FCFA 25,000, which represents less than 10 percent of the so-called 'minimum guaranteed annual wage'. Therefore, he combines work on his farm with hiring out his labour or with retailing bicycle spare parts (which he buys from Nigeria or Cotonou). Last week, when it was his turn to receive labour from his labour exchange group, he brought the group to the field of a peasant from whom he had a maize loan two weeks earlier. His share of the labour exchange was therefore used as a payment for the food loan.

At least for these categories of peasants, among whom are a lot of young men, this period is one of hard work. Hence very few of them are present here at the General Assembly of the GV under the *arbre à palabre*. Children are also involved at this critical period. Many of them do not attend school because they go and stay for weeks on the farm some six to eighteen kilometres from the village in order to help

their parents. At the time of the meeting, many of the participants (if not all of them) had their children working for them on the farm.

Today, 4th of June 1991, is Tuesday. Tuesday is rather incongruously called *Satiday Gbomina*, which means 'the Saturday before the day of *Gbomina*', the regional market, and is therefore considered as a week-end day devoted to feasting or resting. Nevertheless, Tuesday is almost never synonymous with a period of recreation for a large number of women. If they do not go to the farm to collect vegetable, fruits, wood and/or other farm products to sell in the market, many of them prepare products (wheat bread, peanut oil, different sorts of bean and maize cake, soap or *cakpalo*, the local beer made of millet and maize) to bring to the market the following day. From May to July, women perform these activities not just to earn money for themselves but to feed the family, especially when there is no staple left in the husband's storehouse.

At some 300 meters from the public place where the general assembly of the GV is taking place, 25 year old Ochounsi, the wife of Chocothéo, has been busy for hours, baking bread with wheat flour in her locally-made clay oven. She obtains the flour on credit and therefore pays a much higher price for it. She uses part of the profit to buy goods which she retails in the village. She also has to purchase food for the family, enough for the whole week, if what she earns is sufficient.

Not far from there, Rosalie, assisted by four women, is kneading an enormous quantity of peanut dough which she will transform into peanut oil and *kluiklui* (peanut cake) for tomorrow. The work started yesterday and will take the whole day and part of tonight and tomorrow. One of the women spent the whole week on the farm with her husband and children, weeding cassava fields and preparing land for cotton. She came to the village early this morning with chickens and vegetables which she will sell tomorrow in the market, and also because she had to work with Rosalie to earn cash.

In the meantime, under the *arbre à palabre*, the general assembly continues, apparently far away from these multiple concerns and occupations, but in reality of concern to most, if not all, of those people attending the meeting. 'Rural development', here at the meeting, is operationalised in two terms: cotton and GV. But, as I show later in Chapter 6, one cannot have a complete understanding of the way people deal with intervention (the external definition of 'rural development' and well-being) if one does not acknowledge the alternative, the connected but more independent and personal ways in which, in their everyday life, people like Chocothéo and his wife, Rosalie and her four women assistants, the children working for their fathers on the farms etc. define and negotiate their well-being.

Report, language and brokerage

The Secretary is still reporting on the activities of the GV for the past year. He speaks a mixture of French and Idaca, displaying clear self confidence and a perfect mastery of all the operations related to cotton production and marketing and of the other activities of the GV. Most surprising is his skilful use of the 'specialised'

bureaucratic language used in CARDER offices and by CARDER staff when discussing these issues.

'Je vais prendre volet par volet': The report of the Secretary

> *'We will present a report on our activities from 14-4-90 to 4-6-91. Je vais prendre volet par volet, (item by item) and you can interrupt me with any question you would like to ask. Otherwise, the questions will come after I give the whole picture. First, I will talk about seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and other inputs.*
> *We received:*
> *• 78,350 metric tons of insecticides for FCFA 7,443,250*
> *• 4,960 litres of pesticides for FCFA 7,936,000*
> *• 24 ULV (Ultra Low Volume sprayers) for FCFA 384,000*
> *• 570 kilogrammes of maize seeds for FCFA 99,750*
> *Total: FCFA 15,863,000*
> *'Difficultés rencontrées' (difficulties encountered): Between the secretaries in charge of the markets and me, there was no problem as to the distribution of the inputs (seeds, fertilizers). But between these secretaries and the peasants, there were problems. Inputs were not distributed on time, nor adequately. Also, peasants did not go to the secretaries to get their share of inputs.*
>
> *'Second, the marketing of cotton: We sold 676.17 metric tons of cotton, its gross value being FCFA 67,610,000. When we delivered the cotton to the factory, we had a surplus weight of 12,839 metric tons. As for our net income in the village, after the input costs were deducted, it amounted to FCFA 51,749,600.*
> *'The difficulties here were that we were not paid on time, which caused us losses by delaying our individual programmes. Moreover, some people sold their cotton in different markets to those from which they received the inputs, which made it very difficult for us to get back their debt for the inputs. Also, some peasants were paid more than they really earned from the cotton they sold, which provoked many disagreements. Other farmers could not be paid and therefore felt angry and frustrated. In those cases, we had to check the situation of the whole market and had to go to CARDER and SONAPRA's offices before we could repair the harm.'*

And he continues, *'volet par volet'* as he promised and ends with the literacy programme and the balance sheet of the GV.

Discourse, rhetoric and development language

I should emphasize that in their introductory addresses to the presentation of the Secretary, neither the President of the GV, nor the CARDER specialist of cooperatives mentioned the rubric *'difficultés rencontrées'*, but the GV Secretary does, which is typical of meetings at CARDER offices. The structure of the speech of the Secretary reveals a successful attempt to adopt bureaucratic schemes of presentation. Through this almost perfect reproduction of the language used at the lower level of the rural development bureaucracies in Benin, Baba demonstrates to both peasants

and officials the powerful position he is attempting to allocate himself and secure legitimation for in this cotton connection. It is not a plea to be assimilated to any category of bureaucrat, though it might sound so to some peasants and observers. According to Bourdieu, one practical function of the linguistic habitus is the communication of identity through language style; the mastery of the 'authorised language' may yield a profit in terms of authority or distinction, since language 'represents, manifests and symbolises authority' (Bourdieu 1982: 103-105, quoted by DeBernardi 1994: 875). As a specific field of social interaction, the field of rural development generates specific languages that contribute to some extent to the structuration of the field. Indeed, the roles social actors are legitimised or entrusted to play in different grounds and arenas of the field partly depend on their degree of mastery of the languages and of the material and symbolic elements that underpin the languages, which are developed and reproduced through time within the processes of intervention.

Some authors have suggested that there are different kinds of development language: a normative language which originates from institutions (at policy-making level, through the modelling of reality, for affecting the agency and practices of clients); and an operational language that stems from development practice (the idioms, vocabularies and tropes) that are generated in the process of reshaping policy through practice (Arce 1994: 5-6). Olivier de Sardan makes a slightly different differentiation when he distinguishes different dialects resulting from synchronic cleavages between 'schools', and diachronic cleavages between 'fashions' or 'modes'. He argues that development language, though directed to the intervened, concerns only the intervenors and their own reproduction as social categories, and that even the operational form of development language does not communicate with the linguistic framework of the intervened, thereby producing the need for brokerage roles at the social interfaces of development intervention (Olivier de Sardan 1994: 4-5).

In my view, the discourse produced by actors in various settings is determined according to the stakes and stakeholders present and reveals a compilation of various discursive practices manufactured during the institution's and actors' life trajectories in the course of development intervention. I would support the argument that an operational project language is different in its structure and even sometimes in its contents from a development policy language. For example, the notion of an 'Integrated Rural Development Project' or 'Community Development Programme' is not presented to potential clients as an exact translation of these terms, and if it were, one can imagine it would hardly be of interest to the clients. Their enquiries then would be what is to be done and how, what can they expect (positive or not) and under what conditions etc. In their discursive attempts to operationalise the exercise, agents largely draw on previous intervention experiences (which they share to some extent with the clients), but also on their knowledge and experience of local culture. By discourse I mean following Wetherell and Potter, the actual production of texts and/or talks with symbols, idioms and references. In our case the latter are derived not only from development intervention/policy language, but also from the cultural and linguistic framework of the discourse performer (whether intervenor or intervened) developed outside of intervention contexts, though

perhaps related to issues of self-achievement and well-being. The rhetorical construction of the discourse, that is the ways in which texts and talks are put together and which make a particular reality appear solid, factual and stable (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 95), or as Hauser puts it, the management of symbols in order to coordinate social action (1979: 3), varies according to the parties present and to the issues at stake. Therefore, the rhetorical constructions of development discourse (from development languages) are part of the social realities of development interfaces (i.e. the meeting places of different life-worlds and discourses, see Long 1992: 270-272) and cannot be disconnected from the negotiations and struggles over boundaries, meanings and interests that make up these interfaces, in which stakeholders, be they from local communities or intervening institutions, draw arguments to invest in the interactions.

I would thus argue that, though development language (and practice) is disconnected from actors' worlds and everyday realities, the use of the language (through discourse and rhetoric) does largely draw upon the lifeworlds of the people present, and incorporates their linguistic assets necessary for them to take part in the actual negotiations and struggles. Indeed, they need to construct some concrete objects in their minds (which they derive from existing cultural repertoires) on which to ground the discussions and the battles. The sequence of the 'first 10 minutes of the meeting of the GV' and my analysis of it has already given some concrete examples, first, of the multiplicity of the discourses present at such social encounters and second, of how apparently abstract rhetorical constructions in a particular setting find relevent concrete ground in the everyday life of the individuals and groups of actors involved. This reinforces Olivier de Sardan's point concerning the importance of brokers at development intervention encounters – individuals able to draw upon many cultural and linguistic repertoires simulataneously. But it also shows that the discursive dimensions of development interfaces are much more complex in that it is difficult to define the borders between development languages (whether policy or operational forms) and the world of the intervened. Let me further illustrate this point with the case of Baba and his discursive performance of development language and his positioning for brokerage. Later in the book, especially in Chapters 5, 8 and 9, I will return to consider specific contexts wherein development languages reveal important dimensions of the field of rural development.

Bridging gaps and positioning for brokerage

Displaying a perfect mastery of cotton affairs in and outside the village (e.g. input distribution, cotton marketing, maintaining contacts with SONAPRA, claiming growers' dues at CARDER and SONAPRA's offices, distributing cotton revenues), Baba reveals to his peasant colleagues and CARDER staff that they can hardly do without him. He appears indispensable to CARDER staff who care about sustained cotton production since that is the major, if not the only criterion, used by their bosses to assess their job performance.[10] At this specific point, instead of opposing the CARDER staff taking part in the meeting (as they had on the ground of peasant organisation during the first 10 minutes of the meeting), the skills and actions of Baba in cotton production and marketing win their approval and play to their

interest, though interpreted differently by each of them: The RDV uses it to argue that the substantial increase in cotton production, coinciding with his arrival in the village, from 475 to 676 metric tons in one year, was the result of his actions and presence. The C/PACA always sees, in the 'good functioning' of the GV of Togoudo, an indication that he has done a good job for the past five years, while the RDR and the AVA attribute the increase in the yield (per hectare) to peasants adopting the technological packages offered them – an indication that the extension work (their work) was done properly. The incentives distributed to field agents in every district by the head office depend on the amount of cotton produced in that district. Within each district, every field agent is rewarded according to his grade and position in the hierarchy. Despite what they usually qualify as the stubbornness of peasants, Baba's actions contribute to sustain cotton production, which is 'equally' beneficial to all the field agents present and does not provoke any disagreement or struggle between them, at least not in this particular setting.

Baba is also essential to peasants, for whom cotton is the main cash crop at this moment. For most peasants, the whole set of operations involved in cotton and its institutional organisation remains a strange world, with which they cope in various ways, but which they generically criticise for the arrogance and cheating practices of the agents. The fact that there exists someone capable of bridging this gap and who, in some ways, takes care of their interests is, at least at first sight, engaging for them. It is on this ground of bridging the gap between peasant and 'outside' entities involved in cotton affairs that the secretaries of the cotton market and the Deputy Secretary of the GV (all of them new positions in the GV structure, inspired by the RDV when he came to the village) try to challenge Baba. Elaborating on his rubric of *difficultés rencontrées*, Baba shows the incompetence of the market secretaries and at the same time reveals his ability to settle the complicated situations created by these incompetent 'newcomers'. Elections are to follow the presentation of the report. Therefore, while his speech provides arguments for his supporters, it discredits his challengers, especially the market secretaries.

After the introductory and legitimation-claiming addresses of the RDV and the C/PACA and the altercations between the young PCD member and the *Agba Ilu*, the presentation of Baba, the Secretary, though apparently technical and commercial, raises a ground other than those identified during the first ten minutes of the meeting. These had focussed on struggles more internal to the two social groups (CARDER staff and villagers) on the ground of the *Groupement Villageois*. Here we are at an interface where both groups seem to hold together, the main actor being the Secretary, speaking in the name of the GV council, using, as Law (1991) would put it, technical arguments to generate social structure.

It is a characteristic of development intervention programmes to produce social discontinuities, segmented knowledge systems (Box 1989), communication gaps, that I have referred to elsewhere as structural ignorance (see Mongbo 1989b), and conflicting interests within and between the organisations and groups involved. We are here at what Norman Long calls social interfaces: those 'critical points of intersection between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities based upon differences of normative value and social interest are most likely to be found' (Long 1989). In the case of cotton production

and marketing – within the frame of a state intervention – reciprocal misunderstandings are a regularity. For this reason, intermediation between the different parties becomes necessary. Such intermediation does not entail a simple interpretation from one language to another of the issues at stake on both sides of the bridge. It involves brokerage that requires special competencies. In fact, for the various individuals, groups and categories involved (ranging from politicians dealing with development cooperation to the individuals and groups who are identified as the potential beneficiaries), a project in its daily operation is not just a matter of technical objectives as formulated in official documents and in formal presentations. It is a mixture of diverse elements – economic and political conditionalities, funding and financial procedures, administrative and bureaucratic formalities, technical packages, various types of material and non-material advantages, job opportunities – even as minor as night watchman or helper to the village project officer – new varieties, possibilities of having improved individual or collective facilities or infrastructures for the village where the project is implemented and so on. In other words, what happens is a complete dismembering of the project package, while each of the pieces that fall out engages differently (in time and space) with the various people concerned. For example, in the case of cotton production, not all the social categories involved – including those connected to the village and the different agencies right up to the Minister of Rural Development – are equally interested in the numerous elements that go to make up cotton production – the supply of inputs, cotton production techniques, peasant literacy training, market organisation, income distribution and processing. Namely, all those elements and stages in the process of cotton production and marketing that make up its biography as a 'good'. Intermediation here is a question of bridging the gap between social entities that are politically, economically and culturally distinct and that have different, even contradictory, expectations. In the case of the GV Secretary, an important element in this intermediation is the GV revenue. It constitutes the most important contested stake between the CA of the GV (more specifically the President and the Secretary) and groups of peasants, and explains their persistence in wanting to take over from him. Let us return to the meeting at the point where the Secretary starts reporting on GV revenue and expenditures, which precedes the elections.

GV revenue and expenditures

The way in which the Secretary enumerates the various assets and liabilities of the GV is confusing and almost impossible for anybody to check, unless checked beforehand. Income for the past year is composed of savings from the year before (FCFA 410,610), subscriptions paid by GV members for the building of a maternity house (FCFA 424,000) and various fees paid to the GV by SONAPRA, the National Cotton Marketing Company (FCFA 773,223), the total amounting to FCFA 1,607,883.

The expenditures included hosting guests, the restoration of the warehouse, transport costs of the Board throughout the year, desks and desk materials for the Secretary, literacy training, various costs during cotton marketing, restoration of the water pump of the village and the various expenses of the Secretary. The total

expenses amounted to FCFA 1,584,477 which leaves a difference of FCFA 23,356. A strong sense of indignation erupted from the crowd. Then the Secretary explained:

'SONAPRA paid us the expenses of the marketing and transport of cotton, which brings the total of our cash to FCFA 323,675. I must add that for the cotton we sold this year, our GV is expecting from SONAPRA a total of FCFA 2,410,577 for the various fees.'

'Which will probably be spent the same way...', said someone from the crowd. The RDV then called on the three *commissaires aux comptes*, to give their appreciation of the Secretary's financial report. Two say they have no comment to make, that they had no way of checking his accounts. However, the third, Xakwe, who spent a lot of time, weeks before this meeting, checking the Secretary's papers comments:

'It has been very difficult for me to check the accounts of the Secretary. First, he did not want to give me his books. When he finally did, he refused to explain things I did not understand. The RDV gave me some help. For the rest, I suppose that this is the opportunity for the Secretary to give a full explanation, because there are many expenses which I really cannot understand...'

Xakwe first comments on the report in detail, demonstrating that there were irregularities in the ways in which most of the expenses were made. Then he argues the irrelevance of many expenses. The Secretary could hardly give any justification or answer. Xakwe is a PCD member. His group and many others seem very happy for his having given proof of the dishonesty of Baba, after demonstrating that the secretaries of the cotton markets were unable to do the job properly. Baba himself is apparently confused. From then on, one suspects that his chances of being re-elected as the Secretary of the GV are nil.

The elections: unexpected results

By the time the elections take place it is three o'clock, and only 50-60 people are left. For hours now, the RDV has taken control over the meeting. He is heard to say 'Give that question up! We are wasting too much time'. By so saying, he has just closed a heated debate on the amount that should be paid to the Secretary for his work. According to the agreements of last year, which he wrote himself, the Secretary was to receive 10 percent of the revenue of the GV. Now the RDV announces very firmly that the 10 percent will not be calculated on the total revenue, but on 25 percent of it.

'If there is no other question' (which he does not really wait to check), 'I will move on to the elections. Beforehand, I thank the outgoing council members very much. They were not perfect in their work but they were alright... I give my congratulations to the 'Commissaires aux comptes' especially Xakwe who was very meticulous and perspicacious in his control of the documents of the Secretary. He came many times to me for explanations. I thank him very much. That is how a Commissaire aux comptes should do his work.

'Now there are new rules for the elections this year! The six main members of the council will be elected directly. These are the President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the three Commissaires aux comptes. For each of these posts, volunteer candidates

will get out from the crowd and will stand here in the middle. The voters will queue behind the candidate of their choice. The nine other members of the board will not be elected that way. They will be chosen by the youth of the three wards, three young men for each ward, so that information can flow smoothly from the board to growers in the village. Please! One should not block the election of a candidate because of personal conflicts. Also, we have to be realistic and seek for efficiency. Not all the members of the outgoing board of the CA will be changed...'

Protests burst out from among the 'officials'. The C/PACA reacted energetically saying: 'That is not the way things should be done!' Lots of participants were even more vehement. 'Never! Things will not go that way. Why now improvise new rules while everything was made clear to everybody last year!' The agitation continued for a while, full of general protestation against the RDV and the rules, but no-one attempted to suggest other rules. The President, supposed to chair the meeting, sat quietly in his seat. The RDV persists:

'I don't mean that you should reelect them all, but neither is it wise to remove them all, otherwise the GV will undoubtedly lose its efficiency. Now, the C/PACA is the one who will give you the eligibility criteria.'

Willingly or not, the RDV has just dismantled what we might call here the 'opposition'. In fact, during the elections of April 1990, the rule was that the assembly should choose representatives for each ward. These representatives would gather separately from the general assembly and appoint the board from among their midst, supposedly on the basis of consensus. It was on the basis of these rules that the 'opposition' prepared itself for the present elections. Moreover, it had been decided last year that the present elections would complete the removal of all the former Board members, when everybody, including the RDV, was convinced that the whole board was corrupt. It is worth giving a short account of these agreements as they were achieved in 1990.

By 1990, it was generally acknowledged in the village that the former CA cheated the farmers too much, especially over the marketing of cotton. But for the 1989/1990 cropping season things were different. Cotton marketing in the village took place early in 1990 when most school and university students native to the village were at home. There had been general strikes that went on for months due to the tense political situation. Most of these students were said to be active in the PCD. They organised themselves in small groups, and controlled all the 15 cotton markets existing at the time in the village. Their objective was to ensure that the GV board members in charge of the operations informed every grower of the exact amount of cotton they had sold. Market secretaries were appointed to supervise the operations to the end. The RDV took an active part in this movement. He had then been in the village for a month and did not have a good foothold in the GV. While the students were criticising the board members for their practices, the RDV suggested that what was needed was a training session, so that people would know how such an organisation was supposed to operate. This would not be difficult to organise as it was, he claimed, exactly what he was trained for (i.e. four years training at the Pan-African Centre for Cooperative Training in Cotonou). So right at the end of the

marketing period he organised a so-called training session for all the CA, the market teams and the GV members, on cooperative matters and on the bylaws of the GV.

Regulations were proposed by the RDV for running the CA. Concerning the expenses it was decided that the Secretary would be paid ten percent of the GV revenue for the work he did for the GV. The other CA members would be refunded for their expenses on GV activities and the rest of the earnings of the GV would be used for public works in the village. Such an agreement was of course in the interests of the RDV who spent a lot of time trying to convince the CA to spend GV revenues on village infrastructure.

During the same training session, when participants learnt that there should be general elections every year, most of them requested one. A general assembly was then held during which the CA members were asked to give a clear account of their five years of management (i.e. since the arrival of Baba, the Secretary) which they could not do. People decided therefore to change them all except the Secretary. He held all the secrets of the GV, which he needed to pass on progressively to somebody else before he left. A few weeks later, some of the participants at that meeting explained:

> '*We did just as people did at the National Conference;*[11] *we removed the whole government except one member (the Secretary) to whom we appointed a deputy. The Secretary must introduce his deputy to the various affairs of the GV just as Kerekou (the Benin President) will introduce Soglo (the Prime Minister appointed by the National Conference) to the various affairs of the country. Then at the next general assembly, the Secretary will be dismissed and the deputy will take over, just as Soglo will take over from Kerekou.*'

The elections in 1990 were subjected to hard negotiations. Some *Agba Ilu*, some individual big producers, young PCD members as an organised group, and the RDV were selected by the participants in the meeting as representatives of each ward and were asked to appoint the CA board from their amidst. PCD members forced themselves onto this electoral body and took a leading role in the discussions. PCD members said they wanted to occupy all the posts on the board, arguing that they were the ones who instigated all the changes, that they wanted to make sure that GV revenues profited the whole village and that they were the only group capable of ensuring this. These were difficult discussions. None of them could be elected President because it was generally admitted that candidates to this post must yield at least three metric tons of cotton, which they were all too young to achieve. Finally, it was agreed that they would have half of the posts, including the post of Deputy Secretary and that of the *Commissaire aux comptes*.

Those were the dispositions that guided the preparations of the people who wanted to 'overthrow' the CA. Days before the meeting, PCD activists met in secret at night to determine their strategy. My assistant managed to follow some of these meetings. Part of the strategy adopted was that there would be a clear demonstration of the malpractice of the Secretary in order for the new board to justify throwing out Baba. PCD members were prepared to influence the composition of the electing body, but the young activists were aware, or seemed to accept, that the post of President was out of their reach. Another group, less structured than the

PCD group and headed by two GRVC leaders, Tinkpo and Ekpemi, were also critical of the President, and had also promised to remove him from the board. They lived in two of the three wards of Togoudo and were sure they could count on the loyalty of most of the delegates from these wards to elect them onto the group that would appoint the new board. They relied partly on family relations, but mostly on the fact that the people (or their fathers) in their wards had obtained the land they were cultivating thanks to the mediation of Tinkpo and Ekpemi's parents.

These, then, were the main social actors in this game. None had expected the possibility of a direct and open vote by all the participants. Their plan was to eject Baba from the board, accusing him publicly of dishonesty. As for the President against whom they had no such 'convincing evidence', they expected to reduce his power to a minority voice within the elected board. However, they knew that they could not exert such control over the elections if these were conducted by a direct vote as now suggested by the RDV. Thus, despite their protests, and ignoring all the weak attempts to propose counter rules, the RDV requested the C/PACA to read out the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria are as follow:

1 Being a good worker. Having sold not less than one and a half or two metric tons of cotton this year.
2 Being of good morality, not having committed adultery.
3 Being available and ready for hard work for the GV.

And the RDV added:

'We need a presidium of three persons to lead the elections: Two persons from the growers and one from CARDER.'

In the end, two persons composed the presidium: the C/PACA and the Mayor of Togoudo. Nobody volunteered to become canditate for President, and so three persons were proposed, among whom were Dawe, the outgoing President, and a man proposed by the two GRVC leaders, Tinkpo and Ekpemi.

'Do these candidates meet the eligibility criteria?', one member of the presidium asks the participants:

'That is useless!' says the RDV. *'And it will take too much time'*, adds the AVA. *'Peasants know each other quite well. If any one does not meet the eligibility criteria, people will not vote for him. Also, we can check afterwards the eligibility of the one elected.'*

It turns out that Dawe, the outgoing President has the largest number of votes. The C/PACA declares:

'Dawe is elected! May he come to the middle.' Then, facing the *Agba Ilu*, *'Old men, how do you find him?'* One of them answers. *'We have a good impression of him. We agree that he is elected. Let him be the President.'*

Six to eight persons raise their hands. All of them except two disagree with the idea of having Dawe as President, especially Tinkpo:

'This President is a dishonest man. He travelled to Banikoara in the name of the GV. Once back, he did not give any report to anybody. He just decided that everybody should pay FCFA 1,000 which he managed to withdraw from our cotton revenue. Also, for last

year's cotton marketing and without any consultation, he decided to raise the amount every grower has to pay to GV revenue. There is much more. We have had enough of him...'

One middle aged man says:

'Let's get serious! We like making too much trouble here in Togoudo. This man did not do anything wrong to us. Let us take him and warn him. If during this mandate, he does any single thing wrong, we will throw him out immediately and take another President, even before a year is up if necessary.'

Then one 'wise old man' from the side of Tolidji takes the floor, apparently very angry and upset. He says energetically:

'You the old men here are the ones to be blamed for all the things going on in our village, myself included. You are the ones who allow such disorder to take place in the village. You were there when these young boys (meaning the PCD members) started turning everything upside down in the village, and you said nothing. You even happen to support those misbehaving (an allusion to Goudali whose son is one of founders of the PCD branch of the village). This is enough! We, the old men, refuse the politics of the young folk. We want to maintain the former Board members of the GV. All of them!'

At this point the RDV jumps into the circle and suddenly asks the participants: 'This is the President who is elected. Do you want him as President?'. The intonation of his voice conveys the message: 'listen you people, we are tired of long and fruitless discussions. Let us conclude this issue and move on to other things'. The old men and others queued behind Dawe shout, 'Yes! we take him', while the others keep quiet. Then the RDV declares: 'Right! He is therefore the President of the GV. Let's move on'. From then on, all the outgoing board members are re-elected, the Secretary included. The 'opposition' seems to have 'given up the fight' after the unsuccessful attempt of Tinkpo to convince the meeting that the smaller cooperatives (the GRVCs) should each be allocated a post in the GV.

Consensus, submission or consensual submission?

According to Bourdieu, the very act of getting into the game (the field) is a subscription to the 'meaning of the game', the collective belief that allows for consensual validation of its results (Bourdieu 1980: 111). Bourdieu rejects the distinction between conflict and consensus, arguing that in some 'real situations, ... consensual submission is accomplished in and through conflict', indicating processes by which the dominated accept the reality of domination through an internalisation of the power structure, being, as it were, 'dominated in their brain too' (Bourdieu 1990: 41). Discussing the issue of power from the angle of the power wielder, Villarreal contends that 'power is not a predetermined attribute which is possessed or not, but a fluid resource which is negotiated and used at all levels' (1994: 29). She argues that power entails a process of consensus negotiation whereby the power wielder wields power from others who yield power to him, while in this process, the power yielders win or retain some room for manoeuvre for themselves. But we

can also see from the foregoing processes that power can be grabbed and exerted spontaneously simply in the heat of the action, and not necessarily to serve any clearly thought-out interest: violence at the limits of gratuity, as in the age of princes and despots. In the present case, one can argue that the victims of this violence were the young so-called PCD members, the groups of Tinkpo and Ekpemi, and Goudali. But who actually were the winners? Was this violence exercised by the RDV (by imposing arbitrarily new rules for the elections and thereby restricting the range of alternatives left to the opposition) intended to yield the result it gave? And what was the particular project behind it? From my previous five months in the village, I knew that the RDV and Baba fought over almost everything, which would simply continue after the elections. And in the meeting, they clashed over the amount of cash which the Secretary was formerly supposed to be paid from the revenue of the GV. Baba was a close friend of the C/PACA, whom the RDV openly accused during his frequent disputes with Baba, of having facilitated the managerial malpractices of the GV, while the C/PACA viewed the RDV as someone stepping beyond his job prerogatives. After this meeting, the RDV appeared to me to be left with bitterness. I met him the day after the general assembly and greeted him, saying: 'Hey Boss! Congratulation for yesterday. The party was very hard for you. But in the end, your friends and you won it. Wonderful!'
He reacted strongly:

> '*They are not my friends and you know it very well! You were at the meeting and saw how we proceeded. Didn't things go very democratically? Anyway, those young men are lazy. One cannot work with them. They are keen on criticism but do nothing to build anything concrete...*'

At first sight, one might conclude that the RDV's ability to exert influence derived from his position as state agent and RDV in the village. But the room to exert a leading role was not just simply handed over to him in the name of his position as RDV. He first had to promote himself among the young PCD members and cotton growers as a specialist of cooperative matters. Then, he had to win over the C/PACA, the AVA and the RDR. In other villages of the programme, the RDVs did not gain such room. Also, by accepting invitations to various meetings called by the RDV since he was appointed in the village, the GV of Togoudo, as well as the other CARDER staff members present, seem to have, at least to some extent, 'subscribed to the sense of the game' led by the RDV. They seem to have yielded power to him, which he now fully exercises. I would say, following Goffman, that we are at the geometric intersection of actors bearing particular (and historically-constituted) social attributes (1972: 63). But I cannot fit into the present social situation a process of internalisation of the power structure (as argued by Bourdieu and supported to some extent by Villarreal in her treatment of 'subordination' in gender relations as a 'self-inflected condition') that would lead to 'brain domination' among cotton growers in general, especially the 'losers' of the present events to the RDV, or more broadly, to the organisational set up of the Community Development Programme. In other words, I wonder how self-inflicted were the results of the elections on the 'losers'. These issues will be discussed in the following chapters, where I explore the ways in which the 'losers', but also the RDV and the Secre-

tary, operate with this 'consensus' in their everyday life after the elections. This case, and others, allow me to examine the role of consensus-making in the reproduction of rural development intervention and therefore in the reproduction of 'rural development' as a field of interaction between the social actors involved.

Conclusion: the field of rural development as an object of social anthropological research

My concern in this chapter has been to elaborate the theoretical notion of *a field of rural development* as a general framework for social anthropological investigations into matters of development intervention. As I hope to have made clear in the first chapter, my theoretical starting point was the rejection of all kinds of pre-packaged theories or general models with which reality might be approached and explained. I argued that my 'theory-free' research engagement consisted of two threads that became determinant for the type of situations I was exposed to, the experiences I shared with others and to the orientation of the present discussion. First was my desire to contribute to debates on rural development intervention. Second was my methodological standpoint, an 'actor-oriented approach'. Undertaking research from these standpoints, I came to the conclusion that the best way to do justice to the everyday complex life realities of the social actors involved in development intervention required conceptualising these realities as part of a *social field*, a historically constituted area of social activity where quite disparate systems of belief coexist. Such a conceptualisation allows one to situate present-day interactions in their historical development and thus to account more fully for their dynamics.

This position takes us a step further in the rejection of linear and dichotomous analyses of intervention situations, where roles (of either intervenors or intervened), rules and meanings (supposedly dictated by powerful political and economic external bodies), and fates (winners/losers, or one leading the game and the other condemned to coping with or adjusting to coercion) are determined in advance. I have also stressed that *field of rural development* is not to be equated with Bourdieu's game field, where the rules and meaning of the game are set and closed in advance, leaving the players with no more room for maneoeuvre than that of escaping the attention of the referee to now and then bypass the rules without being sanctioned. I have argued that the field of rural development is made concrete and takes on manageable forms for actors in certain physical or symbolic 'grounds' and 'arenas' and in specific time-bound situations, where actors, engaged in its rhetorical and practical use, coalesce with or confront each other on concrete issues, interests and stakes related to rural development intervention and well-being, perhaps (though not necessarily, or always) in rural areas. And I proposed that it is in these encounters that roles, rules and meanings are rhetorically and/or practically worked out.

But I also indicated that not everything is possible to the actors involved and that the latter are not fully rational, anticipating strategic beings. For social actors, the range of choices are limited in time and space and the outcomes of interactions in action-contexts cannot fully be anticipated. There are two main reasons for this

which I have already evoked in the foregoing discussion but which I will also do larger justice to in the rest of the book. The first concerns the fact that the field of rural development is the product of a specific historical process that has given a general frame (and therefore limited range of choices) to the actual operation of the field. I tackle this issue in Chapter 4 (where the making of the frame of intervention policies and practices in Benin is discussed) and in Chapter 6 (where I look at the historical development of the settlement patterns in the village of Togoudo). The second reason, which I tackle in the next chapter, is that the operations in the field of rural development take place in a macro-context, whose elements constitute integral parts of the micro-situations of social interaction among the actors. In the case of the Community Development Programme in Benin, the context is made up of recent socio-political and economic developments not only at the village and national levels, but also at regional and international levels.

Notes

1 Throughout I use 'peasant' to refer to men and women involved in productive activities in rural areas, including farming activities for home consumption as well as for sale. I use this term even when part of the means of reproduction is already commoditised. Hence, 'peasant' should not suggest anything about the importance of farming activities within the multiple occupations of the actors concerned. Some peasant men and women cultivate only a very limited area of land, earning most of their living from animal husbandry, small processing units, shop-keeping, retailing etc., while others earn most of their cash from export crop (cotton) cultivation.

2 He defines populism as a 'certain type of social relation (ideological, moral, scientific, political) in which intellectuals engage, at least symbolically, with the 'people' and which produces knowledge, or action, or both' (Olivier de Sardan 1990: 476).

3 The concept was generated from the 'knowledge battlefield' of the University Department named *Agrarische Sociologie van de Niet Westerse Gebieden van de Landbouw Universiteit, Wageningen.* In English, the Department was called 'Agrarian Sociology of Non-Western Regions' of the Wageningen Agricultural University until the early 1990s when it became 'Sociology of Rural Development' (Rurale Ontwikkelings Sociologie).

4 In recent publications, the authors have made more explicit their distance with regard to predefined and deterministic notions of structure by stressing the emergent forms inherent in agrarian structures (See Long and van der Ploeg 1994: 74-75; 80-82).

5 *GRVC: Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative.* These are the socialist cooperatives promoted by the revolutionary government (1972-1989) from the mid-seventies, in line with its Marxist-Leninist agenda. Before reaching the status of Experimental Agricultural Socialist Cooperative, *Coopérative Agricole Expérimentale de Type Socialiste (CAETS)*, the groups had to pass through one or two major phases of pre-cooperative organisation such as *Club-4D: Club de jeunes qui ont Démocratiquement Décidé de faire leur Devoir pour un réel Développement de leur pays*, and/or GRVC. As I will later stress in this book, it is important to note that GRVCs did not earn as much success with peasants in Togoudo during the period when they were actively promoted by the former government as they now seem to earn.

6 *'Marchés de coton'* is the denomination used to refer to the physical places where cotton growers, who have their farms in the surrounding areas, weigh their cotton after the harvest. There is at least one cotton market in every village where cotton is grown. In a given village, the number of cotton markets allowed (which used to be the decision of the CARDER) depends on the total amount of cotton produced and the distances between cotton farms. Generally, a place is designated a cotton market if it is accessible for big trucks and if surrounding peasants are able to market at least 30 to 50 metric tons of cotton.

7 A few months after the programme started, the General Director of the CARDER advertised the programme at the local representations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and other international organisations, asking for their support. In response, the UNDP decided to appoint United Nations Volunteers in two of the villages of the programme.

8 This relates to the status of the researchers as perceived by the researched. Later in this chapter, I will come to this point. Suffice it here to indicate that most peasants linked the hierarchy with the status of the working place and mostly with its geographical location. As our working place (the University) was located in Cotonou (the capital city), we were allocated a status higher than that of people of the CARDER, even those coming from the head office.

9 The registration list of cotton growers that one can get from the Secretary of the GV and from the local extension agent does not give a reliable account of the actual number of peasants who cultivate cotton in the village. The peasants officially registered have direct access to free cotton seeds and to credit for fertilisers, insecticides and other inputs which they pay back when the cotton is purchased by the parastatal company in charge of this operation. Nevertheless, many peasants, especially women, young men, and small peasants grow cotton without being registered on the list. They obtain these inputs from other peasants who are registered. Therefore, the number of people cultivating cotton is always higher than the number of peasants registered.

10 Here there is a need to clarify the apparent contradiction between SONAPRA's attempts to reduce cotton production (through a reduction of the seed available) and CARDER staff's concern for sustained, if not increased production. From 1975 until the early 1990s, SONAPRA had a monopoly over internal and external marketing of cotton while CARDER held a monopoly over all technical assistance to cotton growers for the production and marketing of cotton. As both CARDER and SONAPRA are parastatals, the services of CARDER in the field of cotton production is paid in cash by SONAPRA, according to the amount of cotton delivered by growers. As this rule has not yet been changed, despite the actual difficulties faced by SONAPRA in the early 1990s for the processing and the marketing of the cotton sold by growers, it was still in the interest of CARDER staff to increase production. The situation changed around 1993-94 when the world market conditions became more favourable to cotton (especially with the devaluation by 50 percent in early 1994 of FCFA, the local currency) and when SONAPRA increased its cotton processing capacities.

11 See Chapter 4 for discussions on the National Conference and on related political developments in Benin.

3 The socio-political context in Benin and in the villages

Te souviens-tu béninois?
Dans ton sommeil, ma foi,
Tu as perdu farine et noix,
Rejoignant le concert des sans voix.
....
Oseras-tu encore rêver
à la magie des vers enlevés?
De tes désillusions couvées
Tu n'es pas encore levé.
....
Veille béninois, attends le voleur.
Prendra t-il les roulettes du donnateur,
ou le manteau du promoteur?
Attention tu ignores sa couleur.
....

from: B. Gbado (s.a.) *En marche vers la liberté: Préludes du renouveau démocratique au Bénin.* Cotonou

Introduction

The events presented in Chapter 2 raise several issues of which I will draw out three that are of central importance to the argument of this book. First is the powerful activism of the Communist Party of Dahomey on the village scene and the resentment of the *vieux sages* of this strong pressure from the young. By claiming the ability to put things in good order in the village, these young men contest and challenge the former state of affairs, mainly the local state administration, the *vieux sages*, and the CARDER. Second is the Community Development Programme as a policy 'innovation' and the confusing and conflicting situations it created within the former setup of the CARDER, with its classic activities, and within the framework it had established of interaction with the villagers and with other state or non-state organisations. The last but more insidious issue that became transparent from the meeting is the sharp increase in cotton production during the previous two years. Though it was not self-evident from the scene described, one can assume that the doubling of cotton production as a cash crop from one year to the next would entail socio-economic, environmental and political realities, affecting household labour and paid labour management, resource allocation and rights and obligations within the household, cropping patterns and land use systems at household (domestic) and village levels, that need to be examined. These sets of socio-political and economic phenomena do not arise out of the blue. They are historically produced and cannot be fully understood unless one looks into the specific contexts in which social actors produce them. This is the task of the present chapter. My point of view is that one cannot understand the stakes that are present within an encounter if one

does not refer to the broader contexts of its occurrence. Political and policy events in Benin cannot be considered as city-based debates and events out of the reach of people at local level. Also, socio-political contexts are not just macro phenomena with few relations with the micro and daily concerns of actors. They are made part of the 'realities' of local actors, in so far as such actors, in their own ways, incorporate these events into their interpretations and constructions of the immediate environment of their social, economic and political activities. Indeed, as Knorr-Cetina argues,

> *'though much of the physical setting of an encounter may be potentially available for attention, most of it will remain unnoticed. Furthermore, circumstances of action which transcend[1] the immediate situation are continuously called upon by social actors.'* (1981: 11).

But I do not intend to treat these contexts as external macro-structures to which local actors adapt in micro-social situations. Of course, major shifts in national politics and in state policy for development intervention affect the range of alternatives that local actors can draw on in their everyday life. Nevertheless, these patterns become concrete only in situated interactions where they are selectively and strategically attributed meanings by social actors. For example, though the job attributions of the CARDER agents present at the meeting (the C/PACA, the RDR, the RDV and the AVA) could be supposed to have been described more or less clearly in official documents and from previous experiences, the actual setting shows that they remain under permanent negotiation and redefinition. As Brittan puts it, 'situated interactions ... are partially structured by past definitions and yet at the same time 'always open' to reinterpretations (Brittan 1973: 84). In these micro-reinterpretation processes, local actors make concrete formulations of macro-phenomena, thereby creating or constituting macro-structures through micro-actions. This is what Knorr-Cetina refers to as the *structuring practices* of agents, whereby the macro appears to become an integral part of the micro, residing *within* micro-episodes (1981: 34).[2]

Everyday life in Togoudo is full of these micro-episodes, as clearly illustrated by the meeting reported in the previous chapter. For example, by the very fact that they claim to be PCD members, the young men, in their own way, translate in the local scene the developments in Benin national politics of the previous three to four decades. We need, therefore, to look at such developments for a thorough understanding of the situation. Also in itself, the Community Development Programme, initiated by the Minister of Rural Development in 1988, is the result of the economic and socio-political changes in the country from the early eighties onwards. Neither the CARDER agents implementing the programme in the villages, nor the peasants they interacted with, had cleared their minds of their former experiences of state interventions. The challenge now is to account for these contexts of social interaction, not as external environments but as socially (re)constructed.

In order to discuss the major political developments during recent years in Benin, I will first present two closely related dramatic events. The first, the overthrow of the Mayor of the Commune by the young PCD members of the village, occurred in Togoudo, while the second, the peaceful shift from a military, one-party, Marxist-Leninist government system, took place at the *Conférence des Forces Vives de la Nation*,

briefly called *Conférence Nationale* and referred to in this text as the National Conference.[3] Thereafter, I will draw on relevant historical events and developments (colonial, but also now and then pre-colonial events) that help us to understand the general patterns and specificities of the socio-political context of the late eighties and early nineties in Benin. Hence, this chapter aims at giving an analytical description of the socio-political context in which the Community Development Programme emerged and operated. This description cannot be extensive since I do not intend to write a monograph on Benin politics but just a selective picture of the political developments in the country since the colonial period[4] that are, to some extent, relevant for the village and CARDER situations analyzed in the book.

Unrest in Togoudo and the overthrow of the Mayor of the Commune

Early 1990 in Togoudo, a group of young men conducted a demonstration and overthrew the Mayor of the Commune, accusing him of corruption. They installed a new Mayor, a young man of 28 years who had dropped out of school in 1984. It was no less than a *coup d'Etat* in the commune! The young men claimed to represent the local branch of the Communist Party of Dahomey (PCD). Members of this group were aged between 20 and 35. Some of them were university graduates without jobs, others were former students who had dropped out of school while others were illiterate young farmers. These young PCD members succeeded in enlisting some older men in their activities in the village, just as they did during the 1991 campaign for the election of the administrative council of the cotton growers' association or the GV (see Chapter 2).

Popular unrest and 'improvised' overthrow

According to witnesses, about 200 young people took part in the demonstration that ended with the changing of the Mayor, on the 5th February 1990. Most probably, many young villagers and children had joined the demonstration for the fun of it. This is how a young peasant who does not consider himself as a PCD member reported on the event one year later:[5]

> *'When he was first elected, the Mayor was not that bad. But soon, he forgot that he was elected by the people in the village, not by those from outside. Do you know B...? that rich man who lives in Whao? Everybody here knows he became wealthy because he is a thief and organises robberies of goats, motors etc. in the village and nearby towns with a band of lazy young men. He would lend money to peasants at a very high interest rates, which they would fail to repay and he would refer the matter to the Mayor who would then help him to seize the peasants' goods (animals, motor, bicycle etc.) or, in some cases, to jail them in Gbomina. The other problem was that the Mayor often called on the police to arrest people and force them to pay the taxes. And we never saw what that money was used for.'*

The *impôt de capitation* was a tax invented by the colonial power to generate local resources for the colonial administration while accelerating peasant incorporation into the market economy. Cornevin, quoting an administrative report in the early

forties, comments that the head tax collected composed some 50 percent of the budget of the territory, and thus one of its most important assets (Cornevin 1981: 431). Starting from the 28th June 1899, every boy/man and girl/woman above ten years of age was requested to pay an annual tax, supposedly on income and called *impôt* or *taxe de capitation*. This was locally translated as 'head tax' or 'the sleep tax', which you had to pay if you wanted to 'save your head or have the right to sleep in peace'. Most probably, these local denominations have a link with the previous experiences of the tax system installed by the Dahomean Monarchy. Indeed, a similar annual 'head' tax existed in the pre-colonial Dahomean Kingdom which was levied on every head of household at the 'Annual Customs', a public ceremony organised every year by the Monarchy (Law 1995: 54, quoting Norris [1789] 1968: 87 and Le Herissé 1911: 83-4). One can imagine that any attempt to escape the payment of this tax would put a heavy risk on one's head. From the colonial period, the levying of the annual tax by local authorities was associated with a lot of violence against the population. From 1958, women were exempted. The amount paid increased through time. In 1899, the tax amounted to 2.55 francs per year for both men and women living in Cotonou, Ouidah, Grand-Popo, Agoué and Porto-Novo, but was 1.25 fr for people living in other places. In 1942, it was 56fr for men and 40fr for women while a day's work earned about 3.5fr (Cornevin 1981: 413-14, 460). In the 1980s this tax amounted to FCFA 2,100 (about US $10) per year. The amount collected was given to the District, which was supposed to give back or spend 10 percent of it in the village where it was collected, which people claim was rarely done. Therefore, district officers were generally much more interested in the taxes than were the administrative authorities at commune or village level (Mayor, Délégué), though the latter were often suspected of not handing the total amount collected over to the district officer. Nevertheless, the decision to use the police force to collect taxes was often taken or incited by the district, not the commune. In its political campaigns, the PCD recommended peasants to rebel against the head tax system. Among the reasons evoked to support such a standpoint was that the total amount collected in this system was insignificant while the process of collection was dehumanising and humiliating for the population and diverted many peasants from their activities, thus reducing the GDP. But it was maintained until early 1994, when it was discontinued, following the devaluation of the FCFA on the 11th of January that year.

There were other taxes people had to pay, for example when needing an official paper at the commune. According to the young peasant speaking above, all these taxes had already been suspended everywhere except Togoudo – which was not completely true. He continued:

'*One morning last year, B.. and the Mayor went to arrest a peasant for a debt of FCFA 12,000 (4,000 loan and 8,000 in accumulated interests on the loan). The peasant said that he had already repaid B.. his money but B.. disagreed and asked the man to show the paper (receipt) that proved he had already paid. In front of the Mayor, B.. started to load into a car the bags of maize and other produce that the man had harvested from his farm. The people present became very upset. It was the period when the schools were closed because of strikes, and therefore most of our students living in Abomey, Bohicon, Parakou and Cotonou were here in the village. Two of them were the peasant's relatives. They*

started to protest. People started to shout that B.. should leave the man in peace and give him his goods back. Apparently, they did not intend to overthrow the Mayor. The idea was just to rescue the poor peasant from his tyrants. But the Mayor started to threaten them, saying that he would call the police from Gbomina, that young students were causing too much disorder in the village etc. Then from the crowd, some voices shouted 'Let's overthrow him. He and his friend B.. are thieves.' That was all. It was very funny the way things went then: Under the leadership of a small number of persons, the crowd forced the Mayor to go to the commune office, and took the keys from him. It was a Gbomina market day and many people were in the village. The Mayor got visibly afraid. Suddenly, people started to shout that Orogbo would be the new Mayor. Then the crowd sang all around the village, showing Orogbo as the new Mayor.'

The end of 1989 – beginning of 1990 – was the period when the whole state apparatus in the capital and major cities was in severe crisis and subjected to strong pressures from socio-economic and political groups both within and outside the country. In the main cities, there were frequently street demonstrations, sometimes with violent confrontations with the armed forces. As the head of the District of Gbomina later explained,

'We in the District were much too busy with national unrest (meaning demonstrations in the cities) to pay attention to village agitations.'

Orogbo remained as the commune head for ten days before he was arrested and put in jail in Abomey (the capital city of the Province). Later, at the beginning of March 1990, he was released, following the general amnesty proclaimed by the National Conference. At that time, the former administrative apparatus of the state was about to be dismissed as a new Government was established by the Prime Minister nominated by the National Conference. For the districts and villages, it was a non-state situation. The internal administrative apparatus was almost non-existent and it was granted no authority by the population. Therefore, when Orogbo came back home, he simply sat at the Commune office as Mayor. Later at the end of the year when the communal elections were organised by the new Government under the new constitution, he was elected village Chief and Mayor.

The version of the PCD members was the same as to the sequence of the events. The major difference was that, according to them, it was not just a spontaneous move, a one-time, short-lived popular uprising that brought Orogbo to the position of commune Mayor. They declared that they were preparing for the unrest for several months and were waiting for the appropriate opportunity to activate their plan. They had already chosen Orogbo as new Mayor, in close agreement with higher level authorities of the Party. According to them, the overthrow of the Mayors in many communes (as happened indeed during that period) was centrally planned by higher PCD groups as part of the strategy of that party to take political power, starting from village level.[6] Nevertheless, though one might agree that such spectacular action would have required previous preparation and strong moral support or political back up from some formal organisation, I personally did not get the feeling, having talked to many of these so-called PCD members, that their various agitations in the village (including the overthrow of the Mayor) were

inspired by political conviction or resulted from their commitment to an extra-local political programme.[7] Though some of them were obviously abreast of the political discourse of the PCD, they had to make this agenda locally meaningful. Most importantly, it appeared that references were made to this agenda to provide ex-post justification of actions or standpoints that could have been motivated by more immediate or personal interests. The life itineraries of the so-called PCD members sheds more light on the process of their emergence on the local political scene. Let me therefore begin by presenting Orogbo, whose case is to some extent representative for this category.

Perhaps back in my village I would succeed: the life trajectory of Orogbo the new Mayor

The idea one gets when recording the life history of the new Mayor[8] is that he is young in age but old in his family and work experiences, his travelling inside and outside Benin and in his social experience within the village. As indicated earlier, Orogbo was 28 years old when he was installed as Mayor of the Commune of Togoudo. He is married with two wives (in 1987 and 1989). His first wife is from Togoudo, while the second comes from H., a nearby village. He has four children.

Orogbo was born in 1962 from a peasant family in Togoudo where he did his primary schooling (from 1973 to 1979). He attended secondary school from 1980 to 1984 in Dassa, Glazoué and Savè, the three main Nagot cities of the region. He passed his BEPC (*Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle*: the diploma obtained after 4 years in secondary school) in 1983, abandoned school in 1984, and tried to find a job. In 1984-85, he took part in a test for the recruitment of primary school teachers. He passed but was rejected by the examination board because he was considered to be less than 18 years old and therefore too young to be recruited as a school teacher. He said:

> '*In fact, I was over 20 years old but in my papers it was written that I was 17. The reason was that in 1983, when I was to pass the BEPC, I was 21 years old, which was said to be too old for this diploma, especially if I wanted to continue with school which I then intended to do. Therefore, I made a jugement supplétif*[9] *that reduced my age to 16 years. One year later, I had the chance to be recruited as a school teacher, which required me to be at least 18. It was too late then and too difficult to change my age again.*'

In 1986, he went to Natitingou (northwestern Benin), searching for a job. He did all kinds of work to earn money (shop and account keeping, private tutorage for primary and secondary school boys, working in a petrol station). He returned home at the end of 1986/early 1987, passed a test, and was recruited as secretary and manager of an experimental farm in Ouègbo (Southern Benin). In September 1989 that project ended and he once again returned to the village. Since then, he claims to have decided to remain in the village since none of the things he has tried to do outside the village have lasted for long.

When he was at school, he claims to have visited Nigeria more than five times, during the holidays of 1978, 1980 and 1982. There he bought consumer goods (bicycles, spare parts for bicycles and diesel mills) which he sold in the village to make profit. It was with that money that he provided for his school needs and

pocket money. Like most people of his age, he obtained his farming experiences from working for his father and for other peasants as a wage labourer in the village during the school year. When he came home from Ouègbo in 1989, he tried to start farming. 'But I don't like the work' he said. And he added:

'Nevertheless, as everything I tried outside of the village bore no fruit, what else could I do? I am not as successful as the others in farming but I'm doing my best. Last year, I sold FCFA 35,000 of cotton. I bought a second-hand bicycle for FCFA 15,000.'

As for his political and associative experiences, Orogbo said:

'I joined the Communist Party of Dahomey in 1982 on the invitation of some of our village brothers who were at the University. One of them was the head of the project in Ouègbo where I had worked for more than two years. In 1984, I took part in the organisation of holiday courses here in the village, as teacher. During the mornings, we taught and learned while, in the afternoons we did what we called cultural activities and civic lessons, where we mainly discussed Benin political issues before and since the revolution of 1972.'

Orogbo also played in the football team of the village and was the lead singer in the *cinkunmɛ*[10] group from 1978 when he was in his fifth year in primary school. The group was said to be doing very well and managed to save FCFA 38,000. But the treasurer, an old man, used all the money for himself and the group broke up. Later in 1982 he initiated a *Toba* group (a rhythm quite close to cinkunmɛ and originating from the same area). The group continues to function. But he had withdrawn from singing after becoming Mayor.

In all these experiences, Orogbo is not very different from many other young men of his generation now staying in Togoudo and claiming to be PCD members. Most of them have no more than secondary school education, have failed in their attempts to work outside the village and are now trying, with many difficulties, to carry out agricultural activities which some combine with small-scale trade, handicrafts, shop and barkeeping. They generally have some practical experience from combining school life with cash earning activities and from having taken part in the cultural life of the village. Most of those who attended school had to travel to Dassa, Savè, Abomey, Bohicon or Parakou for their secondary schooling. But very few of them became involved in smuggling with Nigeria or Togo as did Orogbo. Perhaps because of his political experience (on which he did not comment much), he was a step ahead of the others. Like most of his comrades, he claimed to have become a member of the Communist Party of Dahomey while he was in college. It is difficult, however, to appreciate how far their involvement in the PCD went, apart from naively taking part in street demonstrations. But Orogbo, being close to a high ranking member of this party from 1987 to 1989, when he was working as secretary and manager of the experimental farm in Ouègbo, might have gained extra experience and a deeper insight into PCD's agenda. In fact, 1987-1989 was the hottest period in the recent political life of Benin. The impression one gets from discussing with these young men is that, having failed to find (white collar) jobs in the cities, they returned to their village, hoping to succeed there. In fact, they had, of course, never been completely absent from the village. They had worked as wage labourers,

played in the village football team and were involved in cultural activities in the village when they were students. Along with the students who came back to the village during the strikes of 1988 and 1989, they organised control of the cotton markets at the end 1989 in order, as they said, to protect the interests of their parents, which ended up in an attempt to take responsibility for the board of the GV, the cotton growers' organisation.[11] They were open to external discourse and 'development' events, which to some extent contributed to making them a social category and which they seem now to use in order to grant themselves a significant role on the village scene. One critical period, which provides a glimpse of how such national developments became an integral part of the daily life of people in the village, is the period from 1987-1990, which marks the end of the Marxist-Leninist regime.

The end of the Marxist-Leninist regime and the emergence of a new political discourse: The *Renouveau Démocratique*

The Benin Republic has been through a series of dramatic socio-political changes, especially at the end of the eighties, that deserves close attention within the present study. As mentioned earlier, the major political event was the shift from a military, Marxist-Leninist, single-party based government system to a multiparty regime. This was a long process that culminated at a peaceful and innovative conference called the *Conférence des Forces Vives de la Nation* that later inspired political groups, activists and leaders in most African countries South of the Sahara.[12] Some observers tend to attribute the process of political change that took place through the national conference in Benin to the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist block in Eastern Europe and the downfall of the Berlin wall. Though one cannot deny a link between these world-wide phenomena and the political changes of 1990 in Benin only should not reduce these fundamental processes to the side-effects of the failure of the Marxist-Leninist system in eastern Europe.[13] Most importantly, one cannot understand the historical relevance of the changes in Benin, nor understand the process of appropriation of these macro-political changes at local level as resources for confronting subsequent economic constraints at regional, national and local levels, if one assumes that these political changes are simply induced from 'outside'.

The conference took place from the 19th to the 28th February 1990 with 488 participants from various social sectors: farmers, students, representatives of trade unions, local organisations, civil servants, NGOs and so-called *Sensibilités Politiques*.[14] Also invited were Beninese from the 'diaspora', that is so-called important personalities such as those who had held important national or international positions (all the former Presidents of Dahomey,[15] former high officials in the World Bank, the FAO, ILO, UN, IFAD etc.). The Christian Churches, Muslims and the local religions were also represented.

Within ten days, the 488 participants at the conference, supported by on-going street demonstrations, the media[16] and encouraging messages from all over the world, had completed a radical change in the political regime without any blood-

shed. Only the President of the Republic escaped the tidal wave, interpreted as a necessary concession for preserving peace in the country, as he still enjoyed the loyalty of the BGP, the best equipped body of the army. Transitory institutions were given a mandate to install all the institutions of the new Republic (Constitution, Parliament, Presidential elections, Government..) within one year (see ONEPI 1990 for the main reports of the conference). A new political discourse emerged whose key words were *Renouveau Démocratique,* and *Transparence* (Democratic Renewal and Transparency).[17]

Mayor overthrown in Togoudo and the Regime overthrown at the National Conference: the rational and historical background to the changes in the 1990s

The unrest in Togoudo and the National Conference were unprecedented events in post-independent Dahomey (Benin). Many economic and socio-political crises accompanied by street unrest had occurred since 1960, mainly in 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1975 (see Ronen 1975; Allen 1989). Nevertheless, as far as I know, none was reported to have reached village level, with the overthrow of the officially-established administration. The establishment of Orogbo as Mayor through demonstration, his election a few months later, and similar village and commune-level uprisings reported in the Mono and the Oueme Provinces, showed that there were fundamental differences between this economic and political crisis and preceding ones. And most importantly, it indicated that there had been profound socio-political changes in Benin under the so-called Marxist-Leninist regime. As for the *Conférence des Forces Vives de la Nation,* though the idea was not completely new on the Benin political scene, no such meeting that had been held before had resulted in such radical decisions which had been put into effect by the acting President.[18] There was popular unrest from 1960-1972 but it was city-based, most of it resulting from dissatisfaction by civil servants about their treatment. While the shilly-shallying of the political regimes of that period motivated the decisive military coup of 1972, they also bore the seeds of the dramatic changes of the early 1990s, as I will briefly outline below.

From 1960 to 1972: Instability within the tripartite urban-biased political system

From 1960-1972 Dahomey was famous for its political instability, resulting most from economic crisis and from rivalry and short-lived shifting alliances between three leaders politically and morally supported by three different regions, each dominated by an ethnic group: Porto-Novo region in the southeast dominated by the Goun, supporting Sourou Migan Apithy; the Abomey region in the centre dominated by the Fon with Justin Tomètin Ahomadegbe; and the North dominated by the Bariba supporting Hubert Maga.[19]

About the economic crisis Evidently enough, in terms of standard macro-economic indicators, Benin is a poor country. The per capita Gross Domestic Product was US$380 in 1992, with changes of -0.1 percent from 1965-1973; 0.1 percent from 1974-

1980; 0.0 percent from 1981-1985 and -2.2 percent from 1986-1992 (CMEP 1993: vi, 157). There are hardly any mineral resources. State income is principally made up of duties (amounting to 40-70 percent of the total income), most being taxes on imported goods largely re-exported through smuggling to neighbouring countries (Nigeria, Niger, Togo). According to BCEAO statistics of the early 1980s (Seho 1991), this re-exportation constitutes up to 40 percent of the activities at the Port of Cotonou. The single agricultural product on which political leaders could count at Independence in 1960 as an export product was palm oil. Soon (and even before 1960), French research institutes discovered that the Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Cameroun had a better climate for oil palm than Benin. Other products such as coconut and coffee were also found to be more adapted to Ghana and the Ivory Coast. In the end, and starting from the early seventies, cotton became almost the only export crop for a country (see Table 2) that relied on agricultural exports for about 40 percent of its Gross Domestic Product and 70 percent of its foreign currency earnings. The trade balance was constantly in deficit, the value of exports never being more than 60 percent of imports (see Table 3).

Table 2 The weight of cotton in Benin exports

	1961	1965	1970	1975	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
	per cent												
Cotton	5	13	15	23	29	29	57	56	70	66	76	80	73
Palm oil+cake	53	73	35	20	4	3	5	8	3	3	2	2	1
Coffee	8	3	5	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Brut oil	0	0	0	0	41	18	32	32	23	25	17	12	16
Others	34	11	45	54	26	49	6	4	3	6	5	6	10
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: A compilation of INSAE, IMF, BCEAO, UNDP, MF and Customs statistics by ER/FSA (1994: 26–28)

Budget deficits were therefore constantly high and reached FCFA 7.3 billion from 1960-1969, despite a French contribution amounting to FCFA 6.8 billion (statistics BCEAO). These deficits, in fact originating from the colonial period (the 1959 budget having a deficit of 209 millions FCFA) were worsened by various factors. To list a few: 1) the returning Beninese colonial staff from West and Central Africa after Independence, 2) a very weak taxation system together with a general anti-fiscal attitude among the population, 3) the ever increasing amount of clandestine trade with Nigeria, essentially based on smuggling and various anti-duty stratagems, and 4) the rapid increase of civil servants due to the resolution to take control of the whole administration; the number of ministries increased from 8 to 12 between 1960 and 1971 and from 16 to 23 between 1980 and 1984, which mostly required an increase in staff and materials: the number of civil servants increased from 9,600 in 1960 to 13,444 in 1966 (Seho 1991: 69-70), to 29,000 in 1980 and 47,163 in 1986 (CMEP 1993: 9) with the cost of salaries rising from 2.8 billions in 1960 to 36.2 billions in 1987 (Djacoto an Hodonou 1991: 9-13).

Table 3 Evolution of foreign trade (services not included)

	Exports FOB	Imports CAF	Balance	Coverage rate of imports by exports
Years		Millions FCFA		per cent
1961	3,579	6,275	-2,696	57
1965	3,367	8,491	-5,124	40
1970	9,062	17,660	-8,598	51
1975	6,790	42,080	-35,283	16
1980	13,272	69,969	-56,697	19
1984	72,822	125,903	-53,081	58
1985	72,680	160,134	-87,454	45
1986	40,140	139,300	-99,160	29
1987	29,600	139,200	-109,600	21
1988	20,440	151,200	-130,760	14
1989	29,780	101,000	-71,220	30
1990	31,700	116,500	-84,800	27
1991	37,100	160,100	-123,000	23
1992	36,800	171,800	-135,000	21
1993	31,900	178,200	-146,000	18

Source: A compilation of INSAE, IMF, BCEAO, UNDP, MF and Customs statistics by ER/FSA (1994: 26–28)

Except for the period from 1986 when attempts were made under pressure from the WB-IMF to reduce the number of civil servants, measures taken to limit state expenditure were confined to taxing the already low salaries of civil servants, which caused street demonstrations and strikes that mostly ended up with the intervention of the army to 'restore order'. According to statistics compiled by Ronen, the per capita Gross National Product declined from 21,000f in 1959 to 10,000f in 1968, while the average rural income dropped from 11,000f in 1959, to 10,000f in 1968. However, in that period, about 86 percent of all cultivated land was used to produce food for local consumption. Ronen concluded that this situation helps to explain why there was no general famine, complete economic breakdown or mass exodus to neighbouring countries (Ronen 1975: 152). In short, the popular unrest of the 1960s that led to military coups and political instability (six coups d'Etat and eight Governments) resulted more from the bankruptcy of the state and its subsequent difficulties in meeting the salaries of civil servants that were an important slice of state expenditure, representing 60-95 percent of state income during the first six years of Independence (1960-1965) and from 1989-1993, and some 40-45 percent of state expenditure during the same periods (see CME 1993: 221).

About the political instability As for the political rivalry and arrangements between the three regional leaders that caused military interventions, once again, these were city-

based and remained the affair of the educated urban political elite. As Allen argues, the 1972 coup was a response to the instability of regimes based on the politics of clientelism and the spoils that it had produced. In his first speech, Kérékou drew attention to the 'inertia, ... congenital deficiency, ... notorious inefficiency... and unpardonable incompetence as well as threatening national unity' (1989: 31 and 132). In fact, political instability based on short-lived alliances between political elites dated before independence and continued after. Between 1957 and 1963, there had been nine different civilian governments (no military coup d'Etat), each resulting from a reshaping of political alliances within the electoral body – made up of only the few literates, who at the time were the only part of the population allowed to vote (Ronen 1975: 187). Rural people's participation in national political debates, therefore, was practically to nil. Moreover, during the colonial and post-independence periods, village chiefs were traditional (customary, mostly hereditary chiefs) or otherwise appointed by the central administration, with barely any consultation with the population of the villages concerned.

When, in 1965, on the occasion of legislative and presidential elections the vote was extended to all adult citizens, campaigns for legislative elections were locally conducted with an appeal to historical or regional awareness. This was done in such a way that support for a candidate was not necessarily because of their ethnicity or regional origin, but because of fear of domination by another ethnic group, should the other candidate win. As for the presidential elections, they remained dominated by the three previously mentioned regional leaders, a tripartite political system based on clientelism, prebends and spoils that operated in the fifties and sixties, and which excluded people in the villages from national political debate.[20]

The emergence of a leftist-marxist political rhetoric and actions

The political atmosphere in the sixties had also provoked the disgust of some unions, of intellectuals and student associations, mainly the Dahomean members of the FEANF, the Federation of African Students in France. These leftist groups started political activities, literacy programmes, and peasant mobilisation against bureaucratic malpractices – especially during their holidays. Some of these activists had relations with and became the intellectual supporters and political partners of the junior officers who carried out the 1972 coup that led the country to political stability[21] (even if only apparent) with no further successful coup until the 1990 National Conference. One key argument in their political rhetoric was: 'We must eradicate definitively the old regime and the people, structures and ideology that carry it'.[22] The regime's programme, delivered one month after the coup (30th November 1972), was jointly prepared by these young political actors (military and civilian) and bore five main features: popular democracy and participation, radicalism (on issues related to culture, education, and health care delivery), egalitarianism (against the French elitist and urban-biased education and administrative systems adopted by preceding Governments), nationalism (against excessive involvement by France in Dahomean affairs) and self-reliance.[23]

In this book I am not interested in whether these objectives were achieved or not. What is important as far as this study is concerned is that it was the very process

of implementing this programme, together with the context of its emergence, that made the political changes of February 1990 very different from previous ones, especially for people in the villages. In fact, starting from 1973 and for the first time, village councils and village head (*délégué*) were democratically elected by villagers, with very little, if any, interference from the state administrative apparatus present at district level. Also, vigorous campaigns against the myth that intellectuals were the only specialists of politics were conducted *(Les intellectuels tarés)* while the so-called feudal system and witches were 'hunted', all involving a large part of the town and village population, especially the youth and women's committees (COJ, COF). In brief, even though a process of power concentration in the hands of a few (in the Central Committee of the single Party created in 1975) had slowly started, the regime seemed to have worked, at least in its first years, to break the myth of intellectual political elites and enlist people's participation in political debates at village and national levels. The most immediate consequence of this bringing of national politics to the village level in 1972 was that for people in the villages, changes in the political system could no longer pass completely unnoticed and mostly touched them in one way or another. To give just a few examples: the reforms of local administration in 1973 and 1982, of the education system in 1975, the translation of the constitution, available in every single village in 1977, the referendum of 1979, the creation of women's positions on village councils and the various legislative elections (with peasants represented in the parliament) and the presidential plebiscites.[24] All these made people in the villages more aware of national political debates and therefore concerned with the events taking place from 1987-1990 that ended with the overthrow of the very regime that occasioned popular political participation.

Political divorce, economic crisis and popular unrest

Quite soon after the coup (1973-74), a faction of the students and unions separated from the Government, questioning its lack of radicalism and claiming that, in any case, political power taken from the 'top' by a few 'putchists' could never be really exercised by the masses at the 'bottom'. According to them, the masses would have to achieve their own and authentic revolution, from the 'bottom'. Most of these people were members of the UCD *(Union des Communistes du Dahomey)* who would later form the clandestine Communist Party of Dahomey (PCD) in 1978. This fell immediately after 1977 when a group of mercenaries led by the famous French mercenary Bob Denard disembarked at Cotonou airport (16 January 1977) intending to overthrow the Government. But the confrontation turned to the advantage of the Benin army who shot some of the mercenaries and arrested others. The rest of them fled.[25] As a result of this aggression, the regime became radicalised and began strong repression of the clandestine opposition, whether left or right. Nevertheless, the PCD became very active and successful as an opposition party among students, unions and also in the villages, especially with the Adja in the Mono Province, and the Daca region in the Zou Province where Togoudo is located, but also in villages of the Ouémé, Atlantic and Borgou Provinces, basing its campaigns on ethnic identity and the local political and economic difficulties facing

the population, all of which were attributed to the Government. To a large extent, the actions of the Government since 1972 had made village people more open to national politics, which was favourable to PCD political activism. Also in the seventies and eighties, contrary to the case in the fifties and sixties, many developments took place that increased the incorporation of village economies into national and regional markets, and therefore exposed farmers to national and regional economic crises.

First was a rapid increase in the urban population (see Table 4), together with an increase in school attendance and a rapid increase in the number of urban civil servants. One can only assume then that the demands for food crops from the villages increased.

Table 4 Evolution of population in major cities of Benin from 1961 to 1992

	1961	1979			1992	
	inhabitants	inhabitants	per cent of (1961)	inhabitants	per cent of (1979)	per cent of (1961)
Cotonou	78,300	327,600	318.4	536,827	64	458
Porto-Novo	64,000	132,000	106	179,138	36	180
Abomey-Bohicon	26,400	72,900	176	148,485	104	462
Ouidah	17,200	25,300	47	64,433	155	275
Parakou	14,000	60,800	334	103,577	70	640
Djougou	9,500	28,800	203	134,099	366	1311
Total	209,400	647,500	209	1,166,559	80	457

Source: 1979 and 1992 census.

Second, in the seventies, there was the oil boom in Nigeria and favourable market conditions for Togolese phosphate and uranium from Niger. These countries were then importers of food products from Benin (maize, cassava, yam, sorghum, peppers, see Igue 1985; 1992). The world economic crisis of the early and mid-eighties badly affected these countries and reduced access for Benin agricultural products to their markets. The Nigerian case was special in that the exchange rate of the Naïra (the Nigerian currency) dropped sharply, which increased the cost of Benin agricultural products on the Nigeria market. This reduction of the regional market was worsened from the end of 1987 by the crisis in Benin cities where the civil servants were no longer paid regularly and therefore had to reduce the food consumption of their families. In villages like Togoudo where the farming conditions were suitable for cotton, the way in which peasants coped with the situation was to increase their cotton production. The marketing of cotton has always been guaranteed by the state, but its low return (as compared to other crops such as yams, cassava and beans, see Chapter 6), the delays in the payments to peasants and the malpractices of agents had always made most peasants suspicious about this crop. Left with few cash-earning alternatives in 1987 and 1988, most peasants fell back on cotton production, as shown from the statistics presented below (Table 5). One cannot sustain that the increase from 1988 to 1990 resulted from an improve-

ment of the extension system, since this was exactly the period of absenteeism and strikes. Nor can the price paid to peasants explain it, as it dropped from 110f per kilogramme in 1985 and 1986 to 100f in 1987, was raised to 105f in 1988, dropped to 95f in 1989 and then was maintained at 100f for the following three years, before it was raised to 110f per kilogramme in 1993, and following the devaluation of the FCFA, 140f in 1994.

Table 5 Cotton production in Togoudo and in Benin from 1987 to 1993

Years	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
	TOGOUDO						
Number of growers (*)	130	300	400	450	600	650	788
Total area (ha)	70	180	350	475	450	525	900
Total production (Tons)	78	233	330	700	495	668	1105
	ZOU PROVINCE						
Total area (ha)	15,087	22,790	20,330	28,037	37,295	29,620	
Total production (Tons)	13,921	18,898	19,066	35,095	32,697	37,092	
	BENIN						
Total area (ha)	68,836	97,623	90,451	122,793	151,317	128,817	
Total production (Tons)	70,202	108,752	104,660	146,406	177,123	161,595	280,000

Source: Records of the GV of Togoudo and of SONAPRA

(*) The number of growers as recorded by the GV is always lower than the number of the people actually cultivating cotton. The GV records the growers who have direct access to credit, which mostly excludes women, and other growers who are only interested in cultivating small amounts of cotton. These people arrange to obtain seed, fertilisers and insecticides from those who are registered.

Finally, many farmers have adhered to the idea, forcefully promoted by the regime of Kérékou since 1972, of putting their children in school, which, in connection with the systematic recruitment of university graduates started by the regime from the mid-seventies, developed expectations of getting white collar jobs. The end of systematic recruitment from 1986 onwards wiped out this hope, so that graduates or drop out students had now to live at the expense of their peasant parents. Moreover, with the closing of the schools in 1987, 1988 and 1989 because of the frequent strikes, most students went back home and had to live their everyday life at the expense of their parents, with the latter losing complete faith in the future of their children, especially outside agriculture which was generally considered to be slavery.

All the events mentioned above contributed to the fact that the socio-economic and political crisis of 1987-1990 was not just city-based but was experienced in the remotest villages. It made the changes of that period experiences which most

villages such as Togoudo shared, and the basis on which political activists such as the PCD members of Togoudo elaborated their arguments and actions.

The regime of Kérékou was fully aware of the widely spread nature of the crisis[26] and they tried to deal with it. In the mid-eighties they launched what one could call the liberalisation of development intervention. In fact, since 1974, most independent civilian organisations, including most student organisations, were banned by the regime. Very few private initiatives survived, or were allowed to, especially in the fields of education, health care, and rural development. However, by the mid-eighties, budget deficits were rising and official development efforts had enlisted little enthusiasm among the rural population, while responsible bureaucracy was suffering in incurable sclerosis. Then in 1986, having realised all this, the President appealed to 'civil society' to launch private rural development initiatives in collaboration with local authorities. In the wake of this appeal, many *Associations de Développement* at commune and district levels were registered (Attolou 1989). They were Non-Governmental Organisations that were supposed to involve local populations. These associations were initiated by civil servants born in the communes or districts concerned, most of whom were now living in the major cities (see Daane and Mongbo 1991; Mongbo 1993). In some ways, this opening of the field of development intervention from the side of Government represented a sort of *laisser-faire* policy apparently calling for individual and collective initiatives for local development. It seemed also to be an attempt to fill in the gaps of the regime's failure in this field, while setting ways for future disclaimers of guilt.

Many other attempts were made by the regime to 'occupy the field'. The mass organs of the Party (OJRB, OFRB, CDR, UNSTB) attempted some timid actions (public conferences on the crisis, renewal of their boards and a call for new members) to gain back the loyalty of students and trade unions to the regime and to the economic adjustment policy, no matter what it cost politically. Attempts were also made in a few villages by young men and women, especially by the OJRB (the youth organisation) to start cooperatives for young producers. It was in this context of economic crisis, political agitations and survival strategies launched by the various organs of the regime, together with the increasing passivity and sclerosis of the development bureaucracy, that the Minister of Rural Development, most probably in his attempts to 'occupy the field', launched the Community Development Programme.

The insertion of the *Community Development Programme* into a dynamic socio-political landscape

Before closing this chapter, I wish to introduce briefly the socio-political landscape existing in Togoudo when the Community Development Programme started. The most visible actors, the potential interlocutors of the RDV, were the various committees and organisations. In its policy of enlisting village people into local and national politics, the regime of Kérékou favoured the emergence of a large number of these committees.

As a result of the motto of self-reliance, people's participation, popular health and education, of the early years of the revolution, Togoudo had (as most villages), an association of parents of school children (the APE: *Association des Parents d'Elèves*). The board of this association was supposed to participate in the management of the school and to enlist all parents in helping to provide the school with necessary working materials. The main issue this committee was concerned with when the RDV came to Togoudo was the building of class rooms for the children.

In the mean time, there was a health committee established with the assistance of health staff, members of the village and the District. The committee was attempting to build a village health centre (UVS: *Unité Villageoise de Santé)*, especially for childbirth. Another committee was the *Comité Pompe* in charge of the management of the village water wells.

The *Groupement Villageois*, the cotton growers association, was one important body on the village scene, as already indicated in Chapter 2. It was supposed to regroup all cotton growers in the village and was, in the period starting 1987-88, the local organisation at village level that had the highest cash income. Attached to the GV were 18 cotton markets which were the places where cotton was purchased, but which in fact consisted of the group of peasants who sold their cotton at that specific place. There were also the GRVC (*Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative*) that were in a state of lethargy when the RDV arrived. These groups suddenly woke up and started requesting a 'voice' in the management of the GV. There were also women's groups, some of which were formed by the social assistant of the area before the arrival of the RDV in the village.

A more recent group was the young men's cooperative called *Coopérative d'Action Economique des Jeunes (CAEJ)*. It was established with strong assistance from the OJRB as part of its campaign aimed at 'occupying the field'. The state administrative apparatus at Commune and District levels, as well as the CARDER, had been requested by the national president of the OJRB, who was the Minister of Information and Propaganda, to give all the support needed to the newly established association.

Another committee was the *Association de Développement*. The State President's appeal to civil society to launch private development initiatives in their villages (which I referred to above as the liberalisation of development intervention) was heard by the natives of Togoudo, who founded the association for the development of Togoudo, with a development plan and, of course, a *Conseil d'Administration.*

As far as the village administration was concerned, there were three wards or *quartiers* in the village. Most villagers could hardly identify the borders of these so-called wards. Nevertheless, they were administrative units from which the members of the village council were elected, according to the schema used under the Marxist regime. As mentioned, the intensive involvement of young people in public village administration after 1973-74 had weakened the position of elders, especially in localities such as Togoudo where no 'traditional' (customary) chief existed (see Chapter 6). This situation was made specific in Togoudo with the activism of the young so-called PCD members.

The groups of actors presented above were those with whom the RDV would most probably negotiate the construction and implementation of the Community

Development Programme. All the people involved in these various committees and groups were potential 'partners' in the village redynamisation programme, each of whom tried to secure the position that was believed to be to the most favourable. Finally, one should not forget that the people to whom we are referring have in various ways interconnected family ties, which make this specific field of interaction much more complicated to move in, to observe and analyze than it might appear. Nevertheless, when the RDV came to the village to start the Community Development Programme, he too had to establish another committee!! as prescribed by the programme, which was called *Comité de Suivi du Développement du Village*, in short *Comité de Suivi* (committee for monitoring village development). At the meeting held to introduce the RDV and the programme, this committee was presented as the one above all the others, because all other committees and groups were working in the different fields that contribute to the development of the village (health, water, school, agriculture etc.), while the present committee was to be in charge of the monitoring of all development endeavours in the village. The RDV seemed to have the flavour of the potential bargaining during the introductory meeting. Reporting on it later, he said:

> '*When I first arrived, people thought that I came with a bag of money to solve all the problems of their village. Everybody wanted to be in the Comité de suivi. Its members were everyday at my house. When later they understood that they were the ones to search for the money, and here in the village from their fellow villagers, then most of them disappeared.*'

But contrary to what the RDV stated, these actors did not really disappear from the scene. A process of local (individual as well as collective) appropriation of the programme had begun. The implications of this for Togoudo will later be dealt in Chapter 9.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, we were interested in understanding more about two of the issues that appear in the second chapter of this book: The heavy activism of some of the young men on the village scene, who presented themselves as members of the Communist Party of Dahomey; and the issues concerning the Community Development Programme itself. It had been introduced by the Minister of Rural Development and presented by the agents involved as an innovation in the field of rural development. I argued that these phenomena did not appear out of the blue and to understand them we needed to look into the socio-political and economic contexts that produced them, and how the actors involved structured and transformed them in the everyday micro-episodes of their life.

I hope I have made clear that, as a social category, the young PCD members drew their resources (identity, political discourse, audience and practices) from local, national and international developments. To some extent they shared these with fellow villagers, and made them concrete each time they attempted to deal with specific situations and to change the course of events to their advantage. The

diversified nature of the political landscape in the village, on the eve of the birth of the Community Development Project, had developed historically as local appropriations and manifestations of attempts made by the Kérékou regime to put an end to the elitist political system of the colonial and post-independence period. Local socio-economic developments linked to the national crisis, but also to sub-regional and international phenomena, especially the crisis in the world market and its effects on the Nigerian economy (i.e. the drop in oil revenues and in the exchange rate of the Naïra) and on Niger and Togo export revenues (from uranium and phosphate respectively) were experienced locally in household and village affairs. The very presence of young school leavers in the village without any clear prospect for the future had been part of the political and economic experience of villagers for the last two decades.

Actors (be they Minister, state agents or villagers) dealt locally with this situation in their daily occupations. In that sense, the Community Development Programme was not just an innocent innovation in the field of rural development. Though the people involved tried to appropriate it in various ways, it was for the Minister of Rural Development, one way of 'occupying the field'. As for the young PCD members, in their attempts to succeed at home (having failed to make a living in the cities) they made use of the discourse and practices of the PCD, reproducing national political debates in the village scene. But as I also shown in Chapter 2 and mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Community Development Programme was to be inserted into an existing culture of development intervention that is, in itself, the outcome of a historical process. Hence we need to look at this intervention culture in order to understand how state agents as well as villagers tried to appropriate the Community Development Programme.

The insidious fight between the C/PACA and the RDV, the specialised language used by the secretary of the GV, and the strategies established by some villagers and the RDV within the programme will become clearer after some insight into the historical evolution of state intervention in rural development and into the trajectories and motivations of the actors involved in particular modes of state intervention. These issues are the focus of the next two chapters.

Notes

1 Author's emphases.

2 Author's emphases.

3 This latter event is presented in detail in the Appendix.

4 For more detailed analyses of different aspects of socio-political developments in Benin, see Ronen 1975, 1979; Allen 1989; Decalo 1979; Glèlè 1969, 1981; Mongbo 1991; Bierschenk 1995 and also Bierschenk and Mongbo 1995.

5 In fact, the following story is the summary (and the average) account of pieces of the event by various people (men and women, aged between 20 and 50 years old) on different occasions. Their common characteristic is that none of them claim to be PCD members, though some show sympathy to the PCD group in the village. Some even do not believe in or know of the existence of such a group in the village.

6 Many other spectacular modes of unrest and coups were reported in the same period especially in Southern Benin. The most outstanding were in the communes of Avrankou in the Oueme Province, and Houin, Atchanou, Comè and Djakotomey in the Mono Province. For the latter case, the PCD group overthrew two Mayors and replaced them with only one, proclaiming a restructuration of the local administration scheme. PCD members willing to discuss these events with me declared that the movement was launched in June 1989 with the motto of creating power dualities (*dualité du pouvoir*) at local level (installing PCD administrative structures that would report not to higher state structures but to the PCD Central Committee). This motto is said to have been maintained even after the National Conference in February 1990. This seizing of power at local level was aimed at preparing the ground for a popular armed insurrection and the overthrow of the Government. Popular demonstrations were still organised now and then by PCD activists. During one of these (the 16 of September 1990 in Dogbo-Tota in the Mono Province on market day), the police shot Bernard Kpomassi a PCD activist and high-ranking member. It was said that more shootings of PCD high-ranking members were planned and that this was part of the strategy of the new Government to force the PCD, either to implement the final stage of its plan (armed insurrection) without further preparation, or to simply withdraw its motto and therefore stop street agitations. Apparently, high PCD authorities had chosen the latter alternative, taking into account, as some of them said, the state of local and international political forces at that moment who were no longer in favour of an armed insurrection.

7 Here, one should, however, take into consideration the account presented in the previous footnote, according to which the 'power duality' motto of the PCD had been withdrawn after the shooting of Bernard Kpomassi in September 1990 by the police force, while I had started my research in Togoudo only in January 1991. If things took place as presented in the previous note, one could then understand why I did not get from the so-called PCD group in Togoudo any feeling of loyalty to a centrally-planned political agenda. As the agenda was withdrawn, one assumes that local actors were left with a state of affairs that required other appropriate and manageable forms of action.

8 Orogbo did not want to say much about his political experience. Getting him to speak about his life history was not easy. Portions of it were obtained on separate occasions. It was only in December 1991 when discussing *groupement de femmes* that he had just started with a few others that we could complete his life history.

9 This is an act of a local court that gives people, who were not registered when they were born, the possibility of obtaining a legal birth certificate stipulating an estimated age, without a date of birth. As in the case of Orogbo in 1983, when people registered at birth for one reason or another, request this certificate at the local court, they obtain another age.

10 This is a popular rhythm made from a combination of two calabashes poised on water, two or four maracas, a big gourd, a 'gong' and a flute. The rhythm originated from Savalou (centre of Benin) where it was played at funerals. Nowadays, it has become very popular and is played in many villages in central and southern Benin and in most schools all over Benin. A modern version of it has been promoted since 1977 by Stan Tohon (a local musician), who calls it *The Tchink System.*

11 It is a regular activity of leftist student organisations to try to protect peasants against what they call the exploitative practices that go together with export crop production and marketing. Attempts were made since the early sixties to discourage peasants from cultivating groundnuts, tobacco and cotton for sale, these crops being presented as the channels through which 'capitalism, imperialism and their local puppets exploit peasants'. This discourse has served as an entry point to the villages for these

organisations and it is interesting to note that, in the hands of the educated village youths, it served as entry point for playing active roles in village economic and political affairs.

12 After the Benin conference, there were popular requests for similar conferences in Niger, Gabon, Congo, Togo, Zaire, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Cameroun, Burkina-Faso, Mali, Sénégal etc. They were given various names: *Conférence consultative, Forum, Séminaire national, Table ronde.* What people wanted to achieve through these conferences was generally the same: either the regime wanted to escape the fate of Kérékou's regime, and/or the opposition wanted the eviction of the regime and fair democratic elections. The fundamental mistake in these attempts to copy the Benin experience was that they became obsessed by the end-product of the process and failed to see that the political shift in Benin had been an object of negotiation and struggle between political groups for decades and that the National Conference was no more than the culmination of this very long process.

13 It is evident that the end of the Cold War deprived many African countries (especially those like Benin making intensive use of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric) of the ideological and sometimes military support from Eastern European countries, which reduced their room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis internal opposition and the Western countries and international financial institutions. But there is not much indication as to whether the Benin regime of 1972-89 had been much further into socialism than the level of rhetoric, and whether this brought the regime any closer to socialist countries. Most interpretations of the Head of State's 1974 speech announcing Marxism-Leninism as the state's ideology 'see it as attempting to create legitimacy for the new regime and as designed to placate and demobilize pressures from the left for further radicalisation' (Decalo 1979; Ronen 1979; Godin 1986, quoted by Allen 1989: 35). To take but a few examples, and as argued by Allen:

> '*what has been nationalised (by the so-called marxist regime) exclude the commanding heights (trade and land). And while there are ties with Communist states, those with the Soviet Union are weak and even those with China or North Korea have none of the significance of ties with France.*' (1989: 129).

14 This was the word used in place of 'political parties'. It included the state party as well as all groups who proclaimed themselves to have political tendencies, provided they handed in an analytical document on the state of affairs in the country and how this could be improved. There were 51 *sensibilités politiques* represented at the conference. The Communist Party of Dahomey refused to take part in the Conference. It was well known that this Party was the only well structured political group but it had placed the Regime in serious difficulties within the country for more than a decade. The Party had been subjected to brutal repression on the part of the police. Many PCD members or those associated were jailed, tortured and killed. It is acknowledged by many political actors outside the PCD that without the perspicacious actions of this party, the changes experienced through the National Conference could not have taken place, at least not at that moment. It seems that the PCD would have preferred a Maoist type of popular armed revolt that would lead to a spectacular overthrow of the Regime, as happened in Togoudo and in other villages. Indeed, according to some PCD members, the idea of the Conference was treachery. For them, 'It was an invention of reactionary forces to create an illusion to the people, especially for the petit bourgeois who, in essence, prefer *ad hoc* and illusive arrangements than radical and more effective solutions.'

15 Dahomey is the former name of Benin, given after the Danxomean kingdom that fought against French colonisation. The name was changed by the socialist regime in 1975.

16 The conference was broadcast live in full by the state radio and television. Also during the conference, many debates were organised on television on various topics (human rights, democracy and development), at which different people debated their opinions.

17 See the Appendix for details on the National Conference of Benin.

18 Andriamirado commented on it as follows: 'A liberty has been conquered, that of the word. Another independence is acquired, that of the people, and no longer that of the state, which was nothing but the independence of the Heads of State.' (1991: 16).

19 Of course this is a simplification of a far more complex political landscape. In each region, there were supporters of the two other leaders, acting as opponents of the native leader.

20 That is, if there was any such debate at national level at all. According to some analysis, 'Dahomey leaders were not motivated by ideology (as was Kwame Nkrumah) nor could they be pragmatically independent (as could Houphouet-Boigny), and they were as ambivalent about their economic future in independence as they were enthusiastic about its political aspect. The goal of the Dahomean elite was independence, the establishment of a sovereign state, because it is the modern framework for recognition of a free people; but they were also afraid of 'going alone'. In the pre-independence period the Dahomean elite was under the aegis of French culture; few of them could have been suspected of wishing to abandon it.' (Ronen 1975: 157).

21 Observers of Dahomean politics scene attest to the fact that the 1972 coup reflected the junior officers' distaste for what had happened to their army and their seniors as both became caught up in spoils politics (Allen 1989). None of the partakers in the coup was 40 years old and they soon isolated the seniors from major military command. Also, their political ambition was obvious. There was no statement or promise of handing over political power to a civilian Government after turning 'things right', as former coup makers used to declare.

22 '*Il faut liquider définitivement l'ancienne politique à travers les hommes, les structures et l'idéologie qui la porte.*' During the first years of the regime, all the politicians who had participated in the former regime were purely and simply cast out of any political activity.

23 See Discours programme *Pour une politique nouvelle d'indépendence nationale*, 1972.

24 In a recent study in five villages of South and North Benin where informants were asked to give an account of national political history as experienced by their villages, neither national independence day, nor the 1972 coup d'état were mentionned, let alone the multiple coups that were cained out between 1960 and 1972 (see Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1995).

25 The case was brought to the United Nations which commissioned an enquiry that revealed the implication of former right-wing exiled Benin politicians, as well as officials from Togo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Morroco and France which of course they all denied. There were rumors that the defeat of the mercenaries was not due to the Benin army alone, which was still then equiped with 1945 guns. It is said that the victory was the result of the involvement of the well-equipped body guards, housed near the airport, of the North Korean Prime Minister who was on an official visit in Cotonou in that time.

26 The Government continuously campaigned against the PCD for its wide infiltration in schools, universities, trade unions and villages, and accused this party of being responsible for instigating disorder in the country.

4 The making of intervention policies and practice: an exploration into the emergence of its general frame

Introduction

In Benin, one cannot really speak of comprehensive and coherent policy planning and implementation by the state in the field of agricultural and rural development. One finds instead an active and continual process of negotiation between various categories of actors in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects of various kinds. Such negotiations take place at many levels: in ministry offices; the offices and laboratories of research; in extension and other specialised services attached to the Ministry of rural development; in the local offices of funding agencies; and in the villages. A few major issues channel the specific domains of activities concerned in these negotiations, which give an indication of the categories of actors involved and shed some light on the policies thus induced.

First, is the permanent need of the state to increase its earnings in order to keep its budget deficits within reasonable limits and to meet the salary claims of civil servants. This goes together with the state project to build a nation out of a heterogeneous and ethnically-diversified colonial territory, and to establish its authority over the whole country by expanding its bureaucracy while caring for regional balance in its interventions and the development of its institutional apparatus. The second major issue relates to the staff of the institutions involved in development intervention, their search for career development and material achievements, sometimes coupled with the desire to improve academic records or achieve scientific ambitions. Third are the funding agencies, and their ever-changing intervention policies, approaches and requirements. Finally, there are people's strategies at local level for appropriating and dealing with these various actors, or finding their ways through the stated and unstated agendas of the various categories of actors involved in development intervention.[1] If there ever was a state policy for agricultural and rural development (beyond general statements about the role of agriculture in the economic development of the country), it must be sought for, not in written documents, but in the fields and arenas of bargaining and confrontation of the broad categories[2] outlined above.

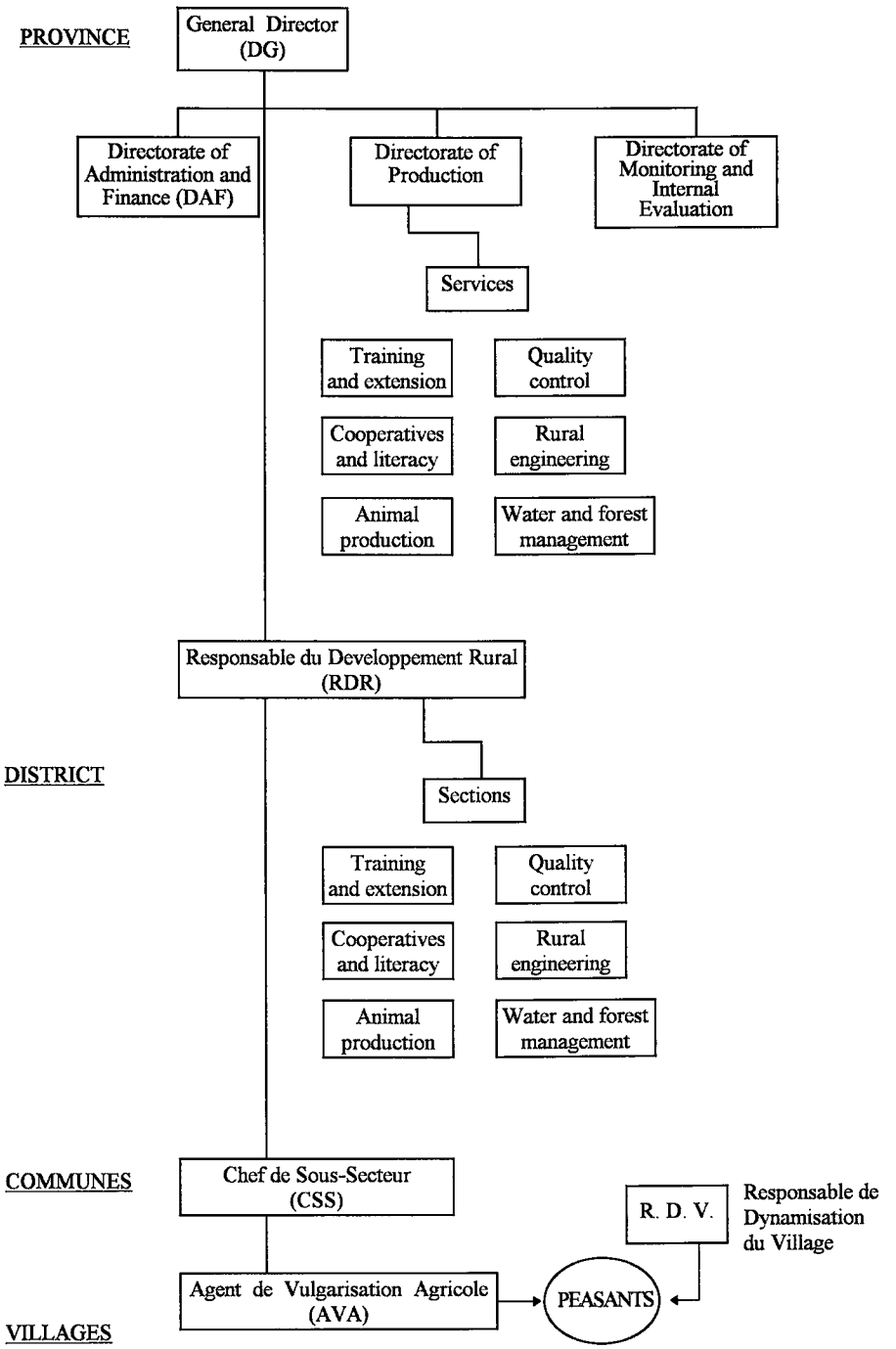
Nevertheless, as Arce points out, 'the process of agrarian development .. (or following my conceptualisation, social interactions in the field of rural development and their outcomes) ..is a social construction of actors who, by linking different interactional settings and social zones, make practical use of government rules and conventions' (Arce 1993: 12). These interactional processes among government

officials and between officials and rural producers, together with the power processes involved, generate what I will call a 'frame of action' that is given flesh and blood through a specific discourse or development language. By frame, I mean the organisational pattern together with the set of rules, procedures and social conventions by which actors operate, and which they reproduce and change. Frame here is therefore close to what Bourdieu calls dispositions, or the crystallisation of meaning (1980:73). As Arce rightly puts it, 'relationships of power, the use of particular scientific knowledge and state organisational traditions, set within an administrative context, constrain the range of alternative courses of action open to the state' (1993: 23).

In that sense, the Community Development Programme seemed to be at odds with the frame of intervention in the CARDER, though its language could find some ground within the development language used within the CARDER. As I indicated in chapter two, the activities of the RDV was seen as stepping over the domains of competence of the C/PACA, the RDR and the AVA. Also, it was hardly acceptable to the RDV, as a village agent, to carry the same title of *responsable* as the district officer (RDR) and not to have to report to the district officer but directly to the General Director of the CARDER at head office. But the very fact of the production of such a contradiction within the CARDER indicates that 'frame' here, and as I use it throughout the book, should not be considered as a rigid structure (a crystal, using Bourdieu's crystallisation metaphor), to which every actor and all actions have to fit. The continuous negotiations and struggles between C/PACAs, RDRs, AVAs and RDVs in the context of this programme, concerning roles, regulations and procedures shows that the frame I refer to is no more than the resource reference for negotiation and struggle, from which all the actors involved in this field draw arguments and weapons for the pursuit of their interests and projects. As the product of social interactions, the frame and the discourse of state intervention in rural development, with which those especially involved in the Community Development Programme had to negotiate, cannot be anything but the product of a historical development. Therefore, one cannot have a complete understanding of what could be read as policy planning and implementation in the field of rural development in Benin without looking at how the frame, the language and the actors of this game have historically emerged and developed a culture of rural development intervention. In this chapter I will deal with the historical emergence of the frame and the actors. The next chapter will delve further into details about the actual motivations of the actors.

The actual frame: the situation in 1990-1992

The CARDER is a parastatal created in 1975 under the regime of Kérékou[3] for each of the six provinces of Benin and is in charge of all operations related to agricultural and rural development. Its organisational structure is standard all over the country. Though this structure was changed regularly, one can broadly distinguish a head office with the General Director, assisted by Deputy Directors, responsible for agricultural production, monitoring and internal evaluation, finance and administration.


PROVINCE
General Director (DG)
Directorate of Administration and Finance (DAF)
Directorate of Production
Directorate of Monitoring and Internal Evaluation
Services
Training and extension
Quality control
Cooperatives and literacy
Rural engineering
Animal production
Water and forest management
Responsable du Developpement Rural (RDR)
DISTRICT
Sections
Training and extension
Quality control
Cooperatives and literacy
Rural engineering
Animal production
Water and forest management
COMMUNES
Chef de Sous-Secteur (CSS)
R. D. V.
Responsable de Dynamisation du Village
Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole (AVA)
PEASANTS
VILLAGES

Each Deputy Director has assistants in relevant (technical) domains. Most of the experts (the subject-matter specialists) in agricultural production and animal husbandry are concentrated under the directorate of production (training and extension, cooperatives and literacy, animal production, quality control, rural engineering, water and forest management, pest control, research and development). Every district has a supposedly decentralised unit of CARDER, headed by the RDR *(Responsable du Développement Rural)* and staffed with medium level trained subject-matter specialists of the same domains of expertise as those of the General Directorate (especially those under the Deputy Director of Production). At the village level, the whole structure rests on the AVA *(Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole)*, the village extensionist, for the implementation of the activities of the CARDER (see the organisational chart in Figure 1).

The official mandate covers all assistance to peasants for agricultural and rural development. But, when I started this research, the core of the ongoing activities of the staff of the Zou CARDER was the *Projet de Développement Rural Intégré du ZOU*, the Integrated Rural Development Project, which had begun in 1983. It came to an end 1991. It was coupled with a Research and Development project that was supposed to feed it with relevant technological packages. Apart from these main activities, there were casual injunctions from the Ministry, with which the staff managed to keep going one way or another, until the minister departed from office.[4] Also, since the CARDER's were the official state apparatus for rural development in the provinces and had (at least until the late eighties) the monopoly of rural development intervention in the provinces, most national or international agencies resorted to them for the implementation of various programmes related to agricultural or rural development (see Table 5). This constituted the third side of CARDER's actions in the villages.[5]

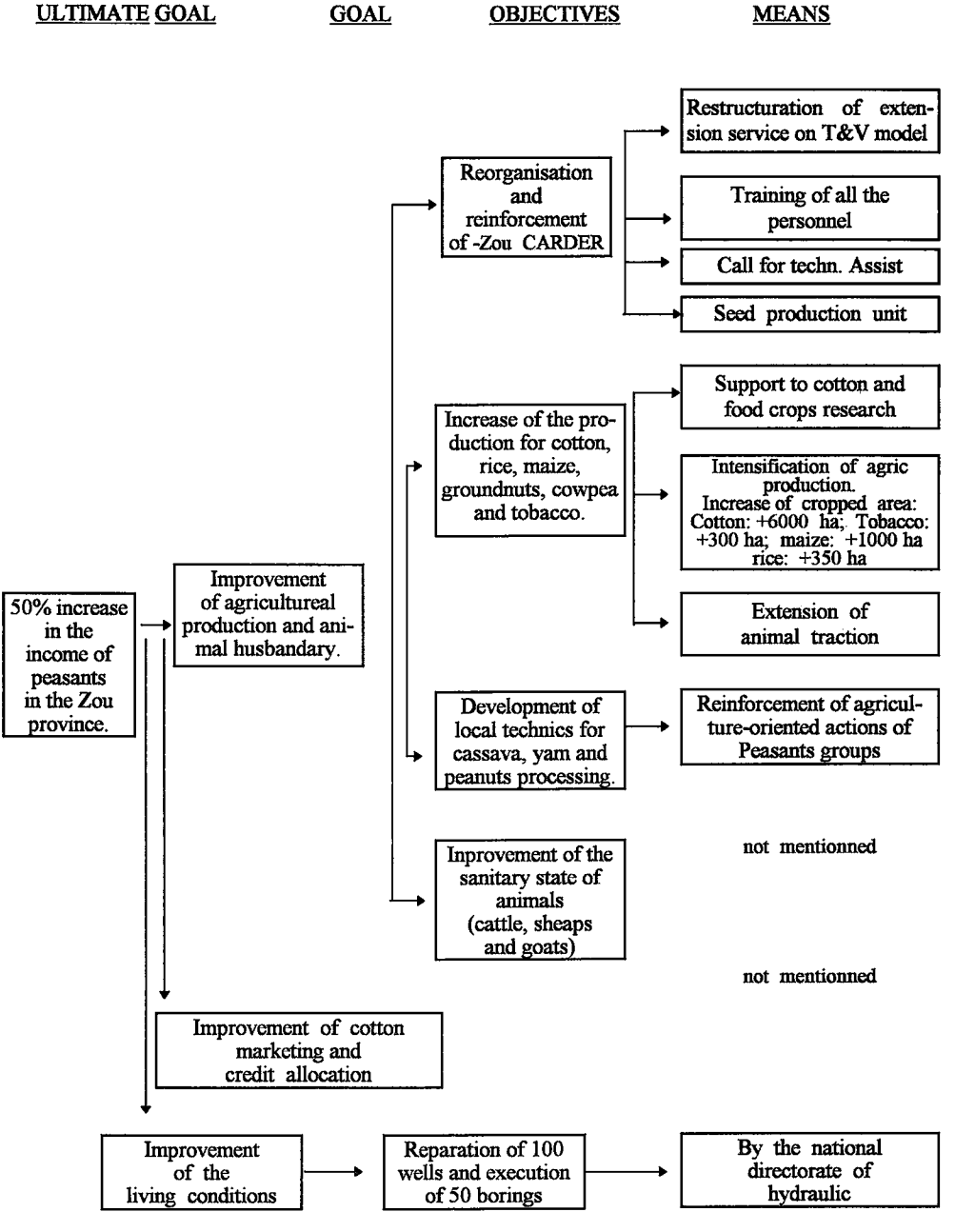
The ultimate goal of the Integrated Rural Development Project as stated in the project documents was to increase the income of peasants in the Zou Province by 50 percent. In view of achieving this ultimate goal, three main areas of intervention were identified where specific targets were set. First was the improvement of agricultural production and animal husbandry at peasant level. Second was the improvement of their access to credit and a reorganisation of the marketing of cotton, and last, the improvement of their living conditions. For each goal, specific objectives were identified and the necessary means for achieving these objectives were defined (see the project chart in Figure 2). The assessment studies conducted during the preparation phase of the project resulted in the classification of peasants into four categories, according to their level of application of existing technological packages (sowing density and techniques, use of fertilizers and insecticides, use of animal traction etc.). These categories were called the four *niveaux d'intensification* (levels of intensification). One primary objective of the project as stated in project documents was to bring farmers from level 1 to level 4 in the field of crops and animal production. This covered the domains of agricultural production (cotton, rice, maize, groundnuts, cowpea and tobacco), local processing techniques for cassava, yams and peanuts, rural infrastructures such as roads *(pistes rurales)*, bridges *(ponceaux)*, drinking water etc.) and production, especially the health of cattle, sheep and goats (see project chart).

Table 6 The main projects implemented by the Zou CARDER around 1990

PROJECTS	Objectives	Projected duration	Starting year	Official ending date	Budget	Fundings
Integrated rural development of the Zou province	Increase rural producers' income and state currency earning	5 years	Sept 1983	Sept 1992	18 billions FCFA	- World Bank - FAC - CCCE/CFD - Benin Government
Research & Development	Targeted agric technology development	5 years	1986	mid-1990	FAC-CCCE/CFD project	- FAC - CCCE/CFD - Benin Government
Crop protection	Reduce pre and post-harvest losses	10 years	1986	1996	GTZ nation wide project	- BMZ (German Government) - Benin Government
Inventory and management of low-lands	Increase local rice production and reduce rice imports	7 years	1988	continues	UNDP/FAO nation wide project	- UNDP - Benin Government
Cassava project	• Improve cassava production • Bio control	Not fixed	1989	continues	Recycling of Japonese fertilizer donations	- Japonese Government - IITA - Benin Government
Soja production	Improve nutritional value of food diet	5 years	1989	continues	8 millions fcfa per year for all Benin	- UNICEF - CATWEL
Sassakawa Global 2000	Increase maize production	5 years	1989	continues	3,976 billions fcfa for all Benin	Japonese Sassakawa Foundation, Monitored by Jimmy Carter Foundation
Pilot project for experimentation on tobacco	Restore tobacco production	yearly based contract	1991	continues	2,8 millions fcfa per year	ROTHMANS
Agro-meteorological experimentation	Make agro-meteo data accessible to peasants	not fixed	1991	continues	UNDP nation wide project	UNDP

Source: A compilation from various CARDER reports

Figure 2 Planned objectives and means of the Rural Development Project of the Zou Province (1983-1991)



Source : Project file (World Bank)

The approach used was the Training and Visit extension system, basing all the actions on peasant groups *(Unités de Suivi)* or cooperatives, with a functional link to the Niaouli research station located some sixty miles south of the head office of the CARDER. Some programmes of the research station were also funded by one of the funding agencies of the CARDER project. The total budget for the project amounted to FCFA 18 billions, with credit from the World-Bank/International Development Agency (WB/IDA), the French government/*Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique, Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération'* (CCCE,FAC), the actual CFD *(Caisse Française de Développement)* and allocations from the Benin government.

In the actual implementation of the project, only cotton and all its related activities (the distribution of inputs, quality control and marketing, rural roads to ensure easy access to the villages for input disposal and transportation,[6] literacy programme for local leaders) benefitted from the close attention of staff. The other crops (especially food crops) were expected to benefit from the by-products of the techniques learned and used for cotton production (sowing in rows, applying fertilizers and insecticides etc.).[7]

Furthermore, during the nine or ten years of the project, there have been five different Ministers of Rural Development, each with his ideas and orientations on the implementation of the project, but mostly with suggestions for the restructuring of the organisational chart of the CARDER (which goes beyond the single Zou-CARDER). This has been changed at least three times. But the most disturbing changes for the project are the changes of head staff and district officers. There have been four different General Directors and five different Deputy Directors of production, most followed by staff changes at district level. New projects or approaches were started and presented as complementary to the main one. A major one from the French donor was the Research and Development project that advocated the differential assessment of farming situations (according to agro-ecological zones, socio-economic status of farm enterprise etc) so that adequate technologies could be devised and forwarded to each category of peasant.

In fact, the context of this Rural Development project of the Zou Province at the time of my research provides some insight into what is conventionally called state policy in planning and implementing rural development. The major aspects of these policies can be outlined as follows:

- They had to be placed in a project context, focus only on agriculture, with special working facilities and dual decision making structure (state and funding agencies and their representatives) before activities considered by the staff as significant were undertaken, and then conducted thoroughly and continuously over a significant time frame. They must not suffer major interruptions or re-routing of means from their targets at the whim or inspiration of incoming Ministers or General Directors.
- Nevertheless, the staff had to be flexible enough to accommodate to new activities within the project: casual ones either initiated by a new Minister, or ones introduced by some other state or non-state institution via the Ministry.
- They had to yield 'concrete and measurable results' and generate immediate cash for both the state budget and the staff, to improve the income of the former

and reduce the budget deficit for the latter. Therefore, the main target crops were to be export crops.
- Actions had to be directed toward cooperative types of peasant groups.

These basic dimensions of state intervention in rural areas were progressively established at the beginning of the colonial period. They were, to some extent, the legacy from the colonial administration to the independent state.

The emergence of the frame and the actors

The historical processes that led to the emergence and reproduction of the frame, the actors and the language in the field of rural development intervention in Benin were (and still are) complex and composite processes that do not lend themselves to linear description. Nevertheless, for the sake of the presentation and discussion, I will first consider the emergence of the frame and the social actors. Later, in Chapter 5, I will elaborate on the actors, their motivations and the making of the development discourse and culture. Concerning the frame, I will examine the formation of the CARDER's and of the state bureaucracy for rural development. As for discourse and culture, I will focus on two main elements that appear almost as unavoidable cornerstones in development intervention in Benin during the colonial period and since, that is, 'peasant organisation' and 'participation'. According to Dissou (1970), state intervention in agricultural development went through major changes over four different periods: the period of hesitation from 1906-1916; the period of the preparation and implementation of a policy for the development of export crops from 1917-1931; the period without much change from 1931-1952, and the development of peasant cooperatives from 1952-1960, which coincided more or less with the definition of the *Régions Agricoles*, which was later to be called CARDER (1975). I will now examine these periods and discuss in which ways they contributed to the emergence of the frame and the actors of intervention in agriculture in Benin.

From 1906 to 1916: the establishment of the agricultural and forestry service

The *Service de l'Agriculture et des Forêts de la colonie du Dahomey* was first established after an order from the French Minister of the colonies, on the 6th of December 1905. The main concerns of the service as prescribed by the ministerial order and reported by Dissou (1970: 26-27) can briefly be summarised as follows:
- to forward relevant information to settlers and native cultivators on matters related to agriculture and forestry,
- to conduct research on possible improvements in existing farming patterns by organising experimentation when needed,
- to search for the markets and ensure the quality of the agricultural products exported to Europe,
- to stimulate tree plantation and deal with all questions related to the development, conservation and exploitation of forests, including problems relating to forest land and ownership,

- to take part in the organisation and functioning of the *Sociétés indigènes de prévoyance* for mutual savings and credit allocation, and to control the quality and quantity of food and seed storage of these societies,
- to provide agricultural training.

Based on this ministerial order, the agricultural policy of the government in charge of the colonies was three-fold:

- to provide 'European settlers and native cultivators' with an efficient instrument for an increase in agricultural production in the colonies,
- to ensure the *mise en valeur* of uncultivated lands, by giving land concessions to farmers acquainted with improved cropping patterns,
- to organise satisfactory conditions for the marketing of agricultural products to Europe (Dissou 1970: 29).

In the Colony of Dahomey, the official agricultural development intervention programme derived from this policy is to be found in the official correspondence of the 31st July 1908 of Lieutenant-Gouverneur a.i. Gaudart addressed to the staff of the agricultural service. The ultimate goal of the programme was the 'improvement of agricultural production in order to meet the food needs of the natives and to provide France with the tropical agricultural products needed by its industry'. The note indicated the major steps to be followed for the implementation of the programme and set a few specific targets.

Concerning the steps for implementation, they included assessment studies followed by the extension of cropping techniques, together with the installation of trial fields that would be located near paths (so as to attract the attention of passing natives).

As for the specific targets of the programme, they concerned:

- In the short run the development of export crops (cotton and maize), food crops (millet, cassava, yam), and special attention to the palm groves and to the processing of palm products,
- In the medium term the starting of agronomic research on other crops that might be interesting for Europe,
- The improvement of animal husbandry for milk and meat production and for animal traction, with more rational feeds, improved breeds.

A local corps of indigenous (native) staff in the service was created in August 1913 in order to give official status to the indigenous assistants/interpreters for the French agricultural staff, while a professional agricultural school was started in June 1914, which marked the birth of the local agricultural bureaucracy.

Therefore, in Dahomey, as probably in most former French colonies in West Africa, the period from 1906-1916 corresponded to the period when the basic concepts and instruments used to date by the state, the staff, the producers and other actors involved in the 'field of rural development' were established. The official note of the 31st of July 1908 carried the two components of what would later constitute (and still remains) the core of policy in agricultural and rural development in Benin: agricultural production for food self-sufficiency, exportation and industrial development; and the ministerial order of the 6th of December 1905 that set in motion, or at least officially marked, state involvement in the field, and laid down the major domains in which the service would operate. It established the basic

structure of state instruments for intervening in rural areas, that are still somehow being reproduced. These domains were: agricultural information (now called *vulgarisation agricole* or training and extension), experimentation (agricultural research), land reclamation and irrigation (rural engineering), protection of waters and forests (now called natural resource management), packaging and quality control of exported agricultural products, peasant organisation, savings and credit, and agricultural staff training. The option prescribed then was a simultaneous development of crops and livestock for the interest of both the native peasants and the metropolis. But, as shown in the presentation below, export crops became of central interest for the agricultural service and the colonial administrative staff.

From 1917 to 1931: The agricultural service and the development of export crops

The period from 1917-1931 was a period during which a policy for the development of export crops was carefully elaborated and implemented. Apart from palm oil, already considered a basic export crop, six other crops were selected (coconuts, maize, cacao, coffee, cotton and tobacco) where attention would be given to efficiency (Dissou 1970: 34-35). Stimulating conditions were set for the development of these crops: easy access to land and credit for settlers, technical assistance which included the opening of various research stations on maize, coffee, cacao, oil palm, coconut and cotton.[8] The geographical regions that were suited best for each crop were delimited and four agricultural regions or circumscriptions were created, each specialised in certain crops.[9] It became clear that all the services delivered for agricultural development were primarily intended for an improvement of export crop production, including maize which then ranked high in the exports of the Colony. Maize cultivation was the object of much attention during the first years of the colonial period as it was greatly in demand in France, the United Kingdom and Germany for use in the army and industries. According to the journal *African Mail* of the 13th November 1908, 'the increase in the maize exports from that French colony (Dahomey) is really remarkable over the past four years: In 1904, 207 tons, in 1905, 2.059 tons, in 1906, 7.282 tons and in 1907, 7.839 tons' (quoted by the *Journal Officiel du Dahomey* of 1st February 1909 reporting on the December 19th, 1908 meeting of the Chamber of Commerce). Efforts were especially oriented towards storage techniques. But all these fell short because in 1916 and 1917, after long discussions, it was concluded that the quality of the maize was too poor to be improved (it was too readily infested by weevils and there were many other agricultural products with which the Dahomean colony could accomplish its duty to contribute to the parent state (see exchange of mail between the *Service de l'utilisation des produits coloniaux pour la défense nationale du Ministère des Colonies* and the *Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* about the maize of Dahomey from 1914 to 1917.)

The research stations, the extension services, the service for packaging and quality control, were operated more on signals from external markets, and controlled in some way by formal state channels. It should be mentioned that the strategy to develop export crops did not contradict the clearly stated colonial policy of *mise en valeur*. The literature is abundant on the social, political and economic motives of the

colonial adventure, beyond the *mission civilisatrice* rhetoric. However, I am not interested here in these aspects of agricultural policy development. What I am trying to establish are how the processes by which the colonial instruments, used to achieve the colonial project in the first years of this century, ended up by being appropriated by the local elites and used as the armature, the frame of state intervention in agricultural development in the last years of the century.

Problems arose with the first organisational set up for agricultural development because the agricultural areas or circumscriptions did not coincide with administrative ones (*Cercles*). There were six administrative *cercles* as against four for agriculture. Therefore, the heads of the agricultural regions did not have report to any *Commandant de cercle*, but only to the head of the *Service de l'Agriculture* in Porto-Novo, the capital of the colony. This caused the former to complain of not being informed of what was going on and not being able to control this category of staff. This situation gave rise to conflicts between these two categories of colonial officials (agricultural technocrats and administrators) at all hierarchical levels, which was at the root of the major changes introduced in the colonial apparatus, and marked the next period of intervention in agriculture.

From 1931 to 1952: the period of active intervention by the state in rural development and the bureaucratisation of agricultural staff

In 1941, the colonial administrator Lieutenant-Governor Truitard criticised the agricultural service for being technocratic and more interested in pure scientific achievements than in a practical programme of extension services for agricultural products, for farming techniques and 'taming' the natives for better cropping patterns in view of improving yields.

This argumentation took place during the period 1931-1952 which Dissou (1970: 47-49) considered as one without much change. In fact, it appeared from the previous period that very few European settlers had bothered to start farms in Dahomey, despite the fact that access to land and credit had been made easy for them by colonial regulations. Trading companies and the colonial administration would therefore have to count on small-scale peasant production to increase agricultural exports. This implied that peasants in any given area might need the services of different specialists because of the diversified nature of their farming systems. Truitard therefore suggested that instead of having one specialist (for just one or two crops) in every region, generalist agricultural technicians should be appointed in every administrative district, with the obligation to report to the local administration.

In a report sent to the High Commission in Dakar about the reorganisation of the agricultural service in Dahomey, following two joint meetings of administrators and agricultural staff held on the 24th February and 15th September 1941,[10] he wrote: 'Each cercle should have a European Agricultural Officer who is not only specialised in cotton, coffee or palms but is also a technician *placed at the disposal of the commandant of the circle who would give the necessary instructions for the execution of a general agricultural service.*' (my translation and emphasis)[11]

In my view, and contrary to the opinion of Dissou, this period was a determining one that posed for the first time in Dahomey the problematic issue of the role of the state in agricultural production and the subsequent issue of its relations with the peasants, the staff, the intervention organisations and with other actors involved in the agricultural sector.

According to Truitard, who was then the highest colonial authority in Dahomey, agricultural development should be administered through instructions from the administrators of each of the administrative regions. Instead of sticking to the regulations and legislations that facilitated agricultural production as laid down during the previous periods, the state should become the active deviser and implementer of agricultural development programmes. During the previous periods, regulations that attempted to attract European settlers into agricultural production did not yield much interest from white settlers, and there is not much evidence as to the reasons for such results. One might question whether there was no other alternative to this lack of interest from potential settlers than the direct intervention of the state in native agriculture via its administrative structure, and thus the creation of a state bureaucracy in this field.[12] If an improvement in the efficiency of the agricultural service was its main concern, the option suggested by Truitard's project also seemed to tackle the problem of the conflict of power and authority between the agricultural service and the administrative apparatus. Since then, a field of control and power negotiation was acquired (in some sense accidentally) by the central state which, even 35 years after Independence, it is not yet ready to give away. To a large extent, nowadays, the administration of agricultural matters by the state is no longer in the hands of the territorial administrators (who are now placed under the Ministry of Security and Internal Affairs). Agricultural administration is now the business of bureaucrats under the Ministry of Rural Development and constitutes the prerogative and part of the *raison d'être* of the Ministry.[13] From this perspective, one may doubt whether the policy statement of May 1991 of the new government on the withdrawal of the state from certain fields of rural development has much chance of being implemented.[14]

Another aspect of Truidard's project was the creation of the attitude of 'functionary' (officials) for the staff of agricultural services, and the creation of a permanent agricultural bureaucracy at national, provincial and district levels which here I designate the bureaucratisation of the agricultural services. They are considered *glegan* (head/specialists of farm affairs), people 'sent by the head of state or by the Government'[15] for agricultural matters in the village. This, I assume, must have played an important part in the building of the mental dispositions[16] of the field staff and the peasants that support the top-down approach that governs development intervention, be it by state or non-state organisations. Most probably, during the colonial period prior to Truitard's project, peasants already considered the staff of the agricultural service as messengers of the 'whites' (i.e. the power) and would have continued to do so whether Truitard's project had existed or not, though peasants most often identify field staff with the institutions for which the staff work: SATEC, CFDT, CAITA, CARDER etc. Nonetheless, the project seemed to have legitimised top-down state intervention to both peasants and staff (especially to the latter), and to have set the basis for a culture of state intervention in rural develop-

ment in Dahomey/Benin.[17] A very good indication of the fact that for most intellectuals in Dahomey/Benin, state intervention in rural development is taken for granted is that Dissou considers the period during which this fundamental step was made, as a period of non-events, one without much change (Dissou 1970: 47-49).[18]

Truitard's project for the regionalisation of agricultural services argued against the practice of the moment, which consisted in specialisation for each geographical area, and special organisations to deliver a specific service. He asserted that peasants did not just grow maize, or cotton, or coffee etc, but managed complex farming patterns, and should therefore be assisted by generalist technicians. However, from the changes later introduced in the organisation of the Service, it appeared that organisations or institutes structured vertically around one, or a very limited number of specific crops persisted. This was the case of SONADER for oil palm SATEC, CFDT, IRCF for cotton, CAITA for tobacco, most of which were private enterprises or parastatals. Even within more recent so-called Integrated Rural Development Projects implemented by state organisations (such as the one in the Zou Province from 1983-1991), attention is often given to one or two export crops. As for the so-called 'generalist service', it turned out to be 'a service with insufficient staff confined within the limits of administrative territories, having no clear activities and hardly any means to achieve any, and finally subjected to heavy bureaucratic rules' (Dissou 1970: 73). The service seemed to have operated as a reservoir of manpower from which staff were recruited when specific operations tuned to specific crops or a limited range of activities were started within other organisations, which remains largely the case today. For example, to be moved to the head office of the Ministry or an intervention organisation (i.e. out of the scope of a specific project) is like being assigned punishment or being 'garaged', while waiting for the first opportunity to be moved to a project. No project, no work.

From 1952 to the sixties: The state opened up to private cooperatives

This period is characterised by a sharp increase in the number of cooperative organisations. But the development of these so-called cooperative-type 'movements' started as early as 1919 in Dahomey, with the creation of the SIP *(Société Indigène de Prévoyance)* by the state (see Daane and Mongbo 1991). Peasants were obliged to be members of the SIP, and the membership fees were simply added onto the head tax. The SIP was under the control of the local representative of the colonial administration. The official objectives of the SIP were:

- to constitute a seed stock to be distributed to members in due time
- to buy agricultural implements that members could borrow or have free
- to help members in case of illness or accidents
- to protect members against the consequences of drought, flood and other natural disasters (Agoua 1984: 14, quoted by Daane and Mongbo 1991).

Later, and within the SIP, peasants were requested to join and cultivate 'public farms' in every village and sub-district, the products of which would provide funds for actions of public interest.[19] In 1946, because of controversies over the term *Indigène* from the growing number of African intellectuals, the SIP became SAP or SP *(Société Africaine de Prévoyance* or simply *Société de Prévoyance)*. Also, the period

starting from 1952 must also be put in its wider context. It was the post World War II period in Europe and one of reconstruction under the Marshall Plan, with a large contribution from the United States of America. This gave political groups from these countries the room to engage in discussions about colonial regimes and the values of liberty, human rights, etc., arguing for the independence of the colonies. It was also the period when the elites of the colonies were voicing a wish to claim their rights to be part of the political affairs of their countries. These political discourses and struggles were activated and/or stimulated by the Bandoung Conference of 1955. The various reformative decisions taken by the colonial administration during that period on the involvement of private cooperatives in agriculture cannot be fully understood outside of this context.

In Dahomey, whether because of this international context, or aside from it, measures were taken by the colonial administration that stimulated the development of private cooperatives. The 'Ramadier law of 1947 on French cooperatives' was promulgated from 1955 in the colonies. It was decided to give more autonomy to the *Service d'Assistance Technique aux Cooperatives* that was created in 1955 and to the FASC *(Fonds d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Coopératives)* created in 1938. Also, agricultural credit facilities created in 1931 *(Caisse Centrale de Crédit Agricole du Dahomey)* were reinforced, with support from some French funding institutions such as the CCCE *(Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique)*. This environment favoured the emergence of many private cooperatives in the agricultural sector around 1958-59 (Yèbè *et al.* 1986: 38). In the Zou Province, unions of mutuals emerged around 1955 as SOPA *(Société de Production Agricole d'Abomey)*, UMAS *(Union des Mutuelles Agricoles de Savè)*, UMAD *(Union des Mutuelles Agricoles de Dassa)*, UCODA *(Union des Coopératives Dahoméennes)* etc.[20]

While there seemed to be an opening of possibilities by the state for the creation of cooperatives in agriculture, the SAP *(Société Africaine de Prévoyance)* remained locked into the state bureaucratic apparatus. Indeed, the name and the structure of this organisation changed from 1953 to 1956 and 1957. It was called successively *Société Mutuelle de Prévoyance Rurale (SMPR), Société Mutuelle de Développement Rural (SMDR) and Service de Modernisation Agricole* (SMA). From a peasants' risk-preventing cooperative, the organisation seemed to have been moved to become a public (state) service for agricultural modernisation and 'rural development' in general, stepping then toward options that were apparently under the competencies of the state *Service de l'Agriculture*, probably in line with the restructuration forwarded by Truitard's project. From 1959 to date, the SMAs were turned into SDR *(Secteur de Développement Rural)*, the district extension agency. The supposedly peasant organisation was then turned into an administrative service definitely placed under the general administration of the state.

Conclusion

The final step in this state takeover of what was declared to be a peasant organisation coincided with the establishing of the Republic of Dahomey (4th December 1958) and the proclamation of Independence on 1st August 1960. By then, the frame

(i.e. the major elements of what could later be called the state policy on agricultural/rural development intervention) was in place and the new Government was not apparently interested in starting fundamental debates on agricultural and rural development issues. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, and according to one analysis, 'Dahomey leaders were not motivated by ideology (as was Kwame Nkrumah) nor could they be pragmatically independent (as could Houphouet-Boigny), and they were as ambivalent about their economic future in independence as they were enthusiastic about its political aspect. The goal of the Dahomean elite was independence, the establishment of a sovereign state, because it is the modern framework for recognition of a free people; but they were also afraid of 'going it alone'. In the pre-independence period, the Dahomean elite were under the aegis of French culture; few of them could have been suspected of wishing to abandon it' (Ronen 1975: 157). The main components of the intervention frame inherited from the colonial administration were as follows:

1 The involvement of the state in the administration of agricultural development was already taken for granted, while the state's important budget deficit inclined it to place emphasis on and give priority to export crops. From the SMDR to the SMA *(Société Mutuelle de Développement Rural, Service de Modernisation Agricole)*, and with the interchangeable designation of *Circonscription Agricole and Secteur de Développement Rural*, rural development seemed to have been made equivalent to agricultural development/modernisation.
2 Basing actions in the field of agricultural development on so-called peasant organisations was becoming habit. As mentioned by Dissou (1970: 64), agricultural policy on the eve of Independence leaned essentially on cooperatives. That is how the Dodja cooperative (the first to have been established by the independent state) and the *Cooperatives d'Aménagement Rural Obligatoires*[21] were established.
3 The structures of the *Service de l'Agriculture* were established according to the organisational structure of internal administration (Provinces and Districts). There were the *Régions Agricoles* with the *Chef de région* at the province level, the *Circonscriptions Agricoles* or *Secteurs de Développement Rural* with the *Chargé Agricole* or *Chef Secteur* at District level. Together with the structure, a local agricultural bureaucracy was created, which would naturally struggle to survive as a distinctive branch of state bureaucracy after Independence, hence ensuring its own reproduction and that of the structure. But in the early sixties, the service was too poorly staffed to give meaningful technical assistance to a significant number of peasants in villages.
4 Therefore, operating in parallel to the *Service de l'Agriculture* were the SONADER *(Société Nationale pour le Développement Rural)* in charge of palm production and the management of the *Cooperatives d'Aménagement Rural*, the CFDT specialised in cotton production and marketing, and CAITA providing the same kind of services for tobacco. In the Zou Province, the *Région Agricole-Centre* for example, UMAD and UMAS were structured in such a way that they had collectors in charge of marketing groundnuts and of allocating credits to peasant groundnut growers in the villages.

Starting from 1963, contracts for conducting specific rural development operations in given provinces were signed with private companies: SATEC and CFDT in the Zou province, CFDT in the Borgou and BDPA in the Atacora province, while the national company, SONADER, was in charge of palm production development in Southern Dahomey. Not all the staff of the agricultural service were involved in those projects. Those involved enjoyed better working conditions and salaries than others in the province or district agricultural offices confined to bureaucratic routines (mainly agricultural statistics), hence the attitude of 'no project no work' which I noticed when I started this research.

The CARDER *(Centre d'Action Régional pour le Développement Rural)* created in 1975 was very close to the *Région Agricole*. The main difference between it and the *Région Agricole* was that from its creation at the end of the eighties, and contrary to the *Région Agricole*, the CARDER was given monopoly over any operation aimed at agricultural and rural development in the province, and did not share its sphere of rural development intervention with any other private organisation or companies of the type of CFDT, SATEC, CAITA etc. Also, there were clear statements of expanding activities beyond the single sector to all relevant domains of rural development. But the CARDER's have inherited most of the staff of these organisations and companies, together with their routines, bureaucratic procedures and the mental dispositions of the staff as well as the rural producers with whom they interacted. This situation, together with the further locking of the CARDER into the state administrative apparatus, completed the prolongation[22] and adaptation of the frame of state intervention in the field of rural development that begun in the colonial period.

Notes

1 All these phenomena are by no means special to the Benin State. Similar phenomena of development policy planning and implementation have been identified in various parts of the world and documented by different authors. See, for example, Grindle 1980; Long and van der Ploeg 1989; Arce 1993.

2 I have already mentioned in earlier chapters that these categorisations are no more than indicative since the actual interplay between the actors in the field makes it far more complicated and difficult to draw clear-cut social boundaries.

3 Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the idea of such a centralising approach to rural development existed before the advent of the revolutionary Government in October 1972. The first version of the CARDERs was tried out as a pilot project in the Mono Province in 1968.

4 For example, by mid-1990, the hot issue was the installation of the *Chambre d'Agriculture* (the Chamber of Agriculture). In the Zou Province, the issue was handled by the General Director himself. It concerned peasant organisation, which was a permanent feature of state intervention. It was an order from the new Minister (with the transitory government that was established in February 1990 after the National Conference). The *Chambre d'Agriculture* was expected (according to the Ministry's plan) to be one of these platforms through which peasants would express their wishes, would influence the decisions of the state and intervention institutions in matters of agricultural and rural development, and therefore would act as a countervailing power to the state. The device was expected to support the IMF-WB restructuration project of the CARDERs whereby peasant organisations (GVs) would take over some of the

CARDERs activities such as the disposal of inputs and the marketing of cotton. By this period, the mid-1990s, the establishment of the *Chambre d'Agriculture* was a national, hot issue for the new Minister, and it was understandable that the General Director took care of it himself. With the previous Minister, the dominating issue had been the Community Development Programme while the one before him advocated the 'Pilote Village' project in the Mono Province.

5 One such issue in 1990 was the spreading of improved cassava varieties in the province. It was a national (even sub-regional) programme launched by the IITA (International Institute for Tropical Agriculture) in collaboration with the Niaouli research station. The cassava programme of the IITA included the selection of high-yielding and pest-resistant varieties, biological pest control etc. It covered all the West and Central African countries. In Benin, the CARDERs were resorted to as channels through which peasants could be reached.

6 Concerning the rural roads construction rubric of the project, not all villages could be covered. Selection was made on the basis of a few criteria, one of which was what staff called *Village gros producteur* (of cotton).

7 In 1983 and 1984, when I was conducting field research for my engineer's degree, I spent seven to eight months in the province. I was then offered quite incidentally the chance to get a glimpse of the implementation of the project as it started. I had a few discussions now and then with staff and I was given the opportunity to join teams from various specialisations (training and extension, rural engineering) on field visits. I also got the opportunity of free discussions with the staff in a few villages, at sub-district and district levels, and at the head office. I was not interested in the project per se. Nevertheless, for the glimpse I got, I can now acknowledge that at the beginning, at least for the staff present on the project at that time, cotton was not the only important focus. I was on field trips with a team from the rural engineering department for the identification of villages where drinking water could be installed. The team never once asked about the cotton production capacity of the villages. Also, the seed production farm of the CARDER was very active in the production of maize, groundnut and cowpea seeds, which had nothing to do with cotton. But that was at the beginning of the project. It remains to be seen how cotton turned out to become the central focus. It should be mentioned that it is the only crop that allows agents to get special remuneration according to the total amount marketed.

8 The first research station established seemed to have been the Niaouli station in 1905, primarily for research on maize, later on coffee and cacao. Research on cotton started in the South (Abomey) and also Savalou in 1920 with the IRCT. The oil palm station of Pobè (IRHO) was created in 1922, while a coconut research station was established in Cotonou in 1949.

9 Maize and palm for the first agricultural circumscription located in the south-east (Porto-Novo), coffee, cacao, coconut and palm for the second, including the middle-south and the south-west (Allada, Ouidah, Cotonou and Mono province itself), cotton for the third, situated in the Zou province, and tobacco for the last, comprising the two northern provinces of Borgou and Atacora.

10 From the archives of the *Service de l'Agriculture*, as reported by Dissou (1970:48).

11 'Il faut que dans chaque cercle soit affecté un fonctionnaire européen de l'agriculture qui ne soit pas uniquement le spécialiste du coton, du café ou des oléagineux, mais bien le technicien *placé à la disposition du commandant de cercle qui pourra lui donner les instructions nécessaires pour l'exécution du service général agricole'* (my emphasis).

12 It is noticeable that this type of development – the state becoming directly involved in the administration of the sector – did not occur in other fields such as trade, handicraft, small industries etc. Yet in the field of agricultural development, the possibility for private entrepreneurship in agricultural extension was not considered.

13 Nevertheless, during the regime of Kérékou, the District extension officer (the RDR. *Responsable du Développement Rural*) was the second Deputy-President of the CRAD *(Comité Révolutionnaire d'Administration du District)*, the administrative board of the District. At provincial level, the General Director of the CARDER held a similar position in the CEAP *(Comité d'Etat d'Administration de la Province)*. Both officials held therefore important positions in the local administration which most of them enjoyed at least occasionally and were to some extent under the authority of the local state administrator.

14 See the letter of policy declaration by the Benin Minister of Rural Development on May 1991 in Washington where three main domains were identified: One reserved exclusively for state intervention (policy orientation, monitoring and evaluation), one domain that is not exclusively reserved for the state (extension, training, peasant organisations) and finally a field from which the state should withdraw, namely that concerning the marketing of agricultural inputs or outputs.

15 In Fon (the most spoken local language) '*To' xosu, Togan, Acekpikpa*'. In the Yoruba and Nagot language, '*Ijoba ilu*'.

16 'Dispositions' is used here in the same way as Bourdieu, indicating the structuration of meaning (through social and economic processes) which structures human social behaviour and actions (Bourdieu 1980: 73, 84)

17 It should be mentioned that this state involvement in agriculture was to come any way, through Truitard or some other initiator. It corresponded to the trend of the moment. See the evolution in the ideology of agricultural development in the Third World in the fifties and sixties.

18 Dissou has played a significant role in state intervention in agriculture. Among other appointments, he was the head of SONADER (Société Nationale pour le Développement Rural), the Head of the Department of Economy and Rural Sociology and the Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of the National University of Dahomey. He retired in 1991 and is the President of UFP *Union des Forces Progressistes*, the political party that was created in 1990 on the ashes of the former state party, the PRPB *(Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin)*.

19 As one might expect, the results of the implementation of this policy were far from the objectives thus stated. The whole set up became a power instrument at the disposal of local chiefs and administrators, while peasants experienced these structures as a further taxation (the SIP membership fees) and a further forced labour contribution exerted by the colonial power and later by the post-colonial state (see Daane and Mongbo 1991).

20 Note that these cooperatives did not necessarily provide peasants with better farming and marketing conditions for their products. Instead, some of them turned into groups of violence threatening and robbing peasants (see Daane and Mongbo, 1991 for the case of UMAD), while most of them ran into big management problems, which was the case of UCODA. This cooperative was created in 1951 and specialised in the marketing of palm products but did not live long, despite the fact that it seemed to have become quickly popular with palm producers and within one year, had acquired a significant share in the marketing of palm products in the colony. From 1952 to 1953 the number of member cooperatives rose from 13 to 18 which corresponded to an increase in individual membership of 6625 to 8915. In 1952, UCODA marketed 5318 metric tonnes of palm products of the value of FCFA 97,720,000 which made up 30.7 percent of the total palm product marketed in the colony. Despite this, UCODA was reported to have registered an enormous deficit due to 'bad management conducted by a Director who was not that honest and who misused the funds of UCODA, which led to the declaration of bankruptcy of the cooperative union by the Territorial Assembly' (see Dissou 1970 :56).

21 These specific types of cooperatives were established in areas identified as being suitable for palm oil production, and where the government had decided to plant large palm groves, because 'the population was lacking in taking initiatives' (Dissou 1970). For the installation and management of these palm groves, and in order to avoid being charged for the land and manpower, the government decided to oblige all those owning land in these areas to become members of a cooperative for the production of palm oil (see Dissou 1970, Mondjanagni 1977)

22 From 1972-1989, the revolutionary regime made every RDR automatically second Deputy to the Head of the District in the local administrative committee, and gave the General Director of CARDER a similar position at province level.

5 The actors and the making of development language and culture in a context of state intervention

Introduction

As described in the previous chapter, one can identify four main categories of institutions or actors operating in the field of rural development in Benin: the state, the staff of intervention agencies, the funding agencies, and the rural producers. However, as I mentioned earlier, such a categorisation is not so useful. For example, confining the analysis solely to these categories and ignoring those related to the market would be perilous. Also, any attempt to differentiate one category from the other, even for the sake of general analysis, is soon revealed as rather arbitrary when we examine these actors in action. In their daily production of the discourse and practice of rural development, the actors do not lend themselves to any pre-packaged linear model whereby the state elaborates the policy, and the staff of the intervention agencies implement it among rural producers, with the financial and technical assistance of funding agencies. Nor should we conceptualize these actors from a neo-liberal or neo-marxist functionalist perspective that views the state as a social body distinct from what is called 'civil society'.

This present chapter then introduces the reader to the motivations of two categories of actors involved in the field of rural development: the staff of the intervening agencies, and the experts and representatives of funding agencies, though the latter category is treated rather superficially for lack of empirical data. I explore, especially for the first category, the background of their unthematised assumptions, their implicit expectations and individual know-how, showing how the background resources on which they draw for action, indeed their lifeworlds (see Benhabib 1986: 239), are built during the course of their life trajectories. But because of the difficulties in considering state staff as actors in their own right within the framework of the state, there is first the need to give some clarification, very briefly, on the notion of 'state', as used here in this book. This, at the same time, sheds light on the interlacing nature of both social categories. The discussion is followed by an illustration from the case of the burial of the Community Development Programme in the Atlantic Province, the best research case I recorded on the making (or ending) of a project by staff in order to suit their own interests, yet in the name of the state. Finally, a more systematic exploration is carried out through examining the lifeworlds of different categories of actors.

The 'state' and its logic

The debate on the state, especially in the African context, is moving us away from attempts to seek a universal theory of the state, and from the conceptual opposition that many social scientists have made between 'State' and 'Society' (for example Chazan 1989; Azarya 1978; Fossaert 1981 quoted by Bayart 1989; Shaw 1987; Parpart 1988). Alternative perspectives suggest that we should conceive of the working of 'society' outside of the 'state' as '*excrescences* of the state' (Geschiere and Konings 1993: 13), while Bayart advocates the concept of *Etat rhizome* to account for the complex and underground ramifications of the state in society whereby the state works as a feeding or nurturing substratum for its large clientele within society (Bayart 1989, 1993: 220-221). Though I find these perspectives more illuminating than previous ones on the nature of the relations between 'State' and 'Society', the argument needs to be taken a step further. We should not limit ourselves to just documenting the manifestations or ramifications of the state in the interstices of society. This seems to portray the 'state' as the centre from which socio-political processes start and develop toward 'society' that is thus situated on the periphery (the idea of excrescences or rhizome). We need to uncover the ways in which actors not only take advantage of being connected to the state, but create, use or contest state power, prerogatives and policies in their everyday lives. Indeed, when one is faced with the daily manipulation, creation, and contestation of state power by social actors within specific contexts, a question which readily comes to mind is where precisely is the 'state', where does it begin and end?' The categories of actors labelled as representing the 'state' or exerting state power vary according to the positions of those who attribute the label. The 'state' is socially and contextually defined (which may simply be a conscious or unconscious denial of its existence or social reality). Also, this definition varies in time and space. The perceptions, expectations, and claims that, for example, Benin students have on the Benin state are probably not those that Dutch or French students have on the Dutch or French state, and the image of the Benin state as provider of guaranteed employment for school graduates has profoundly changed since the mid-eighties. In the course of one day, the status attributed by villagers to a village extension agent can change according to context, from representative of state power to simple expert on some specific agricultural technique, or he may be coopted as a 'son of the village' who helps deal with various situations, including coping with state power.

In short, the notion of 'state' remains quite vague and hard to grasp empirically. In Benin, some categories of people or societal positions are quickly included no matter from which position one attributes the labels. These are the central government, made up of the Head of state and his Ministers and other central bodies of the regime (legislative, judiciary and the repressive[1] apparatus), or as Skocpol puts it, the 'set of administrative, policing and military organisations headed, and more or less well coordinated by an executive authority' (Skocpol 1979: 29). It is the authority against which civil servants, students and their organisations would go on to the street to demonstrate for better working or living conditions. In fact, in the Benin context, as in many other African countries, the logic of the state – as a minority of so-called intellectuals who seized the political power and who are in

search of economic anchorage – cannot be fully understood without taking into account its dialectical and conflicting relations with these categories of citizens (represented by students' organisations and trade unions) who have always positioned themselves as the central concern and bottleneck for that 'state'. To a large extent, these latter categories, and the elite defined here as being the state, have hijacked the state apparatus (i.e. the ability to control a big share of national resources and wealth and to exert supreme power, coercion, violence and repression) that was artificially and arbitrarily installed with colonisation and later awarded sovereignty and legitimacy at independence through various violent or so-called democratic artifices.

In the Benin case, these categories have often been the source of political instability particularly since 1957 (see Chapter 3). Even the apparently quiet Kérékou era (from 1972-1989) was one of permanent 'fights' between the regime and the trade unions or students, with the consequence (or the excuse) of regular attempts by factions in the army to overthrow the Government. In that sense, particularly stressful years for Kérékou's regime were 1975, 1977, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1987 to 1989. As indicated in Chapter 3, the claims of students and civil servants often concerned salary or bursary increases, or protests against the reduction of salaries or staff, but they sometimes turned into requests for political change as was the case in 1963, 1967, 1979 and 1989. Thus, since 1957, these 'forces', mostly inherited from the colonial period[2] drove the different regimes into a continuous search for budget equilibrium, not so much through a reduction of state expenses, but via an increase of its internal and external earnings. With almost no mineral resources and a very weak fiscal system, export crops became of vital importance as far as internal sources for state income. These would be complemented by various forms of development aid, which gave funding agencies an important role in Benin political affairs and in the actual design and implementation of so-called development policies, including rural development.[3] These elements explain (at least partly) why a dominant feature of state policy in the field of rural development is the appropriation of the wealth produced, much more than what some neo-marxists call the 'surplus'. Therefore, the overused rhetoric of 'agriculture is the basis of our development and industry its motor' *(L'agriculture est la base de notre développement et l'industrie en est le moteur)* does not bring the state much further than emphasising the development of export crops – a sort of commitment to, or reproduction of the *mise en valeur* policy of the colonial period. It shows very little, if any, will to consciously develop or expand the internal consumption market by increasing the incomes of rural producers, or by increasing their share of export crop revenues or by any deliberate support for the local economy. Such processes have taken place in most West and Central African countries (in Senegal with groundnuts, Ivory Coast with coffee and cacao, Mali with cotton, Cameroun with cacao, palm oil etc.) and have been analyzed by various authors (Amin 1973; Dumont 1966; Dumont and Mottin 1980; Meillassoux 1981; Rey 1971; etc.), mostly with neo-marxist paradigms of dependency, centre/periphery, or the articulation of modes of production.

But still, we need to go beyond these interconnected phenomena – the hijacking of state power by a small but expanding city-based elite and the focus on export

crops that structures the interactions between village staff and rural producers. We need to look more closely at the ways in which the state is made (or not made) concrete in the everyday operation of rural development – without this being a simple prolongation or excrescence of a central state but the creation of the state here and now. We need to examine how policies are negotiated in the whole process of specific development actions and to explore what the motivations are for the different actors involved. This, then, is what I attempt to do in the remaining part of this chapter. Since I believe that discussions on the motivations of actors and the daily making of policy and the state cannot be undertaken efficiently in an abstract way, I start by reporting on an episode of the 'burial' of the Community Development Programme in the Atlantic Province of South Benin.

The burial of the Community Development Programme in the Atlantic Province

The Community Development Programme survived two years after the departure in February 1990 (after the National Conference) of the Minister who initiated it. It came to an end all over Benin in 1993 when the IMF-WB project for the restructuring of the CARDERs started. The main funding agency (the World Bank), the experts and most probably some high-ranking Benin staff involved in the preparation of the new nation-wide project did not find the Community Development Programme relevant enough for rural development. All the RDVs were appointed to new positions within the new structure, which ended the assistance given by the CARDERs to the various activities of the RDVs, without providing for any follow up. But though there was no official preparations for it, the decision to stop the project did not fall without warning on the heads of the RDVs and villagers. Rumours and gossip took care of this. Since early 1992, rumours became more and more persistent over the restructuration of the CARDERs, particularly on the likely dismissal of 60 percent of the CARDER staff and on the activities that would be kept. It became clear that the Community Development Programme was not on the list of activities to be maintained and that therefore the position of RDV would cease to exist. In that situation, as most RDVs said, 'everybody is running. It lies in your own hands to save your head', which meant making as many contacts as one could with friends, protectors (Godfathers), relatives etc in the hierarchy in order to save a place for oneself in the new structure.[4]

In April 1993, the GTZ commissioned a project appraisal mission in the domain of 'natural resource management' with a view to funding a new project in the Atlantic Province. The German government had financed a regional rural development project in the Atlantic Province through the GTZ since 1977, but discontinued it after an evaluation in 1989. Negotiations had started since 1990 to design a new project but the Benin and German Governments did not agree on the form of the new project until 1993. Some suggestions were made. The present appraisal mission was meant to investigate the possibility for further cooperation between the German Ministry of Development Cooperation, the GTZ, and the CARDER Atlantic. The team of the mission was made up of two freelance German consultants, one of whom had six months fieldwork experience in the Province on smallholders and

poverty, and one junior female staff member of the GTZ. The GTZ in Benin asked me to participate in the mission as their 'local expert', mostly for the fieldwork, not much in the discussions and document preparation. The mission was given a mandate to suggest any option on which the German and Benin governments could reach an agreement so that a new project could finally start. During the mission, a review of all the former activities of the Atlantic CARDER was made. The German members of the appraisal team became seduced by the Community Development Programme after visiting one of the villages where it was implemented. We were brought to the village by Omioke, the former RDV of the village who had been appointed fishery expert in an another area.[5] At our request, the villagers were informed in advance (the day before) of our coming. We spent the whole day in the village, discussing with men and women, young and old. There was a Development Committee representing all the cooperatives with which we also had discussions. We were introduced to the village from the perspective of the Community Development Programme. Therefore, what we really saw and heard were the activities initiated (or presented as such to us) together with Omioke while he was there as RDV. The style of cooperative work introduced here by the RDV was different from that usually promoted in Benin. There were groups working on specific activities (farming, animal husbandry, food processing etc.), but instead of working together and sharing the products or the revenue, members of each group had in common only equipment, a common place for the activity and a flexible time schedule. For the rest, in most groups, things were done individually and everybody managed his own affairs. It was expected that this would induce competition among members and shame those lagging behind and not taking proper care of their activities. It was also expected that this would develop a sense of professionalism: going to the 'workplace' would be seen as going to the 'office' (which only intellectuals with white collar jobs had had the privilege of saying). If things went well, they might purchase some common labour-saving implements. But the RDV said this was not established as an objective, because similar attempts had proved irrelevant in other places. In short, in this village, cooperative work was a sort of 'working apart together'. Also, there were some original activities such as raising snails, aulacodes and fish, and speculation on food products by the village Development Committee. Some implements were designed and made by group members for the storage of maize and processing of cassava.

During the discussions, very clear invitations were made by the members of the cooperatives and the Development Committee to help them solve problems relating to their activities: enlarging the snail, aulacodes and fish raising enterprises by building more accommodation; facilitating the connecting of producers with the appropriate technicians for advice, and with potential consumers including restaurants and hotels in Cotonou; providing for credit for the speculations on food crops; improving food processing equipment. We were particularly impressed by the discursive skills of many groups and committee members in the presentation of their activities and in forwarding their requests.

'We know what our needs are and we have already found the way to tackle our problems and improve our conditions. We now know that you can solve your own problems. The RDV has helped us very much in finding ways. Nevertheless, in our daily struggle to get

out of poverty, our knowledge falls short. We have our hands stretched out trying to reach the goal but their length is not always enough. We have managed to get our loads up to our knees, in some cases even up to our foreheads but we lack that extra bit of strength to put them on our head.[6] *That is why we need you. Not to start or to do the job for us, but to help us finish it.'*

Though the main heading of our mission was about natural resource management, we all agreed that it was relevant that the mission recommend the GTZ to support the programme. We discussed the issue with Omioke.

'That would be very good', he said enthusiastically. And he added: 'These people work in very hard conditions, their soils are exhausted, but they keep going. If they could be helped... They don't even need a lot of money. If the GTZ can rescue this programme, it will be wonderful...'

I knew Omioke before. We had met a few times in 1991 and 1992 over the Community Development Programme. Two days after the visit of the mission to the village, I discussed it with him in a more relaxed, informal context. He expressed his doubts as to whether the CARDER would be interested in starting up this programme again. In any case, he himself was no longer interested in it and did not like the idea of going back to live in the village again, even part time.

'I prefer my present work time schedule' he said. 'When I was RDV, I did not have any real time schedule. Peasants could drop into my house at any moment and engage me in endless discussions. Now, my work days finish at 4pm at the latest. This allows me to take care of my own affairs'. Then he added. 'But I trust you. You cannot be part of group that would attack my interests.[7] *If your mission manages to rescue this programme (which I doubt), it is good. But make sure that it does not fall on my head.'*

Indeed, his elder daughter was 15 years old and had just started secondary school. He decided to pay more attention to her because he did not yet feel ready to become a grandfather. Also, he has just built a house for himself and his family. But the land he had built on was declared public property, meant for a zoological park. All the people had been requested to move and they ran the risk of having their houses destroyed without any compensation. The people had formed a committee, chaired by Omioke, to be in contact with the authorities at all levels in order to solve the problem. He complained that the very day of our visit to the village, the committee had an appointment with the Head of the District to discuss the matter. 'Because of *your* mission (from which I earned nothing), the appointment was cancelled and we have not been able to get another date out of the District Head' He said. And he concluded 'I don't want this business of *Développement Communautaire* to poison my life any more. I have had enough'.

On the other hand, he was in contact with a Canadian University (which he had already visited once) and was trying to start a PhD degree. He had started on the lowest rung of the ladder of the agricultural bureaucracy and had moved upward to the engineer level through short and long term in-service training. At this very moment, apart from his family and house problems, this academic achievement seemed far more important to him than anything else. But none of this became

transparent during the day of the field visit. The day after the visit in the village, he joined us at a meeting with the Deputy Director of Production when we were reporting on what we saw and on our idea of suggesting to the GTZ that they support the programme. In a long discussion with the Deputy Director of Production the mission tried to check whether the Community Development Programme could fit into the new operational chart of the CARDER. *'Rien n'y fit'*. The Deputy Director of Production held an ambiguous position. What was transparent from the discussions was that there was no room for this programme in the new context. I suspect that he thought if it had been resuscitated, the Community Development Programme would then have become an innovation again!!, probably involving a lot of preparation, monitoring and coordination work for him. After having been weaned for years, this CARDER staff member seemed to view the new IMF-WB project as a lifeline and apparently did not want to take any risk of sanctions from the IMF-WB experts, the funding agencies of the new programme. The Deputy Director knew very well that GTZ has been the main funding agency for the CARDER Atlantic since 1977. He is an engineer and had been RDR in various Districts of the Province and had obtained enough knowledge about the previous German project to guess that he and his colleagues would win something from it. But obviously, the German Agency for Development Cooperation arrived too late (or too early) on the scene of the post-revolutionary era rural development policies in Benin. The restructuration rhetoric was too far established within the frame of the CARDER and had shaped the way in which the staff were managing their daily lives, to open them up to another approach or to seize the opportunity the GTZ might offer to the Community Development Programme. Also the new project had not been under way for long enough for the staff to find ways to house other opportunities within it. Notice that the Deputy Director did not oppose or openly reject the proposition. He never actually rejected our idea. On the contrary, he kept praising it as a very good suggestion. Nevertheless, while we were asking how the programme would fit into the organisational structure, if it were to start up again, he kept on explaining the new chart to us, the job descriptions and the linkages between the different positions, showing us indirectly but skilfully that he could not find a place for inserting the Community Development Programme.

During these discussions, Omioke did not say much to support our idea, despite his apparent enthusiasm of the previous day when we discussed the matter with him on our way back from the field visit. At the time, I thought this was the traditional silence of some staff in front of their boss. Later, after discussing with him, I discovered his motivations and understood that on that specific topic, and most probably for quite different reasons, he shared the same position as the Deputy Director about the fate of the Community Development Programme.

But the senior staff member of the General Directorate in charge of the monitoring of the programme had a different position. When we met him, he declared that it was vital for the image the villagers had of the CARDER, that the programme continue in one way or another. He had always made this point at head office meetings, especially for three villages that were particularly enthusiastic about the programme. 'But people don't listen to me. When I make this argument, I only hear the echo of my own voice.[8] I wonder if they think that I have a wife or a

particular interest in one of these villages.' He continued by saying that in those three villages people had started various things with the RDVs who were appointed there. And suddenly, from one day to the next, the RDV installed in the village with trumpets playing had to leave silently, on tiptoe, without being able to say anything to the peasants as to what the fate of their activities would be. 'They would never trust us again if we leave the programme just like that, at least in those three villages' he concluded. We asked him if the CARDER was able, with its restructuration programme, to fit this programme again into its activities. He asserted that the CARDER had always been able to fit anything into its activities as soon people wanted it. And there was a new position in the structure called *Spécialiste de Organisations Paysannes*, SOP, at district level that would fit perfectly into the work. But this man was unwilling to contact the General Director on the issue right then even though they had been classmates during their studies. The reason was that he had some ongoing arguments with him at the time that he did not wish to explain, except to say they had nothing to do with the work. But in any case, he did not want to go knocking at his door, although in normal situations he did it without any protocol. He might do it in a few weeks time, after the Director has established the case, but for the time being, it was out of question.

We did not succeed in discussing the matter with the General Director of the CARDER himself. We met him at the beginning of the mission and he told us that we could discuss every thing with the Deputy Director to whom he had given full powers to do so. When we managed to visit him to report on the proceedings of the mission, he had little time to devote to us. He had to go to the Ministry for an urgent affair and assured us that the Deputy Director would keep him informed every day on the proceedings of the mission. For my German colleagues on the mission, the General Director had been informed of the issue of the Community Development Programme by his Deputy Director and therefore we had to close the case.

The final report of the mission that was officially presented to the Ministry of Rural Development did not even mention the Community Development Programme. It covered only the natural resource management project covering a small area of the Province. It was suggested that the project would not be implemented by the CARDER but by the PGRN *(Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles)*, another nation-wide project of the Ministry of Rural Development partly funded by the GTZ and to which a GTZ technical assistant had already been appointed.[9] At the end of the meeting, I went to one of the Ministry officials, whom I had known before and had met many times earlier on different matters, including the Community Development Programme. We commented on the meeting. He declared.

'Now we know what they (GTZ, the Germans) want to do. They have retained only one sixth of the Province. It is OK. We agree – they can start, but that does not solve our problems. We can now approach the German Government for what we think should be done in the whole Atlantic Province'.

Comments

We have here a concrete process of policy making. Though it might be interesting to comment on the ways in which the various actors involved took part in the making of the project on natural resource management, for the objectives of this chapter I look at how, intentionally or not, these actors contributed to the burying of the Community Development project. What were the interests that governed this burial and how were these interests put forward?

The villagers involved in the cooperatives and in the village Development Committee succeeded in making their points clearly. They succeeded in seducing the mission into believing in their activities. They had mastered the use of 'participatory' rhetoric which they made attractive to outsiders by packaging it in local discursive assets (metaphors, proverbs etc.). The mission gave the Community Development project in the Atlantic Province a chance to be rescued on the IMF-WB restructuration wave. But this did not happen and was not the decision of any central institution or state. The decision was negotiated at local level where the mission somehow attributed the status of state representative to the Deputy Director, who was obviously operating from a different register or standpoint. While focusing the discussions on the new chart of the CARDER, his motivations were about securing what had already been gained from the IMF-WB project, and preventing the mission from opening a new working file for him entailing preparation, monitoring and coordination. There were probably many other private reasons which I could not access. For example, the Community Development Programme had not been under the Deputy Director of Production's responsibility when it was running. He might, therefore, have thought that if the GTZ had funded a project from such a perspective, then his directorate would be sidestepped. The motivations of Omioke, the former RDV, were related to his career, his family and other private problems. They related to where he perceived himself in his life cycle. He needed space now to manage his life quietly, the way it had been since the programme had ended. His action was to keep silent, like the other senior staff who had refused to introduce the matter to the General Director. Their reason was apparently a conjunctural conflict with the General Director, that had probably not existed a few weeks before the mission and might have been settled a few weeks afterwards. But it was too late to serve our idea of turning the dying Community Development Programme into an integral part of what would then (later) be considered and rationalised as state development intervention policy in the Atlantic Province. By a simple chance (I assume), the General Director was too busy during that period, called, as he frequently is, to the Ministry for 'urgent affairs'. He probably never heard of the plan to fund the Community Development Programme, of which he was probably unaware too.[10]

Those were the little, apparently insignificant and chaotic events that had no obvious link with each other but ended up in making a big difference to the direction that CARDER (state) actions in the field of rural development in this Province would take during the following years. The very personal and different motivations of these actors were glued together by the mission team who attributed to them the role of official representatives of the CARDER, of the General Director

and, to some extent, of the state who were negotiating development intervention policy and action. As for these officials – looked at in terms of their personal careers, family, social relations and other practical interests – the mission team were not perceived as negotiators of development policy, but as trouble makers who were intruding on their quiet and already smoothly regulated life (at least for the two years duration of the new project). We have here a situation where people arguing from different perspectives and dealing with very different issues end up making a common decision. A consensus built, that is, out of cacophonic, non-dialogical social interaction. The mission team did not or were not willing to push the matter further. After all, it was not their problem. They were free-lance consultants who would probably have no further commitment to the intervention and therefore, to some extent, were unlikely to be much concerned by its ultimate results. If the team had been made up of people who would have been part of the implementation team of the project, then probably the dialogue might have been of a different nature. In any case, these anomalous circumstances combined to produce a decision that would later be rationalised as the state's (or at least CARDER's) decision to stop the project for reasons of the new political orientation.

As for the villagers, one cannot say that the project was over. There is evidently a time sequence as to the coming and the departing of the RDV from the village but such a sequence cannot hold as far as the activities covered by the project are concerned, as well as the discursive and practical skills it helped to develop among villagers. What really happens is a stocking, an entangled accumulation of the activities, languages and practices induced within different projects at the village level.

From this case, we learn that staff played a determining role as social actors (not just as state agents) in the making of decisions in intervention for rural development. Other actors on the scene credited them with state roles and power. However, it would be very misleading, to consider the staff or the organisations in which they work, or both, as the only 'instruments' in the elaboration and implementation of rural development programmes in accordance with any given state policy. If we want to know about intervention policy making and implementation, it becomes necessary also to look to the motivations of staff, as read from their relations with each other, their career perspectives and their private and family lives. It is necessary to examine how, depending on their specific situations, they succeed in simulating or denying state power. We also need to look at the vagaries of everyday life that produce ad hoc social structures that become instrumental in the directions that affairs might finally take. In the rest of this chapter, I explore crucial aspects of the role the staff play in what is generally referred to as state policy-making.

The staff of intervention institutions: different categories and career perspectives

By 'staff' I mean not only agricultural bureaucrats in the Ministries and in intervention institutions but also field workers – thus lumping together those called 'bureaucrats' and the 'technicos'. These people, as shown in the Mexican case by Arce are 'members of an epistemological community since they share a lan-

guage, degree of knowledge and behaviour that somehow distinguishes them from other communities' (Arce 1993: 49). But, as the case above shows, the staff are not the same. Providing some insight into the frames of reference of the staff of an organisation such as CARDER brings one very soon to the conclusion that a minimum of categorisation is needed. The staff sitting in the office (also divided into different and changing factions for different reasons) obviously do not have the same preoccupations as those working in close contact with farmers. Also, as illustrated by Omioke, moving from one situation (in contact with farmers) to the other (an office) can change one's preoccupations. At the outset, if we consider the geographical or vertical structuration of the organisation (or vertical/geographical location of the staff), we can distinguish three main groups: the staff working in the 'field', which means in the rural areas, at village, commune or district levels; those working at the head quarters of the main intervention institutions, mostly based in the capital cities of the Provinces; and finally those working in the ministries or national directorates.

In any case, the most fruitful categorisation is that which derives from the various criteria and indicators staff use themselves when referring to each other. For example, not only those working in rural areas are considered as 'working in the field' *(sur le terrain)*. The staff at district offices consider those at commune and village levels as field staff and the staff of the head offices of CARDERs in the provincial capitals would include the district as well as commune and village staff as 'field staff'. In the same vein, bureaucrats in the ministries and national directorates consider the various directors of regional organisations as 'those in the field' *(les gens du terrain)*. Being 'in the field' is therefore not a power-free attribute. It is enabling and at the same time constraining for the person who bears it, whether he claims it himself (which often happens) or when he is attributed it. Being in the field implies being the person who knows the 'facts', knows the *'réalités du terrain'* and therefore is able to play with and manipulate information. On the other hand, being in the field implies carrying the bulk of responsibility on whose head most of the jobs, requests, threats and also the blame falls, though the load is somewhat reduced by the capability of the field agent to manipulate the information.

Among themselves, the staff members distinguish many categories using two main characteristics. First are the qualifications and schools of training, and second, seniority. Regarding the qualifications and the schools of training, four main categories can be identified:[11]

Category 1: These are staff with no more than 5-6 years of primary schooling, who were recruited and trained on the job by private marketing boards and intervention companies in the early sixties and seventies (CFDT, SATEC, CAITA, SODAK...), or by the CARDERs in the mid-seventies and early eighties. In the Zou Province, they were mostly recruited as collectors (to buy agricultural produce in villages), *'animateurs'*, *'encadreurs'*, surveyors etc. In the same category, can be included the staff who have completed primary schooling and have passed the entrance exam to the first level of agricultural school (CFR Porto-Novo or Ina) where they get two years basic agricultural extension training in agricultural production, animal husbandry and health, forestry, and cooperatives.

Category 2: This category is composed of staff who have completed secondary education and passed the entrance examination to agricultural secondary school where they receive three or four years of training at intermediate level. There is to-date only one agricultural secondary school in Benin. It was formerly called *Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou* and now *Collège Polytechnique Agricole Niveau II de Sékou.*

Category 3: This is the staff trained in agricultural high schools or level one in agricultural institutes or universities as *Ingénieur d'agriculture* or *Technicien supérieur* in various fields of agricultural production. Most of them were trained outside Benin, in agricultural high schools in the Ivory Coast, Senegal or Cameroun. Since the early eighties, some staff of this category, especially those in the field of animal husbandry and veterinary sciences have come from the *Collège Polytechnique Universitaire* of the National University of Benin.

Category 4: This category is of the *IDR (Ingénieur du Développement Rural)*, composed of those who had university training in agriculture as *Ingénieur agronome* or *Docteur vétérinaire.* Notice that the veterinary doctors always refuse to be considered as agricultural engineers. They claim to be 'doctors', while the others are no more than 'engineers'. This issue becomes important when engineers specialised in animal production and veterinary doctors have to work together in the same service. Conflicts then arise about who should head the service, and how the work should be shared, which is strongly linked to fights about control over the working means, especially transport, but also housing when available. Most of the staff of the first generation of this category were trained in Belgium and France while almost all those recruited between 1978/79 and 1986 (when staff recruitment by the state ended) were trained in the Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Benin. Table 7, presents the number of male and female staff for each category up to 1992. The total for the Province was 372 staff,[12] as compared with a total of 338,953 agricultural workers in 1992 (see MDR 1993: 48-56).

Table 7 The rural development staff of the Zou Province

Categories	Male	Female	Total
1 Lowest level, basic training (primary school level)	139	15	154
2 Medium level (secondary school)	157	5	162
3 High level (High school and first level University training)	13	2	15
4 Highest level (Masters level, University training)	41	0	41
Total	350	22	372

Source: MDR 1993: *Compendium des statistiques agricoles et alimentaires (1970-1992)* Cotonou, MDR

On the salary ladder of civil servants, the categories are ranked from rank A (category 4), downwards to rank E (category 1). People can move from a lower category to higher ones. Some even succeed in moving from category 1 to category 4 by internal examinations, and short or long term in-service training. Upward

mobility is considered as a very important target for most staff of low or medium level and is stimulated by various factors: first is the increase in salary. Second, the hierarchical position one can occupy in the institution or negotiate, using its social networks. The hierarchical position one can attempt to negotiate has become more and more correlated with the qualifications one has and the total number of staff belonging to that category. Most people want to be as high as they can in the hierarchy, not only because of the material advantages attached to such positions but also to the social status it gives, and to the fact that then 'one not only receives orders but gives them'. Third is coming into an office or organisation of young and newly graduated staff, at a higher level than those of one's own generation. In the sixties and early seventies there were very few Beninese trained as agriculturalists at medium or high level. A local corps of the native staff of agricultural services was created in August 1913 but was composed of half literate personnel trained on the job, or people who graduated from the Benin professional agricultural school of the primary level created in June 1914. The *Lycée Agricole Médji de Sékou* then called *Centre National des Techniciens Agricoles de Sékou* was created much later, in 1961, with funding from Switzerland, while those trained at university level received their training abroad. The Benin University Faculty of Agriculture opened in the early seventies.

Thus in the sixties, people who graduated from the Sékou agricultural school or from similar ones in Africa were appointed at district and even higher levels in intervention institutions. By the mid-seventies and early eighties, more and more young agricultural engineers began to be appointed at district level, taking over from the earlier staff. Then, many staff of category 2 and 3 of 30-40 years of age attempted to upgrade to category 4. Among this latter category, therefore, staff make further distinctions, which, although only used at the level of informal labelling and never mentioned officially, might possibly influence crucial official decisions. For example, there are those who have been directly recruited as such. They are called *'Ingénieurs authentiques'* and are mostly trained in Belgium, France or at the Benin University Faculty of Agriculture. Other engineers who started the job in lower categories, some even at category 1, are referred to as *'sac-au-dos'* (coming from far away, with a rucksack on his back). What one learns from this search for mobility is that the primary concern of most staff is career and position. As I show later in this chapter through cases from the Community Development Programme, an appointment is assessed by the advantages it provides and by the extent to which it gives the individual concerned the chance to upgrade within the hierarchy and then achieve a 'good career'.

As mentioned above, the second main characteristic which staff members use to categorise each other is seniority. No matter what qualifications a newcomer has, he calls *doyen* or senior, the others who were on the job before him. As there are *doyens* of *doyens*, some even suggested they be called *anciens*. Seniority can be a very important criteria in the negotiation of a position when candidates belong to the same category. This criteria often counts more than the extra short-term training one might have received, even if this training makes the junior candidate more prepared for the job. At least, protests from other staff will use the seniority argument to criticise the appointment of a junior.

These were the more obvious categories used by the staff. But less apparent ones exist, which are not used when interacting with each others or when speaking of their training and working experiences. But on issues concerning working and non-working relationships with other staff members or bosses, categories such as fellow-graduate, trade union member, family relation, same or similar ethnic group, religion, philosophical or mystic group, and most recently political party membership will be evoked. But one should not exaggerate the importance of these categories in the self-achievement strategies of the actors. During this research, I recorded various conflict situations between people sharing one or more of these categories. Sometimes, the very fact of belonging to some common category can worsen a crisis situation when one feels denied the favour that belonging to a common category leads one to expect from the other. Nonetheless, these more diffuse categories provide the people concerned with additional social space when they meet at church, during week-ends, or back home or elsewhere, where they speak the same native language etc. and they might talk about the contentious issue.

Another label which I found very confusing was what staff *at all levels* called 'the CARDER'. This appeared in formulations such as *'A quoi sert le CARDER?' or 'Que fait le CARDER au juste'* – what purpose does the CARDER serve, what does the CARDER do exactly?'. A district extension officer (RDR) might say this as much when complaining of the way staff under him do their job in the field as he might when his bosses above him give contradictory orders or instructions or again when there is a lack of follow up in actions or in the way resources are allocated. But most confusingly, he might say the same when referring to himself, when complaining of how he has to manage his days under such conditions.[13] The same thing holds for people at higher or lower hierarchical levels. I noticed that this was a formula mostly used to neutralise criticisms against one's hierarchical chief during discussions with him. On these occasions, it is common to hear the lower level staff claiming 'the CARDER should do this or that' which in fact might well mean 'boss you should do this or that'.

Among the so-called medium or high level staff engaged in the implementation of the Community Development Programme in the Zou Province, most of the four categories described above were represented, of which I hereafter present three different cases. There were always three main aspects in the information I then obtained, which I will use to structure the presentation. These aspects concerned the training of the staff, their professional experiences and career perspectives, and finally the relations with the immediate and/or highest hierarchical boss, which most often were presented as being somehow conflictive.[14] These factors appeared to determine the way the staff saw their appointment as fitting into their own projects and explained to some extent the type of interactions engaged in with villagers as well as bosses.

Case 1 Tinguédjo the sac-au-dos: I don't mind being in a village as long as it is in my native Province

Tinguédjo is in his forties. He is married and has six children. When, during one of our conversations, I asked what training he had, he answered straight away:

'I am an IDR Ingénieur du Développement Rural A1-4 (relating to rank and salary) with 15 years of working experience. I started working for rural development in 1975. I was only a CDR Conducteur du Développement Rural' (which corresponds here to category 2).

He was born in Abomey and was 20 years old when he passed the BEPC (*Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle*) in 1968, because he 'started school too late'. But he was then too old to have a fellowship from the Government and continue up to the baccalaureate (entry level to university). Because he could not rely on significant support from his parents, he could not 'follow the direct path from the BEPC to the baccalaureate within three or four years and start University and finish as *Ingénieur Agronome*' he said. Then he added.

'But not everybody gets things easily in life. I had to struggle a long way, but I succeeded to get to the same end: Ingénieur. Yes! You know that here in Benin, if a training or job opportunity arrives, it is not enough for you to have the most adequate qualifications or potential to expect to be selected. You must be involved in the political system yourself[15] or you must have some people in it and have a solid back (les reins solides).'

After passing the BEPC in 1968, since he could not benefit from a fellowship to follow 'the direct path', he thought it better to enter a professional college where, no matter how old you were, you could have a state fellowship. So he took part in the entrance examinations of many professional schools (for post-office staff, medical staff etc.). He succeeded with the *Lycée Agricole Mèdji of Sékou*, entering the college in 1970 and completing the training in 1974 with a degree in *Economie Coopérative*. He was recruited in 1975 to the Atlantic CARDER. From February to December 1977, he attended a training course on 'Cooperative management in Africa', at the *Centre International d'Agriculture* in Cairo (Egypt). From June to December 1980, he attended a short training course on the organisation and management of cooperative enterprises at the *Centre Panafricain de Formation Coopérative (CPFC)* in Cotonou. From January to July 1982, he got the chance to go to Bulgaria to the Karl Marx Economic Institute in Sophia where he studied the management of rural enterprises. From all this training, he got certificates that allowed him to register for the DESCOOP programme of the CPFC[16] in 1985, which he completed in 1988.

'I now have the 'Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures en action Coopérative'. I am a full IDR, even higher than that because the degree is internationally recognised as equivalent to a post graduate degree from an Agricultural University.'[17]

When he started working in 1975, (after completing 4 years of training at the *Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou)*, he was appointed *Conseiller coopératif*, cooperative counsellor, in the Ouidah district. From 1976-1985 he was the head of the *Division Action Coopérative* at the head office of CARDER Atlantic in Cotonou. Among other duties and responsibilities which he had then were those regarding cooperatives, youth groups, credit, literacy training and rural media. He also said he had conducted some activities related to extension, development action planing, project management, project evaluation, adult training etc.

'I joined the Zou CARDER at the end of 1988. I worked in the 'Service Etudes et Synthèses' at the Directorate of Studies and Internal Evaluation (DSEI). From September 1989, I was appointed RDV. Coming to the Zou Province was my own choice. I wanted to come back home. I'm not a regionalist, but if the Zou Project (the WB Project conducted from 1983-1989) had been executed under the leadership of people native to this Province, I am sure that the results would have been better.
Myself, with all my experience, I did not suspect that I should be appointed at village level. The former General Director thought I should fill this assignment as a punishment, but I didn't worry. As long as I am in this Province. He was prescribing activities we should undertake in the villages, but I said that nothing could be decided before we had discussed it with the people themselves. What the CARDER could now master and plan well were our living and working conditions in the village. Look where the Engineer of the village is living!'

Tinguédjo was staying in a hut with two rooms, each no larger than 2.5 to 3.5 m^2 area. Neither the floor nor the walls were cemented. For a table, he used a piece of wood of about 1m x 50cm, placed on four wooden supports of about 1m in height. He hardly had any utensils in the hut.[18]

'But the General Director did not like my opinions and got very angry. He said to me: 'I will step on you until you run away from this Province'. He said that to me on a Friday and went to Europe on a mission the following Tuesday. Before he came back a few days later, he had been moved from the Province. And I am still here!!'[19]

Comments

Three interrelated remarks can be made on the case of Tinguédjo. One concerns his training and the ways in which he managed to achieve his qualifications to become an engineer, which he presents here as being set right from the beginning of his professional training. The second aspect concerns his career development and the position he occupied, and his working conditions, which he relates to his qualifications. The third concerns how he presents his relations with his bosses and the ways in which he deals with the rules.

The case of Tinguédjo is typical as far as his training and qualification itineraries are concerned. Many similar stories were reported to me from those recruited in the mid-seventies, a few months or years after the creation of the CARDERs. Tinguédjo pretends that his target was to become an engineer from the moment he entered the Sékou agricultural school. Training for upgrading (to engineer level) did not seem to have been a major target for agricultural staff before the early eighties, when the number of *Ingénieurs agronomes* coming straight from universities, the so-called *Ingénieurs authentiques*, started to increase so significantly that they were appointed in the districts as extension officers (RDR), heads of the district subdivision of CARDER, a position that up to then had been occupied by those who had graduated from the *Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou*. The coming into the CARDERs of a new and younger generation of engineer agronomists had awakened the young staff of lower categories to the need for further training. The presence in Cotonou of a training centre for short and longer duration courses on cooperative studies made it possible

for the staff with basic cooperative training such as Tinguédjo, to try and reach the level of *Ingénieur Agronome*. Of the eight CARDER staff appointed as RDV in the villages of the Community Development Programme, three had attended most of the short term courses of the CPFC and of other schools outside Benin, two had had the opportunity to follow the four year post-graduate course (and were therefore classified as *Ingénieur Agronome*), while a third had passed the entrance examination to the CPFC in 1991 and had therefore quit the Community Development Programme.

Coming to the issue of the position and occupation attributed to Tinguédjo within the CARDER, it should be mentioned that the pursuit of the engineer's degree is not an abstract wish to bear the title of agronomist. Apart from the hope of a salary increase ('I am at A1-4'), it signified an expectation to have access to the position that engineer agronomists occupied at the time of deciding to pursue the qualification. This brings us to the question of how this category of staff perceive themselves as village agents in the Community Development Programme, how the assignment fits into their own projects or how they adjust when it doesn't, or try to divert the programme so that it does serve their objectives. According to Tinguédjo, this assignment was a punishment from the General Director, to which he became resigned psychologically, since his being in the Zou Province was his most important objective and thus the rest was relatively unimportant. This type of discursive resistance to what some staff consider gratuitous brutality from the bosses, makes for a whole culture, mostly shared among staff of the same training level or who speak the same native language or adopt similar mystical practices. One finds the hope and the energy to withstand the brutality from statements such as *Zaan δe yio, zaan δe non wa* ('cloudy mornings turn to clear evenings') or 'the office is for us not for him at Head Office, who will sooner or later be moved away by someone more powerful'. While such statements as these may remain passive resistance (as perhaps is the case of Tinguédjo), they may also indicate real action taken to get the boss, be he the General Director, or the District extension officer, removed from his post. These actions might involve networking or mystical types of prayers and practices. We cannot judge the efficacy of such actions for the end pursued, but what seems important is that they represent real social weapons for the people concerned, who spend their time, energy and means on them. Most importantly, the boss (the officers) to whom these weapons are addressed are not indifferent to what they feel as a danger, since they adopt similar practices to protect themselves and escape the threat. On such occasions, they may resort to alliances and partnerships within their offices, but then qualifications will be of a very different order. For example, drivers, nightwatchmen, home gardeners or village agents might turn out to be the most efficient allies for a Minister, General Director or District officer. These situations end up influencing to some extent the working relations among the staff and thus show the statement of Tinguédjo to be an integral part of the culture of rural development intervention. Statements like that of Tinguédjo are often mixed with regionalist arguments, suggesting for instance that results would have been better if the Zou project had been executed under the leadership of people from the Province. The point about this ethno-regionalist type of argument is that it will be used, whether or not the officer in question belongs to the particular ethnic group

or comes from the region. Hence it can be used to make negative as well as positive comments. In this way, an official might be accused of not remembering that he is native of the area where he is working. In short, it consists of a kind of political argument that lends itself to usage in most situations.

Also, Tinguédjo openly challenged the ministerial instruction and his bosses in the hierarchy for not living in the village, but just camping there. The bosses just let his comments go, either not being willing to enter into confrontation or simply not seeing the relevance of executing such an order that emanated from the Ministry. Nevertheless, even this silence enters into the routine of staff management practised by the bosses. As the hierarchical boss of the RDVs declared when I asked about the fate of a RDV who would not settle in the village:

> *'It is not easy for everyone to comply with this prescription. Nevertheless, I have taken precautions to protect myself if a Ministry official, or the Minister himself happens to discover the case. In the report of every meeting, it is mentioned that I have reminded the RDVs that they should live in the villages otherwise they run the risk of severe sanctions. For the cases I know, I have sent memos to them, with a copy to the General Director, inviting them to settle in the village. I know they are not going to comply but as far as I am concerned, I have done my job.'*

As we shall later see with Asuka, the RDV in Togoudo (the second RDV of the same category as Tinguédjo), this was an opportunity for him to experiment with what he had learned in the previous years at the CPFC. He completed his cooperative training there in 1989 by submitting a thesis which was a project planned for peasant organisations. The third specialist of cooperatives declared that this was a good opportunity to read his previous notes on cooperatives and to try a few things directly with peasants on matters concerning peasant organisations, without having to apply for authorisation from any boss. Therefore, this appointment helped him, as he said, to prepare for his coming entrance examination to the CPFC. As I already indicated, he passed the exam later in 1991 and succeeded.

It appears therefore that this category of staff have accepted and internalised in varying degrees their assignment as village agents on the Community Development Programme, even though it was only temporary. For Tinguédjo, the acceptance was rather passive, with resistance to the rules. As for the two others, they considered themselves in favourable positions where they could experiment with what they had learned at school. For the rest of the staff operating as village agents on the Community Development Programme, the situation was quite different, as is shown in cases 2 and 3.

Case 2 Gbèdjèmin the cool: Should I quit or stay in this programme?

Gbèdjèmin is much younger. He was born in 1958. He graduated from the *Complexe Polytechnique Agricole de Sékou* (the new name for the old *Lycée Agricole Mèdji de Sékou*) in 1985, in plant production. He was then recruited by the Ministry of Rural Development and was appointed at district level in the Zou Province where he worked on home gardens and nutrition. He obtained training on these matters at the Ouando training centre in 1986. He was in charge of the nursery of the CARDER

in the district, for the use of young gardeners, men and women, mostly organised in groups. These activities were linked to the Division of Food and Applied Nutrition *(DANA: Division de l'Alimentation et de la Nutrition Appliquée)* of the CARDER. They were not included as part of the project of Integrated Rural Development of the Zou Province and therefore Gbèdjèmin did not receive any allowances from the project, unlike all his colleagues in the district office. But things changed for him:

'Later in 1987, I was moved to another district as head of a sub-district unit. There, I was paid allowances by the project. The amount paid was fairly good. But I do not know what I have done to them. They have just moved me from my position and put me at the DSEI, Direction du Suivi et de l'Evaluation Interne (the Directorate of Monitoring and Internal Evaluation). This was a joint action of the Deputy Director of Production and Head of Training and Extension Service. They brought one of their people from the Atacora Province directly to the sub-district unit which I was heading and to take over from me.[20] Then, I was just sitting at the head office of the CARDER in Bohicon, without any job specification and so, again, without any advantage from the Zou project. From February to July 1989, I was lucky that a DANA project came to the Zou Province. I was then detached to the project to take part in a nutritional survey in Abomey. After that, I was appointed to the Community Development Programme.'

Gbèdjèmin seemed continually to have problems with the General Director. At RDVs' meetings, the Director would call to him while some other RDV was explaining the situation in his village: 'Eh Gbèdjèmin! what have you been doing since our last meeting?' More or less coherently and with shaking voice, Gbèdjèmin would then report on a women's group starting a garden, mothers of young children being trained in nutritional matters, discussions being conducted with villagers for the building of storehouses, markets etc. The General Director would not let him finish. He would scold him: 'Do you think these are the things you are sent to the village for? People in those villages earn lot of money from the cotton they produce and what is expected from you is just a question of helping them to spend their money properly, not to hide it underground and forget completely where it is, or keep it in their hut so that it burns whenever the hut burns by accident, or use it for getting more and more wives.'

Gbèdjèmin explains that this animosity against him started when he was head of a sub-district unit. Then, the General Director of the CARDER was the Director of Monitoring and Internal Evaluation (DSEI) and used to visit the staff in the field to check whether they were doing the job according to the project plan and according to the internal plans of each district and sub-district unit. On those occasions, he used to mock and threaten staff that he would cut their allowances. But Gbèdjèmin says that he argued with him, because decisions of this kind had to be taken on the basis of technical indicators that were well known to everybody. And if he did not accept and stick to the guidelines, Gbèdjèmin would resort to the Deputy Director of Production, the hierarchical boss of Gbèdjèmin and who was at the same hierarchical level as the DSEI. Also, if need be, people could complain to the General Director.

'But now, he is the General Director, which is a political position. Now, he can take any decision he wants against you, because he is the paramount chief of the CARDER. That

is why I do not react to his provocations. In fact, he does not have any idea of what is happening in the villages. People here are suffering and he is sitting over there taking his dreams for reality, speaking of helping peasants to manage their incomes while many of these peasants operate their farms at a loss and lack food at some critical periods of the year.'

Gbèdjèmin says he has kept good contact with people in the Direction of Food and Applied Nutrition (DANA) and will go back there sooner or later, whether he gets allowances for working with them or not. He explains:

'People have to think about tomorrow. I am still young and it is now that I have to prepare my future. I don't mind staying here in the village working with the people, so long as they find my presence useful. It is not a matter of allowances.'

Comments

At first sight these two cases depict confrontation between the field staff and the Director as to which activities are important in the programme. In most situations I have witnessed within this Community Development Programme, the General Director reacts to the reports of field staff with strong criticism, though there is in fact usually no direct confrontation on activities. Actually, one finds hardly any communication, let alone real argumentation on activities designed to improve institutional performance. My impression then was that what the bosses thought were important activities played no major role. Furthermore even when the subordinates were to be doing exactly what the bosses thought best, the latter would still come up with alternative ideas, and criticisms. It was not so much the substance of what they said that was important, but rather the fact that criticising was considered necessary in this hierarchical relationship in order to underline authority relations and to keep subordinates in their place. Yet not all the criticisms of the General Director were simply gratuitous violence vis-à-vis field staff, as appears from the case of Gbèdjèmin. Obviously one comes to doubt the efficiency of some field staff, not just at reporting sessions (those are not really the places where one can obtain good insight into what is being done), but in the field. Nevertheless, from what I have witnessed of these altercations, a remarkable aspect was that the degree of violence exerted by the General Director depended more on the nature of the staff, their ability to react and argue with the bosses (or on other more concealed elements), than on the actual performance of the staff in the field. Hence we are here faced with a situation where, as van Dijk puts it, (technical) discourse is used for the (re)production and challenge of dominance (van Dijk 1993: 249).

Van Dijk argues that the link between discourse and dominance passes through the social cognitions of dominated people. Some elites who have access to particular communicative means (in this case, situations in which the staff had to listen to the bosses), use these to produce texts and models that are stored and memorised by the dominated and which end up influencing their cognitive patterns such as their opinions, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values. Van Dijk conceives of social communication and power relations as entailing situations in which elites produce discourse and power while receivers worship the discourse and effectively internal-

ize it. None of the cases presented above fit with such analysis. Though it is obvious that the production of such discourse stems from a will to express domination, I could not see in the staff any attitude akin to being passive receivers, even in the case of Gbèdjèmin. Contrary to the point made by van Dijk I could find no evidence for his suggestion that 'social representations deriving from discourse sustain dominance' (1993: 263). Instead, what we see here from the two cases presented is the production of passive or active resistance to authority.

Another point that seems important to my view, and clearly shown in the case of Gbèdjèmin, is the issue of extra allowances paid by the project. These are of different sorts – *'prime de responsabilité, prime de suggestion, carburant et entretien moyen de transport, complément de salaire etc.'*. Within the Integrated Rural Development Project these provided the means by which a supplement to the salary was paid to those staff involved. The same scheme was used for offering incentives to RDVs. Such incentives usually play a major role in the realisation of their life projects, an element far more important than the normal salary of the staff. Indeed, as staff used to stress (and I personally have some experience in this), the regular salary is hardly enough to meet current basic needs (i.e. food, health, clothing and children's schooling), let alone for investment in the purchase of houses, cars, and so forth. To achieve these requires being involved in a development project and holding on to a position that guarantees access to these extras, although at the same time, such strategies conflict with the prospects for future career development, especially for younger staff. The apparent ambiguity in the statements of the RDV in case 2 concerning his willingness to remain in the programme, and at the same time, being prepared to join DANA ('because people have to think about tomorrow') point to the degree of uncertainty faced by this specific category of staff about the future. The following case sheds more light on how this category of staff experiences what I personally see as a dramatic situation.

Case 3 Aniδie: I want to quit... but is that good for the career?

Aniδie graduated in 1985 as *Ingénieur Agronome* in the field of animal husbandry, after six years of training in agricultural science at the National University of Benin (Faculty of Agricultural Sciences) and the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. He was then 27 years old. In the Community Development Programme he was the only one to have studied straight through from primary school to the engineering degree (of the *Ingénieur authentique* category). He was recruited in 1985 by the Ministry of Rural Development and appointed to the animal production division of Zou CARDER. Among other activities, he organised training sessions for the animal health and husbandry field staff. In 1987, he had the opportunity to attend a training session on milk processing in Bostswana, and in 1988 he followed a one-month course on rural extension and cooperatives in Canada.[21] During the same year, he showed some interest in the Research and Development project of the Zou Province and participated in some workshops organised by the project team. In 1989, apparently against his wishes, he was appointed to the Community Development Programme as RDV. During the first weeks of our contact in the village in which he was working, I got the impression that Aniδie was proud of his work and was deter-

mined to do his best for the success of the programme in the village. A short time later, when we were better acquainted, I received a very different impression.[22] When our contact became close,[23] he tried to explain to me that being at village level was too low a level to make any significant contribution to the development of the area, and that he could be more effective if he was RDR (head of the district extension office). Then, once he felt that I was convinced by his reasoning, he suggested that I contact the Minister of Rural Development on his behalf.[24] A few days earlier, during one of our conversations, I got to know that Aniδie's wife was the daughter of an elder brother of Mr.X, a high ranking and influencial staff member of the Zou CARDER. So when he asked me to contact the Minister for him, I said:

'But Mr.X, is your in-law. You shouldn't worry at all. I suppose he can appoint you to any post you like. You just have to ask for it!'

He replied

'Things are not that simple. This man is unpredictable and can say that I am lazy. He is my in-law but he is also my boss and one never knows what position he will occupy in the future in the Ministry. I don't want to give him the impression that I am incapable of executing missions he gives me or that he cannot trust me. The problem is that one cannot do much in this village without minimum access to external funding and an adequate means of transport. Whenever I organise a trip for peasants, I never obtain a car from the head office or the district office. In the end, peasants here don't trust me any more and I feel that I am wasting my time.

So you want me to contact the Minister whenever I can. Perhaps I could tell him that a zootechnician colleague of mine is misused in the Zou Province and then I could ask him if he could do something about it.'

He agreed. I was to go to Cotonou a few days later. But the very day of my departure he came to me and said suddenly:

'In fact, it is question of efficiency, my suggesting to be moved from the village. You should know that most young zootechnicians complain about the veterinary doctors. But, according to older ones who already have good positions in the Ministry, the younger zootechnicians complain because they don't want to work. I wouldn't like the Minister to put me in that category. He might also send me to a zootechnical service that lacks working means, and where I would certainly have to fight against veterinary doctors. I am getting old and that would be another waste of time for me. I suggest that you don't speak at all about this problem to the Minister. I prefer to stay here in the village, in my 'hole'.'

During the following days and weeks, we talked about activities in the village, concerning discussions he was having with peasants on various issues (e.g. food distribution, decisions over the use of the communal resources of the village, and construction of the village road) and about many other things. But I was surprised that he no longer complained about being in the village. In the meantime, his wife had left for Cotonou and Porto-Novo, for a 'mission for me over there', he said,

which could have been anything (including contacting people in her own family for the career situation of Aniδie). Later, I had the opportunity to discuss the issue with Cewɛ, the CARDER staff member working at head office and who was in charge of the monitoring of the Community Development Programme. I had followed him on a week's tour around each of the RDVs in the eight villages of the programme. We had ended the tour with Aniδie. Aniδie and Cewɛ had a long discussion on the assistance that the CARDER should give to the programme.[25] On our way back to Bohicon, I asked Cewɛ what impressions he had of Aniδie. He replied:

> '*The problem with Aniδie is that he won't make a clear decision as to whether he wants to stay in the programme or not. His wife also exerts strong pressure on him. She is taking courses on computer software in Cotonou, and it certainly won't be in this village that she will find a job. She grew up in Porto-Novo, so for her village life is simply unbearable. But Aniδie does not know which position would give him the best prospect for his career. But a man should not be blown this way and that by the wind and chance. You have to make a decision and stand by the consequences.*'[26]

A few months later, Aniδie was moved to the Borgou Province (a Province known for being prosperous for its cotton production, actually the biggest cotton producer in Benin) on a FAO-UNDP project for the development of animal production in the province.

Comments

Aniδie felt frustrated by the role the 'CARDER' (meaning the bosses of the organisation) were playing in the Community Development Programme. If one considers the training opportunities Aniδie had already had after no more than four years of working experience and his family connections with the General Director, one could suppose that he had significant support at a high level of the bureaucracy in the Ministry of Rural Development (the gossip intimated this also). With that, and the fact that he was the only so-called *Ingénieur authentic* among the RDVs of the Zou Province, one could assume that his appointment as RDV was not forced upon him as had been the case with Tinguédjo. We might then assume that Aniδie had most probably been enthusiastic about the programme when he first started in the village. His frustrations originated from his discovery that, contrary to what had been promised, no support could be expected from the 'CARDER' apart from monitoring and control. Despite his many visits to the head office to invite subject matter specialists to the village (located at some 90 kilometres from the head office, which he had to cover on his motorbike, 'rain or shine', he said), none of them ever arrived, though they always made firm promises and booked precise appointments with him. He felt that he no longer had any credibility with the villagers. 'They don't trust the CARDER any more' he said. The General Director was aware of these difficulties faced by the RDVs which had to do with the management of the staff at the head offices. But apparently, he did not take this seriously, though it was contradictory to the monitoring pressure he put on the RDV. In fact, this points, apart from the chaotic staff management style[27] in the CARDER, to the conflicts, the difference of priorities and therefore, the different and contradictory

ways in which the Community Development Programme was used by the different actors involved. Field staff became discouraged and pessimistic. Aniδie had the feeling that he was wasting his time, which seemed typical for younger staff.

Contrary to the impression one got from Cewɛ, Aniδie was not special at all in his hesitations or his apparent shilly-shallying about his career after he became disillusioned with the programme, and its fit with his interests (technical as much as material). Similar preoccupations are found at high levels of the bureaucracy and, in most cases, such people appeared to be at a loss, without any idea of where to go and what to expect, even those who have 'godfathers' in the system. In his attempt to handle this situation, Aniδie argued about efficiency, the geographical scope of his action and subsequent working means, suggesting that with the experience he now had, he could perform well if he was appointed as RDR (District Extension Officer). This better suited his career and material expectations (apart from housing and a few other advantages, RDRs were allocated a car).

The process described above (involving the political and gymnastic management of staff to the disillusionment of field staff and the reworking of their interests) shows that the personal interests of staff get entangled with technical arguments in shaping the everyday reality of policy making and implementation in the field of rural development. But now it is time to turn to the experts and the representatives of funding agencies for an appreciation of their role in these processes.

Funding agencies and experts: The money and the language

First, it is necessary to emphasise that no funding agency or external expert was involved permanently in the Community Development Programme. A few small field activities had been supported very marginally by some agencies but the programme remained mainly an affair of the CARDER. Also, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) had appointed three United Nations Volunteers in three villages of the programme. There was little interaction to record therefore between CARDER staff and experts or representatives of funding agencies on which to ground the following discussions. Nevertheless, one cannot fully treat the issue of policy making and implementation in the field of rural development in Benin without looking at the significant role played by funding agencies in the allocation of means and in the making of the language and rhetoric used in development intervention.

As I explained in the previous chapter, at Independence the state inherited and appropriated the colonial frame of rural development and made few attempts to change it. In fact, the room for such change was very limited. The state did not possess the tools for such a policy change. In the colonial period, native agricultural officials were confined to auxiliary positions. Furthermore, the agricultural education system provided no chance for higher agricultural training than the one year at primary school level. The first agricultural secondary school was created in 1961 (after Independence) with the assistance of funds from Switzerland, while the Benin Faculty of Agriculture opened only in the early seventies. At the same time, access to the regional agricultural schools of Ivory Coast, Senegal and Cameroon was very

selective. Also, in terms of agricultural research in the French colonies, all the local research stations were antennae of metropolitan research institutes whose main offices were located in France, where research policy was set and research programmes designed, according to French interests and priorities. Research development thus largely depended upon the metropolis. And this situation persisted for more than a decade after Independence (see Mongbo 1988). In any case, as indicated in Chapter 3, until 1972, the ruling elite were not really willing to take any initiative or risk of stepping away from the *Mère Patrie*. Another situation inherited from the colonial period was an overmanned administrative apparatus, with the return of the Dahomean auxiliaries from other African countries where they had served as colonial functionaries. The numbers more than doubled during the revolutionary period, from 9,236 in 1972 to 29,000 in 1980 and to 47,163 in 1986 (CMEP 1993: 9). The salary costs incurred put the state under constant pressure to earn revenue to meet at least part of these expenses.

Like their counterparts in the general state bureaucracy, the staff of the agricultural services developed quiet, easy-going and risk-free attitudes, with the prospect of no less than 30 secure years of work.[28] The general culture is one of clinging to the state in order to benefit from the wealth it redistributes, and the other opportunities and perks that may be derived from holding government office. Since very little wealth is generated by the national economy, attention is turned more towards external development aid. In such conditions, the funding agencies and their representatives play an important role as providers of, or intermediaries for, accessing external sources of revenue.

In the field of rural development, financial assistance is usually associated with development intervention to which the staff must adjust and whose language and practices have to be incorporated to some extent into the rituals of the organisation involved. One such example, since the early eighties, has been the notorious World Bank Training and Visit system in most CARDERs, due to the presence of a World Bank financed project. The T&V system was (and still is) presented as a good extension system for technology transfer that brings existing technologies to farmers in relevant technological packages, while providing a feedback channel through which farmers' assessments of the packages can reach subject matter specialists and, if needed, researchers. The T&V was also seen as an efficient and powerful management tool in the hands of senior staff for the monitoring and control of the activities of field staff.[29]

In addition to the T&V system, the GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation) was operating in the Atlantic Province and in many small-scale projects in the country, with the famous ZOPP (*Zielorientierten Projektplanung*, Objective-Oriented Project Planning). This is assumed to be a method for participatory and comprehensive project planning. The problem at issue is analyzed from all angles (using a problem tree), possible solutions and interventions are identified together with hypotheses as to their relevance in solving the problem and then negotiated among the parties involved (see Venghaus 1993 for a critical analysis of the Zopp method).

The mid-eighties saw the beginning of Farming Systems Research (FSR) in Benin, with the launching of one such programme of research by the Faculty of Agricul-

tural Sciences on the Adja plateau in the Mono Province, and the SAFGRAD projects in the North. The FSR process starts with the diagnosis of farming situations and the identification of 'recommendation domains' (i.e. groups of male and female peasants considered socially, economically and technically homogenous for a given problem). Possible solutions are then looked for in research stations (locally or abroad), tested in researcher- and in farmer-managed trials, before the technical package is designed for extension campaigns. This new research approach was expected to bring changes in the organisation and practices of agricultural research in Benin, while helping to devise more relevant technical packages for peasants.

The staff of the Mono, Atlantic and Zou CARDERs, as well as the researchers of the DRA *(Direction de la Recherche Agronomique)*, incorporated both the good and the bad aspects of this new approach into the organisational chart and operation of their institutions, using the terminology suggested by the experts, who also acted as the intermediaries for fund raising and/or as technical advisers for the implementation of the projects. In the Mono Province, the project was called RAMR *(Recherche Appliquée en Milieu Réel)*, in the Zou Province, R&D *(Projet de Recherche-Développement)*, and in the Atlantic Province, ESYCTRA *(Etude des Systèmes de Cultures Traditionnelles)*. Each of these projects were differently anchored to the national research system and to the extension system of the Province where it operated (see Mongbo 1989; Floquet 1994). All these projects were closed by 1989, with the exception of the RAMR project that had established a *Cellule Nationale de Recherche Développement* at the Directorate of Agricultural Research. RAMR even expanded its activities all over the Zou Province (taking over the closed Zou R&D project), with extra funding from the World Bank.

From 1993, after the closure of most previous projects and the beginning of the IMF-World Bank project for the restructuring of agricultural services in the country, the staff became rapidly used to the new organisational chart and to the new denominations of the hierarchical positions of the organisational structure, as well as the extension methods. Like the previous ones, the new organisational charts were designed to be the same for all six Provinces, as also were the activities and the approaches. According to the planners of this restructuring, there was to be a completely new and different organisation for intervention due to changes in the assignment of the CARDERs. The new orientation stipulated that the CARDER would give up all cash-earning activities (e.g. cotton marketing, seed production) and stick to extension, assisting peasant organisations and advising on rural equipment and *aménagement*. Hence, a new organisational chart was designed to fit to the new orientation. But for the CARDER staff, what happened was apparently more a change in denomination than any thing else. Time and again, the new structure was presented to me in the following way:

> *'The denomination of most of the various positions have changed: the DSEI (Directeur du Suivi et de l'Evaluation Interne) became DPSE (Directeur de la Planification, du Suivi et de l'Evaluation). The DPro (Directeur de la Production), became DVAOP (Directeur de la Vulgarisation et de l'Appui aux Organisations Paysannes), the DGR (Directeur du Génie Rural) became DAER (Directeur de l'Aménagement et de l'Equipement Rural). The C/SS (Chef Sous-Secteur) became Sup (Superviseur) while the*

AVA (Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole), the village extension agent, became APV (Agent Polyvalent de Vulgarisation).'

In most cases, and to reinforce the confusion, staff members remained in their positions (the former Director of Production was the new DVAOP, and so forth). As for extension methods, the former GCE *(Groupes de Contact et d'Expérimentation)* became GC *(Groupe de Contact)* while the PV *(Parcelle de Vulgarisation)* became PD *(Parcelle de Démonstration)* etc. These became standardised all over the country. The most astonishing aspect of the whole thing was the ability of the staff to shift from one denomination to the other. Within no more than one to two weeks, people were using the new terminology as easily as one would say 'dad' or 'mam'. Contrary to what I first thought, it was not just a matter of simplifying the presentation to me (as an outsider) by making reference to the former structure. It entailed the staff simplifying the new arrangements for themselves, incorporating them into their frame of reference and operating with them. Also, they had already assimilated the 'new' T&V approach, adopting the renewed rhetoric of 'participatory diagnosis' and 'peasant organisation'.

In this process of assimilation, staff mostly sought ways to reproduce and adapt their practices, while using a new terminology inspired by a different approach. The process seemed to work as well for village field staff as for the bosses at head offices. For example, at field staff training sessions on new approaches conducted by staff of a higher level (whose mastery of the new approach was mostly doubtful), it was often reported that when some field staff (especially those on the job for years already) asked questions on how the new methods could best be applied (mostly as a subtle way of criticising the approach and indicating its lack of feasibility), trainers ended up by saying:

'You are not newcomers in this business and you know very well how these things work... The newly recruited staff should be the ones asking such questions, while you should be those advising them.'

The staff working at the various hierarchical levels of the CARDERs (from the Directors to the village agents) seem to have developed, of course each of them in his own way, the skill of absorbing, processing and retrieving any intervention rhetoric from above, especially those from the experts and the representatives of funding agencies. In this process of language manipulation, local staff did not limit themselves to the internalisation and the reproduction of a cognitive order that would maintain them under the power and dominance of expatriates and funding agencies (van Dijk 1993). Rather their assimilation and reproduction of intervention approaches and practices became strategic in the sense that it allowed them to match their career and life projects with those of the individual experts, and therefore to profit from these circumstances for their own interests, at least during the life-time of the project, and in some cases longer. As shown above, they were particularly prolific in recent years in rhetoric, intervention approaches, methods and devices. For the staff of intervention organisations, funding agencies and their representatives were seen as 'new means and approaches'. Indeed, this was apparently a characteristic of this specific category of actors,[30] justified by their direct exposure to so-

called scientific communities and the like, and therefore to the general and changing trends in development debates. In the end, with their requirements, conditionalities, intervention approaches and devices, funding organisations and their experts have obtained an important share in the development of rural development language and practice. This has been used in intervention organisations and often presented by the staff of intervention institutions since the early sixties as 'state policy' for rural development.

It is worth noting here that the phrase 'funding organisations and their representatives' is used in its very broad sense. In fact, for most staff, there is hardly any difference between the expatriate expert (mostly white), be he technical assistant or head of project, and the funding agency. It does not seem to matter whether the expatriate acts as a local representative of the funding agency or belongs to a contracting agency or is simply an individual recruited for the implementation of the project. As long as he is an expatriate in the project, whether or not the one deciding on (or administering) the allocation of the project's means, he is assumed to have more direct (or indirect) contact with the fund providers. When the expatriate is aware of this power position attributed to him, he manipulates the rules set by the funding agency in order to negotiate the direction of the operations and try to get things done the way he wants them to be done. In both cases, the project staff simply consider him as the *bailleur de fonds*. That expatriates (and through them the organisations they represent in the projects) have played important roles in what can now be considered as Benin rural development policies, is not a statement out of nowhere. Let us briefly consider just two indicative elements. First, as individuals, the expatriates are not fundamentally different from local staff. Like the latter, they are concerned with career and with material and non-material achievements. They too have their own 'projects' (Bierschenk 1988), and hardly have to negotiate them in the arena of the formal project, since staff at various hierarchical levels are aware of the types of commitments these experts have to the projects and their moral obligation towards the project, their organisation or their employer. Second is about the funding organisation or the consultancy or technical assistance organisation that has contracted the implementation of the project. Just as the CARDER, this organisation is in search for self-reproduction and staying in the field of rural development. Therefore, it is not surprising that the staff of these organisations happen to take leading roles in the intervention, to make sure that it serves their own development, thereby influencing the strategies used by the local staff for adjusting to the new rhetoric and approach. In this way, all these actors (experts and locals of all levels) experiment and create in the field the practices of rural development, while operating in the context of the frames and structures historically produced in the process of state formation in Benin.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to highlight three major elements (institutions, categories of actors and circumstances) involved in the making of intervention policies for agricultural and rural development in Benin. First was the state, its need to

materialise its authority throughout the country, and its increasing need for revenue to pay for the heavy salary and overhead expenses, which makes it dependent on two main traditional sources of revenue: export crops and funding agencies.[31] Second were the staff of the institutions involved in interventions for agricultural and rural development, and their search for careers and self-achievement. Third were the funding agencies, their representatives and the experts, together with their ever changing rhetoric. They are also concerned with surviving in the field of development intervention and with their career and self-achievement. Not much empirical material was provided to illustrate the part played by experts and representatives of funding agencies in the field of rural development in Benin. Instead I have tried to show the ways in which the everyday making of discourse and practices by Beninese staff involved different and complex layers of the social realities of intervention contexts, in which expatriates have a significant role. It appears that what is rationalised by the various actors as the rural development policy of the institution or state results from a consensus built out of cacophonic, non-dialogical social interactions between various categories of actors. Their personal interests (for power, career, material resources, room for manoeuvre, coping with family pressure, life projects etc.) become entangled with technical arguments, which together shape the everyday reality of policy discourse and practice. The previous chapter underscored how these three elements evolved historically, with the frame for social interaction in matters of rural development being largely set before the end of the colonial period. But, as I have indicated above, I question the link, suggested by some scholars preoccupied with the critical analysis of discourse, between discourse and dominance. I disagree, to some extent, with the thesis that elites, who have access to particular communicative means, use them to produce texts and models that are stored and memorised by the dominated that end up influencing their cognitive patterns such as opinions, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values. But to take this a step further, I will explore in the following chapters the actual implementation of the Community Development Project in a village context, looking more systematically at the interactions of the project scheme with the lifeworlds of stakeholders, including those of the state agents in charge of the implementation.

Notes

1 This specific category (the military) might not be considered an important one or as a separate body at all in modern Western European States. In most Third World countries, however, the military are a determining factor which any political actor must take account of, one way or another, which again underlines the need for a culturally contextualised approach to the concept of the state.

2 Dahomey was famous for the numerous administrative auxiliaries it produced and 'exported' to the other West and Central African countries for the expansion of colonial administrations in these areas. They were involved in territorial administration but were also teachers, medical auxiliaries, doctors and engineers. The success of Dahomeans in integrating and miming the colonial auxiliary bureaucracy in West Africa earned them the flattering qualification of the 'Latin quarter of Africa'. A few years after the independence of those countries, Dahomean workers were repatriated back to their country and most of them were absorbed by the state as civil servants. The French government promised to contribute yearly to filling the budget deficit caused by returning colonial civil servants (see Ronen 1975).

3 According to some compilations, development aid to Benin is as high as 75 percent of official resources of the state. This ratio is 90 percent for Burkina Faso and only 2 percent for Nigeria (see Bierschenk and Elwert 1993: 12).

4 A common saying of the RDVs who had the possibility to make such contacts was *'Zinwo δo mɛta mɛta wɛ hin y'ayi gbo mɛ'* which means 'The monkey says we will go as a troupe to harvest the bean field, but each must look to his own head if the bean field owner appears'. But not everybody had skills or protectors to help them on that particular occasion of restructuration. And if they had, not all of them wanted people to know that they were running, or the precautions they were taking. Those people then play the hard done by, the fatalists, saying 'Nature did not provide all animals with a tail. For those who have no tail, Nature itself takes care of chasing flies from their back' *(kanlin e ma δo sia eyo, gbɛ wɛ no yan sukpo ninyi).*

5 This former RDV (Omioke) completed, about 15 years ago, a basic training in fishery at secondary school level but had hardly ever practised it. After his basic training, he received some in-service training on cooperative matters, which he practised for more than 10 years, always in areas where there was no fishing activity. With the restructuring of the CARDERs, the authorities tried to rescue as many staff as possible from being pushed out by the rules set by the IMF. Once the new structure of the CARDER was established and the job descriptions drawn up for each post, anyone without the required profile would be dismissed. The strict requirement of the IMF and World Bank before funding the project was that from the 4,916 people in jobs in the six CARDERs in 1990, 3,202, under different headings (more than 60 percent) would have to go by 1993 (retirement: 271; voluntary redundancy with some compensation: 341; closing of short term contracts: 398; leaving the CARDERs but remaining state agents: 298; forced to quit so that the efficiency of these agencies could be improved, *départ ciblé*: 1,894). But these rules were suitably twisted, to the extent that someone who had worked for 17 successive years as an accounting agent, now exhibited his school diploma in extension and was appointed as a specialist in ox-ploughing. As the budget of the new project provided in-service training, these staff were expected to catch up with the necessary skills. For the 3,202 staff who were supposed to quit jobs by 1993, the bargaining continues to the present day, especially with regard to the category of *départ ciblé.*

6 The metaphor here is of the water carrier who fetches water from the river or the well in a clay pot on the head. But the pot is generally too big to put it on the head without help. No helper wants to bend to the ground to give help, so the water carrier (usually a woman) manages to take the pot from the ground up to the knee or hip, before people help to put the pot on her head. This metaphor is very much used by village agents in the presentation of projects or activities for which so-called 'participation' of the 'target-groups' is requested.

7 *A na δ'ahuan mɛ b'ɛna wa gba mi a,* he said, which translates as 'you cannot be in an army that would invade me'.

8 Which means that people remain silent about the issue, wait for a few seconds after the man has finished speaking and then start a different subject. This is one of the ways junior staff deal with seniors when they don't agree with their point of view.

9 At this meeting, on the Benin side, were the two most high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Rural Development, together with the General Director of the Atlantic CARDER. The GTZ was represented by its Benin-stationed staff and two officials who arrived from Germany for the purpose. The Deputy Director of the CARDER who monitored the mission in the field was not there. He was probably not high-ranking enough to attend. The General Director did not really try to argue the proposition to pass the project to the PGRN, and the Ministry officials did not comment on it. After all, for the latter it was no loss, as long as the project remained within the Ministry of Rural Development. For the General Director of CARDER, it was a big disappointment.

10 He was new in the CARDER. He had worked for the past 10 years (or more) as a researcher in plant production at the Institute of Agricultural Research. He was appointed General Director of the Atlantic CARDER only in 1992.

11 Official classification of the Ministry of Rural Development distinguishes 18 different categories according to level of training and domain of specialisation (see MDR 1993). But, for administrative purposes (appointments, financial affairs etc), the categories used do not exceed four or five: Ingénieur du Développement Rural (IDR), Inspecteurs du Développement Rural, Controleurs du Développement Rural (CDR), Agents Techniques du Développement Rural (ATDR), and Assistants du Développement Rural (ADR).

12 The number of administrative support staff (administration and financial affairs, secretaries, drivers etc) has not been counted in this total. There are 129 in this category.

13 In this respect, I found the Mexican case of agricultural bureaucrats described by Alberto Arce very similar to the Benin agricultural staff. Discussing bureaucratic culture, Arce presents the routine in a District office over a 'normal working day' (Arce 1993: 54-57). The rhythm of day there (time and occupation sequences) is almost the same (except for the official working hours), including the content of the staff meetings, the gossip and the jokes. For the Benin case, one thing can be added about memos coming from the Head Office. Most District officers complain that all these memos claim to be urgent and required that *'toutes activités cessantes'*, that all other activities cease until the request is satisfied, and always within a prescribed time limit (48 or 72 hours, usually never more). Most District officers would say 'Some days, you receive one of these orders in the morning that has to be replied to in 48 hours, *'toutes activités cessantes'*, and in the afternoon, you receive another order, also from the same Head Office, again *'toutes activités cessantes'*. You really feel like dropping the first request for the second but you can't. You keep on operating like a fireman with an eternal fire'. Sometimes these memos ask for the same records or are simply contradictory in their requests,*'ordre et contre ordre'*. Another difference with the Mexican case is the care field staff take in sending non-contradictory records to the Head Office. For the situations I have documented in the Zou Province, the field staff do not bother at all. But this has probably something to do with the fact that the project there was no longer in its hottest phase when things had to be done carefully to avoid being fired. The project was over and the production of coherent documents was no longer considered important, either by District staff, or by those at Head Office.

14 The question I generally asked was: 'what training did you have?' *(Quelle est votre formation?)*. The question was asked in different contexts: sometimes I would simply accompany the staff member in a specific activity with some villagers concerning agricultural techniques or organisational matters such as clearing the path to the farms, the village drinking water well, sanitation in the village etc. In other cases, I might talk to staff who would tell me how they started the job in the village, what activities they were carrying out with the villagers and why. In many cases (especially with those who were recruited at a lower qualification level than their present one), this single question was enough to obtain a full curriculum vitae of the interviewee: basic training, work experiences, and on the job training. These latter data were normally presented with a lot of pride, indicating that the achievement had been a challenge. Most probably, my very person, as an graduate engineer from the Benin University Faculty of Agriculture and member of the teaching staff of the same Faculty, played a role in their prolixity. Sometimes, I got the impression that the person was not speaking to me as a researcher, but as one of the so-called *'Ingénieurs authentiques'*, emphasising the qualifications that made him a full engineer, and his seniority and experience that made him more efficient in the field *(sur le terrain)* than the so-called authentic ones. Every time this happened, I tried to avoid the debate and take distance with regard to the issue.

15 One criterion introduced by the revolutionary regime for the promotion of civil servants in general was *'militantisme révolutionnaire'*. For many persons this meant that you had to become a member (at least formally) of one of the local structures of the party or the government (CDR, UNSTB, OFRB, OJRB CRAD, etc..). A common saying used in CARDER then was that 'if you want to eat with dogs you have to bark as they do' *(Il faut aboyer avec les chiens pour pouvoir manger avec eux)*

16 DESCOOP stands for *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures en action Coopérative*: a four-year university level training in cooperatives that is conducted in the CPFC, the *Centre Panafricain de Formation Cooperative* in Cotonou, Benin.

17 According to him, this was a decision taken by the *CAMES: Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur* that had approved the DESCOOP diploma as equivalent to *DUES: Diplôme Universitaire d'Etudes Spéciales* or to *DEA : Diplôme d'Etude Approfondies* , post-graduate diplomas, preparatory to a doctorate degree in French universities.

18 Later I understood that, contrary to the instructions received from the Minister through the General Director of the CARDER, he did not live in the village, which is some 30 kilometres from Bohicon, the city where the head offices of CARDER-Zou were located and where he was working before he was assigned to the village. He was living in Bohicon with his family and used to visit the village daily. I visited him a few times in Bohicon. Once I asked him: 'But look, you are not going by the rules of the Ministry. What if your bosses get to know that you don't live in the village as prescribed?' He answered sharply, 'Do you think they don't know that I am not living in the village? With my age and working experience I should not be tortured anymore. I have a family and, you can see, children at primary and secondary schools. *E non kpo bo non yi fa a*, meaning that it is not when one grows old that one should receive rules and interdicts from the *Fah* (the divination) on how one has to live one's life.

19 I do not think Tinguédo pretended that he had contributed to the moving of the General Director out of the province. For the staff, these types of *concours de circonstances* are instead attributed to fate or invulnerability.

20 These kinds of situations were rather exceptional and did not correspond to the known rules. But they did occur and were object of much comment and argument among the staff, especially when they happened to engineers in sensitive job positions. From 1975 (when the CARDERs were created) to 1984 the assignment of any staff at any level to any position in the CARDERs all over the country was done at the ministry level. After 1984 only General Directors and Deputy Directors of CARDERs were appointed by the Minister. It was up to the General Director to ensure internally the management of his staff, especially those at sub-district levels. The Minister could appoint staff to a CARDER but no further. He would not appoint the staff to specific positions within the CARDER: that was the responsibility of the General Director. Therefore, for a staff member to come from a province and be appointed directly to sub-district level and take over from another staff member who had not requested to move, was quite unusual.

21 People commented that he was too new to the job (only three years) to be given such opportunities when there were staff with the same qualifications who had been working for more than five years who had not yet had the chance to attend courses abroad.

22 I was probably predisposed to thinking well of Aniδie on my first encounter with him in the village for the following reason. In the section involving my encounter with the Community Development Programme in Chapter 1, I mentioned that I met some young men who were on their way to the Covè rice production training centre. One of these young men asked me if it was a new trend for *akowe* (white collar intellectuals) to work in the villages. He asked if I knew Aniδie. Of course I did. We had graduated the same year from the same Faculty and had met again in Wageningen, Holland, in 1988 when we were both following postgraduate courses. The young man told me that Aniδie had chosen to live in the village and work with them. He voiced great enthusiasm and optimism and said how appreciated he was by the whole village. Therefore, when I first visited Aniδie, my attitude and questions must have reflected this positive impression of his presence and work in the village. He went along with this and showed me the notebook/diary he kept for recording the major happenings of the village. I later sent him an encouraging letter commenting that he was going through a very special experience from which he would learn a lot. Later I realised that if I had shown more neutrality or if I had been negative about his being in the

village, his game of presenting himself as a determined and enthusiastic RDV might not have taken place, or, at least, it would not have lasted so long.

23 I often stayed in his house for days, then followed most of his contacts with the villagers. His house was his office and the people in the village had made an *appatam* right in front of the house for his meetings with peasants and visitors. We also drove to Cotonou together now and then.

24 This was late 1990. The National Conference had already taken place and Kérékou's government was out, and so was the Minister of Rural Development who had initiated the Community Development Programme. The transitory government was established, with the former Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, under which Aniδie had graduated, as Minister of Rural Development. Moreover, the Minister was a zootechnician like Aniδie and knew him well. But Aniδie did not dare to go directly to the Minister himself. The reason why he hoped I would be able to intervene was that the Minister still remained at that moment the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture of the Benin University. As a junior lecturer in the Faculty I had a direct informal access to the Minister for issues regarding the faculty. What Aniδie expected was that I could use one of these occasions to introduce his problem to the Minister.

25 According to Aniδie, there were three types of role that the CARDER could play: control, monitoring and finally technical and financial assistance. 'But, the CARDER limits itself to control and hardly does any monitoring. As for financial assistance, it is nil'.

26 At the time, I did not pay attention to the fact that Cewɛ might know the family situation of Aniδie in detail. I thought his informed comments came from their working in the same CARDER for some years. But later, I was to discover that Cewɛ was a close friend of Mr.X, and originated from the same area as he and Aniδie's wife.

27 The account of Gbèdjèmin, in case 2, indicates the chaos at staff management level in the CARDER, and the playing off of one director against another by lower-level staff. Gbèdjèmin said that when the Director of Monitoring tried to sanction him, he would resort to his own boss in the hierarchy, the Director of Production, who was at the same level as the Director of Monitoring. One of the reasons why the subject matter specialists could afford not to keep their promises to the RDVs was that they came under the responsibility of the Director of Production, while the Community Development Programme was responsible to the Director of Monitoring. The story of the specific location of this programme within the CARDER is itself a complicated one, involving conflict between two Ministers, that affected relations between field staff – explained later in Chapter 9. Nevertheless, this location gave the subject matter specialists some room to decide on whether or not to assist the Programme. If a visit coincided with their own interests (visiting family, buying cheaper food supplies, or escaping other obligations in the CARDER), then they found good arguments to convince their Director, who was not in favour of the programme. On the other hand, a sanction from the General Director on staff under a Deputy Director was generally seen by the latter as a reflection of his authority over his people, and could make him come to the defense of his staff to some extent.

28 In the sixties and seventies, to be a functionary was equivalent to being guaranteed a monthly salary whether one worked or not (see Dumont 1966). Such an attitude is, to a large extent, still the case today, though it was threatened by the severe economic crisis of 1987-1989.

29 In its official formulation, the process starts from the village agents. They hand in their plans two weeks in advance (visits of plots, training of peasant groups, demonstration of technical package, report writing etc) to their immediate boss. The latter would plan his own two weeks for visiting (monitoring, control, assistance) all the village agents operating under him. He would send the plan to the district extension officer (RDR) who would make his monthly plan accordingly. Copies of the plans, from the villages to the district, would then be sent to the head office to the Director of Production (for monitoring and technical assistance) and to the Directorate of Monitoring and Internal Evaluation (for monitoring, control and evaluation). In addition, every field officer (at village, sub-district and district levels) should

have his planning of the day in a very visible place so that any senior staff member who might drop in would know where the field agent was and could visit him. The other component of the T&V system concerns the training called *formation par cascade*, whereby the District extension officers (RDR) are trained by subject matter specialists on a two-weekly basis and are expected to train their field staff once back in the district every week, the latter having a weekly appointment with the contact peasant groups *(US: Unité de Suivi, GCE: Groupe de Contact et d'Expérimentation)* for the transfer of the technological package, which would have then been channelled down from the Director, and would perhaps get feedback from the peasants on previous packages. As one might expect, things do not work like that in practice. For an assessment of T&V applications in Benin, see v.d. Luhe 1991 on the case of the Atlantic Province.

30 This topic has not been a focus in the present research. The discussions presented here are rather hypothetical. The subject has been touched on by other authors (Bierschenk 1988) but rather superficially. Hence, the field deserves much more thorough empirical investigation.

31 I have also indicated in the earlier part of this chapter that other equally important aspects of state budget deficits have been deliberately left out of the discussion. These are, for example, the practices, common to most African states, of exerting political control over the productive apparatus, based on the rationing and selective distribution of goods and services to reward the most loyal subjects and to entertain the hopes of others, thus developing an economic model of 'non-accumulation' (See Bates 1983; Mbembe 1988 and also Daane and Mongbo 1991).

6 Togoudo, the farm that became a village

Ilɛ Baba mi ni!
Bi unba ju gbo'ngbo n'inu omi
Oδun igboo
Koni δi kini un kabi ɛdjạ
Gbo'ngbo ni n'kodjɛ
Ilɛ Baba mi ni![1]

Introduction

The implementation of the Community Development Programme in the villages, and the different types of activities entailed, are not the result of preconceived notions of the RDV, derived from the project documents and instructions given by the bosses. They are the outcome of complex interactions between the intervention agents and local social actors of various trajectories. The attempts made by these local actors to decode and incorporate the programme into their own frames of reference and strategies for self-achievement tell us about the nature of their involvement in the reproduction of the rhetoric and practices of rural development and its links to the complex realities of their everyday life. In order, then, to put these attempts at appropriation into context, we need to look more closely at the everyday life realities of local actors, and at their indigenous definitions of 'rural development'. This is best done, not by analysing their discursive interpretations of it, but from looking at social practice, at the daily negotiation and struggles over the ecological, economic, social and political opportunities and constraints encountered in pursuing their own projects. Here I concentrate on the village of Togoudo, which, like so many other villages, is not a homogeneous community, voicing or defending common interests vis-à-vis 'external actors', though it does, of course, display its own distinctiveness. I will argue that Togoudo's heterogeneity in social attributes, income generating activities, and importantly, its discordant styles of collective management of community resources, owe much to its being a residential composite, an ensemble of farmer groups each claiming a different identity, scattered in the woods and later brought together by external circumstances to form a village, without any traditionally rooted and legitimately accepted institutional structure at the village level. In this chapter, I develop this argument, looking at the settlement process and patterns of the various groups now living in Togoudo. There are two reasons why it is relevant and important to examine these issues. First, as I have already mentioned, one cannot fully understand (or one might misinterpret) the games and strategies of the people in the community development project without this background information. The second reason is that Togoudo is not an isolated case, but typical of most Yoruba farm settlements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from western Nigeria (Berry 1985) to Benin. Due to the very ways in which they were created, these settlements now face the challenge of developing and defending a village identity and of surviving against so-called landowners,

which they seem unprepared for. They also have to develop sustainable farming systems and modes of interaction with state or nonstate organisations. The stakes are many – the control and management of natural resources, and the tapping of external opportunities. Furthermore, the region is one of the last reservoirs of natural resources in Benin. Hence we are dealing with the making of agricultural policies at grassroots level, whose consequences can affect life in the area for many decades to come. A discussion of the settlement process of the various groups living in Togoudo will give us a broader perspective on these stakes, the stakeholders and local politics. I first set the scene by giving a general picture of its social, demographic and ethnic composition, as well as its ecological situation.

A first view of the village of Togoudo

Togoudo is located in the North of Zou Province, 250 kilometres inland and some 7 kilometres west of the main Cotonou-Parakou-Niamey road that crosses the country from north to south (see map). I first visited the village at the beginning of November 1990, one early afternoon. The small road to the village was a succession of potholes and bumps and it took me about half an hour to cover the seven kilometres from the main road. It was a hot day and everything was quiet. I thought people were resting, as I saw nobody under the big trees in front of the first houses I passed, except for one or two old men and a horde of pigs fighting over a piece of cassava tubercle. A few pupils were playing in the big yard of the school which is located at the entrance of the village, next to the cemetery and facing the rather large Catholic church and the shrine of Zangbeto, a traditional God originating from the Porto-Novo area of south-east Benin, which is worshipped in almost all localities of southern Benin for the protection it is said to offer at night against thieves and evil spirits. Another shrine is located not far from the church. I was told later that it was to Sakpata, the God of the earth and smallpox.

The night was also very quiet. Early in the morning, together with the RDV and the secretary of one women's group, I took a walk around, along the very tiny paths that meander between the closely-built houses. There appeared no spacial organisation to suggest distinctive household units, or wards. The village was desperately empty and looked as if it had been abandoned for weeks, with pig excrement everywhere. Nevertheless, the houses did not look neglected. Most of them had their roofs covered with corrugated iron. The walls were cemented and marked with drawings. But the doors were all firmly closed. I shouted in some dismay to the RDV:

> *'Look! Statistics have it that 2,500 people live in this village, 50 percent of them under 15 years old. From your reports and from the CARDER staff in Bohicon, one gets the impression that the village is the most enthusiastic and active in the Community Development Programme. But where are the people you actually work with?'*

He laughed and replied:

> *'They are out until around the 20th of December on their farms some 10 or 20 kilometres from here, harvesting cotton and preparing for its marketing which starts in early*

December and will hopefully be finished by the end of December or beginning of January! The farms are spread out all over the area and the paths sometimes don't even allow for bicycles. If you want to meet these people, make sure that you are here from January to March. End of March, they will be gone again!'

In this off hand way, I had just been briefly introduced to one of the major issues that structure social life within the village of Togoudo and its relations to the outside: the farming patterns and their associated labour management, access to and control over land, and marketing. At first sight, more than 90 percent of the inhabitants of Togoudo are engaged in agriculture and other related activities, and in almost the same proportion, agriculture provides adults with their first, second or third income generating activities. It goes without saying therefore that agriculture has a structuring effect on the ways in which household patterns (resource allocation, rights and obligations) are negotiated among members, and on the perceptions that the people of Togoudo have of the 'village' as a community dwelling place and administrative unit. Thus the relevance of the socio-economic infrastructure related to this administrative status, that links the village to external situations, cannot be disconnected from the particular circumstances in which the people in Togoudo practice their main activity – agriculture. The distant location of their farms and the state of the roads and paths that lead to them, oblige peasants to spend several months of the year living on their farms.

The territory of Togoudo is located on a formerly woody plateau covering about 45 km^2, criss-crossed by six or seven small rivers, most of which quickly dry up at an early stage of the dry season. In the rainy season, some rivers rise high and have a strong current. The territory is a narrow valley, two to three kilometres wide east-west and some 20 kilometres south-north. The landscape is irregular and beautiful, with low, flat areas and higher land ridged here and there by water erosion. In a few areas, the low land, that is sufficiently extensive and has adequate clay and water supply, has been used previously for rice cultivation. Other areas are rocky, especially in the beds or along the sides of the rivers. The soil of many fields along the main pathways to the farms looks exhausted and invaded with *Imperata Cylyndrica*, an indication that the land has been cultivated for many successive years. In the surroundings of the village, there is some bush fallow (*Andropoganae*) dotted with a few small trees (*Byrsocarpus coccineus*). Far away on the farms, perhaps 15 kilometres from the village, there remain huge wooded areas which farmers are still clearing, leaving skeletons of dead but still standing trees on hectares of land.[2] In general, the soils are fertile, virgin alluvial soils with a fragile physical structure and a low clay content. This provokes quick exhaustion and facilitates depletion once they are put under cultivation, especially in soft areas, causing in some places the appearance of ferruginous blocs. Within a few years of cultivation, the clay is washed away and the soil turns to a poor sandy soil.

The area cultivated by peasants extends northwards from five to twenty kilometres from the village. Most of them build a dwelling on their farms, as they are difficult to reach, especially from May to the end of October when the rivers rise, making it dangerous to cross them, either on foot, bicycle or motorbike. Then the pathways become even more muddy or rocky while the ravines running down the

the slopes are enlarged and deepened by the flowing water. The land close to the village (within two kilometres) is not usually cultivated because crops there are destroyed by the pigs. These are raised in substantial numbers by almost all the households in the village, mostly without shelter. However, a few old people, some women and young men who either do not have the strength or any better land, produce what they can from it, on plots more or less protected with loosely planted tree fences.

Village infrastructure includes a communal health centre, a maternity unit, five water pumps, a primary school, a nursery school, a Sunday market, two stores for agricultural inputs and a project shop run by the GV.

The populations of Togoudo and their settlement processes

Togoudo is one of those Yoruba enclaves created in Mahi or Nagot territories by Idaca groups coming from Dassa[3] and its surroundings during and immediately after the French colonial war and victory over the Danxomɛ kingdom at the end of the 19th century. More recently (late 1970s), a few Fon migrant labourers from the south and Ditamari (locally called Somba) from north Benin, succeeded in obtaining land and settling in the village. Two different Fulbe groups (called Fulani) established themselves near the village some sixty years ago and are specialised in cattle herding, which they do for the other groups on a contract basis.

Despite the presence of these different groups, Togoudo remains dominantly an Idaca village – comprising 85 percent of the population. The other groups are less visible, the Ditamari making about 5 percent, the Fulbe 7 percent and the Fon 3 percent of the population. They play only a marginal, if any part in the public affairs of the village. As the Idaca put it 'the Fon and the Ditamari are 'on the farms', while the Fulbe are 'in the bush'. In fact, that is how the Idaca present what they like to see as an ethnic specialisation in the village: the Fon and the Ditamari being farm labourers while the Fulbe are the herdsmen, all of them working for the Idaca, who are presented as farm entrepreneurs. Of course the people from the other ethnic groups have a different perception of themselves. They do not consider themselves as any less entrepreneurial than the Idaca. They too, as we will see below, engage in new ways of mobilising and organising resources, mainly land and labour for the majority of them, but also through the activation of marketing networks back home for the most successful Fon migrants. The difference is that they include wage labour for the Idaca as a preliminary strategy. As far as specialisation is concerned one might draw a line between the Fulbe and the Fon and the Ditamari. The Fulbe are the only group specialised in cattle herding. They came to the area in search of herding work, but with a view to developing herds of their own. As a second occupation (nowadays a major occupation and main cash-earning activity for the younger generation), they started cultivating for home consumption and for sale, as well as raising sheep, goats and chickens. On the other hand, the main goal for the Idaca, Fon and Ditamari in settling in the area was to farm, though they often had to begin, especially the case for the Fon and the Ditamari, by selling their labour to those already there.

The settling of the Idaca

Idaca people are primarily yam cultivators. In general, yam needs new forest land every year to yield well. On a newly cleared plot, yam would be cultivated first, followed by maize (once or twice), cowpeas, cotton, maize, and groundnuts. Depending on the number of successive years cultivated, the land would need to be left fallow for 5 to 10 years before the yam would yield well again. Yam cultivators therefore mostly practice a system of farming that does not readily lend itself to their being sedentary. They are continuously in search of new woodland, and are obliged to search farther and farther from the village.

During the first years of this century, information slowly spread to the numerous villages surrounding Dassa that good land suitable for yam cultivation was available in the area now called Togoudo, some 30 kilometres to the north. In Dassa, land was scarce because of the rocky terrain, soil exhaustion and population growth. Agricultural production could barely keep up with the growing food needs let alone the accelerated commoditisation process of the early colonial period due to taxation measures and the introduction of new consumer goods and new market opportunities. First came the hunters, well known for their capacity to spend weeks in the bush, a long way from home. Idaca hunters identified the area and testified to its suitability for yam cultivation. The news spread in different directions, among relatives, friends, youth groups, and to various clans and villages. And so people gradually started to visit and to settle in Togoudo. In the first years, they stayed there only for the cropping season, returning to their villages in the dry season. Later, within two or three years, feeling less lonely because more settlers had arrived, they stayed for longer periods. The men came first, in small groups of kin, friends, and entrepreneurs who used wage labourers. Later they brought their wives and children.[4] They asked permission to cultivate and to settle there from the people of Ayinonxwe who were considered to be the owners of all the land. Indeed, disputes over land are still brought to them for settlement.[5] Idaca peasants kept links with their native villages, where, until the early eighties, they continued to bury relatives who died in Togoudo. New settlers arrived through the networks of every individual settler (friends, relatives, and labourers) and requested permission from the people of Ayinonxwe to plough the land as their own; others, after a few years working as labourers for the first settlers, simply settled without permission. As old man Tolidji said :

> '*When I protested, these people would argue that I myself did not buy the land from anybody and that I could not claim any right of ownership. Some of them built their house right in my courtyard! And there was nothing I could say. Now we are neighbours. I have left it to God.*'

The first to arrive were able to find land adjacent to the village and live in the village. Those who came one or two generations later had to travel up to 17 kilometres away to cultivate, and, depending on the networks through which they had arrived in Togoudo, they kept a residence in the village or on their farms, visiting the village now and then. Others simply moved further to the north, or to the areas surrounding Savalou and Bantè in the west or Savè and Ouessè in the east. Given

this settlement process, only the first 10 to 15 settlers and their descendant families now own the land within five kilometres of the village, but even members of these families have land at distance from the village. First settlers generally encouraged their descendants to search for land further in the bush, so that they themselves could continue cultivating plots closest to the village. Many, especially the relatives of the first settlers, now have two or more farms, one in a five kilometres zone and another in a more distant zone. In this way the settlement patterns of the 1920s, 1940s and 1950s still affect the range of alternatives available to succeeding generations. The following cases of two different settlers provide some insights into this issue.

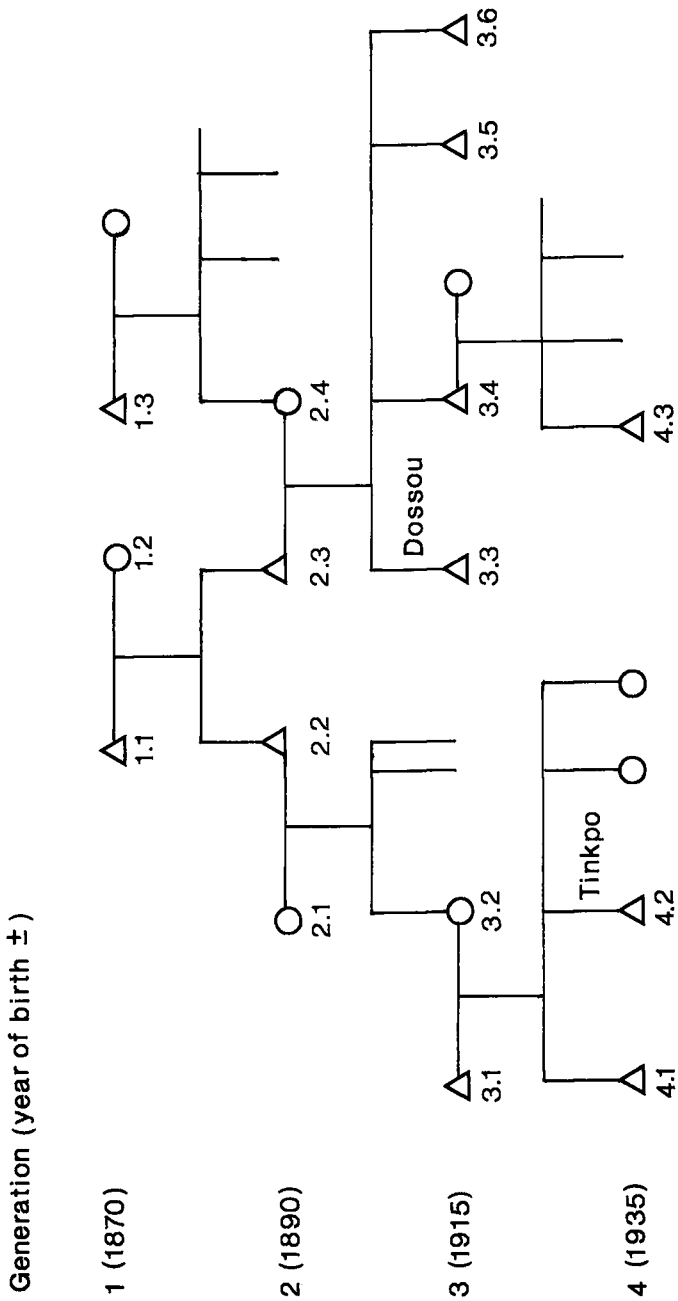
'He looked after me like a son': the settling of Tinkpo's father in Tigoudo.

Tinkpo considers himself to be from Togoudo and takes an active part in the public affairs of the village. But neither he nor his father were born in Togoudo. Tinkpo was born in 1939 in Kamaté, a village close to Dassa, some 30 kilometres south-east of Togoudo. Tinkpo's father (3.1 on the genealogy – see Figure 3) migrated from Kamaté to Togoudo in 1957 and he told me the following:

> *'There was not enough land available for me in Kamaté, and the parcels I received from my father were too exhausted and rocky. I visited Togoudo a few times, years before 1957, with my elder son and Dossou, the son of an elder brother of my wife's father (2.3 on the genealogy). Dossou's maternal grandfather (1.3 on the genealogy) cultivated land in Togoudo and offered some land to his son-in-law, Dossou's father, who then settled in Togoudo. When the grandfather became too old, he returned to Gomè and Dossou was asked to go and stay with the old man and look after him.*[6] *I was complaining of the poor fertility and size of my lands to Dossou when he told me of me of Togoudo and offered to bring me here. He introduced me to his father who looked after me as though I was his own son, and helped me through.'*

When Tinkpo's father (3.1 on the genealogy) brought his family to the village (wife and four children, two boys and two girls), Dossou's father gave him land next to his own house on which to build a house. He also lent him arable land not far from the village. Before the following cropping season, Dossou's father and one of his friends who had settled in Togoudo in the same period, brought Tinkpo's father to the people of Ayinonxwe to ask for land to start a farm. He did not have to bring money – just some *sodabi* (the local alcoholic drink) and kola nuts. They accepted his request and showed him where he could farm. All the area surrounding the village was already occupied by the first settlers. Tinkpo's father and his family obtained about 30 hectarees of heavily wooded land in Akpantan, about 17 kilometres north of the village. Tinkpo's father built a second house on the farm but came back frequently to the village, especially when Dossou's father started to grow old. The former felt a son's responsibility for him. As shown on the genealogy, apart from Dossou, who stayed in Gomè, the man had three other boys who had all left Togoudo. The first had settled in Bethel, 30 kilometres to the north-east. The others left for Ghana. One stayed, while the second came back in the mid-sixties after 15 years abroad to start trading in Dassa. In order to take care of Dossou's father,

Tinkpo's first wives were allocated land near the village, in the area formerly lent to Tinkpo's father when he first arrived in the village.



1.3 Father of Dossou's mother. Used to cultivate in Togoudo (late 19th and early 20th century). Later, he invited 2.3, his son-in-law (Dossou's father) to settle in Togoudo, while the latter was 'given' to 1.3.

3.1 Tinkpo's father was brought to Togoudo and introduced to 2.3 by Dossou.

2.3 Hosted 3.1 'as his own son' and helped him settle with his family and obtain land from the Ayinonxwe people. When 2.3 grew old, Tinkpo's father (3.1) took care of him as if he was his own father. 2.3 died in the early seventies.

3.4 Moved farther and settled in Bethel (about 30 kilomtres) North-East)

3.5 and 3.6 migrated to Ghana where 3.6 stayed and 3.5 came back and started trading in Dassa

4.3 Came back to Togoudo in the mid-seventies and settled on part of the lands formerly cultivated by 2.3.

During peak cropping periods, most members of Tinkpo's family stayed in Akpantan, but the wives and their younger children remained at home. This allowed them to start developing off-farm activities, like the women from first settler families (in animal husbandry, small trade and later food processing, which gave them acquaintance with marketing). In other words, in fulfilling their social and moral obligations to Dossou's father, these women of the fourth generation of Tinkpo's family, diversified their activities and developed assets[7] that are important for men and women of their families in the present economic life of the village. They continued with farm activities but at the same time obtained a foot in processing and petty trade. Another reason which encouraged their entry into non-agricultural activities was that the descendants of Tinkpo's father could not rely on always having the land cultivated by Dossou's father, who died in the early seventies. Indeed, a son of a brother of Dossou who settled in Bethel to farm, came back to Togoudo in the mid-seventies and claimed part of the land, five hectares of which he is now farming. In contrast to the case of Tinpko's family, things went differently for the family of Agbegui, presented below.

The grandfather of Agbegui, the lonesome settler

The land cultivated by Agbegui, now 55 to 60 years old and married with three wives and 15 children, covers about 25 hectares. He is said to have been farming this for more than 20 years. His grandfather was the one who settled in Togoudo (see the genealogy Figure 4). He did not come directly to Togoudo but left his native village around 1915 to settle in Sowé (six kilometres south-west of Togoudo) with a friend of his. He took Agbegui's father who was then about 5 years old. They cultivated there for a few years but when it became obvious that the land in Sowé was not going to be sufficient and was becoming exhausted, they began to think of moving into the Togoudo area. They then tried to make contact with landowners in Ayinonxwe which, according to Agbegui, 'finally happened by simple chance':

> *'It was my father, then only 15 or 20 years old, who found the way. He had a friend whose parents were from Sowé. The father had relatives in Ayinonxwe who were arranging land for him. My father caught a conversation about the issue one day while eating*

at his friend's house. He told his father (my grandfather), who asked the man to mediate on his behalf also, and on behalf of his friend whom he presented as his brother. And it all worked out!'

All of them (Agbegui's grandfather and his friend, and the father of the friend of Agbegui's father) obtained authorisation from Ayinonxwe people (around 1925-1930) to work land some 15 kilometres north of Togoudo, the place they later called Atinkpayi, where Agbegui's farm is now located. But it was a very difficult area, with huge trees that were very hard to chop down. The grandfather's friend, it was said, found it too difficult and decided to go farther north, to the village of Assanté, while the other man also gave up and went back to Sowé his native village. There, he took over the land formerly ploughed by Agbegui's grandfather and his friend, and farmed this and his own land – in the end a large area for him alone.[8]

'My grandfather decided to stay in the place', said Agbegui. *'He and my father started to chop down the trees with machetes and fire, and over a period of years developed large fields. My parents settled, worked and lived there, and I was born there. Other people joined us in the area. But the problem was that during the dry season there was no water. People had to go to Togoudo to fetch water. Also, it was difficult to reach the market of Gbomina. The other people who had built their houses in the area after us, started moving back to Togoudo. Finally, my grandfather brought us back also.'*

Nowadays, Agbegui's family have one of the most organised farm settlements in the Togoudo area. It caters for their household necessities with a large number of poultry and other animals, medicine plants planted as fences on one side of the compound, permanent vegetable gardens for home consumption, and many fruit trees such as mango, lemons, oranges, guavas. Two houses have been covered with corrugated iron from which rain water is collected for human consumption in big jars and drums.

When he first obtained the land from the Ayinonxwe people, and before moving onto it, Agbegui's grandfather received from Tolidji (one of the earliest to settle in Togoudo) a piece of land where he built his hut and dug a well. He had not previously known Tolidji but was introduced to him by the Ayinonxwe man from whom he got his farm. So when he returned from Atinkpayi with his family to Togouda, they settled in this compound and decided to give the place the same name – Atinkpayi. They arrived back in Togoudo around 1950, after some 20 to 25 years in Atinkpayi. Some of the people who were living in the neighbourhood of Atinkpayi farm obtained permission to build their houses in the same ward as the family of Agbegui. But many others established themselves wherever they were able, mostly on pieces of land between 200 to 400 m^2, given to them by families they had met in various ways. I have traced back 15 families whom Agbegui knew from Atinkpayi, and who now have their houses in Togoudo. Four of them live in the same neighbourhood as Agbegui and were authorised to do so by both the grandfather of Agbegui and the father of Tolidji. Six others obtained a place to live (on average around 400 m^2) from people with whom they had formed labour exchange groups on the farm who had houses in Togouda. Of the remaining five, three are linked to their host families through conjugal relations. They have more space (from

400 to 600 m²). The two others received space to build from people they used to work for as wage labourers. They have the most restricted space (200 to 300 m²). But for all these 15 families, as is generally the case in Togouda village, there is no difference in the ways in which the houses of the late-comers and those of the host families are spatially organised or integrated. Houses of different families may happen to open onto the same courtyard and face each other, while the houses of the same families may face back-to-back depending on when the houses were built. In some cases, because the space available in the 'compound' was completely occupied, descendants had to move elsewhere in the village to build their's.

Of the seven living 'sisters' of Agbegui (see genealogy; actually two daughters from his mother, two from the other wife of his father and the three others from the brother of his father), four are married in Togoudo, one in Ayinonxwe and two in Sowé, into the family of the friend of Agbegui's father who helped them to obtain access to land from Ayinonxwe people. Neither the sisters living in Togoudo, nor the wives of the third generation married into the family through men of the third generation, conduct any off-farm activity. They claim they never had the chance to learn any though it would have been useful had they done so. Two of these sisters have difficulties in meeting their needs and work for other women for cash now and then in their processing units, fetching water and wood, and cooking. The youngest wife of Agbegui, the wife of the third generation in household 4 and a married girl from household 3, are members of a women's group, supported by the RDV. They are learning how to process cassava in order to do it later on their own. As for the other women of the family, apart from animal husbandry, small maize and cowpea processing units at a trial stage, whose products are sold in the village, none of them conduct any real off-farm activity. Occasionally, especially during the dry season, they sell their labour to women involved in processing groundnuts, brewing sorghum/millet and maize.

The 'Fon' and the 'Somba' wage labourers in Togoudo: the other trend of migration

The Fon started visiting Togoudo in the early 1970s. People in Togoudo use the term 'Fon', for all seasonal labourers coming from the south. Though most of these labourers arrived from the plateau of Abomey and Bohicon (the Fon area of the province), some were Adja people coming from the Mono province in south-west Benin. These people (the Fon and Adja) come from densely populated areas (sometimes over 200 inhabitants per km²) where the soil, though much less fragile than the soils of the northern part of the province, is quite irreversibly exhausted since it has been under permanent cultivation for the early 17th century (see for example, Cornevin, 1981) with shorter and shorter fallow periods.

Among the Fon coming from the Abomey and Bohicon plateau are two subgroups, with distinctive cropping patterns. Those coming from the southern part of the plateau (Agbangnizoun, Za-Kpota) cultivate mainly maize, cowpeas and groundnuts, which do not necessarily need virgin forest land. Those coming from the northern part of the plateau (the Djidja) specialise in yam cultivation and have cropping patterns very similar to those of the Idaca. Most of these Fon, were unable to settle in Togoudo or in its surroundings and went farther to the north of the

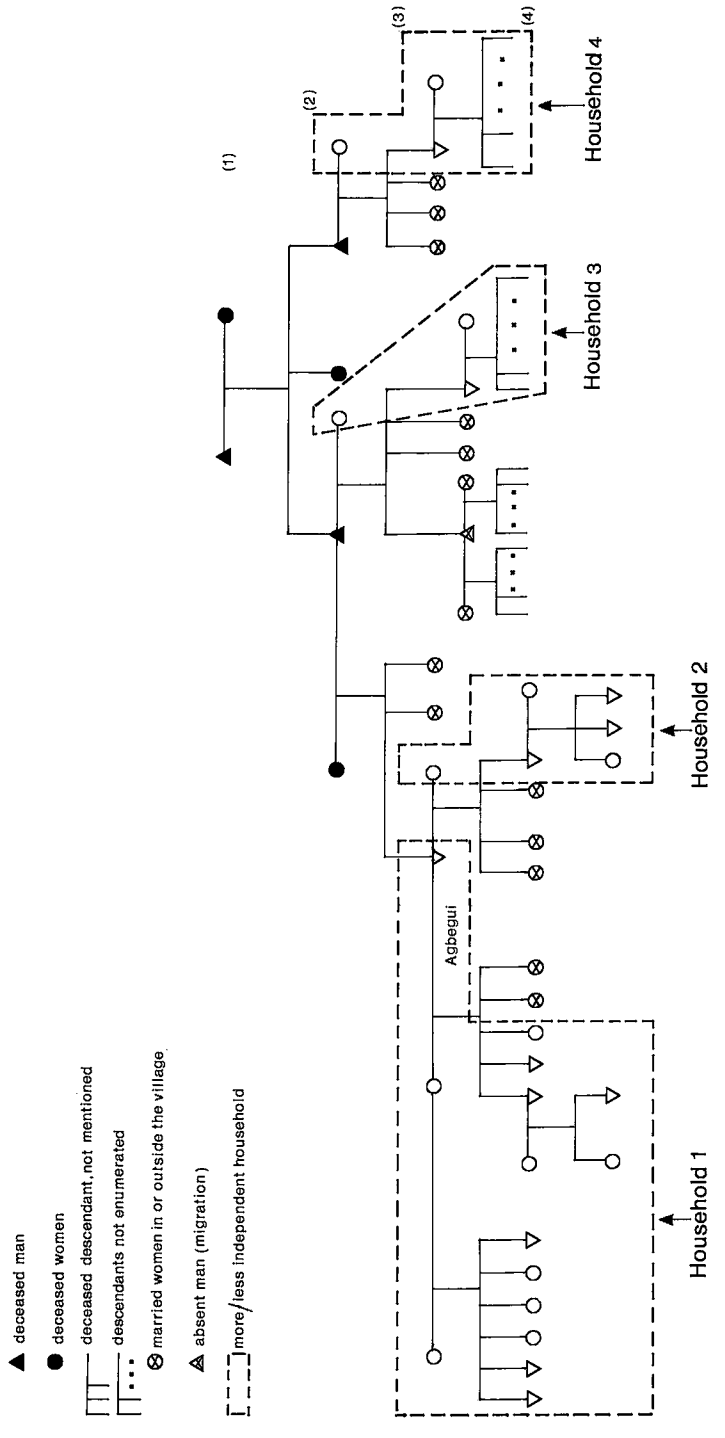
province, to Bantè in the west, and Savè and Ouessè in the East (see Floquet and Mongbo 1992).[9] The father of Sévérin (who is now a *Goxonon*, a sort of landlord in Dani, in a settlement named 'Sévéringon', after himself) arrived in Paouignan with some Mahi cultivators, some 30 kilometres south of Dassa, where he obtained a few hectares of land for himself and his followers.[10] From the late 1970s. Sévérin rode north on his bicycle, in reality in search of land, but pretending that he was looking for agricultural work. He visited Togoudo for two successive years and soon decided there was no chance of obtaining enough land for yam cultivation. He searched farther to the north and obtained permission to settle on the territory of the Nagot of Savè in 1981 after some Idaca who settled in the area (Dani) 10 years earlier. Nowadays, Fon yam cultivators from Djidja occupy land along 30 kilometres tract, extending south-east from Dani to the Ouémé river (see Map 2).

The other Fon labourers (those from Agbangnizoun and Za-Kpota with more sedentary types of cropping systems) were used to cultivating the same plots of land for many successive years with short fallow periods. When they started visiting Togoudo, they mostly held onto their plots back home (see also Roesch 1992). They had a good knowledge of the climatic differences[11] between the north and the south of the province (200-250 kilometres from south to north from Bohicon to Bantè in the west or to Savè and Ouessè in the east) which they followed to keep their own farm at home, to sell their labour in areas such as Togoudo or to cultivate a few hectares there – depending on how much family labour they could mobilize. When they succeeded in obtaining enough land (they needed two to three hectares), they settled in the village. But the early nineties, they were still returning each year to their native village (mainly during the dry season which coincides with Christmas and the New Year). They also returned to bury relatives who died in Togoudo.

Among the Somba there are various ethnic groups (including the Ditamari) coming from the Atacora province, in the north-west of Benin. They come from too far away – and north-western Benin has poorer travelling infrastructure than the south – for them to engage in the gymnastics of the Fon. The five Somba peasants I briefly conversed with declared they came from the rocky part of the province (the Atacora mountain chain) where they cultivated on terraces. Hence they have a good opinion of the sandy and relatively deeper soil of Togoudo. Even when thought to exhausted by Idaca yam cultivators, the Somba nevertheless consider the land still suitable for yam cultivation. They settle as permanent wage labourers, specialising in yam cultivation, working for one or two Idaca peasants with whom they establish patron-client relationships. Later, the Idaca patron would provide them with a piece of land on which they could grow yams, maize, cassava, millet and sorghum. Most of them settle on the farms with their wives and children. When one walks around on the farms far away from the village, one finds now and then Somba 'households' living in isolation even during periods of light work load.

In general these 'foreigners', as the Fon and Somba are labelled by the Idaca, do not need to resort to the landowners of Ayinonxwe to have the land they need. The Idaca in Togoudo are aware of their importance for their own activities as available labour and do not consider them to represent a threat to their position as 'landowners'. As Agbegui declared when asked whether he ever lent land to an Idaca in need of it:

Figure 4 Genealogy of Agbegui's family



> *'Never! You cannot lend land to Idaca people. To foreigners yes! When you lend your land to an autochthon (Idaca), he would plant trees on it and turn the land into his property. People in charge of settling the case (mostly from Ayinonxwe) would ask to whom the trees belong. In general, the one who planted the trees would win the case. The foreigners don't do that and you can keep your eyes on them and trust them. I don't think they intend to stay for ever, so they cannot take the land away. Our Idaca people would try their best to knock you down.'*

As I indicated earlier, none of these 'foreigners' took part in the public affairs of the village, at least not in the early nineties. None of them was a member of any of the various committees (administration, water, health centre, school, church,[12] cotton). They rarely show up at any kind of village meeting, but are counted as members of the cotton market or the peasant cooperative, which gives the leaders of these bargaining units, some weight in their negotiations with the Board of the GV, with the RDV, the VNU and other intervention organisations visiting the village.

The Fulbe: a local bank in the bush

Walking around in the village of Togoudo, one comes across young Fulbe girls selling locally made cheese, which they carry in calabashes marked with beautiful decorations. These girls look different from the village girls, especially in their dress, jewels and make up. To each other, they speak their own language, the Fulfulde, but with the villagers they speak Idaca. When asked where they come from, they point their finger to the south. If one inquires near Togoudo people about where they live, one receives an answer that is not surprising: 'in the bush'.[13] They visit the markets to sell their cheese and buy consumer goods. Social distance persists between the two groups, which shows through the clear separation of residence and almost no inter-marriage. Both groups look down on each other. In the case of Togoudo, the Idaca consider the Fulbe as those 'in the bush', while the *Lamido* (chief of all the Fulbe in the northern-Dassa area, some 40 kilometres away), and the head of another camp, referred to the villagers who owned the cattle and the land they grazed, as *haabe,* which in their social classification is the third and last category down the Fulbe social ladder.[14] There are three of these 'bush camps' around Togoudo. The Fulbe herdsmen camp there with their cattle and the cattle of people from Togoudo, especially the Fulbe of the biggest camp situated less than one kilometre south of Togoudo, which can be reached only through a very small and hardly visible path. These Fulbe came to the area in search of jobs, which for them meant herding. The men led the movement, bringing their wives and children with them, and settled on permanent sites. Members of three Fulbe patriclans live in the camp. The first to arrive and settle was the father of Djato Kadeeri, the head of the camp who is also the *Lamido*. He is between fifty and sixty years old. Djato and his brothers were born in the camp. Their parents arrived and settled there some 65 years ago from the north of Benin, because, as the mother of Djato explained, all their animals died from drought. The Idaca people allowed them to settle there and later gave them cattle to herd. The two other groups came to the

village much later (between 10 and 5 years ago) and were hosted by the group of the *Lamido*, without the need to ask authorisation from the Idaca, as long as they remained in the same camp. Those from the other camps, though under the jurisdiction of the *Lamido*, arrived independently and settled with the permission of the two other villages that together with Togoudo form a commune.

From farm settlement to village status in Togoudo

As demonstrated in the foregoing account, the village as a residential place was constituted by different flows of migration composed of individuals and groups of people who happened to be informed about the availability of land or pasture in the area. Initially they considered the locality as made up of farms, and not as a village to live in (compare Mondjannagni 1977: 135 and 160). Even within the same ethnic group, their origins were different with persisting strong links with kin back home. In the following discussion, I concentrate on the Idaca, leaving aside the Fulbe, Fon and Somba for three reasons, two of which I have already mentioned. First, the Idaca make up 85 percent of the population, and so the village is considered an Idaca village. Second, apart from their role in the economic life of the village, neither the Fulbe, Fon nor Somba have much presence in village politics, at least not actively in the various adventures of the Community Development Programme. Third, the single Idaca group offers sufficient ethnographic material for illustrating the minimum level of social cohesion of a farm settlement like Togoudo that was forced, in one way or another, to turn itself into a village and establish the basis for some collective life. As Agbegui put it,

> '*This village! It is a mixture of different families of different origins. We never can speak with one voice. There are people from Paouignan, Tankossi, Sokponta, Kamaté, Lèma, Gomè, Kabolé, Oguinrin, and so on. Some were even former slaves in Danxomɛ and were freed only after the French war had destroyed the kingdom. Many of us still have our houses and rights over lands back home. We all speak Idaca, but we are not the same. And it is difficult to have a chief here.*'

An indication of the diverse origins of Togoudo people is the diversity of the patriclans (Ako) to which they claim to belong, namely, the Omon-Djagoun, Omon-Aro, Omon-Ako, Omon-Ila, Omon-Sankpan, Omon-Alami, Omon-Ignim, Omon-Itcha, Ayato, Adjanu, Oguiju, Akrivisodonu, Ijehoun, Iloti, and Otchiilokéado. In these clan names, 'omo' means 'children of', signifiying either the home town, or the ancestor who founded the clan. Hence since there has been tremendous migration of Yoruba people from Ilé Ifè all over the area from the 12th century onwards (see Smith 1969; Cornevin 1981), different clan names based on origins and ancestors might well designate the same group of descendants. And there are other ways in which the origin of some of these clans might overlap; for example, people start to bear a prestigious matrilateral name for political reasons in a host environment, thereby creating a differentiation within their natal patriclan, or they adopt a protecting God that entails the use of new names and affiliations. In short, there are many opportunities for the complex interlocking of histories among these various

groups who from time to time claim to be different from one another. I did not investigate this issue fully, but the claim by the various informants to belong to different clans is an indication of their search or need for an identity different from that of others, despite the fact that they speak the same language and have shared the same living area for more than three quarters of a century. But, though it serves as a discriminating argument, clan membership may also be used as a unifying argument in some bargaining contexts, even across ethnic groups. I will not delay with examples of its use among the Idaca, which can be taken as self evident. The most interesting I recorded is its use to turn Mahi and Idaca into the same groups: *'We are the same people, we have the same origin'*. Indeed, Adjanu and Akrivisodonu are Adja-Fon spellings where 'vi' means children of (a person) while 'nu' means children from (originating from a place). Nevertheless, these are supposed to be the clan of some Idaca people who belong to Yoruba society. Either they derived this from their mother's side, or from an earlier migration in Adja land probably prior to the foundation of the Danxomean Kingdom in the mid-17th century, or they acquired it from a change of affiliation after a conversion to a new religion (or God). Other clan names indicate specialisation, such as *Ayato* which refers to people doing metal work, whose God protector is Ogoun in Yoruba, Gou in Fon. By extension, *Ayato* refers to people whose main working tools are made of metal as, for example, hunters. Therefore, these latter clans I have enumerated existed in both Adja-Fon-Mahi and Yoruba-Idaca societies. When the family of Goudali, one of the first settlers asked for land from the people of Ayinonxwe, an argument that favoured them the most, according to Goudali, was that they were Adjanu, which was the clan of the mother of the Ayinonxwe chief of the time.[15] But one should not be misled by such arguments as used in this specific event. They do not necessarily indicate an internalisation of the same social conventions, norms and values as the clans of the Ayinonxwe Chief. It may have helped the Ayinonxwe Chief to solve that specific problem within his chieftaincy, or perhaps they did not really consider themselves as 'owners' of the land in any case. But Goudali often uses this argument to show that he and his family are closer to Ayinonxwe people than anybody else in Togoudo, and therefore they are less strangers to this land than the others. As noticed by Sara Berry from her study of two Yoruba communities in Western Nigeria,

> *'People living in the same compound sometimes trace their descent from different lineages or different towns. Traditions of origin are remembered for long periods of time, even among people settled together in the same compound for several generations. Differences that arise may exacerbate divisions and conflict among neighbours or even kin. Such traditions are just one of many overlapping expressions of Yoruba social identity which may be used both to pull people together and to divide them, when questions arise concerning access to property, power, or prestige'* (Berry 1985: 45).

Apart from the social distance in the clan argument (distance which, as shown above, is shortened or widened according to the use one wants to make of it), there were physical distances that reduced the chance for social interaction between the settlers in their everyday life. Even for the groups who came together in Togoudo, though their huts were built in the same area, their need for land (the specificity of

slash and burn practice, particularly with regard to yam cultivation where new land is needed almost every year) resulted in their scattering in the forests.

Through this process, small hamlets such as Agbegui's were created all over the area, which, from the late fifties, merged into the three wards that now form the village, each made up of a composite set of migrant families of diverse origins. The reasons for coming to live in Togoudo were many: well water construction was easier there, more and more people were settling there and it was better to leave the bush and live among people. Another important argument was that access to Gbomina, the regional market located seven kilometres to the south-east was better, and there was another important market five kilometres to the south-west. Thus the formation of a village identity among the settlers, especially the Idaca, started later, around the fifties and sixties, compared with the beginning of settlements in the area in the late 19th/early 20th century. One crucial moment in that process was the legislative elections that took place in the mid-sixties when the settlement was offered the 'opportunity' to change its administrative status, from farm to village.[16] Incorporation into the national administrative structure obliged the people of Togoudo to establish a minimum base for formalised collective life. A village chief was needed and so the colonial administration appointed the founder of the farm. That provoked a quarrel between two families who both claimed that their fore-fathers were the ones to first cultivate and settle in the village. The consensus reached then was to appoint counsellors among the elders from the three wards of the village. They would jointly appoint the village Chief, after consulting the Fah (divination). In the same process, they decided to give a new name to the settlement and Togoudo was agreed.[17] Until then, the name of the metropoly of the people of Ayinonxwe. The name was *Savalou-Agban*. It was said that the first Idaca who arrived there found large populations of a palm species in the area. Therefore, the place was named on the basis of the supposed owners (Savalou), and the vegetation that attracted the attention of the first settlers. But until 1968, many people complained that the mail sent by their migrant relatives from Ghana and the Ivory Coast were mistakenly sent to Savalou and got lost, because the village was not known (and did not belong) to the administration of Savalou but to that of Dassa. That was the official reason given to justify the need to change the name. But apart from this explanation, readily given by many informants, another argument presented by the 'leaders' of the time to the villagers concerned their resentments against the name 'Savalou-Agban', resentments that came from the consciousness of being Idaca (Yoruba) in Mahi (Fon) land and in a settlement that carried a Mahi (Fon) name, which was then presented as unacceptable.

In this way, the process of incorporation of this new, and what I would call residential, composite into the wider politico-administrative apparatus of the state, generated new identities and new roles (for the wards, for example) and new fields of bargaining and struggle among various groups regarding local affairs and relations with the state. This process excluded the Fulbe, despite their early arrival in the area and their economic relationships with the Idaca,[18] but also the Fon and the Somba. I use here 'residential composite' as opposed to 'residential unit' to highlight the absence of a traditionally rooted and legitimately accepted institutional structure at the village level. I do not mean that where these exist, they enjoy

unanimous compliance from the population. But they structure to some extent the resolution of social, organisational and even technical conflicts or constraints of various sorts, including, as pointed out by Drinkwater (1988: 265) in a case in Zimbabwe, agricultural production. In fact, as far as Togoudo is concerned, there seems to have never been an attempt or a serious need to create a structurally-defined residential unit, even at the simple discursive level. Indeed, the potentials for this were few if one looks at the settlement process of the inhabitants. As Agbegui puts it, and commonly acknowledged by people, the village is a mixture of different families *'To eloo, ako jo kple to wɛ'*, an expression that gives the idea of an incoherent mixture of different clans *(ako)*: a sort of *Russian salad*. In fact, many Idaca and Fon villages in these Nagot and Mahi territories in the northern part of Zou Province in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had this in common, unlike other parts of the country and in earlier times when new villages were founded when a split or breakup within a family grouping occurred. One branch would leave and establishing a new residential entity, with some centralised organisation and a God or mythical-based legislation to control natural and human resources. In most of these cases, even where broken relationships were later restored, the departing group would sever contact with its origins and organise itself independently. In other cases, groups of different origin but living in the same territory managed to set up land cults that functioned, for a time, as an institution for setting land issues (see Lombard 1994: 43-44). In the case of Togoudo, almost no traditional religion was introduced, no rituals for caring for the land or for the ancestors, except two annual rituals whose relevance is contested by many people, young and old.

One is the annual hunting ritual performed by the descendants of hunters. It was supposed to protect hunters in the bush and bring them luck in killing many animals. Critics say that hunting feeds no-one any more; and these criticisms are even stronger within hunting families. The reason is that the first hunters who arrived in Togoudo were not interested in agriculture and therefore did not retain more than one or two hectares for themselves, leaving little chance to their descendants to earn a living from agriculture. Also, with expanding farming activities everywhere, there are few wild animals left in the surrounding bush. Even the aulacodes (a variety of big rats) are chased away or killed by the large cattle herds that cross the area every year searching for water and pasture.

The second annual ritual is that of Sakpata, the God of earth and smallpox, a half day ritual meant to protect the village against smallpox and at the same time to remember the first settlers. This ceremony was first performed in the early sixties after a smallpox epidemic, when the elders of the settlement met and decided to call the Mahi priest of Sakpata to save them. Since then, the elders of each ward (later the selected or elected members of the village council) have performed this ritual every year, which requires a goat and two hens. A purifying infusion is prepared and every villager living in the village or on the farms is requested to smear the infusion on his body and contribute a symbolic 5 FCFA. Many of the literate young men contest the use of such a ritual, arguing that smallpox has been under control for years now. Nevertheless, most of them and almost all peasants come in from their farms to perform the ceremony. Some young men say that they comply, not to protect themselves from any accidental infection, but to avoid the anger of the

Sakpata priests who are suspected of still holding samples of the virus which they could throw on anyone who contests their authority.

Apart from these two rituals, traditional village rituals were performed in the many different native villages of the settlers. However, as noticed by Sara Berry, who observed similar phenomena among 20th century Yoruba migrants in Western Nigeria, such traditions do not entail the continuing active participation of emigrants in the affairs of the community of origin (Berry 1985: 47-49; Peel 1978 quoted by Berry, 1985). In fact, in the case of Togoudo, these traditions are being progressively eroded as settlers go back to their homes of origin less often now they have started to bury their parents in Togoudo. At the same time, the absence of such traditions at village level in Togoudo deprives settlers from opportunities to socialise. Christianity has to some extent filled the gap. First contacts with the Catholic church started most probably in the 1930s or 1940s. A first wattle and daub church was built in 1954 and the stone building was erected in 1988. The first school in Togoudo was the Catholic one, opened in 1963, when the Catholics ran a weekly health service from 1968-1974 before the public health centre was built. Now, 85 percent of Togoudo inhabitants claim to be Catholic, six percent are Protestant and nine percent are Muslim. Adepts of local religions do not exist, apart from a handful of young men around Zangbeto, who they apparently use as a night hobby (CARDER-Zou 1991: 2). But these statistics say nothing about the individual religious beliefs and practices of people in Togoudo. The fact that there is no indigenous religion largely *and openly* practised in the village does not mean that the practices and beliefs related to these religions are not widely shared by many individuals in the village. One finds traces of such practices and beliefs in people's houses (various sorts of idols), on their body (rings, chains, scarifications), on the farms (statuettes, palms hanging on trees, traces of animal sacrifices etc.), and in expressions and invectives of normal daily interaction. But there exist no organised religious practices such as one finds in their places of origin that might influence the conditions of production and self-achievement strategies. And that is one aspect on which there is no contradiction between individual beliefs and practices and the declared commitment to Christian churches. Indeed, within Christianity, there are no 'constraining' rituals related to land fertility, entreaties for a good rainy season, pre-yam consumption, thanks givings for good yields, with the need for priests to mediate in one way or another the process of production. In their villages of origin these rituals would mostly take place in connection with a landlord and a hierarchy of related social positions passed on to following generations through hereditary systems within the same family or among a group of families (Lombard *op. cit.*). Also where they do exist, such positions are not hard and fast but function as symbols subjected to negotiation and transformation.

Indeed, we have here among the Idaca in Togoudo, good evidence for what Klausen calls a high convertibility of money (Klausen 1968, quoted by Long 1977: 116), although we should not assume that such a unicentric system derives from the conversion of Idaca peasants to christianity and the adoption of new values, but rather from the fact that they do not reproduce in their host environment the religious values and hierarchical social organisation of their native places. A significant indication of the absence of such symbolism in Togoudo is the lack of a

landlord. As Goudali, Tolidji and other early settlers complained, each of them separately:

> *'There is no Balɛ (someone responsible for all the land, a sort of landlord or chef de terre) in this village. Everybody can do anything he likes in the 'bush' without having to report to anybody. He can plough new land, sow, harvest and eat new agricultural products at any time, without any of the ceremonies our ancestors used to perform. Most importantly, he can host anybody he wants to on his own patch and give him land as he likes. There is nothing you can say. They will tell you that you did not buy the land yourself. They seem to have forgotten that the land on which a village is established is never a good but a gift to the founders by Orisha (the supreme God in Yoruba pantheon). If you are not careful, they will come and settle on your own land.'*

The situation is more structured with regard to land in other settlements (for example, Gobé, Dani, Katakou near Savè) where a 'landlord', a Balɛ for the Idaca or a Goxonon for the Fon, is appointment by the landowners, usually those who first asked for authorisation to settle, and who is in charge of controlling access for new settlers and organising the payment of a rent on the land. One notices here that such organisation does not serve so much internal interests but rather acts to exert external control on people's movements into the settlement. In the case of Togoudo, the gate remains wide open for negotiations and the battle for self-achievement. This has, I believe, an important influence on the decision-making process at village level, especially in relation to external matters, for example, in contexts of state intervention such as in the Community Development Programme.

Stakes, stakeholders and local politics in the village of Togoudo

As appears from the foregoing discussion, there is no heriditary chieftaincy, no inherited, legitimated institutional power for any category of the Togoudo population. People have to acquire status through their own efforts and strategies and in this sense are *self-made men*, but not in the sense of Melanesian *big men* as presented by Sahlins (1963), nor the political entrepreneurial African *big men* analysed by Médard (1992). Big men in Togoudo or those holding leading positions in village affairs are apparently not in search of social recognition and prestige by investing the wealth they have accumulated in social enterprises, as Melanesian big men do. Nor are they highjacking pre-existing institutional political authority that facilities them to accumulate and invest in the maintenance of power, as in Médard's analysis of African big men. As we will see in the next chapter, access to any politically influential position in the village depends on several complex factors related to the various stakes and interests that make up the economic web and the everyday life of men and women that shape local politics in Togoudo. The positions are used to develop or maintain social networks within the village, but mostly in order to have access to external opportunities, from state or private channels, that become functional for mobilizing resources for further accumulation, developing what I would call *externally oriented self-achievement strategies*. Although it might be analytically possible to make distinctions between these stakes, one is soon halted

by their intricate, interconnected and intermixed nature. Also, one needs to search beyond their manifestations to deline the inner logic of the grounds on which these stakes and the stakeholders operate.

An obviously primordial stake is the access to and control over land. As I show in the next chapter when discussing income generating activities, apart from the general insecurity related to this, the land tenure situation seems closed because there is no land market. The option of moving farther in search of new land is less and less feasible. People seek ways to mitigate this constraint by intensifying their cropping systems or animal husbandry, trading in agricultural products, starting small processing units, quiting agriculture and migrating to town, or by trading in manufactured products. People also invest in social and family relations or manipulate clan identities to obtain access to land.[19] The stakes for earning a living from these alternatives in Togoudo are unequal and their chance of success depends on the assets one has to invest in them (such as literacy, migration experience, family labour, and insertion in the right networks).

Another important arena concerns cotton production and marketing. Chapter 2 gave some hint as to the complexity of this arena and to the stakeholders. I indicated that cotton is a social good through which 1) social structures are generated within the village (e.g. cooperatives at village to district level, seed distribution, and quality control arrangements, markets, and brokerage positions), 2) household patterns are elaborated and negotiated among members, and 3) the village economy and politics is linked to the market economy to state policies. But it is not only the history of cotton in the village, introduced in the mid-sixties, that carries (or reproduces) peasant-state relations. Indeed, searching beyond cotton for the logic of this specific ground of coalition and confrontation brings one to other crops such as yams, groundnuts, tobacco, pepper, cassava and cowpeas. As we later see through the life histories of a few actors, these crops have played a decisive role in cash earning and in bringing the advantages (and other consequences) of incorporation into the world economy to the village. Each of these crops has necessitated the development of forms of brokerage which peasants have more or less shared in elaborating. This stock of experience is now largely invested in bargaining over cotton but it will also influence the strategies people will adopt in the future for dealing with other opportunities after or alongside the cotton era.

Another stake closely related to agricultural production in general, to alternative sources of income, and to cotton is labour management. The influence of the labour requirements of income generating activities on household patterns is self evident. But an additional aspect of labour in Togoudo is its relation to wage labour and the control of migrant labourers. Wage labour, particularly specialised labour from the southern part of the province is not always available on the free market. In recent years (since the late eighties), brokers have emerged who travel down to Bohicon or up to the north to the Atacora Province to organise the recruitment and transportation of labourers to the village. Such people hold firm control over the allocation of this labour, including the labour of their wife and independent children. And access to this labour can have an important impact on production result.

Access to external interventions is a stake ground closely related to the previous one. From the late eighties into the early nineties, the main intervention product

searched by peasants for was short-term credit to pay for wage labour and longer-term credit for animal traction. The brokers involved are state agents of different hierarchical levels (depending on the source of the intervention), NGO agents, and literate children from the village, organised (or not) in development associations. The objectives pursued through access to external interventions are also related to prestige, that is, the status or the image of oneself which one wants to project to fellow villagers.

> *'It does not matter if what we are trying to gain in the group does not work. We are already glad that we are known from outside. People come from a long way to visit us'.*

As we have seen, some of those fighting for leading positions in the different sorts of organisations that provide access to the material and non-material advantages of external interventions do not exclude, at least in their arguments, the undermining of village level structures such as the GV.

One particular ground for external intervention concerns the state, whether in respect to public administration or development issues. The stake here is to obtain a position which enables one can take a share in the advantages (not only material) that might derive from state channels. Various committees are formed (involving cotton producers and health, school, church, community development, public administration groups) that are the battlegrounds for actors who have the will and necessary capacities (discursive as well as material) to enter into this arena.[20]

This brief sketch of the arenas and coalition grounds involving individuals and groups in Togoudo serves to underline how certain social relations, rules and values are historically produced and continually negotiated, locally but also in close relation to external factors – the settlement of the village itself being a voluntary act of constructing a composite social 'order' in an alien world.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced us to the different processes of settlement of the various groups in Togoudo. I discussed the influences of these on the range of opportunities open to the descendants of the original settlers and pointed to the multiplicity and interconnected nature of the various grounds and arenas generated by people in settling and creating a basis for individual, group and collective life within the village and vis-à-vis outside contacts. These grounds and arenas are social spaces in which people negotiate and struggle for self-achievement, and what they define as 'development' or the pursuit of 'well-being'.

We have now reached a point where we need to remind ourselves of the theoretical discussions earlier in the book. I argued that defining the actor requires investigating the grounds of the action, the social encounter, but also, going beyond this, how present encounters are articulated with other space-time locations. I suggested that this required focusing the analysis on the multiplicity of stakes and the complex interlocking of their histories. I argued that the concept of a 'field of rural development' might help overcome this problem (see Chapter 2), channelling the investigation and analysis, and assisting in the selection of the most relevant stakes, stake-

holders and grounds. But here one should be careful not to miss the point. From the discussions in Chapter 4 and 5, we saw the making of a 'field of rural development' as spaces for social interaction which cannot easily be equated with the model of 'rural development' as perpetuated by policy makers and external institutions. The main similarity between the two is that they are both the products of long histories of social interaction that are partly shared. But, after the discussions just conducted, we should be wary about merging these contrasting images and interests at work in Togoudo into a single 'field of rural development' as it emerged from the preoccupations of the state and the sorrows and worries of bureaucrates discussed in the previous chapters. Nevertheless, that is exactly what the different actors involved in the Community Development Programme at the village level seek to do and achieve in the everyday implementation of the programme, thereby manufacturing consent to and reproducing 'rural development'. But, before we come back to the logic of these reproduction processes, the following chapter explores more deeply the apparent absurdity of these local realities, starting with a discussion on the productive activities and the self-achievement strategies of men and women in Togoudo.

Notes

1 'This is the land of my forefathers! It is your problem if you have forgotten where your parents came from. A tree trunk should never forget that it comes from the woods. Living in a river for 80 years would never turn it into an alligator nor a big fish. It would eternally remain a tree trunk. Yes! just a tree trunk! This is the land of my forefathers.' That was the reply of a young Cabɛ *home-man* and landowner to an old Idaca man of more than 70 years old, born in the settlement, who was protesting that he was still considered a foreigner in a place in which he had been and which he had never left, while he no longer had any roots in the place from which his parents had come. This discussion took place in 1994, some 30 km North of Togoudo.

2 The technique for killing the trees consists of cutting a tommy-hole around the trunk close to the ground, until the axe reaches the inner part of the tree. They are then set on fire until the tree dies, standing. The interest in killing but not chopping down the trees is that living trees compete with yam plants for sunlight and soil nutrients, while the dead trunks serve as trainers for the crawling leaves of the yam plants.

3 Dassa is a Yoruba kingdom created in the early 18th century. It is one of the many Yoruba kingdoms (e.g. Abèokuta, Oyo, Kétou, Savè) created after the long migration started in the 12th century from Ifè (in today's Nigeria. See Smith 1969; Cornevin 1981). All the area from the Abomey plateau to the north of the province was apparently occupied or controlled by Nagot (Yoruba) groups, or subjected to regular attacks from these groups, until the mid-17th century when the Fon kingdoms of Danxomɛ and the Mahi kingdom of Savalou were established.

4 Idaca are a patrilineal and virilocal group, practising a homogeneous inheritance (though arrangements exist whereby female members of a family may inherit men's goods). In this system, the bridewealth passes from the bridegroom's side to the bride's male kin.

5 In my view, searching for the nearest village and asking for permission to settle produced in the villager's mind the notion of 'ownership' while producing in the applicant's an attitude of respect. The process was reinforced by the continuous trail of settlement applicants and their eventual call on the

so-called owners for help in settling their (the Idaca settler) land disputes. In fact, the first Idaca cluster in the area is separated from the Ayinonxwe village by no less than 7 rivers, mostly considered as natural borders to territories. When asked how it was possible that the Ayinonxwe people situated so far away could be the 'owners of the lands', some Idaca informants asserted that the Mahi of Ayinonxwe was established in the area and given right over all the lands by the Danxomean Kings. This does not correspond to any historical record I know of. I cannot enter into the details here except to say two things:

First, no Mahi settlement is known to have been established with any 'benediction' from Danxomean Kings, but out of conflictive situations. One famous case is the break in friendship between Gbaguidi, a friend of Houegbadja the founder of the Danxomean monarchy. Gbaguidi then moved to the north-west and founded Savalou around 1645. Another is the succession dispute within the King's family between Agbo-Sassa (the prince promised to the throne after Akaba his father) and Dossou, his younger brother, who seized the throne under the ruling name of Agadja. Agbo-Sassa and a few followers then left for the north-east and founded Ouessè, around 1760, in Nagot territory. Permanent tension and an atmosphere of war persisted between the two brothers and their followers until colonisation.

Second, the settlement colony created by the Danxomean King and which is the farthest north from Abomey seems to be Gbedavo, located not more than 50 kilometres south of Ayinonxwe. In the end, it seems to me that the first Idaca settlers were misled by two factors. First, the Mahi language spoken in Ayinonxwe is a variant of Fon and they can hardly have noticed the difference. This might have led the Idaca to assume that those people were from the Danxomean kingdom. Second, the Idaca were coming from a densely populated area and might have lost the notion of 'no man's land' from their frame of reference and therefore felt the need to find the 'owners' of the land. In any case, this historical process is likely to become a hard bone of contention for governments in the coming years, since agrarian law is poor in Benin and for thousands of Idaca peasants in this whole area their status is precarious as far as land ownership is concerned.

6 A child (boy or girl, of whatever age) may be 'given', without much forewarning, to a male kin member of his mother, for example, at the moment of the marriage (see den Ouden, 1987 for similar cases in Cameroon). In the present case, Dossou was 'given' to his mother's father as a sign of gratitude for earlier favours. This is a form of social security to the elderly when they are no longer able to do much farm work. The question here is how far could Dossou meet the needs of his own family and those of the old man in an environment deserted by most as being too exhausted to farm. The question could not be tackled within the scope of the present research.

7 The wives declared that at the time they did not like the idea of remaining in the village for months while their husband was 20 kilometres away in the bush. They still believe that the way Tinkpo's father arranged things was to the advantage of Tinkpo's third wife, who was the youngest and allowed to follow the group to the farm. But they no longer regret this as it gave them the opportunity to 'become themselves' (with some flourishing commerce), which the third wife never achieved.

8 I did not manage, nor did I find it relevant, to record the versions of the descendants of the two other men on their settling in and moving out of this farm. Nevertheless, the peaceful process described by Agbegui could well have hidden conflict situations, the exploration of which might inform us on other dimensions of the settlement dynamics in the area. For example, we know nothing of the first processes of negotiation over land rights among the settlers, of the political processes involved in inter-household relations, or of labour management and the social and economic organisation of the settlements, which might have later been incorporated into the social organisation of the village of Togoudo.

9 The migration movements of those Djidja yam cultivators started also in the late 19th early 20th century. They first went west through Togoland where the land and climate were appropriate for yam cultivation, and also where the German colonial administration exempted women from paying head tax. They turned back to the areas of Dassa, Glazoué and Savè in the late sixties and early seventies.

10 Notice that when the Idaca started migrating in the early years of this century, they did not search in the south, which they assumed to be closely controlled territory of the Danxomean Kingdom.

11 The rains of the first season move from south to north while those of the second season go the other way (following the movement of the Inter-Tropical Front). For the first season, they would sow their plot at home, or sometimes leave the sowing to wives and relatives, move to the north where they would catch up with the rains and work there for cash. If they were quick enough or less in need of immediate cash (and had contacts with people in the area) they might cultivate a piece of land there on their own account. They would then return home to harvest and then go back north to harvest or do other jobs related to the second season (mainly associated with the cotton crop). As the rains then start in the north they remain there to do the sowing, again returning south to cultivate their own plots.

12 In Dani, most Somba are members of the *Assemblée de Dieu* Church. One rarely sees any other ethnic group (Idaca or Fon) attending. The Idaca there are predominantly protestant, the pastor being the second settler in the village, and actually the first Idaca literate who came in the area.

13 Most ethnic groups in Benin consider that the Fulbe camp *in the bush* with their cattle (even when their camp has been established for decades) and do not like to live in nucleated settlements with other people.

14 According to van Santen on a case from Cameroon, one of the Fulbe social categorisation uses three words: The Fulbe (themselves), the Juulbe (those who are islamised but who are not ethnically Fulbe), and the Haabe (those who are neither Fulbe nor islamised). The latter are considered very much inferior to the Fulbe (van Santen 1993: 47-58) which they consider the Idaca people to be, at least according to those Fulbe who show a strong sense of disgust for the widespread rearing of pigs and hence their excrement found in the village.

15 According to Goudali, in those days family names and surnames were less used as introductory parameters of alien individuals and parties than clan references. When applying for the land in Ayinonxwe, his father brought drinks and kola nuts, and after the usual greetings, asked for land explaining that he was a farmer in search of means of survival. The first question asked was 'where do you come from and what is your clan?' And Goudali added 'When he said it, the Chief just bowed his head. He could not refuse such a request from someone who was from the same clan as the woman who gave him life. After a short moment, he raised his head and said: you are not in an alien place. You are at home'.

16 This event is presented as 'an opportunity', but I do not believe it was felt as such by many people at the time. One of its consequences was better control by the state administrative apparatus over the peasants for tax collection and various forms of labour contribution, though the candidates for the area made many promises regarding education, health, roads etc.

17 Togoudo is a fictitious name. As for the real name, the people agreed on the name which the hunters who first arrived in the area, gave to the little river which they noticed they never crossed until they had hunted sufficient wild animals. The name means 'Don't cross me'. The fictitious name Togoudo that I use here retains the same symbolism. It means 'on the other bank of the river' (i.e. the place you do not need to go).

18 The Fulbe are probably not interested in these intra village bargains. Being cattle herders on natural pasture lands they are more interested in the management of larger geographical areas than a single village. They have their own administrative organisation that covers an area of some 40km radius, where Djato Kadeeri of Togoudo, the *Lamido*, is the authority through whom the Fulbe interact with other groups and with the state apparatus for setting conflicts and other issues.

19 Recently, a form of access to land has emerged whereby land is lent in exchange for a specified labour force (4 to 6 adult persons for one or two full working days) to the lender.

20 Closely related to getting into a position from which one get access to external opportunities is that of the prerogatives attached to every position. On this issue and in various matters, as shown in chapter 2, the so-called wise men (Agba Ilu) oppose or unite with the young men, depending on the matter at hand. Similar situations are found between the GV council and the Mayor, the secretary of the GV and the RDV, the AVA and the RDV, the RDV and the Mayor.

7 Productive activities, household, land and labour in Togoudo

Introduction: The bicycle and the market economy

Trekking down from their Dassa hills to the Togoudo woodlands in the early years of French colonisation, the Idaca people found the land and space necessary to cultivate for food and cash, and eventually were able to buy new consumer goods. A consumer good that became central to peasants' projects in that period – even today – was the bicycle. In fact, bicycles were not a luxury item nor simply a status symbol for people, they were necessary to cover the very long distances from their native village to the new settlements, or simply to get to their farms, often located far away because of their frequent need for new land for yam cultivation, at a time when public transport was non-existent. The necessity for new and better land was not only due to food sufficiency problems. It was stimulated by increasing incorporation into the colonial administrative system and into the local, national and world market economy from the end of the thirties. New roads were opened and railways built in the 1930s, taxation was increased during the Second World War, and tobacco, cotton and groundnuts were grown for export. The import of manufactured goods grew from the mid-forties onwards. A bicycle was very useful for prospecting new land and reducing travelling time. The new lands were fertile and could yield up to 30 tons of yam or two tons of maize per hectare (Roesch 1992). The transportation of agricultural products from the farm to the villages or to market places was on foot and carried on the head. An adult man or woman can carry no more than 30-50kg at any one time, while on a bicycle one can carry 100 to 150kg, cover the distance twice to four times as fast and still find it less tiring. A bicycle was thus an important investment and represented one of the key assets for peasants to become incorporated into the market economy during that period. The French colonial administration even levied taxes on bicycles, which continued until relatively recently. For the early settlers in Togoudo, anyone who did not own a bicycle was 'simply nothing' and 'lagging behind'. This indicates that the market-oriented nature of the local economy in Togoudo was already part of the realities of settlement creation in the early years of this century.

In this chapter and elaborating from the results of a quantitative survey conducted in early 1995, I provide a short description of the local economy, emphasising the central role played by the control over land and particularly over labour in the self-achievement of men and women in Togoudo. But first, a brief word on how the survey was designed and conducted.

The survey

The survey data were collected and analyzed in early 1995 on the basis of hypotheses formulated from my research on the diversification of the local economy, access to and control over land and labour – important factors for how household patterns are negotiated among members and for how decisions on resources and product allocation are taken. This requires some attention to the local definitions of 'household' and 'units of production' which I explore later in the chapter. The survey was conducted with 24 extended households randomly drawn from a list of the members of Groupement Villageois (GV). These 24 households were composed of some 60 heads of units of production (26 men and 34 women), each of whom were interviewed.[1]

Three levels of data collection in the survey were relevant to the discussions in this book. The first level was the identification of the members of each of the 24 extended households and an investigation into how some of their basic needs for staple foods, relish,[2] health, clothing, and schooling are met. The second level concerned all the productive activities (agricultural and non-agricultural) of each member, the ways in which they mobilised resources within or outside of the household, the constraints faced in these activities and their views on future perspectives. The last level concerned a rough estimation of the annual income of the informants, carried out with 10 women and 11 men randomly selected from the 60 sample units. The aim was not to obtain a precise and reliable figure on individual incomes, which is, in any case, difficult to achieve, but to have an idea of the variation among informants and to appreciate better the relative importance of each activity in the composition of incomes. The income generated from cotton production was precise and reliable as records exist for it with the GV. For the other agricultural products, the estimate of the net revenue was calculated on the basis of the approximate yields declared and the average market value of the inputs and products in question for the year. For each non-agricultural activity, a calendar was drawn up with the informant, showing the different degrees of intensity of the activity (four scales were taken into account) throughout the year. The return on the activity was then estimated for each of these periods. Finally, questions were asked on occasional or irregular income during the past year (i.e. unusual sale of animals, recovery of savings over a long period, and gifts from relatives living outside the village).

The results of the survey, as presented below, remain largely descriptive on income generating activities, access to land and labour, household patterns and income. Nevertheless, they function as background information on the economy in Togoudo and to contextualise the case studies of survival and self-achievement strategies discussed in the next chapter.

Productive activities

As already indicated in Chapter 6, the main occupations of men and women in Togoudo are farm activities, carried out in an area extending up to 20 kilometres north of the village. Farm activities are coupled in many cases with animal hus-

bandry and non-farming activities. There is no irrigated land in Togoudo and therefore farm activities are conducted during the two rainy seasons broadly spanning March to June and August to October. Nowadays, the main crops cultivated are yam, maize, beans, peanuts (groundnuts), cotton and pepper. The animals raised are mainly chickens, pigs, goats, cattle and sheep. All the cattle are herded by the Fulbe (see Table 8 for the figures in 1990).

Table 8 Crop and animal production in Togoudo in 1990

Crops	Area covered (ha)	Yield (ton)
Maize	481	542
Sorghum/Millet	180	216
Rice	11.20	11
Beans	196	125.96
Groundnuts	127.50	123.1
Yams	315	2,520
Cassava	35	420
Tomato	70	700
Pepper	138	55.2
Okra	75	225
Cotton	475	676
Total	2068.7	

Animals	Number
Chickens	2,760
Pigs	1,400
Goats	800
Cattle	275
Sheep	40

Source: Carder-Zou, 1991

Since the early 1990s, farming activities have been dominated by maize and cotton crops. Maize is a staple food in the village but also a cash crop. On the farms, it combines better with cotton than cowpeas and groundnuts for coping with labour needs between the first and second cropping season, when the first season crops (maize, cowpeas, groundnuts etc.) are harvested, while those of the second season (mainly cotton) are sown. With maize as the first season crop, peasants manage more to avoid the overlap of needs (harvesting one crop and sowing the other) than with cowpeas and groundnuts. In addition, it allows them to provide food for household consumption.

Table 9 Area coverage by main crops in 1994 in Togoudo (percentages)

First cropping season		Second cropping season	
Crops	Coverage	Crops	Coverage
Maize	63.2	Cotton	74.2
Cassava	1.7	Cassava	1.6
Cowpea	19.5	Yam	11.5
Yam	12.5	Pepper	1.3
Pepper	1.4	Okra	1.5
Okra	1.7	Groundnut	7.9
		Voandzou	0.6
		Sorghum	1.5
Total (%)	100	Total (%)	100
Total (ha)	63.3	Total (ha)	68.8

Source: field Survey, 1995

Figure 5 shows the general trend of agricultural production in Togoudo since 1990, while Figure 6 illustrates the rapid increase of cotton production since 1987. In 1994, for the first cropping season, 63 percent of the area cultivated in the village was sown with maize while 74 percent of the second season area was cultivated with cotton (see Table 9). A further illustration of the importance of these crops in the cropping system is given in Figure 7.

Apart from farming and animal husbandry, other activities in Togoudo include various sorts of trade (e.g. retailing of manufactured products and the trading of agricultural food products from Togoudo to Gbomina), processing of foodstuffs for sale (e.g. meals, cakes, bread, *cakpalo* brewing, relish, and oil), artisan activities (e.g. carpentry, masonry, haulage, mechanics, sewer works, and hair dressing) and transport and shopkeeping.

As the area of coverage shows, seasonal crops, particularly cotton since the early 1990s, play a major role in the local economy. From the 60 heads of productive units surveyed (26 men and 34 women), 56 percent of the women and 45 percent of the men declared cotton cultivation to be their main productive activity, while 24 percent of women and 38 percent of men indicated this to be maize cultivation (see Figure 8). The idea of a main activity varied from one respondent to the other. According to 42 percent of male respondents, the classification of the crop is based on its role (be it in food or cash) in meeting the household's food needs, while the percentage of women basing the classification on this criterion does not exceed 30 percent. Another criterion for ranking crops is whether the crop is income generating. 46 percent of men and 65 percent of women used this measure (Figure 9).

Figure 5 Area cultivated and estimated value of agricultural products in Togoudo in the last five years

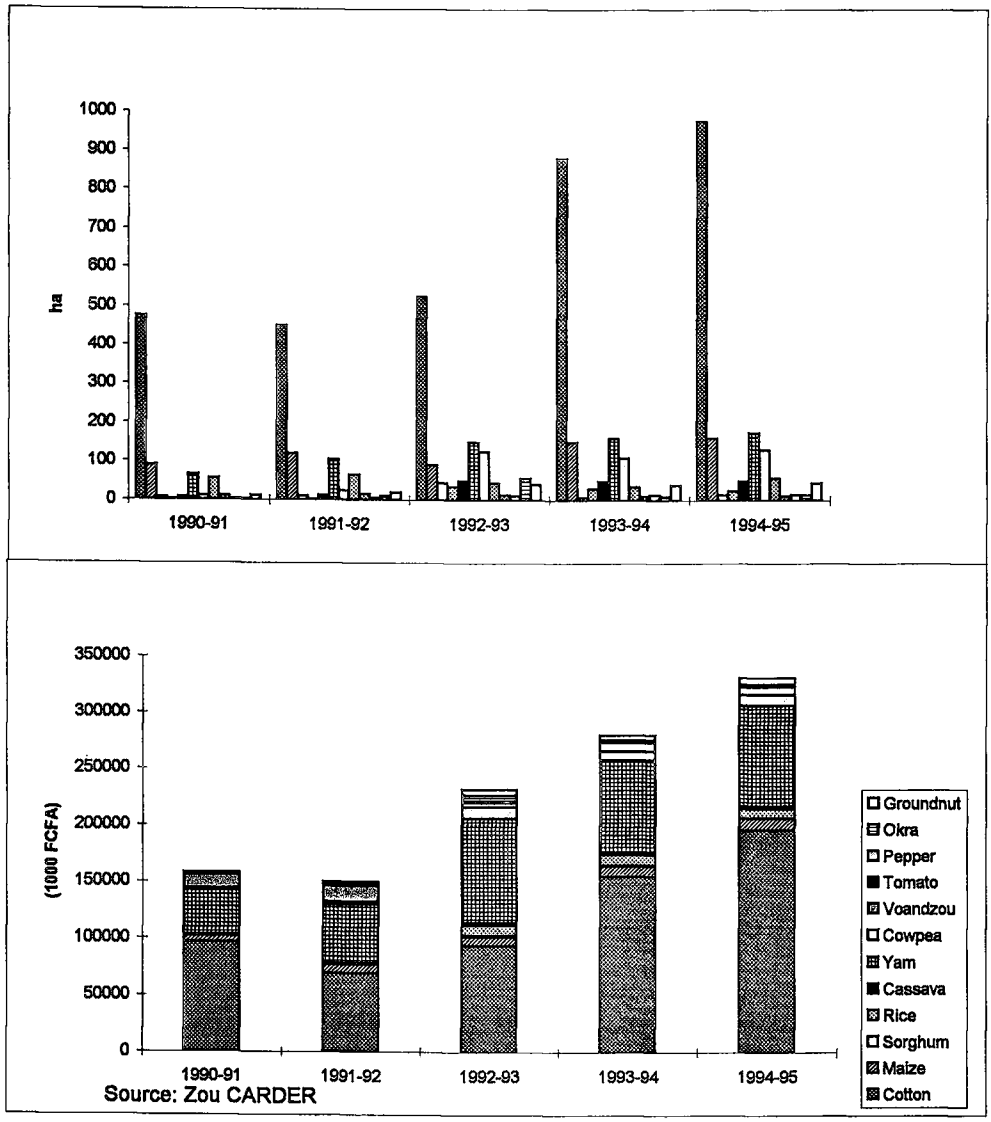


Figure 6 Area cropped with cotton in Togoudo

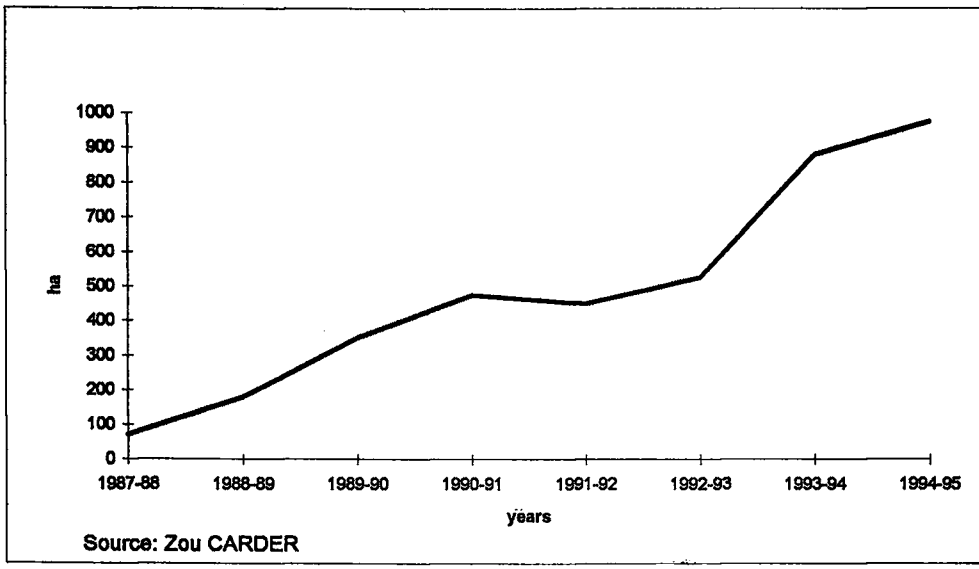


Figure 7 Cropping patterns in Togoudo

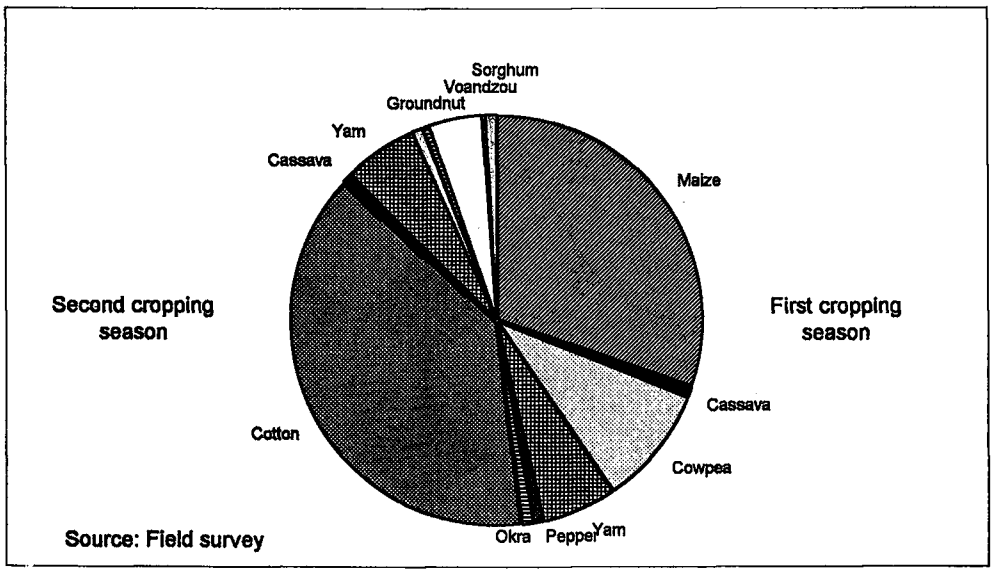


Figure 8 Relative importance of productive activities of men and women in Togoudo

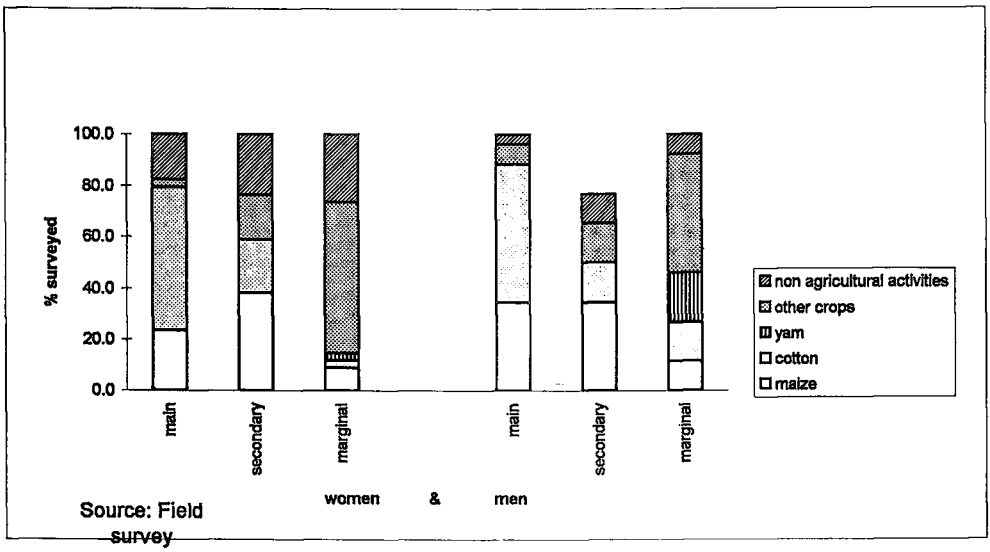
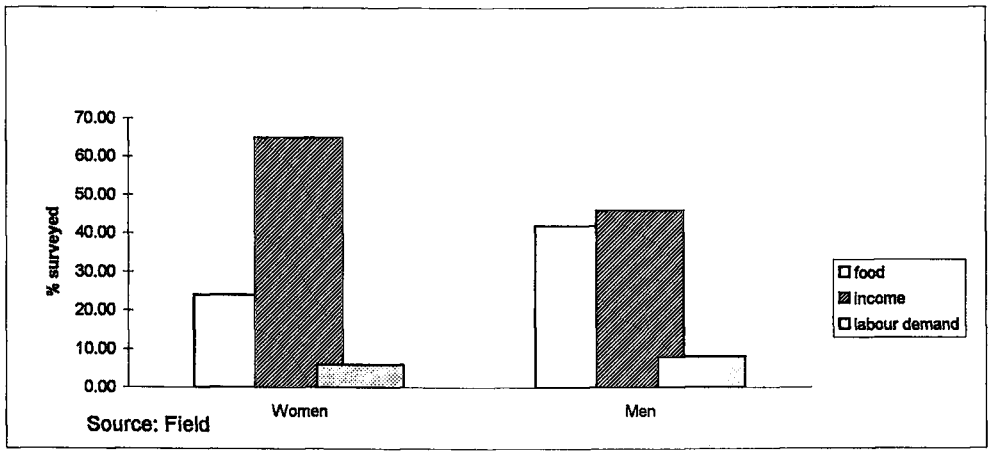


Figure 9 Criteria for classifying activities in Togoudo



For 77 percent of the 34 women and 71 percent of the 26 men surveyed, cotton represents the first income generating crop and, in even higher proportion, the most labour consuming activity. The other activities – (petty) trade, food processing, brewing, animal husbandry, and making artifacts – are declared as first income generating activities for only 15 percent of women and 15 percent of men. But these activities constitute the second income generating activity for 35 percent of women and 20 percent of men, and the third for 25 percent of women (Figures 10 and 11).

The dominant place occupied by cotton in the cropping system of Togoudo is rather recent (see Figure 6 for the growth in the area under cotton from 1987 to date). As I argued earlier, this indicates the world market-oriented nature of the local economy in Togoudo. Indeed, apart from the usual food crops, there have been various trends in cash crops at different periods. There was first the era of the oleaginous, mainly groundnuts and castor-oil, up to the early 1960s. Then tobacco and cotton were added in the mid-sixties and seventies. From the mid-seventies to mid-eighties, Togoudo peasants marketed most of their cash crops in Nigeria and these were mainly peppers, cassava, yams and cowpeas. Maize marketing in Benin towns rose sharply from the late seventies and, since the mid-eighties, cotton has ranked first in cash crops, though 50 percent of the men interviewed in the present survey said they earn as much from their other crops, such as maize, cowpeas, yams and groundnuts, as they earn from cotton. It is noteworthy that no statistical records are kept in Togoudo about the evolution of any crop except cotton. The parsimonious records kept at district level are unreliable because of the conditions in which they are collected (see Mongbo 1985). In the present study, I have preferred to interview peasants individually and in small groups on this issue of the general trend of export crops in Togoudo since the colonial period. What is indicated, therefore, is local public memory, supported by material indicators such as the investments various people made at different periods of time with the cash from such and such a crop (e.g. in houses, bicycles, motor bikes, wife, and land in Gbomina).

Access to land

The rights of the Idaca settlers over land in Togoudo, that is supposed to belong to the people of Ayinonxwe, are not clear. There are some indications of claims of so-called 'owners to the land'. For example, in many cases, land conflicts are brought to the village Chief of Ayinonxwe for settlement. Moreover, since 1989, people from Ayinonxwe have been requesting that Togoudo people pay a rent on the land, especially for the farms cultivated with cotton. From time to time, there are meetings between both parties but no consensus has been reached that I know of. In the meantime, Idaca people occupy the land, pass it down from one generation to the next in the patriline, lend it now and then to autochthones (Idaca), and to foreigners (Fon and Somba). They seem to exert full ownership of the land in its everyday management, but, significantly enough, do not sell, or at least no such a case has yet been noted.[3] In fact, no Idaca would accept buying the land from another, since they do not consider themselves as ultimate owners.

Figure 10 Sources of income for men and women in Togoudo

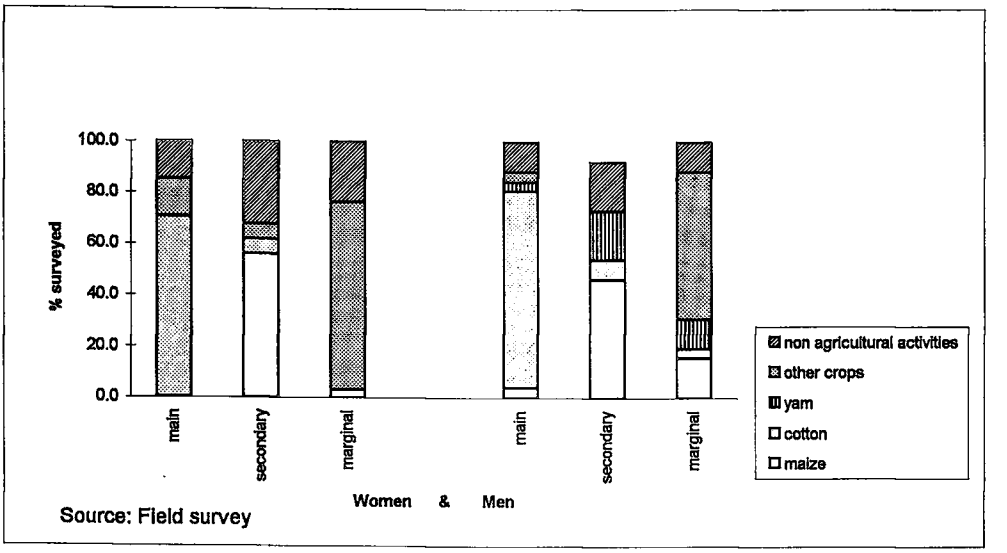
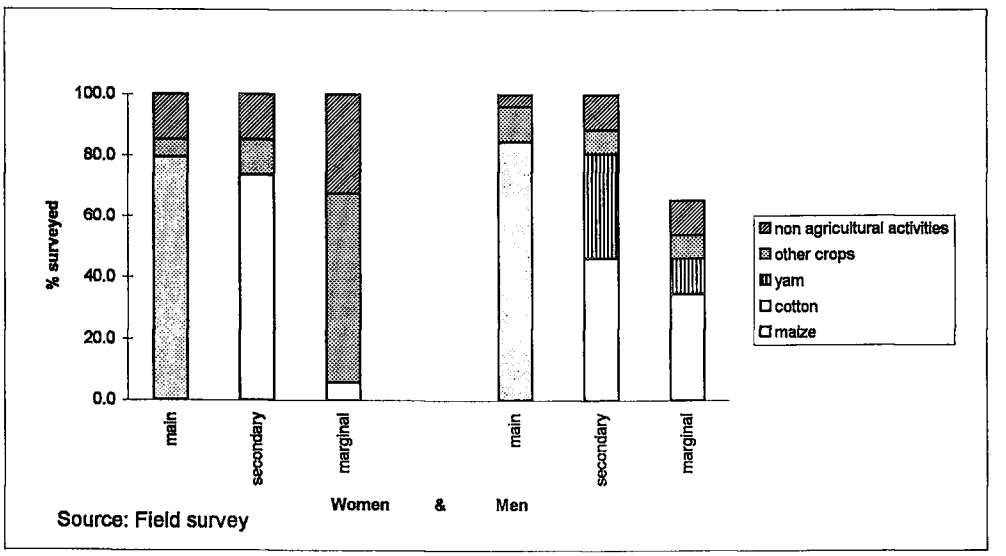


Figure 11 Relative labour requirement of productive activities in Togoudo

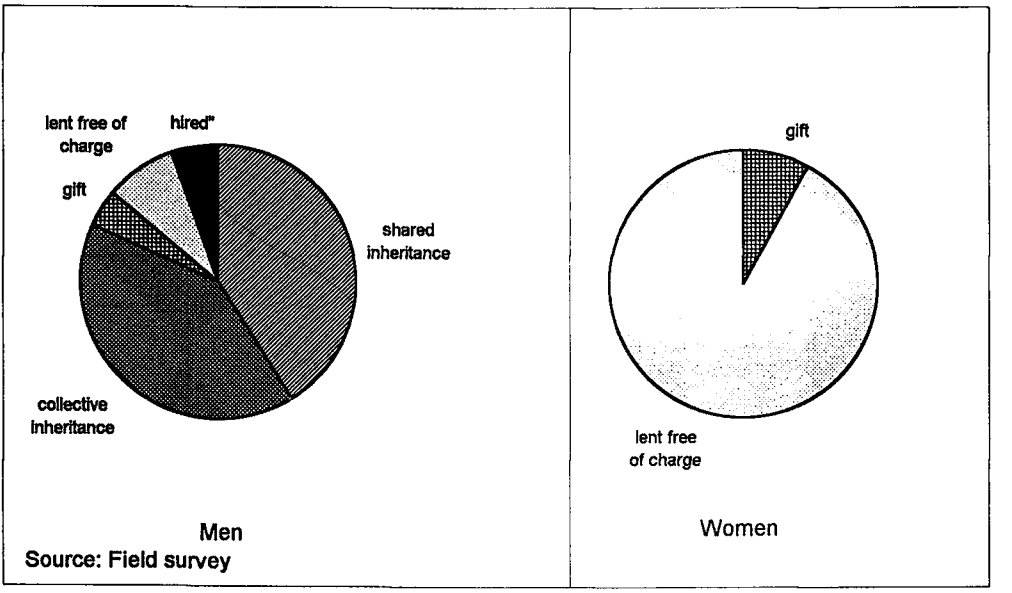


Hence land rights of Idaca people are very insecure, though they appear to have largely contributed themselves to this state of affairs, as discussed in Chapter 6. A new development that renders their situation even more fragile, is that of Idaca people settled in Dani and Gobé, some 40 kilometres north, where the so-called owners have been selling the land to estate agents and traders from the city who are now settling as farmers, without giving notice to the person actually working the land. No such case is yet known in Togoudo, and it is difficult to predict how things will evolve. For the time being and in their everyday use of the land, the Idaca appear as the owners and are treated as such in this account of access to land.

The average land availability in Togoudo is five hectares per adult male, of which two are left fallow. But, in fact, land is unequally distributed, 25 percent of men owning less than three hectares while 25 percent have more than ten. Most women cultivate less than one hectare. Only 25 percent of the women interviewed cultivated between two and six hectares. Here, too, land distribution is highly unequal (a fact related to the land ownership of the family and to the labour management style of the head of household). 80 percent of the women, who put agriculture as their first or second income generating activity, work on 46 percent of the total land cropped by women of this category, while the other 20 percent crop 54 percent of the land (Zounon 1995: 37). The mode of access to land for men is completely different from that of women. Men generally work on land which they have inherited, collectively or individually, while women work mostly on land freely lent to them by their husband or relative (see Figure 12). It is remarkable that about 50 percent of the land cultivated by men is done on collective inheritance. This does not relate to any feeling of insecurity about the land but rather indicates a style of household labour management, as discussed later in this chapter.

Land constitutes a limiting factor to economic expansion for 31 percent of men and 18 percent of women, either because it is simply impossible for them to obtain land (8 percent of men and 11 percent of women) or because they would have to move much farther away from or out of the village, which is now more and more difficult. The distances from farms to the village already oblige 54 percent of men and 33 percent of women to spend weeks and months of the year on their farm during the cropping seasons. People think it is still possible to be lent land free of charge, especially on farms where the inheritance is collectively used, but the plots sizes are generally not enough. This obliges some to plough land in different and distant locations. Most of the 18 percent of women who cannot obtain land indicate that this is due to the fact that the head of household thinks that the land is not enough for his needs. A new mode of access mentioned by eight percent of men and three percent of women (for not more than two or three years) is to borrow land from a landowner in return for the labour of four to six strong men, for two real working days, to cultivate for the landowner, which can be up to four hectares. No man complains of the low fertility of the soils, except for yam cultivation (23 percent). On the other hand, 20 percent of the women complain of the continuous exhaustion of the plots they are given by their husbands or relatives, either because they are stationed on the same, small plot of land, or because they are allocated land after it has been cultivated for some seasons by the relative.

Figure 12 Land tenure of men and women in Togoudo



Source: Field survey

Labour requirements, household patterns and income

The major crops of the farming system in Togoudo are said to be labour consuming and require household exchange as well as wage labour for land preparation to harvesting and transportation of products. Yam cultivation is further constrained by the fact that it requires specialised labour for making the mounds, mostly given by the Somba who come from the northern part of the province. This labour is in short supply. Labour requirements, more than land availability, remain the most limiting factor to economic expansion in Togoudo. 58 percent of men and 47 percent of women were said to be willing to extend their farm but lacked the manpower to do so (see den Ouden 1995 for similar findings on the Adja Plateau in southern Benin). The control of manpower and access to cash for wage labour are determining factors in self-achievement strategies in Togoudo. This has an impact on the way in which household patterns are negotiated among members.

Household patterns

Idaca people build virilocal and patrilineal communities, where inheritance remains with the group of patrikin. Apart from this general characteristic, there is no standard definition into which one can fit all the different basic Idaca corporate groups concerned with domestic functions – here labelled 'households' – who live and work in Togoudo. The 24 households surveyed ranged in size from 3-28 members, 29 percent of them containing less than seven members, 37 percent from seven to ten, while the other 34 percent counted 11 or more members, half of which had over 18 members. The total population of the 24 households surveyed amounted to 251,

of whom only 60 (24 percent: 26 men and 34 women) were more or less autonomous in their production and consumption decision-making, the other 76 percent being more or less dependant on the former for allocating their time and needs. These 60 making their own decisions and negotiating productive resources, including labour, primarily though not exclusively from within the household, form what I call here units of production. Generally, people in Togoudo would claim that women and adult children or relatives living in the same household mostly conduct their own economic activities, making major management decisions in terms of resource allocation and use of the products. When this really happens, as is the case for the 60 persons indicated above, I refer to them as 'units of production', enjoying relative autonomy, although some mutual obligations might remain between these units within the household.

Heads of households are generally men, except in cases of divorce and the absence or death of the husband. It was found that 45 percent of heads of household were married with one wife, 25 percent had two, while the remaining 30 percent had three or more wives (up to five in some cases). Though always having one or more wives, with children, the person referred to as the 'head of the household' is not necessarily the eldest of the family, although it happens in some cases. There are kin groups where the grandfather is present and considered 'head of the household', in others, it is one of the sons. In general, the head of household is expected to provide members with grain, which then gives him some right to the management of resources of the household, including labour. He can request, more or less successfully, the help of all members at peak periods on the farm. In general, the son is supposed to establish his own household when he gets married, even though he remains in the same compound as his parents. In fact in Togoudo, these general rules of household management do not hold. As I already indicated in the previous chapter, one cannot identify a household from the spatial organisation of the residence of its members. The fact that a son with his wife and children, or a wife, have their houses built apart, even far from the house of the head of the household, hardly says anything of the style of management of the household. As the figures show, there are many big households in Togoudo, 34 percent counting more than 11 members with the head of household, his wives, their children and the wives and children of the latter. In some cases a son might already have two wives but still, in varying degrees, be dependant on his father, all of them operating in one unit of production under the control of the head of household. In exchange, the latter provides staple food needs, housing, clothing, means of transport, and bride wealth for one or more wives for the sons. Of the 24 households surveyed, six (25 percent) are made up of one unit of production of 10-28 persons while the 18 remaining households include, on average, three units of production. The multi-generation households/units of production correspond to a strategy of these heads of household to control the labour of their wives, their children and their children's wives and children, but this has some costs, which I discuss below.

Rights and obligations between women and head of household

The large majority of women (80 percent), including those managing their own unit of production, help their husband with the harvesting of cotton, maize and other crops. But only 35 percent of women are involved in weeding, and even fewer in sowing. General statements indicate that women take care of all household chores, including cooking at home and on the farm, while the husband has a duty to provide for the core part of the meal (maize, yams, cassava) and in some rare cases the condiments. The man is also supposed to be responsible for health care, ceremonies and assistance to the wife when needed. Another general statement is that when just married, the woman remains within the unit of production of her husband for two to five years before 'she is liberated'. A man with three wives told me:

> '*When I take a wife, she remains subservient to me for two years. When she respects me, is docile, I give her – but only in the third year – a piece of land where she can develop her own activities.*'

In fact, only the first wife of this man underwent this rule. According to her, the husband liberated her in the third year of her marriage, after he married his second wife and then wanted the first to look after her own personal needs (such as clothes, kitchen equipment, and jewels) herself. As for the second wife, she was 'liberated', not because she proved docile, but by her own account precisely because she was not:

> '*It was four years after I came here that my husband gave me a piece of land which allowed me to start working on my own and stop having to hold out my hand to him. It was two years after his third wife came. That woman was not a hard working woman, but it was at me that he shouted on the farm, to which I always reacted. Finally, he said he had had enough of my work, that I should separate, and I don't regret it now.*'

Women receive help from their husband only for spraying insecticides on cotton farms, for building storehouses or for transporting agricultural products from the farm to the village on their bicycles. Girls work for their mother who take care of their clothing. But their health care and other training costs are at the father's expense. Young girls start their own activities by the age of 15. These consist of cooking porridge (for breakfast), cooking akassa, and growing vegetables in a corner of their parents' plots to sell at the market. It is said that this early involvement of girls in market activities is necessary since it teaches them to 'know money quickly'. For their labour needs on their farms, liberated married women will go for wage labour (some even have to pay for the labour of their sons), or mobilise a different network of relatives than those sought by the husband (i.e. the mother, the sisters, the married daughters and their children, and other female relatives). Some belong to labour exchange groups.

The sons: the returns for remaining 'dependent'

Sons are supposed to be liberated on marrying, but in many cases they continue to live and work under the authority of their father, together with their wife and children. I use here the words 'dependent', 'independent', 'liberated' as locally used by any person in the area who speaks some French . But I did not investigate how emic these concepts are. They could be simple appropriations of the first translation interpreters made of a phenomenon widely shared. How people lived and coped with this situation remains to be seen. I deal here only very briefly with the question. In the survey, eight men of this category were interviewed on the types of work they do for their father, what they get from their father and what their future plans are with respect to relations with their father and their own self-achievement.

Apart from working on the farms of their father, they also take care of transport, and wage labour recruitment from surrounding villages. One is a miller for his father, while another, in addition to helping him on the farm, acts as his apprentice mason. In return, all these men and their wives and children (for the six who are already married) are fed by their fathers who give them pocket money. Seven of the eight have been given means of transport by their father, one of whom has a Yamaha 50. Six of them had their houses built by the father, another received significant help from him when building his house, while the last said he was not yet in need of a house but would surely be given one by his father as soon as he expressed the desire.

Most of these young men find their situation 'natural' and quite enjoyable. Only one of them (the one with the Yamaha) complains that his father thinks he is lazy and that he might quit his father if this continues. All of them have a little private activity (afternoon farming mostly), but declare that they do not find time to work on it as they would like. As for their future projects, some plan to extend their farm slowly until they become totally independent but would help their father in return, when he grows old. One was put to retailing bicycle spare parts by his father which he expects to expand, while another is planning to start trading in food products from Togoudo to Gbomina and Cotonou. For the rest, apart from having material goods, the future project is to take over from the father the management of his affairs when he grows old:

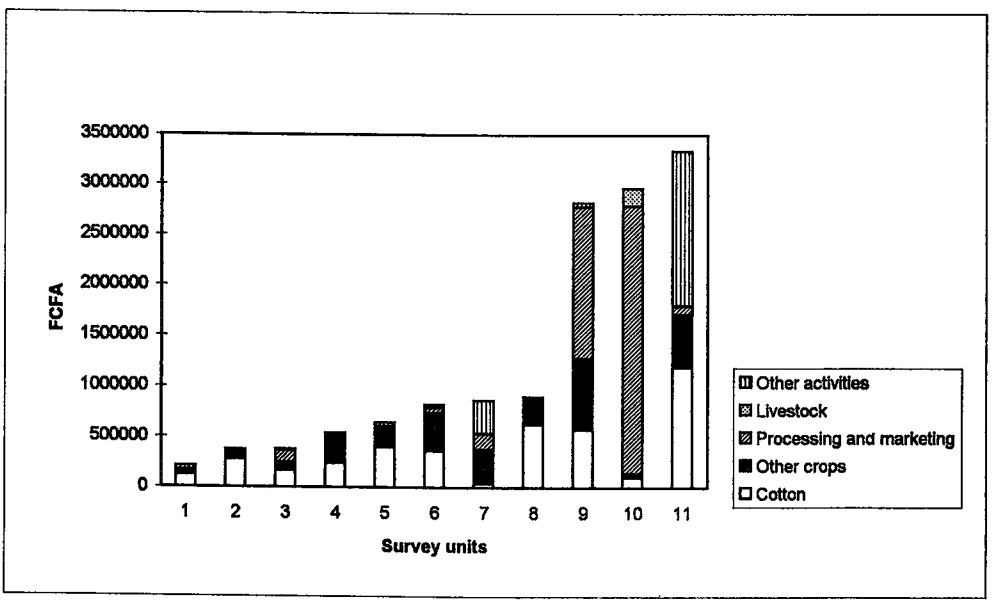
> *'For the future, I think that after all I will remain with my father (this is the one who was threatening to leave him) to help him because I am the only one now here to help him. All my other brothers have gone abroad to Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. When my father is completely old, I will take over his affairs.'*

Wage labour

81 percent of men and 80 percent of women use wage labour during peak periods: land preparation and sometimes weeding for maize; and land preparation, harvesting and destroying of old plants for cotton. This has led some peasants into organising the 'import' of wage labour from nearby villages, but also from the Abomey plateau in the south and from the Atacora Province of the north-west of

Benin, the latter being specialised in yam cultivation. This imported labour arrives mostly in teams of 8-10, sometimes more, whom the 'importer' houses and feeds during the time of their stay on his farm, in addition to the wage they get, which is indexed to the work they do. In order to pay for this labour force, men and women are in constant need for cash, which they find from loans at 25-50 percent – or even as high as 100 percent or 150 percent – annual interest rates, or by selling animals or crops (mainly maize and sorghum). Those who complain of not being able to extend their farm because of a lack of labour present it as a 'lack of cash to pay for labour'. When looked at in detail, the need for cash affects 69 percent of men and 59 percent of women for preparing a cotton farm, 54 percent of men and 38 percent of women for harvesting it, and 18 percent of men and 38 percent of women for maize field preparation.

Figure 13 Sources of income for men



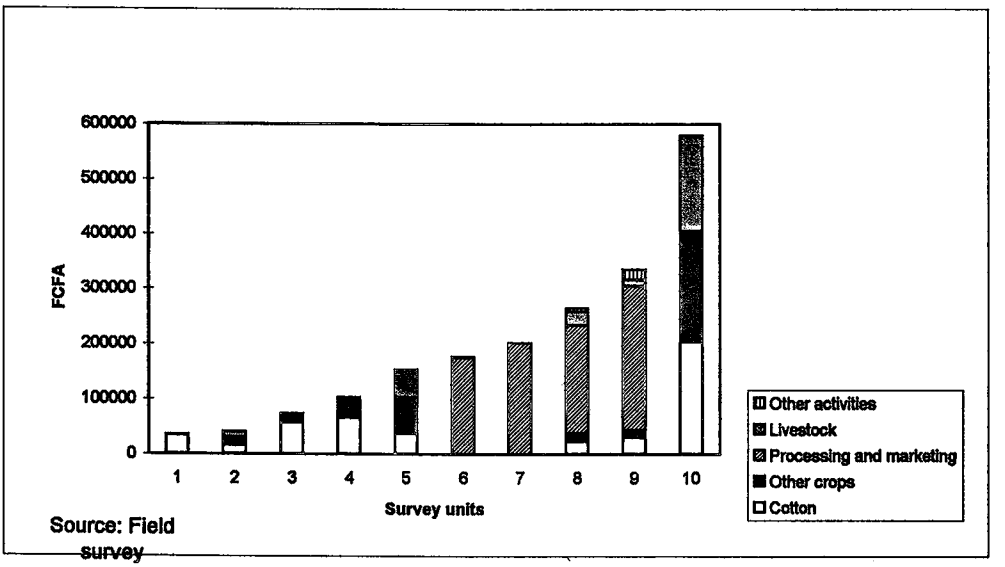
About income

From the sample I randomly selected 11 men and 10 women for an analysis of the structure and approximate size of their income.[4]

All eleven men have an annual income that exceeds 200,000f with 50 percent of them earning more than 822,000f and 75 percent more than 450,000f (see Figure 13). The income that women generate from seasonal crops rarely exceeds 100,000f per year. Only one of the ten women surveyed earned more than this amount. 75 percent earned less than 53,000f on cotton, and less than 31,000f on other crops. Unfortunately, and for various reasons – ignorance of the activity, lack of time because dependent, distance from farm to the village and so forth – less than 50 percent of them practice or earn income from petty trade or food processing (see Figure 14). In total, women earn far less than men (see Figure 15). The income of the

25 percent most prosperous women is less than the income of the lowest earning men. It is noteworthy that for both men and women, the 50 percent less fortunate among them are those who do not combine agricultural production with other activities.

Figure 14 Sources of income for women



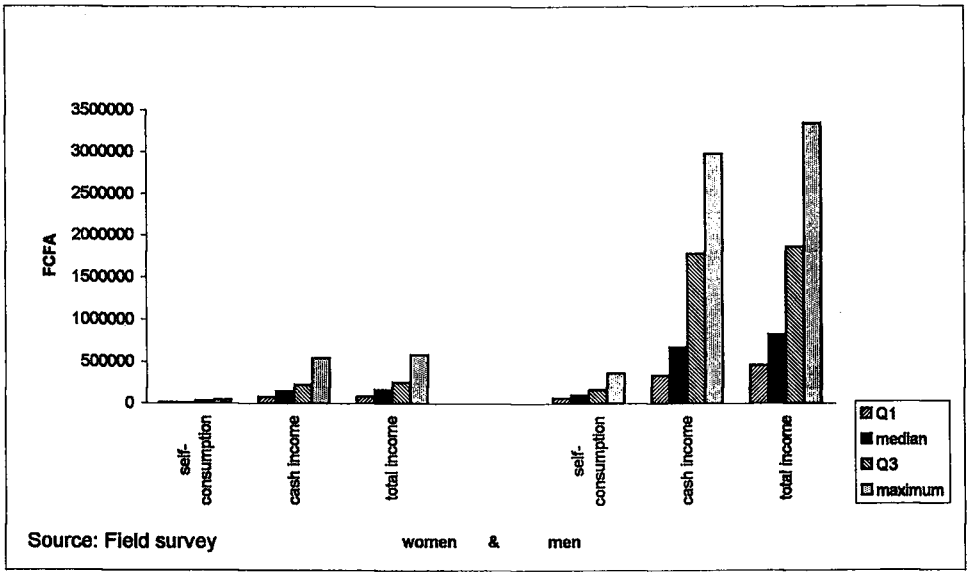
Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it appears that the economy of Togoudo is essentially a market-oriented one, with a high potential for diversification. Although relatively few of those surveyed combine agriculture with other activities (around 30 percent), the fact that successful people, men and women, are those who do combine activities, leads one to believe that diversification will most probably accelerate during the coming years. The size of the village population (2,500 inhabitants), together with the important and traditional production of cash crops, creates a valuable local market for various food processing, brewery, retailing of manufactured products (of which bicycles and motor bike spare parts are important) and artisanal activities. These guide the strategies for self-achievement which I discuss in Chapter 8. In addition to the local market, the important regional market of Gbomina, situated at the crossroads between south and north, and east and west Benin, gives access to market opportunities to the people of Togoudo for cities in Benin, Togo, Niger and Western Nigeria, depending on the state of the economy in those areas (see Igue 1992).

A productive factor for which it is difficult to make any projection is land. It would be a mistake to assume that people from Ayinonxwe will not further press their claim over the land in one way or another. The cases of Dani, Gobé, Katakou, for example, are illustrative of the insecurity of settlers who let themselves become engaged in the logic of so-called landowners. The educated children of Ayinonxwe

might well start selling land to the rich traders of Cotonou and Porto-Novo and one cannot know what that would then bring, since land legislation is rather weak in Benin. Nevertheless, interacting with people in Togoudo, one gets the feeling that this issue is not an everyday preoccupation, although this should not be taken as an indication of the level of gravity of the situation. People in Dani are as much, if not more, easy-going on land the issue, but risk everyday coming to their farm to discover it has already been sold to a new settler and that they are no longer allowed to even harvest their crop.

Figure 15 Incomes of men and women at different quartiles



Labour is another critical means of production. Though networks are established for the recruitment of wage labour from outside the village, household labour remains an important resource and attempts to control it are made through a rather centralised mode of household management by some heads of household. Similar situations are found on the Adja-Plateau in southern Benin (see Fanou 1992 quoted by den Ouden 1995: 32), where the people Fanou calls 'charismatic' accumulators – heads of household specialised in agriculture – use the labour of as many wives, children and dependants as can be mobilised. Den Ouden's research in the same area, on people who want to expand their businesses, reveals that these 'big men', as he calls them, now rely much less on domestic labour but still have difficulties in fully working with wage labour because of the low or negative return from it. As for domestic labourers, they are becoming distrustful of the promises made by the 'big man' as to the future redistribution of the gains made from the domestic labour used (den Ouden *op. cit.*). The present situation in Togoudo seems to give much more room for manoeuvre to heads of large productive units, while the household labour under their control seems still to have reasons to hope for a fair redistribution of the wealth produced: house, wives, motor bikes, radio-cassettes, with, in some cases, the starting of trade with the help of the father. Also, some sons

expect to take over from their father when the latter grow old. But, as we will see from the case of Tinkpo discussed in the next chapter, this way of solving the labour problem is not found to be fully satisfactory and other strategies are tried, mainly through the control of migration networks and the acquisition of the ox-plough.

Notes

1 The survey was conducted in cooperation with the UNIHO-G5 research project, and with the active and valued support and assistance of Anne Floquet, head of the project, to whom I express my sincere gratitude.

2 In many cases in Togoudo, the husband provides the staple component of the food (maize, yam, cassava, sorghum), and the relish – the vegetables, spices and perhaps fish and meat – most of which is purchased, is the responsibility of the wife. The husband might help now and then.

3 I should mention here that I did not seek information on land patterns and transactions in structured or even unstructured interviews, knowing quite well the critical nature of the land issue in Southern Benin. The issue was explored indirectly in various informal situations and with great tact.

4 Notice that this sample was drawn from the GV list, which means that all interviewed households were cotton growers, which gives some advantages as far as income and accountability is concerned, especially after the latest rise in the price of cotton (30 percent), following the FCFA devaluation of 11 January 1994.

8 Survival and self-achievement strategies of men and women in Togoudo

Introduction

My objective in this chapter is to continue the discussion begun in Chapter 6 on locally-built ways of defining 'rural development', and on the ways in which people earn a living. I assume these are based on long standing and socially-shared experiences in dealing with ecological, political and economic factors, both local and external. From the previous chapter, I showed how Togoudo is characterised by a relatively large and diversified span of productive activities. Furthermore, discrepancies in the scale of these activities, resulting from the intrinsic capacities of individuals and groups, from the settlement patterns and access to and control over the major means of production, indicate that there are indeed many different ways for coping with life's constraints and for taking advantage of opportunities. In this chapter, I want to discuss these differential strategies in order to examine later how far the discourse and practice of the Community Development Programme has relevance for the different categories of people it is supposed to serve. My concern here is to underline the different logics that shape the well-being and development seeking of the intervenors and the intervened, in order to see at which points these logics interlock, allowing for the reproduction of development rhetoric and practice.

There exist ready-made solutions to analyzing life-circumstance problems, based on so-called 'objective' or quantitative approaches to the identification and definition of poverty/wealth or inequalities.[1] These represent various arbitrary artifices designed to appraise hierarchically what is commonly called 'the level of development' or 'welfare' of individuals, groups or nations. Using these devices, one can distinguish different categories of peasants based on economic indicators such as the size of the farm enterprise, its technical trajectory, the consumption patterns of the farm/household, and its access to health services and education. One can go even further, tabulating the type of production with working conditions, or working conditions with living conditions.[2] A *poverty line* might also be defined in relation to the cost of the minimum food needed for survival in the area, to which a so-called Engel factor is indexed to take into account of clothing, transport and housing costs. When these latter costs are not taken into account and the line is calculated only on the basis of food needs, one has what is called the *indigence line.* The percentage of a village or country population that falls under these lines represents the *poverty or the indigence indicator* of the village or country considered (see Salima and Valier 1994: 25-27, and Lipton 1988 for further details). When school

attendance, access to health services and literacy are added as discriminatory factors, then we have what is called a series of *human development indices*.

Though the advocates of such an approach mostly claim it to be objective, the methodology poses some problems, of which I wish to raise three. First, is the assumption of the universality of the development path. That is, it sets fixed standards and normative world-views in matters of development against which people's everyday lives are to be assessed, implying from the start the types of actions that should be engaged in in order to alleviate poverty. Second, is the blinkered nature of such 'objective' observations vis-à-vis the diversified and dynamic meanings people attribute to events and things, and according to which they act, thus giving different, changing and sometimes contradictory meanings to poverty, well-being, self-achievement and development. A third related problem with this etic tool is its incapacity, when applied to people living in precarious material conditions, to reveal and account for the diversity of the strategies with which people define their situations, struggle for survival and keep their head above water. For these reasons, I have preferred emic definitions of these concepts, folk views and classifications which can be summarised in terms of notions of *survival, self-achievement* and *well-being*. Emic categorisations, I believe, enable us to define more relevant categories than any economistic categorisation can achieve.[3] Also, as Grignon and Passeron mention concerning food patterns and material conditions, 'the exclusive reconstitution (with economistic devices) of the limits which material conditions impose on popular taste and consumption brings... nothing new as compared to the spontaneous knowledge that a good informant, a housewife *avertie* or expert in coping, can have on his/her universe of practice' (1989: 126).

Emic definitions of 'survival', 'self-achievement' and 'well-being'

My choice to focus on survival, self-achievement and well-being as representations of everyday life conditions is not neutral. It is a result of my attempt to account for the different levels of socio-economic status generally referred to in the area of study. According to these emic definitions, some people strive just for survival, for keeping their head above water, struggling for daily subsistence, not for life projects of supposedly higher social status. They live from hand to mouth. Not that these people do not have any dream of self-achievement or well-being but their actual preoccupations based on their present negotiatory power are believed to be confined to the daily search for survival. In the meantime, others deploy strategies beyond the simple quest for survival, with a view to achieving specific life projects, gaining a 'personality' in the society, becoming a 'person who deserves to be *Patron-Saint (Mɛ djo mɛ)*'. Those that are successful might then be referred to in terms of 'them belly full' or 'they live at ease' or 'enjoying well-being'.

But one should not exaggerate the particularity of emic concepts for local people. Though I stress here the advantages of emic over etic definitions, I do not wish to give the impression that emic definitions are locally produced, in isolation from the external world and from the channels through which external norms and values produced by the dominant 'development' culture feed into local perceptions.

Although I do not believe in the existence of a world global culture of development imposing itself on passive and receptive, or reluctant peasants, dictating the ways in which they define well-being and seek it, we should not expect local definitions of well-being to be totally disconnected from the world-wide human search for well-being driven by dominant cultures and means of communication, from which people at local level might learn. It is with this kind of awareness that I have approached the problem of identifying the differential ways of survival and self-achievement. But before coming to the findings of this exercise, it is worth presenting first the method I used.

The method used

As a first stage, I looked at the living and working conditions of people in general, discussing informally their immediate and longer term projects. But in doing so I did not place people on a ranked scale. Nevertheless, I cannot pretend to have completely avoided categorising them on the basis of my own experiences and world-views, especially in extreme cases of what I considered to be precarious conditions or self-evident well-being. I mostly draw assumptions from external signs (e.g. apparent health, clothing, housing), checked against the living conditions of the households (in respect to diet, child care etc.). At a second stage, and separately for men and women, I asked four informants to rank their fellow villagers (each informant individually) according to what they considered as being a 'successful' or a 'non-successful' person. Fifty adult men were randomly selected from a list of 957 established for the purposes of collecting the head-tax which I obtained from the Mayor. Then I added the names of 15 others to the 50 selected. These 15 were people whose daily activities I had already followed and whose life trajectories I had documented. For the ranking, each of the sixty-five names were written on a separate card. The list was read out to the informant to make sure that she or he recognised the names of all the persons, which was not always the case. Some further indications were then necessary before all 65 persons were identified by the informant. Thereafter, I invited the informant to sort the cards into different groups, according to her or his perception of the situation of the person concerned and each time explaining why she or he chose to put the person in one category or the other. The same process was conducted with women.[4]

At the beginning of each ranking exercise, it was always necessary to ensure the informant that none of what was said about the persons would be disclosed to any villager. I made sure that the ranking exercise was conducted in private and, further, I encouraged the image of privacy by lowering my voice, thereby indicating the 'secret' nature of it. I introduced the ranking exercise by saying:

'We have already been in the village now for a few months (my assistant and I, who did all the rankings together), and we have noticed that things are not running for everybody in the same way. But we think that is quite normal. It happens everywhere! Not all the fingers on the hand have the same size. Here now, we would like to review the situations of these 65 persons, those for whom things are running approximatively the same way and those for whom the situations are different. Though we know these people and others, we don't know much of their everyday life and how things come to be as they are now.

Also, we don't know much of the village and surely we don't have relevant knowledge on the people whom we think we know. You have a saying in this village that 'strangers have big eyes but do not see much'. Therefore, we would like you to help us in this work. We will start reading the names. Could you please compare these people and see who are alike and who are different in the ways things are going for them, and each time could you please explain to us why you think they are the same or different, and why things are as they are to them.'

The strategy in this technique was to introduce the informant to the idea of inequalities in living conditions without suggesting, even implicitly, any definition for living conditions, differentiation, classification criteria, or any explanation of these inequalities. I introduced the idea of inequalities between fingers without giving any suggestion as to the sense in which the fingers are unequal and why. Not a single time in these introductions were the words 'rich' or 'poor' used, neither in Fon, in Idaca nor in French. For each list (male and female), the exercise was carried out separately with four different informants, two men and two women (thus in total eight informants), all adult heads of household or carrying out activities on their own. They were of different generations, trajectories and levels of accumulation as we judged from our observations during our stay in the village. We selected them for the good knowledge they had of the village and of the people, and for their willingness to cooperate.

After the introduction and the agreement of the informant to participate in the ranking exercise, each name was read out while the corresponding card was handed over to the informant who was expected to make different piles, each time explaining why a specific card (a person) should be placed in one lot or the other and why not in others. Generally, the informant would hold the card, watch it carefully, turn it around, and repeat, as to himself, the name of the person concerned. Sometimes, we had the feeling that the informant held the person in his or her hands. During the ranking exercise, each informant created, merged or split the different piles. The number of categories formed by each informant varied from three to six. The first three informants made four categories (in the end five of the eight informants built four categories). Therefore, from the fourth informant, when the number of categories created exceeded (or was less than) four, we engaged in discussions, following their rankings, suggesting that they merge or split categories, in order to arrive at only four. At the end of the ranking, informants were asked to give short descriptions of each of the four categories, that is, brief statements that would apply to the people of the category in question. In the end these turned out to be more eloquent descriptions of these categories than universal qualifications such as 'rich', 'leading', 'middle', 'poor' or 'indigent' peasants or people.

The previous knowledge and impressions we ourselves had of the everyday life of people in the village helped us to ground the information thus collected into some daily realities of the people in question. Indeed, 15 of the men were closely known to us in advance. From each of the categories identified by the informants, two or three persons were researched concerning their working and living conditions, their perceptions and rationalisations of their situation, and the ways in which they were managing their affairs. The features I captured from these different

levels on the local ideologies of development were useful for me later during informal group discussions at the village bar, *Cakpalo* (local beer) and relish parties,[5] games and other social interactional situations with the villagers. I could follow the discussions more easily and efficiently, and even provoke now and then debates on issues related to local norms and social values, for more clarification and alternative versions and visions. One of these debates revolved around the cultivation of a large cotton farm as an indicator of 'well-being' or 'good potential' or 'entrepreneurial decision-making for accumulation'. Many people challenged this point of view, arguing that cultivating a large cotton field was a stupid decision for a farming enterprise, since one takes too much risk for little return. First was the climatic risk:

> '*Nobody protects you when the rains turn bad and the yields are low. The price of cotton will remain the same. If this happens to you with yams, you have a chance that it is general, and therefore yam prices will rise in that year.*'

Another risk mentioned concerned labour requirements at the moment of the harvest. Harvesting has to be done within a limited time period to avoid outbreaks of fire, and, most importantly, dust on the cotton fibres which could result in the the cotton being declared second quality:

> '*You will run after the children, women, and Fon and Somba labourers who are mostly insolent and very difficult to get during these periods, in order to harvest your cotton on time. And many of these labourers will request to be paid immediately after the work. You will then be looking for loans if you do not have, for example, millet or cowpeas to sell. Some people may even obtain money from the women, promising to pay them back with maize from the next year's harvest which they haven't yet sown. With a yam field, you can just harvest each time as much as your hands can cover (they mean family labour). It is true that with yam you cannot earn at once the money you can make with cotton. But if people need a lot of money at once to put into something (for any investment), why don't they simply join immediately a rotating credit organisation? People must be stupid to put so much trust in cotton cultivation. Besides in reality, many of these so-called big cotton growers are just caught in a vicious circle of credit and can no longer get out of it.*'[6]

Another of these debates was about building a house in Gbomina and renting it out to civil servants or merchants. Some people said that was a good way of securing one's retirement from agriculture while many others contested that it was the most senseless investment a peasant could ever make. People argued that it was better to invest in a herd of cows or to spend the money on the children, giving them opportunities to learn something other than agriculture. Potential clients for house renting in Gbomina are said to enjoy much higher bargaining power than peasants, especially those who would soon be too old and weak to claim their rent money in the event of default. Moreover, civil servants, for example, can be moved to any remote village in Benin at any time. Then how can an old illiterate peasant from Togoudo manage to find the person in order to claim his money? The misfortunes of people with similar experiences were evoked.

The final step in the ranking exercise consisted of pulling together the classificatory statements used by each informant concerning the four categories

obtained and the descriptions and analysis they made of them. Each category was scaled with a mark from 1 to 4 (lowest to highest status in that order). Not all the persons listed were each ranked in the same category by all the informants. There were even a few cases where large discrepancies existed between the ranks of two informants, due to differences in level of acquaintance or information about them, one placing the person in medium to low status, the other in high status. Notice that we have eight informants and thus eight rankings (four for each list). Therefore, each person listed had four marks out of which a mean was calculated. Table 10 below gives the results for the men, women and the total.

Table 10 Distribution of the status categories

	Men	Women	All together
Low status	15 (23%)	22 (34%)	37 (29%)
Medium-Low status	18 (28%)	17 (26%)	35 (27%)
Medium-High status	22 (34%)	20 (31%)	42 (32%)
High status	10 (15%)	6 (9%)	16 (12%)
Total	65 (100%)	65 (100%)	130 (100%)

Before concluding the presentation of the method, let me point out that the various steps adopted in in this exercise combine to form a complete set[7] of operations and precautions we had to take before we could reach the level of insight attained into local definitions of 'development' as presented below. In this respect, the method used does not have much in common with 'wealth ranking' techniques used in rapid rural appraisals.[8] Much closer to the approach adopted in the present work are the methods developed by Long for prestige rating (1968: 146-51) and by Seur for identifying differences in farming practices (1992: 28-31)[9] although these latter methods defined beforehand the issue on which inequality was to be based (social status for Long and farming for Seur) and the categories present (social positions in the work of Long).

About the results

As mentioned, the aim of this ranking exercise was not simply to draw up a list of peasants ranked from the 'richest' to the 'poorest'. I was interested more in the emic descriptions of socio-economic situation and status and in how to analyze this. Moreover, I was interested in how local people perceived their living conditions and 'development', and how they appreciated individual and collective actions and strategies supposedly targeted at achieving an improvement in these living conditions and development. The findings later helped me to understand the nature of people's involvement in the Community Development Programme. As I indicated earlier, what I obtained was a three-fold scaling in living conditions, although four categories were identified by the informants. These three levels related to 'sur-

vival', 'self-achievement' and 'well-being'. While those considered as surviving 'struggle not to be drowned', those indexed with well-being are said 'to have dry feet' and described as 'people who deserve to be a Patron-Saint *(Mɛdjomɛ)*'. The others, somewhere in the middle, would probably succeed 'once freed from the creepers that tighten around them', or have already a promising future, in which case it is said that they are 'banana leaves that can never shrink to the size of lemon leaves'.

The texts produced by the informants in such circumstances constitute cognitive social maps of stocks of experience and world views, shared to some extent with others in society. Such texts are, on the one hand, a stock utilised in facing life circumstances and, on the other, are themselves transformed by such circumstances. Therefore, when ranking their fellow men and judging their trajectories and situations, and more importantly when producing discourse out of these, informants engage in discursive performance centred on their own lifeworlds, their socially endorsed interpretations of the world. Yet a clear limitation of this method concerns the discrepancies between interpretations (that can change over time and space) and social practice.[10] Furthermore, while the researcher intends to project local folk classifications of socio-economic situations and trajectories, informants can only portray their own ideals and views. I sought to overcome this limitation by selecting various informants (contrasted in terms of their social attributes such as age, sex, socio-economic achievements) in order to explore alternative local ideologies on development, including the views of those persons ranked in the exercise (who were interviewed before or afterwards). Also, informal group discussions were of vital importance to open up debates concerning the norms and values inherent in survival, self-achievement and development. The informal nature of the groups with which the debates were conducted was decisive to the reliability of the information and the arguments developed. I did not play any role in the organising of these debates as social events (for example, forming the groups, making appointments for holding the debates, choosing topics, or launching the discussions). I simply took advantage of bars, *cakpalo*-and-relish parties and other social gatherings and then followed up the discussions. In these conditions, the topics I introduced for debate depended largely on the directions of the discussions of the people present.

The method allowed me to avoid static categorisation. The informants mostly presented the process through which a given status or situation was attained. They often indicated the concise decisions and organisational strategies the people concerned had made in their life trajectories, giving a normative judgement of what were 'good' or 'bad' decisions, strategies or status. The definitions or categorisations were not straight forward but ambivalent, as the following example suggests:

> *'He is a very good peasant, a hard worker. His grainstores are never empty before the next harvest. Nobody starves in his home and he takes his people to the health centre when they are sick. When he passes, you feel that someone is passing... But he is not honest with workers. He does not pay his debts. He uses wage labourers but it takes people time and trouble before they get paid. Now many people refuse to work on his farm and he has a bad reputation.'*

Sometimes, the informant would give a quick critical assessment of what he knew of the life trajectory of the person, offering his interpretation of the ups and downs, and using economic as well as social indicators:

> *'This man was one of the eyes of the village. Though he is not old (about 45), he has already been admitted into the circle of the wise old men for years now. He could stand on his own feet, hold one head of household on his back, one on his head and one other in each of his arms and still walk.*[11] *But within three or four years, this man was completely knocked down. The misadventures started when he ordered a motor in Nigeria that was confiscated by the customs. He spent a lot of extra money to get it back and then, a few months later, the motor was stolen here in the village. He spent so much time and money on this affair that his farming activities dropped. And two years later one of his oxen for ox-ploughing died. His misfortunes started with his last marriage. That woman is a malediction. Since she entered his house, the man's situation has turned upside down. Now, they hardly have enough to eat and he is weighed down with debts.'*

An important aspect of the method was that it offered further insight into the economic activities of people in Togoudo. It provided an overview of these activities, the management problems they entailed and how people coped with them. In short, the ranking exercise helped me to expand my perceptions of the economic web of the village.

The socio-economic categories and their description

In general, the categories used to differentiate persons and to appreciate their socio-economic status indicate the prevalence of the capability of the persons to meet their basic needs and those of their people. This capability is partly attributed to the organising potential and strategies, as well as to the hard-working nature of the person ('She or he is hard working and knows how to handle things'. 'She or he does not sleep full ears' [(sleep late and wake up early)], 'she or he is clever', 'he has good hands on his people', i.e. good control over the family labour). But this capability is attributed first and foremost to the access and/or control the person has over what are considered to be the basic production assets in the village: land and manpower ('he has land and he owns people', which means that he has a large household). But in some cases, this manpower potential is considered as an immediate social environment of the person: her or his household patterns, his or her labour exchange group, etc. Successes or failures are partly attributed to husband, wives, children, relatives or friends, the quality of which might have determined in one way or the other (positively or negatively) the actual status of the person. Finally, it was remarkable that for most informants, and even within informal group discussions, people seem to give more value to the assumed potential socio-economic security than to actual everyday living conditions. Within such a framework, land and labour assets of people get high value and state agents and their wives are granted higher status than peasants whose households might evidently enjoy higher material status at that moment. The same thing counts for peasants who own cattle, a grain mill (even when the mill is not yet in service), or have children well placed

in the state administration or 'on migration' who take care of them or are believed to do so. On the other hand, people who have built a house in Gbomina which they have rented out are not automatically ranked as being of high status. In the following part of this chapter, I present the results of the exercise, giving full accounts of the categories identified from the ranking of women, limiting the presentation of male categories to the two extreme ones, just to complete the picture of the economic span of the village and the appreciations local actors have of it. The cases presented below are elaborated using ethnographic material collected directly from (and from the social environment of) individual actors ranked by the key informants in the various categories

The categories of women

The women ranked low: 'life is hard' or 'It is a matter of life'

The above were typical comments about such women. There were 22 women ranked low. Among them were:

- Widows or divorced women without grown up or living children, or whose children were away from the village and did not take good care of them. They were seven in total.
- Adult girls not yet married but who had not learnt how to to do anything (mostly meaning trade or food processing for sale) apart from farming. There were four of them.
- Young girls just returned from migration, where they were either living with some elder sister or brother in the Ivory Coast or Cotonou, or were working as maids in Cotonou. They had either not brought anything back, or their parents were too poor and had 'eaten' all the money they had saved. There were seven of them,
- Young girls of alcoholic parents, not old enough to be judged on their own achievements and, in any case, not having achieved anything. Two of them.
- Two women who do not do things on their own:
  'She is a lazy woman, not well raised by her parents and wanting too much from her husband. Since her husband married two other wives, her mouth has gone to sleep (she has stopped vaunting herself) and we see her around much less. The man feeds her. That is all. For the rest, she has to manage herself but she was not prepared for that. If she learns fast, that would be ok. Otherwise, her poverty would be cheap' (i.e. she will not even be able to hide her problems, they will be too great and bring her close to indigence).

Informants describe the realities of these women of low socio-economic status in various ways according to the person considered:

- *'They (the households headed by the women) never miss the annual appointment with Ohanwio' (the month of May when some households are out of grain until the following harvest in July). 'It is not a big harm for adult persons to starve now and then during the year. But when children never eat a belly full.., you get what I mean...'*

- *'The house roof is covered with straw that is crumbling, and walls falling apart.'*
- *'She does not take part in any rotating credit organisation and when she does, it is always the small ones (50 or 100f per week). She would probably fail some weeks to pay the money herself, putting the rotating credit organisation straight into difficulties.'*

These persons engage in various sorts of strategies to survive. Apart from a few cases of 'wait and see' referring mostly to old women (widows or divorced), or 'time will tell' status for young girls starting something or not yet old enough to try anything on their own, these women are said to be 'killing themselves to survive'. They try many little things with little money, sleep on the farms for wage labour opportunities, move from one processing unit to the other helping the owners to fetch water, wood etc. for cash, but cannot start these things on their own, at least not on a significant scale because of lack of money or support or simply because they do not know how to work it out. It is remarkable that apart from wage labour as a source of income (mostly on farms), the exclusive or main income generating activity of these women at present is agriculture when they still have the strength to do it. The case of Yofoun presented below shows but one example of the process through which a potentially active woman falls into this category of 'it is a matter of life'.

The case of Yofoun: 'It's a matter of life'

Yofoun is in her sixties. She is from Tankossi like her husband and is now living in Togoudo with two grandchildren of 10 and 13 years old, a boy and a girl. Their mother is Yofoun's daughter who is living in the Ivory Coast. Most informants said spontaneously of Yofoun's household, 'They don't eat in that house, and the house itself is falling apart'. She does farm work, though with lots of difficulties, and a chaotic retailing of soap, canned tomato, cigarettes etc. Sometimes, she cooks a few handfuls of rice which her granddaughter sells around the village. But they frequently eat the capital from these ventures (no more than 3,000 to 5,000 RFCFA) and have to wait for the cotton harvest to find a job to earn some money. The other source for investment capital to start again are the sporadic allowances her daughter sends her when she finds someone coming and has cash herself. Yofoun said:

> *'Nobody can run any business in the way I am doing it. You eat from it every day. When you are sick it is in the same box that you look. But the business itself does not work every day.'*

Indeed, there are a few periods in the year in Togoudo during which cooking rice for sale in the morning and the afternoon makes an acceptable business for a woman of the situation of Yofoun. The best period is from December to February, which marks the end of the second rainy season and the earning of revenue from the marketing of maize, sorghum, millet and cowpeas. People have already marketed their cotton. Though they will not be paid until April, they already know what revenue to expect. It is a holiday and feast period (Christmas and New Year). Ranking second to that period is the end of July beginning of August, after the launching of the second season. The third good period, but less interesting is mid

to the end of April, which marks approximatively the end of the first sowing and the Passover Feast. Yofoun said:

> *'During Christmas and New Year, when I manage to find money, I cook up to five or six kilos of rice every two days and sell it all. When I have enough money for myself, I buy all the necessities for cash (rice, chicken, guinea fowls or cow's meat, oil, tomatoes etc.) and they are less expensive than when I buy for credit or when someone lends me the money, with a 50 or 100 per cent or even higher interest rate on the credit. Also, many people buy from you for credit, of course, without any interest rate. And it is difficult to make up the capital if you do not have twice or thrice of it to start with.'*[12]

She used to process groundnuts for oil and *kluiklui* but now no longer has the health nor the capital necessary to do it. She holds a plot of three hectares of exhausted land some five kilometres from the village. Neither she nor her grandchildren can manage to get much from the land and she does not have the cash to pay for labourers to cultivate it. She sometimes tries to give part of the land for share-cropping to young men of the village, but they cheated her in the end, complaining that the land was too exhausted and that they could not even get back the money they had spent on paid labour. Nevertheless, she manages to grow something on the land every season (maize, cowpeas, cassava, groundnuts).

The land belonged to her husband who obtained it from one of the first settlers when he arrived in the late fifties. He did not succeed in getting more and decided to move with his two wives and children to Gobé (35 kilometres further north-east) 15 years ago, where he was offered more land. Yofoun refused to join him because her groundnut processing was doing well. But, since then, she has had to take care of all her needs.

The women ranked medium-low: 'The tree could relax. It wasn't so tightened by creepers'

These are all women 'in charge' of themselves, whether they are married or not, young or adult. They are not living from hand to mouth, nor bringing empty hands now and then to mouth as happens in the previous category. They more or less earn well from their activities but do not manage to achieve food self-sufficiency. Therefore, one should not be misled by their external appearance and any assets they might have, which might give the impression of well-being:

- *'She has clothes on her hips and, on some occasions, she enters among people (which means that she appears as of higher status). Her children are clean. She could be better off if she was not so caught in problems.'* Or for some others *'She is not naked but does not have clothes on her hips.'*
- *'Her sons do not find anything to do (or do not want to do anything) and remain round her neck.'*
  'Her in-laws are not good. They did not give her the opportunity to use the assets of her husband when he was away from the village (especially the land)'. Or 'the family constitutes a weight on her husband and on herself so that anything she does vanishes' (that is, she cannot accumulate).
- *'The problem in that house is sickness. The woman works well, as does the husband. But it all goes to the Ifa priests or health centres.'*

Of the 17 women of this category, 10 practice agriculture as their exclusive source of revenue, five as the main income-generating activity, one as the third after petty trade and animal raising while the remaining one, Sabine, whose case is presented in detail below does not practice agriculture at all. For the 10 women practising exclusively agriculture, the main reason is the long period they have to spend on the farm every year at some 10 kilometres or more away from the village, which prevents them even from raising pigs as their fellow women do.[13] The second reason is that they don't know how to go about processing on a large scale or undertaking petty trade (six of them), while the four others declared they had tried a few times and failed, covering themselves in debt.

For this category of medium-low ranking women, informants are quite sceptical as to their capacity alone to move out of their vicious circle, unless luck helps them out. 'They are trying. Maybe one day... It is already encouraging that they will not die of poverty'. Even Sabine, who seems to enjoy some room for manoeuvre, and is able to combine various activities and is not obliged to work for a husband, is not doing particularly well. She appears to suffer (as shown below from the cases of higher ranking women) from the fact that she is not doing agriculture that could function as a supportive activity to her petty trade and food processing for sale.

The case of Sabine: 'Maybe one day...'

Sabine was born in 1962 in Gbomina. As her two sisters and brothers, she was raised by her mother in Gbomina without much support from her father, a police man from Covè (150km south) who worked a few years in Gbomina where he met her mother. He retired in 1964 and went back to Covè with his family but after a few years there, Sabine's mother came back home because relations with the husband and his three other wives was unbearable to her. She settled in Gbomina and continued with her trade.

After three years in secondary school, Sabine dropped out in 1977, and learned to sew. She got married to a school teacher in 1981, broke up with him in 1986 and settled in Togoudo, her mother's natal village. Now, she is in charge of her three children (10, 8 and 6 years old) and one of her junior brothers (17 years old). The husband migrated to Niger in 1986 and has never asked about her since. She does not do any farm work because she was not raised in it she says.

> *'I sew and do petty trade (which here includes cooking food for sale). Sewing works well in the periods before the feasts, but does not earn well. For the last feasts and after a full month of sewing, I saved only 30,000f which I invested in my petty trade. Besides, that was how I first started when I came here in 1986. Now, I mostly cook and sell the food in the mornings. In the afternoons I sew if I have orders and my apprentice goes selling imported products in the village. As for the drink, people pass by the whole day and buy.'*

For the petty trade, Sabine retails various imported products such as canned tomatoes and sardines, maggie cubes, cigarettes, medicines, toilet and make-up products etc. She sells some of the products from her house, and, now and then, her apprentice goes to Togoudo and nearby villages, mainly during the periods when services are closed and workers are at home, at midday, in the afternoon after five

o'clock and during the week-ends. A good period is at the end of the month when they have been already paid.

It is hard for Sabine to have any idea of the returns from this trade though she thinks it is beneficial. She replaces the stock of each product as soon as it reduces, and she buys new products, but never separates the accounts of the products. Also, the money circulates from one activity to the other.

The *sodabi* and other drinks are much easier to follow. A man from Abomey comes to the village every week or two with a large quantity. Sabine is registered with the man (as are a few other women in the village) and receives from him 40 to 60 litres every two weeks for 325 or 350f per litre, which she retails for 400f per litre or preferably for 25f a small glass so that the litre is sold for 550f.

For the rice, she buys a 50 kilogrammes bag every five or seven days in Gbomina for 7,000f. She cooks eight to ten kilo every day with tomato sauce and beef or guinea fowl meat. She does not have to move from her home to sell it all and can sell for 3,000 to 4,000f. And all the household takes lunch from it.

As for the relish, it goes with the *sodabi* or with *cakpalo* which people could buy from a neighbour of Sabine. It is a simple goat relish highly spiced, which people buy and take with *sodabi* or *cakpalo*. Sabine cooks that relish during the week-ends, especially in the periods when people sleep at home. The goat can cost 3-4,500f or up to 7,000 in feast periods, and she sells the whole of it the same day. She makes a profit of 1,250 to 1,500f.

But not all these activities turn out well all the time. It depends on the period of the year. The following table and graph give an indication of the relative importance of the activities all through the year in making her income.

Table 11 and Figure 16 indicate that Sabine conducts all the activities mentioned during only four months. The eight other months are periods of very low level activities and low income. Concerning these periods, Sabine said:

> *'When these periods come, I just pray that nothing happens to the children I am taking care of, and that nobody in my family has any sickness. The size of my various activities during the selling period depend very much on what happens in the low activity periods and on how I succeed in getting through them. When I run out of capital and buy rice on credit, the return is very little. I am a member of two rotating credit organisations, one of 52 people for 500f per week and the other, 1,000 per month with 25 persons. But it did not help me to get through these bad periods. Now I have requested to take my turn at the end of October.'*

The period from December to March is one when relish becomes expensive. The women who cook relish dishes and in addition grow vegetables profit largely from the situation. They sell some of the vegetables at a high price, and use the rest for their relish. Then they have the choice, either to sell relatively cheaply and therefore quickly, or simply stay at the same level as the other women. In both cases they make a good profit. Women like Sabine face double disadvantages. She claims not to be raised in farming and does not grow anything. Furthermore, she does not always have enough money to meet the costs and cook enough when the price is high. The people who give her sewing mostly pay her when they are paid for their

cotton (or the labour they do on the cotton farm) which might happen to be only in April.

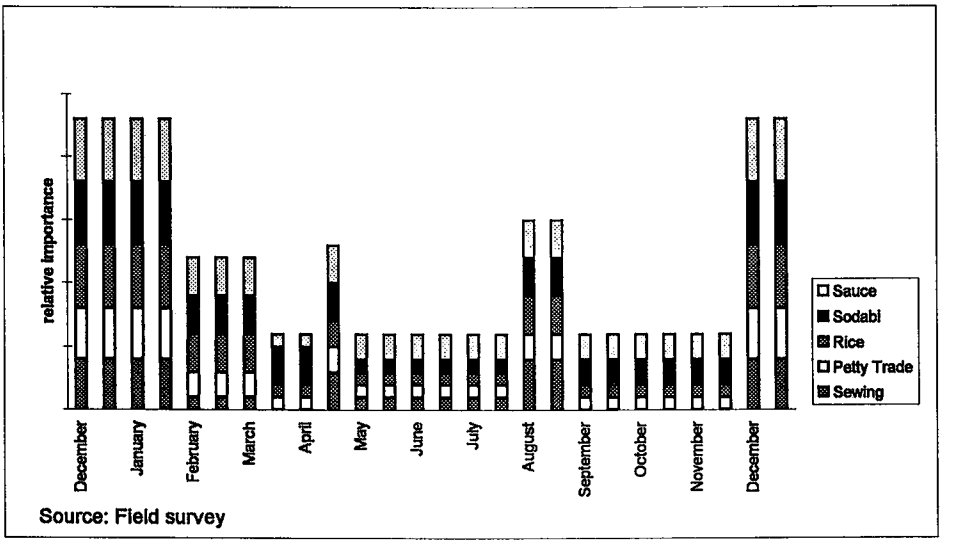
Table 11 Combinations of income-generating activities by Sabine through the year

Period	Major events	Activities conducted	Relative importance
December-January	End-of-year feasts. Cotton is sold, people are paid or know already how much they expect.	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	**** **** ***** ***** *****
February-March	Dry season, peasants have already received their cotton revenue and are staying in the village.	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	* ** *** *** ***
Mid-March to Mid-April	Beginning of the first rainy season. Most people stay on the farm.	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	- * * *** *
Mid-April to Late April	Passover feast	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	*** ** ** *** ***
May to July	Intensive farming period. Peasants stay on the farms	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	* * * * **
August	End of first season and launching of second season. National pilgrimage to Dassa[1]	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	**** ** *** *** ***
September-November	Second season, peasants stay on the farms	Sewing Petty trade Rice *Sodabi* Sauce	- * * ** **

[1] This is a regional Catholic Church feast. People come from Benin, Togo, Nigeria and even Ivory Coast every year in August and stay over night at Dassa mountain where the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared. For all the villages in the area, it is a big social and economic event. New clothes are bought, people come down from their farms, and women skilled in food processing, process within these two days as much as they do during the whole period of the end-of-year feast.

Note: The dots indicate the relative importance of the activity in terms of its weighting in the making of the income.

Figure 16 Sabine's combination of income-generating activities through the year



According to village gossip, she was supported by a hard-working peasant who was her boy friend. Sabine has tried to keep the relation secret because her mother has warned that her husband has not yet voiced any intention to abandon her and she therefore must wait until she gets a clear message from him. Now it is the headmaster of a school in Gbomina who is her boy friend. People contend that this woman always eats her capital and that it is thanks to her friends that she can always start up again.

Sabine is now the secretary of a women's group that started with the objective of growing soya for sale, though she herself says she has not been raised in farm activities and does not conduct any. She is not interested in learning it either. Apart from the soya field which is no larger than 800 m^2 for 25 women, that is, ten times less than each individual woman does on her own farm, the group has initiated a rotating credit organisation and expects to obtain a credit from a United Nations foundation operating in Benin.

The women ranked medium-high: 'Their future is promising' or 'their head is definitely out of water' or 'Banana leaves can never shrink down to the size of lemon leaves'

One cannot differentiate this category from the previous one on the basis of social attributes such as age and family status. Moreover, there remain some uncertainties as regards to food security and material status. 'She feeds herself though..., and she is not naked'. Also, economic activities are not different in their nature (encompassing farm and off-farm) though their combinations are different. These women rely far more on non-agricultural activities as the main or the first income-genera-

ting activity. Of these 20 women, none has agriculture as her exclusive activity and only five have it as the main source of income. All the others practise agriculture as a supportive activity, which allows them to develop peasant networks and retail their agricultural products (see the case of Pélagie below), or to grow part of the agricultural produce needed for their food processing activities.

Apart from the difference in the importance of agriculture to their incomes, there are two differences with respect to the women ranking medium-low. First, is the stability of their multiple activities and their skills in managing them.

'She knows how to do things with her hands on top of farming. She brews cakpalo (11 of them) and/or she raises animals. She processes groundnuts (6 in total), sells maize or millet porridge, makes maize or millet cake (5 – some combining many of these activities)'.

'She works well, does not stay at home and does not sleep full ears (does not sleep too long, or wakes up early).'

The second difference between this category and the previous one concerns the quasi-absence of 'free riders' and of negative social judgements on the persons ranked here as, so-called, lazy affines kin to support, (young) children unable or unwilling to earn a living, incapable or alcoholic husband or one unwilling to take a share in the expenses of the household).

'Her husband has a large farm and his hands cover his problems and his own affairs very well (he is capable and faces his responsibilities)'.

'She has one, (or some) well-off children (in the village or abroad) who help her now and then.'

The stability of the activities does not mean here a continuous performance of a given activity over the whole year, but the capacity of the woman to switch from one activity to the other according to the market, closing down off-farm activities when time is needed for farm activities, but returning to the off-farm activities in good time, without any need for credit, which most of the time has too high an interest rate. These women manage 'not to eat up their capital out of hunger or social problems' or they succeed in replacing it from farming activities or subsidies from children. For this category, informants did not put much emphasis on assets like the state of the house as indexed earlier, especially for the first category. None of them was said to have built any. Pelagie's case is illustrative of this category of medium-high women.

The case of Pélagie: 'late to bed, early to raise...'

Pélagie was born in Togoudo in 1964. She went to the village primary school until 1983 when she quit after failing three times to pass the secondary school entrance examination. Now she is married (in the village) and has three children of eight, six and four years old. She has a farm of her own, raises animals, especially pigs, and processes groundnuts into oil and cake. But her main activity is petty trade (retailing of various consumer goods, sale of agricultural products from her own farm and from that of her husband, and from other peasants). She is said to have developed her trading skills since she was at school. She says:

'When I was 12 years old and attending primary school, I started cooking toffi (sweets) for sale with the money I managed to save on my breakfast. In 1981, my father lent me 3,000f with which I started selling bottled beer in the village. Within two years I paid my father back and bought myself clothes, jewels, shoes etc. I got married in 1984 and have continued with the trade since then.'

She says she has not received money from her husband to continue with the trade. She has received a piece of land from her father (one ɛso, i.e. one fifth of a hectare), which her husband helped her to plough after she had her first baby. That was in 1985. She harvested maize and groundnuts which she sold for 18,000f. With this money, she started again in trade. To date, she has continued cultivating maize, groundnuts and some cassava on the same plot, has not extended it though she could have, and does not want to move from there though the soil is exhausted. The land given to her by her father is close to the village, while her husband's farm is ten kilimetres away. She thinks that would harm her trade. As for the quality of the soil, it does not matter for her because it still yields well with groundnuts which she keeps until there are expensive on the market, before she sells or makes oil out of them. The products she retails – her real business – change over time. She used to retail soap, maggie cubes and kerosene which she bought from Gbomina or Savè. But since 1987/88, many people have started retailing these products so she has switched to gasoline, canned tomatoes, canned oil, copy books, pens, rice and so forth.

The particularity of Pélagie as compared to Sabine is that she knows how much profit she makes on each of the products she retails and on her other activities, including farm work. For example, from 200 litres of gasoline which she buys for 17, 18, and sometimes 24,000 (when there are problems in Nigeria), she makes 2–3,500 profit in one week. On the cans of oil, 2-3,000f, on the rice, 2-3,000f a week. With this knowledge of the relative return of each product, she is able to reduce or increase the quantity of a product according to its market. For example, sometimes it was better to buy 100 litres of gasoline every week than 200 litres. She said:

'Even when the market of a product is low, it is not good to stop selling it completely. I continue on a low scale for a long time before I decide to stop. That was what I did for the kerosene. If you stop completely and start again, say a few weeks later, it will take you a lot of energy to get your clientele back. It is better to tell them 'my stock is over, come back next week' than 'I don't sell it any more'. But in the case of the kerosene, when I noticed that too many people in the village had started selling it, I decided to stop completely.'

Pélagie sells agricultural products too. She started with her own farm products and discovered that it is possible to earn much from them if one chooses the right period to buy and sell. She began offering the service to her husband who was once in need of cash to pay for wage labour. She bought maize from him and stored it. The following year, her brother-in-law and a cousin of hers obtained money from her during the *Ohanwio* period (food shortage) and later paid it back with grain. Now, she has up to eight or ten clients of this type, who take cash or grain in the hard period, which they pay back with cash or grain later. In any case, within a three

month period, this activity returns 1.5 times as much as she invests. And she could wait and sell later, when the products are even more expensive.

She began with animal husbandry in 1984/85 with two small pigs which she bought for 1,250f each. Now, she owns six small pigs (two males and four females), and two big ones (a male and a female). She keeps one pair for reproduction. She also has three sheep, but no chickens because they were all stolen. Animal husbandry is vital for her trade because when she sells all her goods on credit, and while waiting for her clients to pay her back, she can still renew the stock after selling a few animals, She says:

'My husband never suspected that people could earn much raising pigs. I could sell pigs for as much as 6,000f. When I sell three or four of these at once, I can help one or two households cross Ohanwio... and it is not for free.'

Her last activity is horticulture, which she does together with her husband. In fact, she does very little of it. The place is quite far from the village, more than 5km. People cultivate here from August to March-April. The fact is that as she works now and then in the area and is involved in trade, she is entrusted by many people doing horticulture there (including her father, brother, cousin, brother-in-law) to sell their farm produce in general and vegetables in particular in the market in Gbomina, Dassa or Savè, depending on the period, without making any profit. Pélagie said:

'People don't need to buy and sell everything before making money. Trust is more important than anything else. All these people trust me. They check now and then as to the price of the market. I never cheat them. But because of this trust, they would never sell their maize, groundnuts, beans and sorghum (she does not sell yam, saying it is beyond her financial capacities) to any body else without asking me if I want or am able to buy, or to lend them the money they need, from which I earn more than I could have made from the vegetables.'

But what she did not add, until I asked her later, was that the peasants who give her their vegetables to sell, pay for the transport costs, not her. Her other trade profits from this because then she does not only sell vegetables and she does not return empty handed. Also, with this and over nine months of the year, she has direct access to the cash of her husband who allows her to take money from his vegetable revenues, right there in the market, to purchase spices and other necessary products for relish for the household. During the other months, he contributed nothing, the general practice of men in Togoudo.

The women ranked high: 'They live at their ease' or 'c'est les doyennes'

Most informants declared this spontaneously, referring to their food consumption status in comparison with that of the previous category.

'People eat (with emphasis on 'eat') in that house. There, it is not as for other people for whom it is a matter of 'we eat whatever we find, and as we always find something we never starve'. In that house, it is a matter of 'we eat whatever we like to eat'. That is so for the children and for the adults as well.'

Some of these women are said to be *'doyenne de la maison'*, which means that they look after things, and sometimes feed the family. They have built houses and own bicycles and clothes of high quality *(wax hollandais)*. Their activities cover a wide span, including, for most, agriculture products bought from their husbands and other peasants and sold wholesale. They also act as heads of saving-and-credit groups (rotating credit organisations), and are said also to give credit to people out of their own money.

> *'She has accumulated and is able to give credit without being disturbed in her own affairs. Knock at her door at any time. She is right present and ready (she always has cash to lend).'*

There are six of these women in total out of the 65 women ranked. One is the wife of a teacher at the village school. She is around 35 years old and retails various manufactured products. Of the other five, only one (Florentine) is less than 40 years old. The others are aged above 50. One has two sons of a high rank in the State administration and another son who has been working for years in Ivory Coast. These children are said to take good care of her. She understates a minimum of farm work and retails cigarettes. Apart from this woman and the teacher's wife, who have a relaxing life, all the other four are hard-working women and have obviously accumulated certain items, such as bicycle, houses, animals, clothes, jewels, and household equipments. Of these four hard-working women, three (including Florentine the youngest) are intensively involved in *cakpalo* brewing, which they all claim to have learned from their mothers. The last (Ayaba) has similar activity and trajectory patterns compared with Pélagie described earlier and ranked medium-high, except that she is much older (about 60 years old), has never been to school and no longer goes very frequently to market. She keeps a farm enterprise with animals, including two cows, and she collects agricultural products, mainly maize, cowpeas and yams, which traders come with cars to the village to buy. Of the three *cakpalo* brewers only one (Valérie) trades agricultural products on the scale of Ayaba. The two others combine this with active involvement in agriculture.

I now present the case of Florentine, the youngest, who combines all the activities conducted by the women of this category (farm, brewery, trade of agricultural products and management of a rotative credit group), although here I place emphasis on her brewery.

The case of Florentine: 'Them belly full'

Florentine is the daughter of one of the first families to settle in Togoudo and to acquire land near to the village. But neither her husband nor herself obtained land in the village domain 'because there are too many men in that family. The land available there is not yet enough for them' she says. She received one hectare of land from her husband on his farm, some 10 kilometres from the village, and she sometimes sleeps there. She grows maize, groundnuts, tomato, okra and pepper which she sells together with the other farm products purposed from her husband and from other peasants. She also grows millet and sorghum which she processes into *cakpalo* and some yams for home consumption and for gifts for her parents. She uses wage labour for the difficult work (ploughing and weeding) but does the

sowing and harvesting herself. Her book-keeping is very precise. Now and then her husband helps her transport the products on his Suzuki motor bike, including calabashes of *cakpalo* to Gbomina.

She brews *cakpalo* throughout the year, the most intensive period being during the dry seasons, especially from December to March/April, when she brews 100 to 150 kilogrammes of millet every week. The price of the millet varies according to the season. When harvested in November or December, each 100 kilogrammes bag is sold for 3,000 or 4,000f. In April, the same quantity costs 5,000, rising to 7,000 or as much as 9,000f in July, August and September. No peasant millet grower likes to sell on credit. Florentine says:

> *'Peasants here mostly cultivate millet or sorghum in order to make cash for specific farming operations. The harvest of millet and sorghum occurs around November and December. When they sell it they use the money to pay for labour for the harvesting of cotton. The rest of the revenue is used for end-of-year feasts, so that the cotton revenue is kept for investment in housing, bicycles, and bridewealth for the marriage of a son or for the peasant himself. During the other periods of the year, either it is a matter of meeting labour costs (March, April, June, August), or to survive Ohanwio (May-June), or to meet some urgent need (e.g. a health problem, funeral or some other ritual ceremony).'*

In fact, it seems that Florentine herself, like the other two women of this category involved in *cakpalo* brewing, is not interested in buying millet for credit – unlike other lower ranked women, who brew, though on a smaller scale, using millet bought on credit. In addition to the purchase of the millet, there are many other expenses before one can produce *cakpalo*. She says:

> *'For a 100 kilogrammes bag of millet, you would need 3,000, 6,000 or 9,000f of firewood for cooking, depending on the season.*[14] *Then you would grind the millet for 750f and order water. You need 9-10 Jaboko of water (i.e. 200 to 250 litres). If you are lucky, from one bag of 100 kilogrammes, you can obtain about 200 litres of cakpalo and make 3-5,000f profit. Sometimes, you come up with nothing and get your back broken if you were not a woman before (if you were not financially well off).'*

As I have discovered, *cakpalo* brewing is a complicated and delicate process involving over 10 different stages, with a few sensitive ones where the whole operation can collapse for various reasons, most of which are said to be beyond the control of the brewer, no matter how experienced she might be. The grains are first immersed in water for 24 hours, left for two to three days to germinate and dry, and then are ground and the flour left for a few hours. Fresh water is added and the mixture remains until it reaches a certain level of fermentation before the cooking starts, which can last about 24 hours, after which the drink must be sold within five to seven days.

The sensitive steps in the cooking process are the germination of the grains, the fermentation, the cooking and the marketing. There seems to be no technique known to *cakpalo* brewers to physically recognise the germinative potential of a stock of grain. They can observe this only after the grains have been in the water for two days and then put under germination for three days. When a failure occurs the

grain (100 kilogrammes in one case for Florentine) is most often only good for one thing – feeding the pigs. Similar risks exist at the fermentation and the cooking stages when the brew can end up as porridge instead of *cakpalo*. In such a case, not even the pigs can really profit from it. As for the time limit for selling the product, this is due to the fact that there exists no technique to stop the fermentation process once it has started. Therefore, after seven days, the taste becomes intolerable and not even the pigs can be fed with. Florentine says:

'Though this is an activity with a high return, not everybody can cook cakpalo. It calls for lot of attention and can break your back once and for all, instead of improving your situation. If in the same year you have three times millet of bad quality, it will be difficult for you to stand and walk again (to set your financial situation back to normal). Also, when people know that you are at the time limit for selling, they will buy on credit and won't hurry to pay you back. But the risk of having the same stock for more than five days is very limited because people drink a lot in this area.'

The *cakpalo* drinkers have a diversified taste as far as the alcoholic content (i.e. fermentation degree) is concerned. Some people prefer the sweet variety, others wait until its alcoholic content is high. Consequently, most brewers of the scale of Florentine (or close to that) have three to five different stocks of drink, from the sweetest to the sharpest in order to keep their clientele. But this requires a high level of investment in cash and time. If one adds to this all the risks mentioned earlier (of non-germination, non-fermentation, and production of porridge), then one can understand that anyone who wants to remain in the business at the level of Florentine, needs at least two months of running capital, costing 800 kilogrammes of millet, with extra investment for wood, water, grinding, not to mention the basic equipment in calabashes,[15] cooking jars and utensils; that is, at least (in the most favourable periods for the cost of millet and wood), 90-100,000f. Most brewers I have interviewed have started slowly, with their mothers[16] or a relative and have built up to their present levels of brewing step by step, with the ups-and-downs of 'back breaking' and with the rescue of their husband, a rotating credit organisation or cash from animal husbandry.

Florentine raises pigs and has eleven small and six adult pigs, which she feeds with the byproducts of the brewery. Yet, she has to sell part of her byproducts to other pig raisers because it is mostly too much for her own animals to consume. She also organises a rotating credit group and therefore can negotiate taking some or all of the turn of someone else when in urgent need of cash. She says, *cakpalo* brewing is an activity with a high return but you never can run this business without good supportive activities – some kind of 'spare tyres' such as pig raising, grain retailing etc. But the combination of brewing with relish is too risky, even though people mostly drink *cakpalo* with relish. 'This would ruin you' declare all brewers, some of whom have already tried before.

'When you sell both products, most clients would buy both, pay for one and promise to pay for the second later, which they hardly do. This would not prevent them from coming for more credit, then on the second product. In the end you don't know how your capital vanishes. And you cannot be too severe with them, otherwise they will say everywhere

that you are a bad woman. When you sell only one single product, you do not refuse credit but the account is kept more easily.'

With her activities, Florentine has managed to make some concrete achievements cited by people as indications of her 'living at ease'. Apart from the normal female equipment (i.e. clothes, jewels of relatively high value, and household utensils) she succeeded in buying herself a bicycle with which she now moves much faster to the farm and to Gbomina. She has built a house in her husband's compound with clay and cemented walls and a corrugated iron roof. She says

'In the future, if things work well, I am thinking of extending my animal husbandry, eventually purchasing land and building a house in Gbomina for renting. The main handicap is that you cannot just extend cakpalo brewery as much as you like. Even when you have money to invest, it is almost impossible to brew more than 1.5 bags a week. You just cannot handle more.'

Cakpalo, local economy and women's strategies for survival and self-achievement

As shown in Chapter 7, women mostly have farms of small size with poor soil fertility and there is no possibility of purchasing land even when one has the cash available to do so. But the most constraining factor for women, as far as agricultural activities are concerned, is labour. They might manage to borrow pieces of land here and there but they don't yet have full control over their own labour during farming periods, since they must help their husbands at least for sowing and harvesting. Access to wage labour, especially to migrant labour, mostly passes through the husband or a male relative or friend and only after the man in question has made sure that he has met his own needs first. This delays their sowing, with consequent risks of a bad yield. Nevertheless, 20 percent of women still practice agriculture as their exclusive source of income while about 78 percent have it as their first, second or third income generating activity (see Zounon 1995: 34-36).

Access to and control over land and labour largely condition the ability of peasants to grow cotton, the main cash crop for Togoudo peasants since the mid-eighties. In 1991, for example, only 19 percent of cotton growers were women, while women make up to 48 percent of the total number of Togoudo inhabitants involved in agriculture. This marginal access of women to cotton, the most reliable cashcrop, should not be seen as linked solely to cotton. As indicated earlier, behind the cotton logic is the general search for income from new opportunities offered by agricultural activities. There are no statistics on marketing outside of state channels but one suspects that women have more room with crops other than cotton, where the seeds, fertilisers and insecticides are under the control of the state and the board of the GV, where there is not a single woman. In any case, with the limitations imposed on their access to land and labour (which does not date from the cotton era), there is very little chance for women to achieve much within agriculture. Among nine percent of the women ranked as of high status and said to be 'living at their ease' (six of the 65 ranked), only one has succeeded in reaching this status exclusively from agriculture, though she soon extended her activities to include the storage of

agricultural products which merchants come to collect in their lorries. As for the others, either they inherited from a rent situation (the wife of the school teacher and the mother of highly ranked state agents), or then were involved in food processing. It is highly indicative that among the 39 women ranked low or medium-low (that is 60 percent of the 65 women ranked) are all the 35 women (54 percent of the total 65) who have agriculture as their main income-generating activity, which constitutes some 90 percent of the total number of the women ranked low or medium-low. Despite this apparently negative characteristic of women involvement in agriculture, this activity appears to operate as a good gatekeeper for women, as shown from the cases of Pélagie and Florentine, as compared with that of Sabine.

Indeed, when it is not an exclusive source of income, agriculture is associated with food processing, petty trade, animal raising and, in some rare cases, a relatively large scale of agricultural trade. As shown in the discussion above, it plays a supportive and reinforcing role to non-agricultural activities, provided the woman concerned is not overloaded with household duties and 'free riders' as are Yofoun and Sabine. Given these conditions, the best self-achievement strategies that women can engage in are processing activities, coupled with animal raising, agriculture and perhaps petty trade.

I enumerated 35 *cakpalo* brewers in Togoudo in 1991/92, of whom 19 do it permanently, on the scale of between half and one 100 kilogrammes bag of millet every week in good sale periods. Eight others, though brewing frequently, do not generally exceed half a bag per week while the others brew sporadically. People say that there are many more women in Togoudo who have learnt brewing from their mother or some other relative and have earned from it. Many of them have been 'broken', either by bad germination, bad fermentation, or unpaid credit from *cakpalo* drinkers. All brewers are afraid of the high risks involved in this activity, though at the same time, it is said to have the highest return. Recent studies in the area (Zounon 1995) show that *cakpalo* brewing and groundnut processing into oil compete for the highest returns, according to the season for it. In all situations, food processing activities seem more interesting to women than agricultural activities (see Table 12).

Table 12 Comparison of the gross margins for certain income generating activities

Activities	Maize 1 ha field***	Cotton 1 ha field**	*Cakpalo* brewing*	Groundnut processing*	Maize processing*	Bean processing*
Gross margins, FCFA	35,675	56,155	10,410	39,374	4,398	4,715

* Calculation based on processing activities in July 1994, for three to five processing units.

** Calculation based on the 1993 campaign. Cotton cultivation starts in June and payment is made in December or January the following year

*** Calculations based on the 1993 campaign. The cropping duration (from land preparation to marketing) is normally between four and five months.

Source: From Zounon 1995.

Notice that the crop margins are for standard male performances which women, given the handicaps I pointed to earlier, can hardly achieve.

There is evidence that *cakpalo* brewing is a good option in the local economy and for the social life of the village. The purchase of millet by women allows some peasants, either to accumulate their cotton revenue while still meeting their obligations relating to labour costs and end-of-year feasts, or for other peasants to pass the *Ohanwio* period without damage. From the 1990 figures, millet and sorghum yielded 216 tons, half as much as maize or cassava which are the staple foods, but largely sold. Almost all of this was sold in the village. Some brewers say they find it difficult to buy millet in the village and therefore must travel to Gbomina. The tradition of drinking *cakpalo* with goat meat relish is quite special to this village. It is widely acknowledged that African peasants do not raise animals for home consumption and that their protein intake is low. Meat is consumed on rare occasions, on feast days or at rituals. But here in Togoudo, the *cakpalo*-and-relish parties provide peasants with opportunities to consume meat much more often than is generally assumed. I almost never saw women at those parties but some of them bought the relish. As for the young men, they eat it too, especially when they are paid their wages after the sowing or harvesting of cotton. This tradition gives goat raising a different character in this village than usual. There is a relatively large local market for these animals, in contrast to most villages where the market, at best, is in the nearby city. But not only goat raising profits from *cakpalo* brewing. The byproducts of the brewing are used to feed the pigs and chickens. Finally, *cakpalo* does not depend on an external market. It is consumed locally and the demand for it is not always met, which gives some security to brewers, as long as men can earn cash from cotton and other farm products. In this way, the *cakpalo* business balances the inequalities of access to agricultural production factors. Indeed, *cakpalo* is at the heart of the dynamics of the local economy. Yet, even more, it gives people the opportunity to meet and is therefore one of those banal events that stimulate social interaction among peasants isolated for months on their individual farms, and it contributes to the making of village identities while providing an opening for various sorts of negotiations. A half litre of *cakpalo* is sold for 50f compared with 175f for a 66cl bottle of beer (pre-FCFA-devaluation costs). *Cakpalo* parties are therefore hardly exclusive to any social category, especially during feast periods.

In fact, any programme aimed at making village life more dynamic (as intended within the Community Development Programme) would gain a lot by looking at the *cakpalo* business, especially when activities are targeted to women. In the present case, not a single discussion, let alone action, was oriented toward *cakpalo* brewing or groundnut processing. Nonetheless, problems exist in the business which could have 'interested' intervening organisations aimed at improving the self-achievement chances for women and others directly or indirectly connected with the business: Problems of credit for starting or continuing, the fluctuation of millet prices, the various risks with respect to low germination, fermentation, stabilisation of the fermentation process, hygiene of production, and equipment and labour saving techniques. The same analysis could be made of groundnut processing into oil, bean cake, and vegetable growing, though the major bottleneck here is the fact that the market for oil is completely outside the village, which makes this activity

less secure than *cakpalo* brewing. When, in the next chapter, we come back to the everyday implementation of the Community Development Programme in Togoudo, we will have a better insight into its disconnection with the local economy and social life, though, that in itself did not prevent its appropriation by local strategies for self-achievement. Let me now briefly discuss the socio-economic categorisation of men.

The categories of men

In order to complete the picture of the various ways in which people in Togoudo cope with constraints and advance their life projects, I will here present, through three different cases, the two extreme categories of men, those ranked low and those ranked high.

The men ranked low: 'we too have come to life' or 'it is a matter of life'
Fifteen of the 65 men were ranked in this category. Some informants were particularly hard in their judgement of these people, of their living conditions and of how they came to be in their present situation. There seems little excuse for a man to belong to this category in Togoudo, apart from those who have been sick for a long period (two in total), old men without family support (three), young men who have just left school (two), or young men just married without enough land (three). The other five were granted no excuse for being what people called *God's mistakes*. They are said to be lazy, drunkards, irresponsible, and/or having wasted their time when they migrated to Ghana, Nigeria or the Ivory Coast. Three of them are older than 40 years old, married, with children but do not possess more than three hectares of land. They are not excused for that – 'They knew that situation of theirs since they were children.' The three young men who were just married and did not have enough land, though they all have very precarious living situations, were ranked in this category more, I think, because of their lack of land than for the actual living conditions of their households, which implies that despite the severity towards landless old men, informants were aware of the disadvantages of low land ownership.

In general, the people of this category are materially deprived and face food shortages regularly. When they own a bicycle it is old, their houses are in poor condition, except for two men who have been ill over long periods and some young men living in houses built by their parents. These people develop different survival and self achievement strategies out of their situations. Here, I give an account of two contrasting cases – those of Aloka and Chocothéo – to show how they identify themselves, which influences how open they are to self-achievement. Aloka is considered a lazy and irresponsible man. He is generally not taken seriously when he speaks in public, but he does have public responsibilities in Togoudo and the surrounding villages. He is in charge of looking after the water pumps and regulating their use. In addition to that, he conducts extension classes against guinea worms. Chocothéo, whom I mentioned in the second chapter of this book, together with his wife, for not being interested in the GV meeting on cotton, is not considered to be a lazy man

and does not have low social status in the everyday life of the village. He is ranked as one of '*God's mistakes*'. That was in 1991/92. But now, three years later, he would have been ranked at least medium-high. The trajectories of these two men give us some indication of how these people cope with their situation and how they struggle for self identity, and incorporate pieces of intervention packages into their daily attempts to keep their heads above water and furthermore even engage in what I call externally oriented self-achievement strategies.

Aloka, the miller

Aloka is a nickname given to this man (David), which means the miller: Alo means to mill and ka means flour. Aloka was born in Sowé in 1946 and settled in Togoudo in 1981. He left his wife and five children behind in Sowé. He did not manage to build himself a house in Togoudo and lives with Ina-vieux, a lady from one of the first settler families, in a kind of husband-and-wife relationship. Aloka did not arrive in Togoudo in search of land to farm, but to work as a miller. He obtained this opportunity while he was in Nigeria where he met some Idaca people from Togoudo who came to buy a mill for a man in Togoudo, actually the father of Ina-vieux. Aloka does not like farming, and developed a very early disdain for farming activities.

He completed his primary school course in his native village and was then already behaving as an *Akowe*, a white collar worker, who did not wish to dirty his hands with farm work. He pretends to have always refused to help his parents on their farm. In 1963, he failed his first attempt to pass the entrance examination to secondary school. He immediately joined an uncle in Ghana where he is said to have done the minimum of the cleanest job he could find, just in order to have enough cash for coffee and to clean his shirt and trousers. One year later, he came back to Sowé and had to take up milling work which he practised until 1971, at a monthly payment of 1,000f and the possibility selling flour droppings to Fulbe people. Up to 1980, when he arrived in Togoudo, he travelled to Togo and Nigeria for milling work and other petty jobs.

The early 1980s was the period when a UNICEF and USAID water pump project begun, as well as the Integrated Rural Development Project of the Zou-CARDER, to install water pumps in a few villages. A committee was to be set up, and one of its members had to be someone willing to look after the daily functioning of the pumps, take care of their maintenance and regulate people's access to them. Such a responsibility required that the person be present and often available within the village. Aloka was fully prepared for this and was proposed by most villagers. The project also needed village volunteers to teach peasants about the risks of guinea worm with the use of unclean water, which Aloka was pleased to do. These persons are now called *animateurs villageois* or promotors. They received some training, after which it was their job within the programme, as Aloka expressed it, to go round the wards and farms (16 in total for Aloka) to teach peasants ways of cleaning their water and to argue that guinea worms did not come from sorcerers but from unclean water. Aloka complains that people from Togoudo do not take the guinea worm problem seriously and never show up at the meetings he calls. When asked if he earned enough from this job to meet his needs he replied:

'UNICEF does not pay anything. But God has provided the body with a mouth, and will surely provide what will enter it. It was only in 1984 that I touched a hoe for the first time in my life in order to cultivate a farm. Now I have a small farm where I grow maize and okra, exactly what my mouth wills. I'm not someone for farms. It is because the job of miller is not doing well any more that I feel obliged to do farming. Otherwise, that is not my business.'

Nevertheless, he is the secretary of a peasant group whose main activity is supposed to be farming. In normal days, Aloka spends much of his time with the RDV, the VNU and with us, ready to be sent on missions anywhere in the village. He is present at every public meeting of the village, especially when external agents are there. In most cases, he is asked by the hosting board of the meeting to prepare the yard (to clean it, install the chairs, tables and benches, getting the children to help) for the meeting. In so doing, he is incidentally quite well informed about the various discussions underway with the different external organisations who visit (e.g. the CARDER, the regional health department, officials from public administration, NGOs). Hardly any adult person takes Aloka seriously, but when it comes to contact with externals, he is useful to people interested in any sort of opportunity that might arise vis-à-vis these organisations. Questions generally addressed to him are, for example: 'You are the one who knows these people. How do you think we should introduce our case to make sure that we win it?' or, in cases when the hosts are late 'Are your people coming really?' Aloka would then give himself haughty airs, teaching peasants the right way to do things and finishing by addressing us or the visitors with an expression typical for agricultural bureaucrats 'Ah those peasants... (Ah ces paysans-là!)', implying their ignorance. Lately (early 1995) he was allocated a bicycle by USAID as part of new extension equipment for the anti-guinea worms campaign. It is said that a monthly grant was promised to the *animateurs villageois* such as himself.

Clearly, then, Aloka is emerging as a local development intermediary and considers himself, in those instances, closer to bureaucrats than to peasants. The most interesting aspect of his situation is that most peasants trust his competence and concede to him a respectable status. On these occasions, he looks down on peasants – as he probably thinks any good bureaucrat is expected to do – building in his own way his bureaucratic identity. After having experienced such attitudes from him on different occasions, I came to doubt the biographical discourse he had constructed about himself as someone very distant from farmers and farming, which indeed are mostly looked down upon by intervention agents, whether they be in agriculture, health, public administration or teaching. But outside these development arenas, he seems to lose social status and recognition and is considered lazy and irresponsible in the eyes of peasants – someone, as a peasant once told me, *'made by God to exorcise other human beings from devil's harms.'* I will come back to this in the next chapter and relate it to the status peasants attribute to intervention issues in their daily preoccupations. To proceed here, I would like to look at Chocothéo also ranked low and who develops external contacts, but quite evidently with goals different from those of Aloka.

Chocothéo, the multiple entrepreneur

Chocothéo (30 years old), is much younger than Aloka and has studied longer than him. Moreover, he is not considered lazy by village people. He does not show any disdain for agricultural activities, though he is highly disadvantaged in terms of access to land. His grandfather settled in Togoudo as a hunter and did not bother to occupy any plot of land. His two sons (the father and uncle of Chocothéo) had to borrow land from other settlers in two different zones, because they were always offered small areas of exhausted soils. Now, Chocothéo has five small pieces of land (about a quarter of a hectare each, the total farm size available to him not exceeding two hectares) from different persons in different locations. These are his uncle (his own father died in 1979), his mother, his brother (who also were lent the land by the original 'owners') and a friend who received one hectare from his father for *gbagagle*, 'afternoon farming'. Chocothéo grows maize, cassava, groundnuts, yams and cotton. With the very dispersed location of his plots, he and his wife and children have to move over long distances from one farm to the other and therefore do not manage to devote much time to farm work itself. On the other hand, the lands are generally exhausted and he can never be certain whether a plot of land he has cultivated one year will be his the following year, even when the land belongs to relatives, because they do not have enough for themselves.[17] Therefore, he knows that he cannot survive on agriculture, let alone make any real progress by relying solely on it. In addition to her involvement in farm work, Otchounsi, the wife of Chocothéo bakes bread with wheat flour on a scale. Chocothéo undertakes some trade himself. From 1985 to 1988, he travelled frequently to Nigeria to buy goods such as radio-cassettes, spare parts for bicycles and motor bikes, fertilisers, and even mills. He says:

> '*At the beginning people used to pay me to take them there because they didn't know how to manage in Nigeria. In 1988, I worked as a surveyor in Gbomina and was paid 10,000f. With that I went to Nigeria myself and bought a few spare parts and started to retail them. Since then I have continued and people who want to buy anything now no longer bother to follow me. They just give me the money and I take care of the rest, which is much more profitable for me. I know where and how to get cheap articles of quite good quality, and here, I know what people want or would like.*'

He is member of a labour exchange group and he generally uses his turn either to sell the labour to people in need or to pay back loans of cash or food grain. He keeps close contact with all external interventions entering the village and that is how he became recruited for the survey and also for the agricultural youth training programme of the CARDER. In 1988, a young peasant cooperative (CAEJ: *Coopérative d'Action Economique des Jeunes)* was initiated by Tolidji Gaston, a young man from one of the first settler families living in Cotonou who had contacts with Ministers and other authorities of the Government.[18] CAEJ had about 38 members. Chocothéo was elected secretary of the cooperative. Later, when the RDV launched the idea of a women's group, he was proposed as their secretary since none of them was literate. But the CAEJ did not work out, even though Gaston managed to obtain a large plot of land from his family for it (10 hectares). Nevertheless, Chocothéo worked on part of the land for two years before he was asked by the family to stop.

As for the women's group, he complains that they are always fighting and they grow only two *ɛso* (less than a half hectare) of cassava. He is also member of the football club of the village. All these contexts of social interaction (labour exchange group, football club, CAEJ, women's group etc.) allow Chocothéo to be integrated into networks where he could market his Nigerian experience. Persons intending to buy a radio-cassette, a bicycle, a motorbike, a watch, even cloth for making trousers, would request his advise for the make and quality of the material to be purchased. In many cases, he would simply be asked to obtain the goods.

In general then, in 1991, the impression people in the village had of Chocothéo, was that of a poor young man, with no land, already burdened with an unfortunate wife and children, but doing his best to keep his head above water. It was therefore no surprise that he was ranked as of low status. But Chocothéo had a clear plan in mind – a life project in which he believed and for which he kept on working and searching for opportunities. He intended to start a shop/bar where he would sell *sodabi*, various bottled drinks, and manufactured goods, including spare parts for bicycles and motor bikes. And, in the end, he succeeded in doing so. Let me briefly explain how.

Of course, the RDV was not interested in his idea. He considered it unrealistic from a young peasant, although it was one of the projects of the GV to start a similar shop in the village. Chocothéo approached the VNU also, but the latter could do nothing. He said he could not even inform his bosses about it to ask their point of view, since the idea fell completely outside the scope of the activities he was expected to support in the village (mainly agricultural production and animal husbandry), and with groups, not individuals. He approached us too (my assistant and me) with the same idea. He worked now and then for my research, carrying out part of the survey and doing translations and made a little money out of it. He started an animal raising group with 15 other young men but the group did not last for more than three months. In the meantime, my assistant introduced him to some ladies in Porto-Novo (south-east, on the Benin/Nigeria border) involved in wholesale smuggling across the border and to the Cotonou international market. Since then, even for his spare parts, he has stopped going to Nigeria. He can obtain them cheaper from these ladies, and so no longer faces risk with custom controls. Also, the ladies provide his wife with wheat flour on better terms than she used to get from Gbomina. After a few months interacting with the ladies, he managed to secure some articles on credit. This was in January 1992, at the time when peasants being paid for their cotton harvest, part of which they normally use to repair that bicycles which are always in very bad shape after a year of two rainy seasons. Chocothéo had every spare part necessary. When he came down to Cotonou in February to pay back the ladies, he stopped at my place and said:

> '*I have made a big leap. This year is going to be a good one. I think my shop will open. With the profit I made in this single month, no less than 150,000f, I am able to complete the house, set the shelves and buy articles and open the shop. When it is ready I will invite you for the opening day.*'

He has a book where he keeps his accounts. He writes everything down, and does the same for the bakery of his wife since he has started buying her wheat from

Cotonou. But his decisive leap was in July of the same year when through the same ladies, he became involved with some dubious affair concerning a large stock of wheat flour that was to be sold off at a price far below normal. Hence he obtained 20 tons of the stock without having to pay any significant part of the cost. He explained that, in early September, he would be able to pay it back completely as there would soon be the Catholic Church pilgrimage to Dassa, which offered a tremendous market opportunity for bread. The stock was transported by night to the village, with him paying for the petrol, and then retailed on bicycle throughout the surrounding villages, even in Gbomina, because he could offer a competitive price. Also, for the pilgrimage, his wife baked more bread than she had ever baked, and sold it all. With his profits, Chocothéo arranged the bar side of his shop, bought a second hand kerosene refrigerator and started selling cool drinks, which were never to be found in the village before. Since 1994 his plan is to engage in the marketing of agricultural products. His contact ladies in Porto-Novo are interested in maize and cowpeas. He will soon start collecting them in the village. But he says he first needs to arrange good quality storage. He kept in touch with us and would drop into my, or my assistant's, office when visiting Cotonou for business. He used to say:

> *'You people did not arrange any credit for me when I was struggling to start this shop. But it is thanks to you that I have got to know these ladies, who trusted me because they trusted you. That's why I am very grateful. I will always stop here and greet you. Besides, I feel that my well-being might come through you. One never knows who else I will meet at your place.'*

In any case, he now (in 1995) seems definitively to have his head, if not his whole body out of water. If in 1991 he was considered as one of 'God's mistakes', now, thanks to his insertion into the external world and his roots in networks in the village, he has ended up building himself a 'personality' in the village. Lately, during a minor dispute with a fellow villager who told him to stop boasting so much as nobody knew what tomorrow might bring. He declared:

> *'Yes nobody knows of tomorrow but I boast about my work today. You and yours cannot break this achievement [with witchcraft he meant]. But even if you succeed, I have already got a name in this village. I am a reference. People refer to my name as a meeting place. 'Let's meet at Chocothéo' they say. Even if you succeed in harming me, my name will not disappear. They would say 'we used to meet at Chocothéo'. On what occasion is your name ever called in this village?'*

The men ranked high

All ten men ranked in this category grow cotton on a large scale, not less than five hectares each year for the past four years at least. All of them combine cotton with the cultivation of maize and beans for sale, while four grow yams for sale and the others vegetables. Two of them declare they own a herd of cattle among the Fulbe and one is the owner of one of the mills of the village.

During the ranking exercise, there was hardly any reference to the food consumption patterns of the households of the persons ranked in this category. Informants stressed land ownership, the hard-working nature of the persons, the assets they

had accumulated (e.g. bicycles, motor bikes, houses, mill, cows) and most importantly, the size of the manpower at his disposal. Indeed, these men all had large families, in some cases of three or four generations depth, where they act as the head of the family and mobilise its labour for their farms. In addition to that, three of them have Somba households living on their land who supply wage labourers and are particularly helpful for yam cultivation, while another, involved in the trade of food products, 'controls' a link with Fon labourers who arrive every year in Togoudo for the maize and cotton seasons. That is the case of Tinkpo, which I now present in more detail.

Tinkpo, in search of animal traction

When I first met Tinkpo on the 23rd April 1991, he was preparing to receive a mission from FAIB to his GRVC, a peasant cooperative. It was a hot and important issue for him. He had hoped for such an opportunity for three years and did not want to lose his chance of obtaining credit for animal traction, like his friend Ekpemi had succeeded in doing so a few months earlier. This issue is explored further in the next chapter. Despite the fact that he controls a large household, he always has to pay for wage labour.

Tinkpo is in his mid-fifties. He is married with five wives. The first has eight children, three married girls and five boys, one of whom attends school and the other four work on the farm. The second wife has three children, two married girls and a boy born in 1970, to whom Tinkpo provided a wife a few months after we met. The third wife has five children, three boys and two girls, all working on the farm. The fourth wife has three children, all on the farm and the last one, he only married in 1990. The wives have their own farms, the first two are also engaged in food processing. But everybody in the household works first on the farm of Tinkpo, especially at peak periods (land preparation, sowing and harvesting). After that the women take care of their own business. As for the children, the girls generally help their mother on the farm, but it is out of question that the boys perform their own farm work (or help their mother) apart from some *afternoon farming (gbadagle)* of less than a hectare each, where they can work after four o'clock, in order, as Tinkpo puts it, to learn farming themselves. For the cotton crop, he operates a bit differently. Every son between about 12 and 14 years old is allocated at least one hectare of land which he is expected to plough with cotton as an afternoon farm, in addition to his contribution on Tinkpo's own portion. But the boys do not have access to the revenue from this cotton farm. Tinkpo explained:

> '*We do all these things together here. Only my wives keep their harvest and sell it apart, because I cannot take care of everything for them. I am responsible for their food. Even on the farms when they are working for themselves. Apart from that, they need to earn their money for condiments for making relish and to meet their own needs including their daughters. As for my sons, it is my responsibility to take care of all their needs, up to their trousers, bicycles, radio, pocket money and their education: how to do things in life.*'

The boy for whom he was going to pay for a wife was around when he was speaking. Incidentally, he had never received any radio or bicycle yet. A few years

ago, Tinkpo bought himself a motor bike and let his children have his old bicycle, which they ride to the farm where they usually have to spend most of their time. But he managed to build a house with a corrugated iron roof for the boy who is going to get married and is proud of that.

With all his family labour, Tinkpo should not need wage labourers for the amount he produces. For the second season in 1990, he cultivated 10 hectares of cotton and 1.5 hectares of cowpeas. For the first season of the same year, he made five hectares of maize and two hectares of yam. For year 1991, he intended to do the same. He had already launched the first season. But he complained that the children seemed less disciplined now than in his time when he was working for his father. They do nothing on the farm until the parents arrive. Therefore, he remains dependant on wage labour to some extent. But he has a well-established connection for that. He has a friend he came to know in Ghana, who now lives in Bohicon where he trades maize, and also buys maize from Tinkpo, collecting it from his farm and from other peasants in the village. The man is from Za-kpota, one of the villages on the Abomey-plateau where the Fon wage labourers come from. For four years now, at the beginning of the first season, Tinkpo travels down to Bohicon and his friend helps him through Za-Kpota to recruit labourers, sometimes as many as 15. But bringing in many wage labourers to plough the land can trap the peasant, and Tinkpo is aware of it. Indeed, it takes about five days to sow 10 hectares of a crop (which can be done with a dozen wage labourers and the family labour), but within a month, the whole field will have to be weeded in less than two weeks if it is to yield well. The family's labour will then not be enough and one is faced with two alternatives: either to buy herbicides or to recruit wage labour again. In both cases, extra money is spent which reduces the return on the crop. On the other hand, it is not in the advantage of the peasant to keep the labour on 'to host them' after ploughing, since, as long as they are there, they require feeding morning and evening, with bags of maize, beans, cassava flour, litres of oil and fish. Therefore, one needs to finish quickly with them and to let them go. To cope with this impasse, Tinkpo manages to extend the sowing of his farms over three weeks. The field is divided into many plots with different sowing dates, so that crops do not mature at the same time. Then, when weeding time comes, he can extend it over one and half months, and the same thing goes for the harvesting period. Therefore, he uses only his family labour for those activities. Though maintaining labourers over three weeks, he does not have to feed them for more than six days. This is the way he does it:

'*Before I go for labourers, I talk with two or three people whom I know badly need some. I even discuss it as if it were a secret matter. Many people in this village are dependent on wage labourers but do not work out their labour needs in advance. They just wait here and, if labourers come, they start running after them. When my labourers arrive, they work on my farm during the first two or three days and I feed them. Then they move to one of the others and come back to my farm at the end of the second week and so on. Since I started doing this (about four years ago), I have never used wage labour for weeding and harvesting crops, except for harvesting cotton. And the people I arrange with are very grateful to me.*'

Nevertheless, Tinkpo is not satisfied with the way he solves his labour problems. He has up to 30 hectares of land and could grow more of every crop if there was a worthwhile solution to this problem. When he employs wage labourers, he has to be behind them and check to see if they are doing the job properly, which is not always the case. And when any of them gets harmed in one way or the other (e.g. breaks a leg, or gets bitten by a snake), he feels responsible, and at least has the person taken back home or pays for the transport, for someone to carry him, and something for the treatment. His disatisfaction with his labour solution became more acute last year when his friend Ekpemi received animal traction from the FAIB project. Sometimes he has considered simply purchasing this for himself. It costs about 600,000f to have the oxen and complete set of tools needed for ploughing, sowing, and weeding. If he takes the decision, he will do it for two years.

For the cotton season of 1990 only, he made a net revenue of 400,000f (deducting fertilisers and insecticides); the labour he paid for from income on maize and cowpeas. He has already planned how to use this money: 120,000f for the marriage of his son (mainly bridewealth), 60,000f would be left for solving household problems, maybe for eventualities such as burials, ceremonies, and health problems. He wants to buy an extra calf for 40,000 to add to the four animals he already has; 70,000 will be used to pay the wage labour of the first season of 1991. Then, 40,000f will be kept in case the children ask for anything, whilst the rest, 70,000f Tinkpo said, would be used for *pagaille* by which he meant repairing a few things on his motor bike that could well extend over the next year, buying shirts and trousers for himself and staying with the friends ('relish and meat parties'). Although he says he could well plan and buy the animal traction himself, he thinks it is too risky to do such a thing. He explained:

> *'I have never used the thing. I only see people doing it and they say that when you buy one, the CARDER organises a training session for you and tames the animals. But what if I don't learn well? What would happen if I simply don't have the luck: the metal implement might break in my hands, my land can refuse to respond or, most importantly, the animals can die? That is why I prefer to have it on credit. If it does not work for one reason or another, I would simply ask the people to come and collect their devil back. If it works, then I can pay them the credit.'*

Rural diversification, labour constraints and men's strategies for survival and self-achievement

The discussion presented above gives an idea of the different ways in which men in Togoudo cope with the major constraints of farming activities, (i.e. access to land and labour). The case of Chocothéo is an indication, in addition to what we have already seen with the women, of diversification that is taking place in the local economy, entailing income-generating activities complementary to agriculture. The settlement patterns in Togoudo and the absence of a land market seem to have generated relatively fixed situations of landownership, which people have to cope with. Various options have been tried or are under way, of which the cases of Aloka and Chocothéo are two radically different examples of the changes taking place.

Aloka's illustrative disdain for agriculture and his preference for an intermediary role between externals and the local population in the matter of development intervention – actually a sort of development brokerage at grass-roots level[19] – is not actually related to any lack of land. Indeed, Aloka is not just a single case in that kind of choice. Other people, having large access to land, happen to take the same option (as the case of Gaston Tolidji discussed in Chapter 9), while others simply migrate to the main Benin cities or to Nigeria or the Ivory Coast.

As for Chocothéo, he provides one example of the different ways in which people constrained by limited access to agricultural land try to secure the best out of their environment. The subsequent diversifications engaged in by people in Togoudo concern animal husbandry, mainly pigs raised freely without any enclosure or particular care but for which reliable market opportunities exist.[20] Alternative activities include tailoring, carpentry, house building, the transportation of agricultural products on bicycle or animal traction to the village or the market, the organisation of labour exchange groups for the hiring out of labour, which most people ranked medium-low or medium-high actually do to make both ends meet. Others are being trained in some of the main cities in Benin (Bohicon, Parakou, Cotonou, Porto-Novo) to be mechanics, taxi drivers, tailors, and so forth. For those who remain in the village, these non- or para-agricultural activities are supported by farming.

As for access to and control over labour, this is principally the fault of people like Tinkpo, who own a relatively big farm and hopes to plough as much as possible. Although this offers some sort of survival opportunity to landless people and migrants, it also creates situations whereby the head of the household tries to retain household members as a labour force that can be mobilised easily. In such a context and aiming towards collective management of assets, some heads of household keep the children with them, without much effort to send them to school. Boys can then be bribed with an early marriage as in the case of the son of Tinkpo, who obtained his first wife from his father when he was only 21 years old. The woman, once arrived, becomes an additional member of the labour force for Tinkpo. But these situations are not static. Despite all these attempts to control people, Tinkpo and Ekpemi do not feel comfortable with these solutions, not only for moral questions but because they have to face now and then clashes of interests within this coalition of individuals that make up the household, which makes the solution unreliable. They are trying therefore to have animal traction.

For the moment, though we will return to these dilemmas in Chapter 9, one remark deserves to be made on the three cases of men (as individuals, but at the same time, as social categories). These people are different as to their social identities, what they set as life objectives, and therefore in the types of resources they struggle for. Nevertheless, all of them resort to intervenors in some way or another, seeking to establish common ground between the intervention packages and their projects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to provide insights into the complexity of the economic web that social actors generate, reproduce and at the same time struggle with locally in their daily attempts to earn a living and meet what they conceive of as 'well-being' and 'development'. There are various categories of people, different in their own perceptions of their identities, in the perceptions they have of the social, economic and ecological environment, and therefore in the setting of different strategies, individual and collective, aimed at achieving their life projects, which local ideologies of development categorise as survival or self-achievement strategies. The differences between these categories of people have much to do with their access to the assets necessary to produce, that is, to their material potential to provide for minimum basic needs. But the differences are not limited to that and are more subtle. There are individual ways of doing things, taking decisions, organising and following up different 'branches' of their businesses, which makes for the enormous difference between Sabine, on the one hand, and Pélagie and Chocothéo, on the other. There is also the individual capacity to manipulate politically social norms and relations such as household patterns, long distance relations, etc. with the aim of acquiring, controlling and using elements of the social and ecological environment. These elements become – but only then – assets for generating social status and material goods, as we have seen with Pélagie when she gets into trading agricultural and horticultural products, Chocothéo with his retailing of bicycle spare parts and wheat flour, and Tinkpo in the management of his household and the need for migrant labour. Each of them, in his or their own ways, have acted as entrepreneurs in the transactional sense (see Long 1977), identifying evaluation gaps in given situations and then bridging transactions to exploit these gaps, taking relevant decisions in due time and using these social networks built incidentally as well as intentionally. They have emerged as economic brokers, controlling crucial sets of relationships that link the local economy with the wider regional and national structure. Finally, these are examples of how the identities people define for themselves can produce radical differences in what they primarily define as assets or means of production. The ways they go for these assets and the social status they obtain from these ventures makes the difference. Take, for example, the difference between Aloka and Chocothéo.

My intention in this chapter, as I mentioned at the beginning, was to complete the discussions of Chapter 7 with an *état des lieux* of what different categories of individuals and groups define as constraints and opportunities for achieving their life projects. This has been done in order to prepare discussions on the ways in which these everyday definitions of well-being and development find grounds for negotiation with the actions attempted by the RDV in the Community Development Programme. I was not engaging in a discussion of entrepreneurial decision-making per se, though some models of such an analysis have been used in the foregoing discussions.[21] My argument is that differences between categories of people in terms of living conditions cannot be confined to economistic assets or indicators used to identify poverty or social inequalities. Oppenheim (1990: 3) asserts that 'poverty takes away the tools to build the blocks for the future, your life chances'

(quoted by Alcock 1993: 3). But which tools for which future? The differences in the perception of these parameters, as I hope to have shown, are not just ethnic or of geographical nature. They are rooted in the individual identification of self, in personal experiences and ideals, the pursuit of which might bear potential stimuli or threats for the dynamic of economic and social life at local level. Not making these differences clear brings us to so-called etic categorisations to an homogenisation of people who are completely different, either by pitying and making them objects of misery or idealising their potential to exit from poverty or to solve inequality problems once adequate policy is designed for it.

Notes

1 See Alcock (1993: 9), where he suggests that differences be made between poverty (a prescriptive concept implying the need for corrective policy actions) and inequality (a descriptive concept not making any normative appreciation on the state of affairs projected.

2 Townsend (1979) has worked out these sorts of indicators for poverty in Britain, from standards of living set by himself, which show high correlation with income. The approach was later improved by letting the indicators be assessed by the interviewed before the survey (Mack and Lansley 1992). In both cases, these indicators were based on static categories, produced from the imaginations of the researchers themselves.

3 Recently, we have used emic socio-economic categorisations in villages of the Abomey plateau. There, the soils are irreversibly exhausted but nevertheless yearly scoured by resident peasants who liked to keep hope. Almost all able men have migrated to northern Zou or to cities, while women busy themselves with petty trade and food processing for a nearly illusionary market, that barely gives them any return. In short, it is a generally precarious context. The criteria elaborated locally to differentiate people in terms of their living conditions, referred to their ability to keep their poverty within the privacy of individual households (not to speak of it in public) though everybody is aware of it.

4 In this case, a census of adult women was taken before randomly selecting 65 of them, as there was no pre-established list of women available.

5 These are tomato and spicy sauces with goat meat sold by some women from early in the morning (7:30 to eight o'clock) through mid-day and early afternoon (two to three o'clock), which is not a farming period. Otherwise, the selling stops at nine or 9:30pm. People, mostly men, gather at those places, buy the relish, order some calabashes of cakpalo, eat the meat and sauce without any rice or bread or anything whatsoever while drinking the cakpalo. For the cakpalo-and-relish parties I have attended, I have hardly seen people sharing relish. As for the cakpalo, people took turns in buying, and the calabash cup used to drink it passes from hand to hand. The parties take place at the house of the cakpalo or relish seller or in a peasant's house. About one litre of cakpalo costs 100f.

6 Nevertheless, as already indicated in Chapter 2, cotton production has been rising since the mid-eighties as the most reliable cash crop. After the FCFA devaluation on January 11th, 1994 (50 percent), the increase in the price of cotton from 110f to 140 (about 27 percent) made this crop apparently more interesting for peasants than yam, though the prices of fertilisers and insecticides were increased by 50 percent. Yam was still largely sold to Nigeria while the exchange rate of the Naira, the Nigerian currency, did not change much after the FCFA devaluation, as Naira had lost its value following that devaluation. Another constraint with yam cultivation in these last years is the difficulty to find specialised labour for the making of the *buttes*, since most young men in Togoudo find it too hard and the Fon labourers from the

South come from a different farming systems area. Only the Somba take this work now, but there are not many of them.

7 These were: the time we took to identify the informants and to build for ourselves a background knowledge of different living conditions in the village, the particular way in which the rankings were conducted, the feeding of the criteria identified back in informal group discussions for refining them or revailing alternative forms of local ideologies on development, – the fact that we did not constitute the groups that conducted these discussions, nor did we decide on the topics for discussions.

8 In most of these cases, and within a one to two week period, individuals or groups are asked to rank list(s) of people according to their 'wealth/poverty'. Then, eventually a few people from each category of wealth are invited, in so-called focused group discussions, to identify solutions to improve their situation. For examples on this technique, see Grandin 1988; Sharrock *et al.* 1993; Tung and Balina 1993; and more generally the issue *RRA Notes* n°15 of May 1992, especially edited on 'wealth ranking'.

9 In his approach and following Mitchell and Epstein (1959), Long selected 10 social occupational positions in the village which a sample of 50 men and women were asked to rank on a four-point scale and explain the reason of their ranking. Seur used the 'repertory grid technique' following Kelly (1955), and Bannister and Fransella (1971), whereby individual key informants were asked to compare peasants of different triads drawn from a list of 10 peasants, and each time explain the differences.

10 See Arce and Long 1987; Drinkwater 1988 and van Donge 1993 for discussions about the notion of 'lifeworld'.

11 He is self-sufficient in his affairs, could give financial or material assistance (credit) to many people without any drawback or harm on his own affairs.

12 For 10 kilogrammes of rice, cooked on two occasions, she would need around 7,500 or 9,500 FCFA in cash and sell for about 12,000 FCFA. But from many consumers, she will not get all the money before a week or ten days, some would even wait until April when they are paid for their cotton, which means that she would need at least three to four times the necessary capital to run the business, around 30 or 35,000 FCFA. But often, she buys part or all the inputs on credit and then they are 1.5 or 2 times more expensive. Sometimes she obtains loan from people at various rates (10 or 20 percent per week), depending on the persons, but it is not easy to find enough money. Her children in the Ivory Coast usually send her money, mainly at the end of the year. If she is lucky and the money comes early, then things are better and she can run the business through June if nobody falls seriously ill in the meantime.

13 Contrary to chickens and goats, nobody raises pigs on the farms because, since the animals are left to wander, people fear that the pigs would destroy all crops if they are raised on the farms. But as this activity interests primarily the women in the village, they are the ones to be disadvantaged by this issue.

14 Firewood is expensive in the rainy seasons because every thing is wet and people who could carry it home are busy on their farms.

15 *Cakpalo* is not drunk in a glass. Never! It is sold in calabashes of different sizes according to the quantity one wants (about a quarter, half or one litre), and served in calabash cups. These calabashes are locally produced, out of a legume called *ɛgusi* in Yoruba and *Gusi* in Fon, the fruits of which are used to make cheese for relish, oil or cake, all very much appreciated in meals in Benin from north to south and in Nigeria. According to brewers, when used permanently, a stock of calabashes can last for one or two years. A break of six months would mostly oblige the brewer to renew part of the stock because, unless they are regularly exposed to the sun, mildews attack the calabashes.

16 Florentine learned to brew from her mother, who later helped her to start up on her own. 'I have grown up with it' she says. As a little girl, she used to help her mother throughout the whole process. When she was around 12, she continued cooking with her mother who used to sell part of the sweet *cakpalo* to her on a wholesale basis, taking into account to some extent her contribution in the whole process. Florentine started then organising trade of sweet *cakpalo*, saving money and making her own clientele. She was around 17 when she first brewed *cakpalo* entirely on her own, from her own millet, wood and water, with the help of her mother and using the equipment of her mother. Since then, she has never stopped. Despite the ups and downs, this has remained her main activity, supported now and then by farming and the occasional rescue by her husband.

17 There have been some incidents. One day, the uncle removed some of his cassava plants from the plot of land he had lent Chocothéo, arguing that he had overstepped the limits of the plot he had allowed him to use. Chocothéo claims that the uncle was angry with him for not agreeing to remain and work with him. Indeed, Chocothéo's father died in 1979. He dropped out of school in 1985 and came to the uncle, though he had his first son in 1979 while he was still in primary school. As shown in the previous chapter on household patterns, staying with the uncle meant that Chocothéo had to work for him with only food as compensation. But he did not like this idea and decided to move to the house of his father and manage on his own.

18 The case of this cooperative is developed in Chapter 9.

19 See Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 1994 for a brief discussion on the concept of *courtiers (du développement) aux pieds nus*, bare-footed development brokers, and Mongbo 1995 for a case study on these brokers in Benin.

20 To raise pigs in Togoudo, one simply needs to buy a young sow for 2,000 or 3,000f and just wait, giving it now and then kitchen waste so that it recognises its sleeping place and owner. For the rest, the animal would find its way around the village, come across a male from which it would have young, and eat anything it finds and scrounges. Contrary to what happens in many other villages, there is no regulation requesting that animals be put behind fences at the beginning of the cropping season and it would in any case be untenable for the animals, as the peasants stay for weeks on the farms. As raising pigs requires very little work, so does the selling of them. Specialised pig traders come right to Togoudo, mainly on Tuesday to purchase dozens of them for the markets of Cotonou and Porto-Novo.

21 See Long (1977: 105-143) for an extensive conceptual framework and methodological discussion on the analysis of entrepreneurship.

9 The Community Development Programme at the crossroads:

Social interfaces, transformation of development policy and the reproduction of the field of rural development

Toute la terre avait une seule langue et les mêmes mots
... Et l'Eternel dit
... Allons! descendons et confondons leur language
Afin qu'ils n'entendent plus la langue les uns des autres
Genèse,11:1,6,7

Et ils furent tous remplis du Saint-Esprit,
Et se mirent à parler en d'autres langues
... La multitude accourrut et elle fut confondue
Parce que chacun les entendait
Parler dans sa propre langue.
Actes,2:4,6

Introduction

The foregoing chapters have given us a picture of the historical background, the frames of action, the values, interests and future perspectives of the different actors involved in or concerned with the Community Development Programme in the Zou Province, particularly in Togoudo. These actors cover the CARDER staff as state agents, the people of Togoudo, but also ourselves as researchers. The discussions have highlighted the important differences between, but also within, each of these 'epistemological communities'. Indeed one question, following Louk Box from a similar context in Costa Rica, whether these people were able to engage in any purposive social interaction at all (Box 1989: 167). Yet we now know, from the example discussed in Chapter 5 on the burial of the Community Development Programme in the Atlantic Province, that actors can in fact reach some sort of agreement out of cacophonous non-dialogical social interaction. Likewise, the election of the GV board discussed in Chapter 2 indicates that consensual submission can be achieved at a specific time and space on particular issues, through conflict, verbal violence and power, without this prejudging the strategies that the 'losing' parties might later deploy, in other arenas, for further struggles over the same issues. In fact, the various social contexts of the implementation of the Community Development Programme, both within the CARDER and on the village scene, bring us to what Norman Long has conceptualised as social interfaces, those 'critical points of intersection between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are found' (Long 1989: 2). In the present case, these are the physical or symbolic social encounters where the different, sometimes conflicting and contradictory, frames of meaning[1] present do find some common grounds for

negotiation and struggle over values and interests around 'well-being' and 'development', sometimes reaching *ad hoc* or operational consensus which becomes instrumental in a continuation of the struggle and argument. By so doing, actors at these social encounters contribute, not really intentionally, but nonetheless efficiently to the reproduction of the field of rural development as a distinctive field of social interaction.

According to Long and Villarreal, a detailed study of social interfaces provides insight into the processes by which policy is transformed, how 'empowerment' and room for manoeuvre is created by both intervenors and 'clients', and how persons are enrolled in the 'projects' of others through the use of metaphors and images of development. They further argue that in this analysis there is a need to elucidate the types of social discontinuities present and to characterise the different kinds of organisational and cultural forms that reproduce or transform them (1993: 143, 147). In addition, I argue in the present chapter, from the digestion of the programme within CARDER and its actual implementation in the villages, that such social encounters are conflict and coalition generating *par excellence* or the playing grounds of existing conflicts and accommodations. In these various ways, they function as places were fields of social interaction (in our case the field of rural development) are activated and reproduced.

I first discuss the process of incorporation of the Community Development Programme into the Zou-CARDER. I argue that the CARDER staff attempted to lock the new policy statement and approach implicit in the Community Development Programme into their former frames and culture of intervention while trying to attract funding agencies. At a second stage, the same process is discussed at village level, giving particular attention to how local actors dealt with the programme and made it meaningful in their everyday life. What I attempt to show in this chapter is the seeming gap between the activities of the Community Development Programme and the daily preoccupations of the people it is supposed to benefit – whatever its relevance. At least that is the impression gained when one first encounters it. I also look at how these gaps are produced, and this later allows me, in the concluding part of the chapter, to examine their rationale in reproducing the field of rural development.

New Minister and old staff: locking the new policy orientation into former frames in the Zou-CARDER

The initiation phase of the programme

The report written at the head office of the Zou-CARDER and entitled *Plan de mise en oeuvre du programme de développement communautaire dans le Zou* (Zou-CARDER 1989) is self-explanatory as to how the idea, which the Minister wished to be a new one, was incorporated into old practices.[2] Elaborated by the ministry staff to be an alternative approach to development intervention, the idea of the Community Development Programme perhaps, in fact quite probably did, generate new behaviours and attitudes, but it was first incorporated into the frames of the Zou-

CARDER, participating therefore in the various bargaining, conflicts and gainsaying at work which constitutes the everyday realities of CARDER. The report starts by pointing out the fact that the ultimate goal of the operation was to 'promote integrated development in rural areas, based on the effective participation of the populations and on the identification of needs felt as a priority in the villages'. Then it gives the various steps to be followed by the staff for the implementation of the programme, after which it proceeds to outline the strategy for action in the next three years.

The first step was the preparation of various guides for use by the RDRs, those responsible for rural development, and their staff, who were in charge of the initiation phase of the programme. The second step was its introduction in the field, and the third, the appointment of the RDVs, who had taken no part in the former steps but were responsible for the actual implementation of the programme in the villages. Among the documents handed over to the RDRs and their staff to help them with their initiation actions were guides for writing village monographs, and a paper on 'the development of the villages' that gave some basic recommendations for developing plans from below and for their implementation. The most interesting aspect of these different documents was that in spirit as well as form they were a very good summary of some three generations of state intervention in rural areas since the colonial period. They combined recent neo-populist rhetoric about participation and people taking their destiny into their own hands with a careful definition of the domains in which actions were to be conducted. The latter specified the Groupement Villageois, the GV, as the village organisation to which all villagers *must* adhere, and the actions to be carried out and when – in other words, laying out a blue-print approach. This then removed from the people in question what they had just been given, that is the freedom to choose and plan for themselves the activities and the types of organisations that would support them.

The second indication of the multi-generational and multi-fashioned nature of the document is the list of domains of action identified beforehand. These were: food (combatting child malnutrition and improving the diet of the population); public health, i.e. sanitation, drinking water hygiene, devising a timetable for frequent visits of a medical doctor and vaccination of the children, and training four villagers in primary health care; socio-economic infrastructure (building schools, post offices, markets); protection of the environment by improving cropping techniques at different levels of intensification, by improving animal husbandry and preventing animals from wandering all over the village and by encouraging better household use and saving of energy; land use management (*gestion des terroirs*); improving the self-financing capacity of the populations through diversification of income-generating activities, improving crop yields, youth training, and the organisation of cooperatives. The domains and activities thus identified were then planned over the short, medium and long terms. Despite all these detailed statements, the staff in charge were asked to organise village meetings where the people *à la base* could express their needs to be incorporated into a participatory design for the programmes. The staff were sufficiently, if not overly, directed. From the various documents they had received and the information meetings they held with the General Director (sessions where the latter gave instructions), they were well equipped for any kind of devel-

opment plan, which could be written without the need for organising village meetings. But the village meetings were organised, with the assistance of a monitoring committee from CARDER head office, and therefore they had to take place, not only for the extra knowledge they might provide but also because they were part of bureaucratic procedures (such as mission reports, expense claims which included per diems) – that is, all the little things that gave concrete life to the programme and could serve as reporting materials to the ministry. For the writing of the village development plans, as none of the RDRs wanted to take the risk of being accused of having left some domains out, they simply covered them all, specifying from time to time that the *encadrement* would be based on the 'Training and Visit' system.

There were 30 development plans for the 30 villages selected, but they were almost the same, the main differences being how the texts were organised and how detailed they were. They were almost a re-writing of the guide received from head office, packaged into descriptions of the villages and the providing of some local details. The most interesting aspects of these documents are not the village development plans per se, nor whether part or all of the activities planned in the documents were implemented, but the following two characteristics. First is the excellent reproduction of the old 'top-down' approach to development planning packaged in a 'bottom-up' rhetoric. The second is the operationalisation of the new abstract idea of the 'Community Development Programme' in concrete form, yet using old interventionist devices that had been at work for decades in agricultural services (wandering animals, adherence to a specific, and state-designed, type of cooperative, elaborating plans which excluded those who later had to implement them) and some newer ones (such as the so-called 'intensification levels' and the 'Training and Visit System' of the last development project of the Zou Province). In fact, at large village meetings organised by intervention organisations supposedly to prepare development plans from below, requests brought by villagers are almost invariably the same, and concern social infrastructure, public services, credit and what they themselves call their 'ignorance of good and improved cropping techniques'. One should not, therefore, be surprised that the meetings organised in this case yielded nothing more than the classic shopping list of development plans, which field staff knew perfectly, and which was already largely covered by the document guides prepared by CARDER head staff. The question, then, is: of what use were all these guides and reports when the villagers already knew their 'lesson on development plans'? And why go through the whole process when the information already existed in the regular documents and reports of the CARDER?

I realised that this had something to do with the need to give the Community Development Programme an existence on paper, and in the minds of all the individuals involved within the structure of the institution and in the villages, that would appear independent of the on-going activities of the CARDER. In short, these were a set of bureaucratic devices to show compliance to the Minister's orders and to show evidence that the job was done, while, at the same time, feeding elements of the programme into the everyday routine of the staff in order to make it real to them and to acquaint them with the new language and the accompanying requirements of the new approach, even if little change occurred in the hardware styles of

development intervention within the organisation.[3] As a member of head staff once told me,

> *'with all the things we have done here within this programme, no one can say that we did not try, that the issue was not tackled. If the villages are no more dynamic than they were before, it won't be because we did not do our job.'*

It became an opportunity to bring into the discourse new (or renewed) fashions, derived from the funding agencies and their experts. In this way, one sees the old and the new melted into the same package, such as the regulations against animals wandering in the village, a feature of the hygiene campaigns of colonial and early post colonial periods, and more recent concerns such as waste recycling, energy saving and sustainable agriculture. In my view, this is one of the processes through which new items reach down to village level and become incorporated into the shopping list. Now, for example, the villagers are using, more and more, the rhetoric of 'planting trees for a safe environment', and 'participation', 'taking the jar up to one's hip before people help you put it on your head'.[4]

The process described above is indicative of the bureaucratic, administrative and discursive power and adaptability of CARDER for reproducing itself, but also for keeping up with the changing requirements of funding agencies, experts and Ministers, while at the same time, informing its peasant clients about the latest fashions in the language and rhetoric of development.[5]

In fact, another dimension of importance, beyond the concerns expressed by the Minister, is the survival of the CARDER. Indeed, around 1989-91, as I discussed in Chapter 3, fundamental debates over national politics and a structural adjustment programme, the closure of a major World Bank rural development project in the Zou Province, the launching by the French government of a new project with a non-state orientation that suggested that the CARDER should not be involved, created a vulnerable climate for the CARDER. It needed to present an acceptable, new face in order to attract resources for development intervention. The figures for cotton production were no longer sufficient to motivate funding agencies. Hence the Community Development Programme was put on show. The villages considered to be the most successful, and like Togoudo, were visited by all the missions that arrived in the province, while the General Director requested that the RDVs design projects to be submitted to the funding agencies.

The social life of the programme: bargaining and watching your step within the CARDER

In reality, all this turmoil meant little more to CARDER staff, especially at the medium and lower levels, than what they called the *tracasseries habituelles du CARDER*.[6] And they did not yield much success, at least for the CARDER head staff. Not many projects were designed by the RDVs from the villages and very few of these projects (most of which were small) were funded at peasant group level. At a quarterly meeting of the RDVs, the General Director voiced strong irritation after each RDV, reporting on what he had done during the past three months, told of people building their own schools, health centres, markets and rural roads with local

non-durable materials, extension work on improved diets for children and adults and so on. He shouted:

> *'But where are the projects? Do you think people need you before making houses with local non-durable materials? Where are the projects on land and natural resource management (gestion du terroir), water catchments for cattle. You should be more active and you must know that the people will not be of any help to you for the development of their village (my emphasis). I need from each of you at least one project every month and you should not forget that I am not appointed to this post (General Director) for 100 years. I am prepared every day to be moved. Therefore I don't want you to waste my time.'*

This apparent misunderstanding between the General Director and the RDVs was far from being the only one among CARDER staff about the Programme. The divide did not put field agents, the front-line workers, against office or head staff. It was more that the Programme got caught up in the everyday quarrels and conflictive routines within CARDER. But apart from this, or perhaps because it, the social life of the programme produced its own social groupings, stakeholders, interest groups and networks, with it own changing operational/organisational chart. To give just a very schematic overview. The main stakeholders were Cewɛ and the RDVs, the General Director, the RDRs and their staff, the Director of Production (DPro), and other senior staff such as Ekanye, Dourodjè etc.

Cewɛ is the staff member at head office who was appointed informally by the General Director to replace Ekanyé, who remains officially the technical assistant and coordinator of the programme.[7] Cewɛ believed that the programme would later turn out to be an important one, and the coordinator's job a promising one with a car allocation. He was apparently more dynamic than Ekanyé, but for many, that was not the main reason for his winning the position over Ekanyé. Cewɛ was from the same native area as the General Director, and both were from the same province as the Minister who launched the programme, and as the Prefect of Zou Province. Moreover, Cewɛ had good private contacts with the General Director and was a friend of the Prefect. The three men happened to meet now and then. The relaxing element for them was speaking in their mother language and the shared stereotypes on local food, customs and women, about which they joked. On these occasions, however, Cewɛ behaved respectfully, conforming to his age and place in the social hierarchy, which it seems gave the Director confidence in his loyalty, as compared to that of Ekanyé with whom he shared no other social space than the work place, which mostly remains very formal and distant. But beyond the ethnic factor, there were some personal attributes Ekanyé did not have, that might have allowed him to overcome this barrier. A common expression in the CARDER about situations like his was 'he has not been vigilant', meaning 'it was not enough to get a position; one has to keep it', and for that, 'professional competence is not enough; you need to bark as the dogs if you want to eat with them'.[8] This indicates that 'watching your step' was part of the normal everyday life of CARDER, and people had to learn to cope with it. Furthermore, CARDER's culture placed the ultimate blame on the 'victim', who was supposed to have room for manoeuvre. Ekanyé's reaction to this was a rather fatalistic one: 'I have seen many DGs coming and going. He will not remain DG for ever. His sun is shining now, let him make hay.'

Cewɛ received no particular sympathy from the RDVs. They often complained that he liked playing the boss too much and that he would become tyrannical if ever endowed with power. They also thought that one should not bring a goat when hunting when one owns a dog.[9] Nevertheless, Cewɛ remained their best ally at the CARDER head office. There was animosity by some headquarter's staff towards them, and it was a period of instability with rumours of redundancies because of the structural adjustment programme becoming more and more persistent. Thus they hoped that because of the good relations between Cewɛ and the Director, their requests and complaints would stand a better chance of reaching him through Cewɛ than through Ekanyé. As for Cewɛ, he hoped that in the near future, CARDER would form an autonomous team of experts on issues concerning community development. Also, he strongly believed that the programme would become important. It was mutual enrolment on both sides, in individual or collective projects. The RDVs hoped to secure their position and interests in the CARDER while Cewɛ found there some prospects for an interesting career.

From their side, the RDRs responsible for development within the head office were greatly frustrated by the programme, to which they were generally hostile, and they resented and showed great animosity towards the RDVs. The first *pomme de discorde,* or bone of contention, was that they, the RDRs, had designed all the development plans for the villages, but it was the RDVs, appointed to the villages in their geographical coverage, who had responsibility for implementing the plans and, even more galling (and contrary to established CARDER procedures), they did not have to report to them. The RDRs thus accused the RDVs of doing nothing in the villages, because they were not subjected to any control. What the RDRs considered most unfair was the fact that the RDVs received the same monthly allowances as them. The type and amount of those allowances was subject to a lot of bargaining and argumentation at the beginning of the programme. Within the organisational structure of the CARDER, there were five general hierarchical positions with their own level of monthly allowances (especially the *primes de responsabilité* and *primes de suggestion*) in addition to the salary. These positions were the *Directeur Général*, the *Directeurs*, the *Responsables*, the *Chefs de service*, and the *Chef de section*. The denomination of the position *Responsable de Dynamisation du village*, RDV, had been decided at Ministry level and could not be changed, but became a focus of bargaining in the Zou-CARDER. As they had the title (*Responsables*) and also the same level of qualifications as the RDR, they claimed and won – although working at village level – the same level of allowances as the RDRs who worked at the District level. The RDRs considered this unjust, not only because they had a wider geographical area to cover than the RDVs, but because they had designed the plans during the initiation phase of the programme, and all the RDVs had to do was simply to implement them!

Although the topic was one of the most debated informally among CARDER staff, RDVs such as Asuka and Tinguédjo had particular relationships with the RDR of the area where they were appointed. Asuka originated from the same area as the RDR of Gbomina, they spoke the same language and practised the same religion. Neither had their family with them and they mostly drove home together at weekends in the RDR's car. As for Tinguédjo, his RDR simply respected him for his

seniority. The RDR called Tinguédjo *Doyen*, and Tinguédjo used to resort to the RDR now and then for transporting things from the village to Bohicon or the other way around.

But, in general, the opposition of the RDRs to the programme found a 'ground' at the department of production and with the DPro and some of her staff. The DPro was said to have been especially appointed to her position by the former Minister, the one to precede the initiator of the Community Development Programme. Being one of the rare women at the higher levels of the agricultural bureaucracy in Benin, she was known to be very strong and to have a big mouth. She was one of those who objected to the whole idea of this programme.[10]

When the Minister's instructions to start this programme came, the General Director of 1991 was in fact the head of the DSEI. In normal times, the working relations between the Department of Production and the DSEI is not an easy one. The former is responsible for the everyday operation of the various intervention programmes under way in the CARDER (and therefore has close contacts with the RDRs and their staff) while the DSEI is supposed to evaluate the work of the field agents and apply sanctions, which a Dpro might well take as a criticism of themselves. As explained in the case of Gbèdjèmin in Chapter 6, some field agents were aware of this situation and played on it, playing one director off against the other in order to escape sanctions. Actually, the Dpro was said always to be in conflict with the former DSEI, which worsened when the latter was appointed General Director by the new Minister. Therefore, while at the beginning of the Community Development Programme she did give a minimum contribution to the programme, later she dropped it. Within the formal organisational structure of CARDER, the DPro holds a strategic position between field staff and the subject matter specialists at head-office (see the Chart). She held the power to prevent them from visiting the RDVs in the field to provide them with the technical support they might request.[11] Despite the behaviour of the DPro and some other agents such as Asuka, the General Director (the former and the new one) could not easily disclose all these internal disputes to the Minister, since it might convey the impression that they did not have a grip on their staff.

The split between the DPro and the DSEI (later the DG) on the relevance of the Community Development Programme (which to some extent reflected the conflict between their Minister protectors) would certainly have influenced the views of field agents about the programme. But not all the staff of the Production Department sided with the DPro. One of her staff, Dourodjè, was involved in the monitoring committee.[12] As a former DPro, Dourodjè still had good relations with some staff of this department, whom he had initially recruited into the programme, despite the opposition of the DPro which she could not always express. Also, although he complained of the incompetence of the General Director (note that they were colleagues when Dourodjè was acting-DPro and the General Director was DSEI), he resolved to sustain the programme because he did not approve of the systematic opposition of the DPro. In fact, Dourodjè was enroled by the General Director one Sunday after a church service at the Protestant Church when the latter addressed him as a colleague, as they used to do when both were of the same rank. Dourodjè later told me:

'I was surprised that day because, contrary to his habit, the Director was not making gros dos (playing the big man). He was simple and respectful. You know, chameleons usually walk with a lot of grace. But when there is danger, they run faster than any other reptile. That's what happened. The Director expressed his sorrow about the programme and about the animosity of the DPro. We discussed the philosophy of the programme which by the way I adhere to. Then I decided to become active in it.'

But, by April 1991, Dourodjè told me he had decided to withdraw since 'Cewɛ has turned the programme into his own affair', making it almost impossible to have any meaningful or constructive discussions with him or with his boss (meaning the General Director) about the programme.[13]

An overview

To sum up this brief discussion on the fate of the supposedly new policy orientation within CARDER, I would say that it operated as an activating ingredient for the various parties involved in this institution to express different attitudes, much of which could not be predicted, but which nevertheless became decisive for the direction taken by the operations. The programme was interpreted differently according to staff perspectives, to the coalitions and cleavages produced by different individual and collective interests, to the ethnic and geographical origin of staff, to patronage, but also to the individual and collective capacities of the actors to enrol others, no matter what their technical efficiency or hierarchical position.

Given such a dynamic social life, the operational structure of the programme changed a lot, but almost never in conformity with the formal plan. The programme was placed at the DSEI instead of the DPro, with a supporting network through Dourodjè from the DPro, which excluded Ekanyé, the formal coordinator of the DSEI. Later it was placed under the General Director, marginalising Dourodjè while attempting to attract funding agencies. The most interesting aspect of this social turmoil was its contribution to the reproduction of CARDER as an institution for rural development intervention, by activating the various people involved in its everyday realities. By giving opportunities for argument over administrative procedures and technical matters, with everyone having an opinion on how things could best be done, with the emergence of new stakes, scandals etc., the programme prevented the everyday life of CARDER from falling into lethargy, a variety that added spice to the everyday life of the people. Another aspect of this reproduction process was that despite the occasional jokes and frequent criticism of the programme, no one contested the relevance of the 'participatory approach'. This was a common ground, though there were differences as to how this could best be achieved, which allowed for continuous transformation and appropriation of this neo-populist discourse within the CARDER, even at village level.

New policy orientation and negotiated development at village level: the example of Togoudo

The activities of Asuka, the RDV in Togoudo (or more precisely, what local actors, including Asuka, turned the programme into and achieved within it), roughly fall into two categories: the construction of social infrastructure; and the constitution of peasant groups for applying for external funding and facilities. In each of these domains of action, Asuka always had to negotiate his entrance and his copyright over the achievements. Until his departure in 1993, the RDV had succeeded in placing himself at the centre of the village scene of development intervention as an authority in the sense that he received authorisation (see Callon and Latour 1981: 278-279) by some peasant leaders and women to play this role. He did not obtain this authorisation from his appointment by CARDER as the village RDV. Though his introduction in the village was accompanied by official ceremony,[14] as was the case for all the RDVs, he had to negotiate his position in village affairs and struggle to keep it. So, Asuka managed to inveigle himself into some of the public debates taking place in the village when he arrived.

The RDV inveigles his way into village public life

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, Togoudo was marked by PCD student agitation concerning the Mayor and the GV management, and it was in that context that a committee had to be appointed by the villagers (*Comité de Developpement Communautaire* also called *Comité de Suivi*) to coordinate all development activities in the village. The setting up of this committee involved most members of the various committees and boards in public life in Togoudo,[15] except the young PCD members who did not show much interest.

It was not clear to people what the aims of CARDER were with this programme ('maybe the state has remembered us, something might be coming'), although a few had doubts ('how can the state send money to villages while it does not have enough to pay the salaries of its own workers? A kneeling man cannot hold a child on his knees!'). Part of the discussions with the CARDER staff in charge of setting up the *Comité de Suivi* were about the problems people faced in the village ('what are the difficulties you face, what makes life difficult for you?'), to which villagers attending the meeting gave the well-known infrastructural shopping list, the school, health centre, houses, and the roads.[16] From these discussions emerged the consensus to let those who had no leading role in the existing important committees and boards, have the chance to sit on the *comité de suivi*. Nevertheless, the APE committee received different treatment because its members strongly argued that rebuilding the school class recently destroyed by a tornado was the most important thing that should be done. Thus Agbegui was appointed President of the *comité de suivi* and Dawé as his deputy. Agbegui was a mason building the school house, while Dawé was the secretary of the APE. Asuka used to joke about these dispositions saying:

> '*When I came, people thought I brought money to build their village for them. But, when it became clear that I did not have such money, things changed. Especially when I got interested in the GV and started talking about its reorganisation. Teeth began to rattle.*'

This was his first experience in political bargaining in Togoudo, which was soon followed by the turmoil around the GV. At the end of 1989, the young PCD members were already organised in small groups for controlling all the 15 cotton markets that existed in the village. Asuka took an active part in this, claiming expertise on peasant organisation.[17] At the end of the marketing period, he had organised a training session for the board members, the marketing teams and all GV members who were interested in cooperative matters and in what are known as standard byelaws for GVs in Benin, where it is stated that there should be elections of board members every year. Seizing this excuse, the young PCD members, whose objective was to overthrow the former GV, requested immediate elections. A general assembly was called, and the RDV had to take an active part in deals between the *Vieux sages*, the young PCD members and some individual big producers over the allocation of positions on the GV board, which gave him the opportunity to support the other groups in the struggle to prevent exclusive control of the board by the young men. Among other things, this engagement of the RDV produced the legitimacy he got from intervening in the book-keeping of the GV.

Asuka's access to bookkeeping and to decisions on the allocation of GV resources, that is the cotton returns (see Table 13),[18] was determining for the infrastructural part of his achievements. These GV resources are important in Togoudo. For the cotton marketing of 1990, it amounted to about 1,900,000 FCFA. The year after it was 2,317,348 FCFA.[19] It was not clear how much the revenues (*ristournes*) were in 1987 and 1988, nor how the board spent them (see Table 13). The goal of the RDV was to devote a large part of this revenue to, what he called, development actions in the village, which he succeeded in doing. He suggested, through an internal ruling, approved by the General Assembly of early 1990, that 10 percent of the revenue should be paid to the general secretary to cover all the costs he might make during the year. His claims in previous years had constituted up to more than half the revenue. The other board members would be refunded for their costs. Since then, many villagers (especially the board members, the heads and secretaries of the cotton markets and some big producers) would spontaneously resort to the RDV, 'our engineer', for organisational problems related to the GV and to cotton production and marketing, such as timely distribution of the various inputs, and the distribution of revenues that fell within the competence of the AVA, the C/PACA and the C/SS. They would also call on the RDV for problems concerning GV management that was the speciality of the C/PACA. On the other hand, when any external agent (government or non-government organisation), or agent of public administration (the Prefect of the Province for example) came to the village, the RDV would be called to the preparation meeting and to be among the officials. Contributing to cleaning up the GV management, won him the confidence of many producers, who were aware of the practices of Baba and some CARDER agents, but did not know how to fight them. Producers worry particularly about their own revenue (over which they had little control, handing it over to Baba), and not that much over collective GV revenue (see Mongbo 1994). In a period when (from about mid-1980) the most important cash crop had been cotton, it was vital that they felt secure about what they earned. Therefore, the whole process gave the RDV official recognition in the village and at the same time some legitimacy to keep an eye on

the overall management of GV resources, which most cotton growers who took part in the bargaining considered to be one of the reasons he had been sent to Togoudo, since cotton remains a symbol of state intervention in rural areas. Moreover, apart from missions sponsored by the public administration, most villagers considered all the visits from intervenors hosted in their village since the programme started were due to the presence of the RDV. They say that it was thanks to him that their village became known in higher places and was visited by people from outside.

Table 13 *Ristournes* and *plus value* received by the GV of Togoudo

Years	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94
Ristournes	220,588	nk	552,643	2,317,348	1,132,595	2,329,236	5,043,182
Plus-values	-	-	1,000,000nk	2,277,147	629,268	nk	nk

- : Null
nk: Not yet known (for certain)

Sources: CARDER and GV statistics. The dates given by them did not always coincide.

It was in this way that Asuka got his job description. It was no longer the vague statement of 'make the village life more dynamic' prescribed in project documents. In fact, this was a position he had negotiated.[20] In his struggle for self identity, Asuka benefited from the representation that most peasants have of cotton production as state business, and extracted profit from the events of the end of 1989 and early 1990. As he used to say, this gave him access to some reliable resources to build the village. The process went together with actively building social networks: he recruited some of the people he considered to be key actors, who, in their turn, were engaged in a process of recruiting him for their projects, but with whom, according to him, relations were neither stable, nor very trustful. The first persons were Aloka and Chocothéo, mentioned in the previous chapter. Later, a few new members of the newly elected GV board, leaned on the RDV and his tough management, to become famous in the village. As Dawé, the President said 'when I leave this position, people will point at things (infrastructures) and say those are the things Dawé achieved when he was here.' There was also the Mayor who used the RDV's presence to get some GV funds for the commune's administration. At the same time, there were others who considered such persons as the peons of the RDV. But Asuka also had to cope with or struggle against existing networks that appeared to have set agreement on the ways to use GV revenues that were not exactly legal. At the centre of this network was Baba, the secretary, with allies among village and district agents of CARDER. These networks proved to be efficient in influencing organisational aspects of GV life (e.g. programmes of visits, of meetings, accounting control) to the advantage of Baba. But the fight between these two groups (the RDV's and the secretary's) did not stop until the departure of the RDV in 1993, and, as we see in what follows, there was more on the building of infrastructure than on the making of cooperatives.

Building village infrastructures

Around 1985/86, the GV board, with the advice of the C/PACA, decided to build a new storage unit for agricultural inputs (mainly for cotton – seeds, fertilizers, insecticides) with a shop where the GV would sell consumer goods. The former storage unit had become too small. By 1989, the GV had still not managed to finish the unit, which was one of the criticisms against the board. Asuka seized upon this problem and argued that the revenues obtained at the end 1989 should be devoted to solving the issue. The school and health centres were also brought into the discussion and it was agreed that they were urgent as well.[21] Part of the revenue was allocated to the APE to finish the school house,[22] while for the health centre it was decided that, as a provisional solution, the existing storehouse would be renovated for this purpose, once the new one was completed. In the meantime, financial assistance would be searched for from outside. But this did not work out and in any case there were some groups who did not want the village to wait for hypothetical goodwill from outside. They argued that the GV could meet the cost if villagers contributed. The person who pushed hard was the Mayor who lacked an office. He had suggested that the provisional health centre could be used as the Mayor's office once the village had its own centre for child delivery. But in 1991, the new storage was found too small again. It had been designed and started in 1985, and nobody could have forecast that cotton production would double in 1988. So another storehouse was needed in addition to the new one, which the GV board set as a priority above the health centre. Strong arguments followed, and a 2,000f contribution for men and 1,500f for women was fixed for the health centre. The amount collected was supplemented by an allocation from the ristournes and so a large child delivery house was built in 1992, together with a house for the midwife. In the same year, the new storage unit was started, and was finished by 1993. Then the Mayor was allocated the other unit as his office.

As one might expect, none of this went as smoothly as appears here on paper. The GV board objected strongly to contributions from the *ristournes* for the building of village infrastructure and other public issues.[23] They argued that the *ristournes* belonged only to cotton growers, not to the whole village, while the problem for which funding was sought did concern the whole village, including the civil servants working in the village, who were better served with school and health services than the cotton growers who had to pay for the infrastructure.

The everyday relationship between Asuka, Baba the secretary, Dawé the president and other board members of the GV was often one of fierce arguments, especially when it came to revenue allocation, Dawé much less than Baba. The RDV would be careful to distribute inputs to growers on time (so as to sustain cotton production), and to distribute cotton revenue quickly to growers who would be waiting for it to pay their contribution to some infrastructure project. On the other hand, Baba would give various excuses (delays on the side of the growers such as the non-payment of certain fees)[24] in order not to perform these operations on time. In some cases, these stratagems were meant to harm some particular market, demonstrate the inefficiency of market secretaries, or simply to delay the plans of the RDV. For example, in 1991 and 1992, it took two full weeks for the GV board to go to

Gbomina and get the revenues, and when they did, it was because there was the threat that the money would be sent back to SONAPRA. In 1991, they managed to organise the revenue allocation while the RDV was absent, bypassing the different rates decided upon in the *règlement intérieur*. The RDV suspected that they had accomplices at the CARDER district office. Therefore, he called an official meeting of GV board members, village and district CARDER staff, specifying the agenda (i.e. clarification of revenue allocation in Togoudo) and sent a copy of the invitation letter to the General Director of the CARDER apparently to conform to bureaucratic routines. But it is a common knowledge in CARDER that any agent who gives any kind of support or takes part in an illegal use of cotton revenues runs the risk of loosing his/her job. Sending a copy of the invitation letter to the General Director of CARDER with this specific agenda was a quiet way of setting a trap, that all CARDER staff know of. This meant that a copy of the minutes of the meeting would be sent to the Director and any body who was invited but missing could well be asked to explain why. Furthermore, if there was disagreement (indicated in the minutes), the Director would be obliged to open a file on the case in order to 'cover himself' because written documents now exist. If he does not do so and people from the village later write a letter to the Minister or the President (which people often do), he could be in trouble. Therefore, all those invited were present. The meeting lasted from 10:00am to 19:30pm! A complete review of the *règlement intérieur* was made and the extra payment obtained by each person calculated. The RDV and the C/SS delivered moralising speeches, elaborating on the shameful size of the matter and the bad reputation the board members and the village would have, 'especially with the presence of 'foreigners' of first degree (the VNU) and of second degree (us, the researchers)'. The persons concerned promised to pay back but never managed to until 1993. Now and then, some board members would openly contest the right of the RDV to stick his nose into the affairs of the GV, saying:

> *'This man, his position is Responsable de Dynamisation du Village, which means that he is here for the whole village. Now he has turned himself into GV master. He should leave us in peace. There is the comité de suivi with which he is supposed to work, but he does not feel comfortable with that...'*

Now and then, the RDV would openly declare that the people he was fighting were bewitching him. He became seriously sick from August to September 1991 and even people in the village said he had been poisoned because he went too far in inveigling himself into other people's affairs. But he said they were wasting their time because he was protected by God. He was a *christianiste celeste*, reading his bible very frequently. Some people were against him and did not hide it. Very rarely did he drink or eat with peasants, pretending that it was his way of remaining impartial, though he did obtain a piece of land from Ekpemi for cultivation.

Nevertheless, people were unable to break the bridge to him. His authority was further legitimated by the capacity he had shown in bringing district level CARDER staff, including the RDR, to meetings of the GV. Most importantly, he knew the regulations and always argued on what he called a legal and democratic basis. They also needed him from time to time for explanations of the various 'innovative'

decisions taken in their names (the GV) by the CARDER head office, within the programme of restructuring agricultural services and the expected withdrawal of CARDER from some activities, such as for example direct negotiations between GVs and SONAPRA. Another top-down decision of the sort was the creation of the district union of cotton growers. Yet, the GV board members argued continuously that their revenues belonged to the cotton growers, and not to the whole village, and should not therefore be used as though they were for village development plans. They kept on searching for marginal, yet legal ways, to derail their revenues from these plans. One idea they had in November 1991 was that the GV would devote at least 50 percent of the revenues for credit to its members for farm labour costs, especially for cotton harvesting. The RDV did not reject the idea but suggested that it first be submitted to the general assembly in December 1991. The assembly rejected it strongly, saying that if ever such an operation was started, only the board members would benefit from it.

The relations between GV board members and the RDV were not always conflictive, especially when government and non-government development organisations were expected to intervene in the village. At these occasions the RDV would give the people concerned a kind of pep talk or initiation into how to talk and behave in order to win the hoped for help. These 'training' sessions are more frequently given to the women's and men's groups formed by the RDV, which constitutes the second aspect of his work in the village, discussed below.

'I want to form a women's group: are you interested?'

When Asuka arrived in Togoudo, the fashion[25] of men's and women's groups had already been introduced into the village by Tolidji Gaston and the *Animatrice*, promoter of the district social service.[26] It was part of a national project for the promotion of soya cultivation, supposedly to improve household diet. The approach consisted of calling a large meeting of women, demonstrating soya porridge preparation and consumption, recording it on video and then asking women to form a group to cultivate soya, with help from the project (e.g. in farming equipment, individual and collective credit, *vivres PAM*, and the World Food Programme). The case of Tolidji, though not unique to Togoudo in that period, was more localised and more challenging than was the case of Asuka when he arrived.

Tolidji Gaston, the CAEJ and the clash with Asuka

In 1987, Tolidji Gaston, a young artist-painter from Togoudo (born in 1959) who had tried in different ways but failed to settle in the Ivory Coast and in Cotonou to exercise his profession arrived in the area. He had been to Cuba for training on a government fellowship and had come back to his village to start a peasant youth cooperative, not to settle as a member (he never was), but as *Chef de projet* he said, in charge of the external relations for the cooperative. In short, a broker. He named the group CAEJ, *Coopérative d'Action Economique des Jeunes*.[27] Over 40 young men were registered for membership but, despite the assistance of local authorities, the group was refused access to three different locations visible from busy roads so that

people could see what young men were capable of. With these successive failures, by 1988, the group had almost vanished.[28] Then, in order 'to rescue the project', three families, including Gaston's family, agreed to offer land, most members being from those families. By end of 1990, about two years after the application and with the help of Nancy, a Peace Corps volunteer whom Gaston had met by chance in Dassa in 1988, the group obtained 400,000f animal traction and equipment. The members (three families) were not interested in working together and preferred that the money be shared out, but the AVA, Nancy and Gaston insisted on the primary objective and so the animals and equipment were bought. But they were never in fact used.[29] That was where Asuka came in. In a meeting with Nancy, Gaston, the AVA and what was left of the CAEJ board, he suggested that the animals and equipment should be hired out, which Gaston took as an attempt to kill off his project. Although both men interacted in their daily life in the village, they never addressed each other about the issue.[30] They even became intensively close when Gaston's wife was sick and had to be transported to the hospital in Gbomina. Asuka helped him over some weeks, carrying him on his motor bike, yet each had sworn not be the first to start the discussion on the CAEJ matter. Gaston commented to me that Asuka should learn to be modest and suggested I ask him how things had started and what went wrong, and that Asuka might even learn from it. On his side, when I approached Asuka on the issue, he declared:

> *'Forget about these dreaming politicians. Not just anybody can start a cooperative! It is a technical matter, not a political one. I am not a politician, but a technician, and if he stays around for some time, perhaps he would learn something about launching and managing a cooperative...'*

I tried and failed to bring these two men together to discuss the problem. Each of them warned me never to try again. Asuka said *mɛ e tunhun gan e wɛ'non sa gan ha* – 'You sell metals (gold) to him who knows its value', while Gaston said, 'I know well now that people here are individualistic. I just wait and see how far Asuka will go with the cooperatives he is starting'.

Though it appeared as a failure, the experience of the CAEJ awakened the interest of a few peasants with large farms to plough using animal traction. During the whole revolutionary period when cooperatives were strongly promoted, no such concrete assets were ever given. Asuka considered the whole issue a challenge. Ekpemi was one peasant whose desire for animal traction equalled Asuka's desire to meet the challenge.

Ekpemi, Tinkpo and their GRVC familial

Ekpemi was in his forties, married with three wives, eight children and heading a household of 16 persons, including his father, mother and two younger brothers. His father owned 25 hectares of land which he ploughed together with the household of his brother. They had a cotton market in the area with a former demonstration plot of 40x50 m². He was the head of the market board and was involved in the GV discussions of early 1990. He had tried to make private contacts with the RDV and was favoured because his family originated from the same village ward as Dossou,

the landlord of the RDV. Ekpemi and Dossou lived in the same compound and therefore, visiting Dossou, Ekpemi became more acquainted with the RDV. Furthermore, Adjikɛ, the wife of Dossou, was the treasurer of the soya group and Ekpemi had listened to a few discussions between Adjikɛ and the RDV. One day he told the RDV that he wanted to create a family cooperative, *un GRVC familial*. 'But that is not possible!' said the RDV. You need at least seven adult persons (president, secretary, treasurer, two organisers and two account checkers) and a common farm. Then Ekpemi replied 'if that is so, then with my wives, children, brothers and father and mother I could form even two *GRVC familial*!'. Asuka told him that it would not be accepted that he find some other non-family members, to which Ekpemi replied:

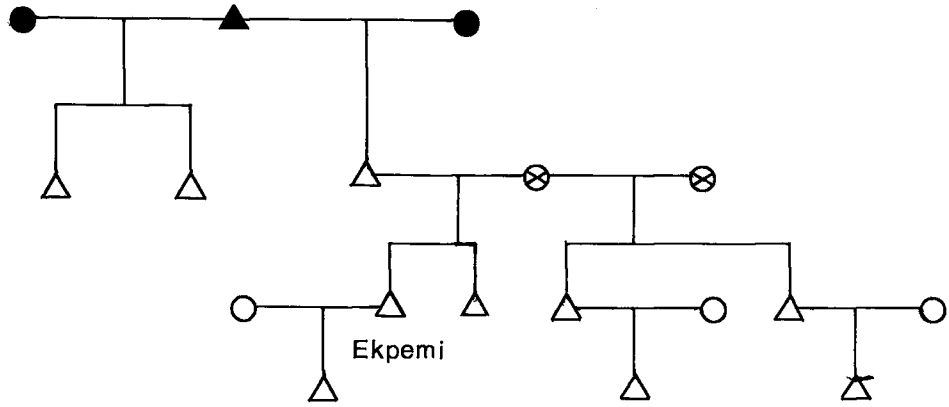
> '*But I don't see the problem you are mentioning. When people come to visit the GRVC, they will see the members (adult persons, men and women), they will see a good collective farm. Then what else? Would they ask about the identity cards of the members?. If necessary, every body will use his mother's family name.*'

Finally, the RDV visited his farm, and agreed on the idea. Further contacts were made with the AVA, the C/PACA and the C/SS whom the RDV had involved in the case. Ekpemi was told that the area must be well divided with large paths every 100 metres (every hectare) so that a car could pass, and that all the fields should be sown in the same period. An appointment was made for early May 1990, about one month after the sowing, for the official launching of the cooperative, with its board and everything. Ekpemi explained to his relatives that he was in discussions with the *Engineer* and that probably he would find some *vivres PAM* for the family, and perhaps animal traction providing some of them cultivated part of the farms around the demonstration plot at the same time and sowed the same crop. The other persons involved did not see any harm in doing so as long as these remained individual farms.

> '*But then every body should properly look after his farm so that if the akowes visit it at any time, they will always see it in good shape. It is just like we used to do on the cotton fields when we were young*' he added.

The AVA helped Ekpemi to divide the area very well and, finally, eight hectares of cowpeas and maize cultivated. A showboard was put at the place announcing *GRVC Kodji*. On the day of the appointment, Ekpemi prepared a meal (pounded yam with chicken sauce and *cakpalo*). The AVA, the C/PACA, the C/SS and the RDV came. The *GRVC Kodji* members were there (13 people: ten men and three women aged from 20-45 years; see Figure 17 for the kinship relations between them). Ekpemi was the president, two others were secretary and treasurer, and the rest were simple members. They were told that the collective farm was perfect. Now they should open a bank account at the agricultural bank in Gbomina. They were also accorded a long explanation, in a mixture of Fon and French, of the standard bylaws for cooperatives, which Ekpemi kept on repeating. Then it was declared that their GRVC was launched and recognised by CARDER. And, then, with the departure of the visitors, the so-called GRVC members continued with their affairs as before.

Figure 17 Kinship relations between the members of GRVC Kodji



● ▲ deceased men and women

⊗ non-members

Tinkpo, the friend of Ekpemi, whom we know from Chapter 8, soon decided to do the same and prepared himself for the following year. When we met him, he was ready and knew the conditions:

> *'I know, it is easy: you have to be at least 15 persons, have a PV (Parcelle de Vulgarisation) i.e. a demonstration plot of at least five hectares with wide and straight alleys after each hectare to allow the passing of cars. One can grow any crop, not necessarily cotton. The group should have an account of at least 12,000f at the agricultural bank and yield one-and-a-half to two tons cotton per ha. None of these conditions are difficult for us on my farm.'*

In fact, Tinkpo had just compiled a list of different things from different extension periods: the 15 persons, the PV and the cotton yield relating to the extension groups of the mid-seventies to eighties, and the other conditions which really related to his so-called GRVC. The RDV, together with the AVA, the C/SS and the RDR, whom the RDV enroled on the matter, started formalities for both of the GRVCs to acquire *vivres PAM* and animal traction. This worked for Ekpemi in 1991 (he received his animals and equipment later in 1992), but Asuka did not succeed in solving Tinkpo's case before he left the area in 1993.

The women groups

Apart from the CAEJ, another group that existed in Togoudo before the arrival of the RDV was the soya women's group formed by the *animatrice*, based in Gbomina, as part of the campaign promoting soya to improve household diets. When the RDV

took up residence, the group had already split into three: one part had simply dropped out, saying that they did not have time to always sit at meetings while none of the things promised when they started had ever arrived (*vivres PAM*, farming implements, individual and collective credit). Alele was one of the early drop-outs. She lived in the neighbourhood of the president and the treasurer. Her husband was in Nigeria and used to return home in the dry seasons. She said she had been interested because, in the announcement of the meeting, it was said that all the women who had problems with food should come and there would be a solution for them. Many women arrived, but when everything started, she noticed that it was not a matter simply for those who had food problems, but was rather for the *Mɛdjomɛ*. 'I could not be in such a group. It was higher than me' she said.

Sabine (see Chapter 8), the secretary, and a few other women living in the same ward, quite distant from the ward of the president and treasurer, also complained that the latter two wanted to force their ideas and will on the group and did not want to listen to others. She added: 'They have big eyes and when ever they open their mouths, only big things come out'.[31] In fact, Sabine was in her thirties while both the president and the treasurer were over fifty and belonged more to the category people call 'belly full'. In the end, the two groups collapsed. There was even conflict between the president and treasurer, the latter accusing the former of sorcery.[32]

The RDV was first told a version of this story by Adjikɛ, the treasurer, a few weeks after he settled. After discussions, they agreed that Adjikɛ would invite the other women for a meeting. But Adjikɛ proceeded to recruit new women on the basis of a multiplicity of criteria: kinship, neighbourhood, behaviour, style of working, childhood friendship and so on, each of which criteria being applied quite specifically from one person to the other (see Koning and Speets 1991 for similar cases in Dani). Women like Alele were excluded, though she was Adjikɛ's neighbour. Adjikɛ said it was because 'the woman doesn't work hard. And besides, her husband is absent and is a man who likes problems. He would say that I had driven his wife into bad things'. It was no longer the soya sub-group of the ward. Of the 13 members who remained from the 20 she recruited, only two were members of the original soya group. At the meeting, as the women recalled it, the RDV declared, assuming they were the soya group,

> *'I have heard about your misadventures with the group you started on soya. Now, I want to create a women's group. Are you interested? OK. If you are interested, you should know that making a group is a matter of organisation. You will have to arrange every little thing.*[33] *But to start, what activity would you like to do in the group?'*

One of the women told Asuka to give them some suggestions, but he refused. 'No. You have to decide for yourself what is the most convenient to you'. Later, from the way some women commented, it was obvious they were expecting something different:

> *'we thought it was because he had words in his mouth to tell us that he called us. He thought we would group, but did not think around what. At least the animatrice knew what we were going to group on – soya...'. Some others added 'anyway we accepted*

because he said good things would come from it for us. And we see from the surrounding villages all the things women get from grouping. Whoever saw good things and refused?'

Finally, the group started with soya and cassava but in 1991 sowed cowpeas too.

Another issue Asuka discussed with them that day was the board. The treasurer remembered very well how it happened. She said:

'That day, I did not expect the RDV to ask for a president. Suddenly he said: 'who are the people you think would be the chiefs in your group? Choose them'. I did not want to be President. I am too nervous for that. I am quick to abuse people. The woman I thought could play this role wasn't in the village. She'd gone to her native village for a ceremony. The President of the soya group was a sorcerer so I didn't want her in my group. Then I told the RDV: 'We don't know each other well yet. We have to think on it for a few days and we'll let you know'. The others couldn't argue with me because I was the one who had called them. They did not know anything about the issue in the first place. Later I explained it to them. They all agreed and said that they would leave everything to me, provided I managed to bring good things for them in the group.'

The woman chosen by Adjikɛ for President was another neighbour, with whom she (together with her husband) had spent more than five years in Ghana working on cassava processing. The idea of Adjikɛ was to process cassava with the group. There were women in her home village who had been donated a processing machine so that it was even less tiring. Both women were much involved in farm activities and raising animals. They were over fifty and thought processing cassava and staying at home (i.e. no longer going out to the farm) would not be a bad thing for them at their age. But other members were in their twenties and thirties. They were interested in petty trade and cooking relish. They hoped for the credit that people had spoken of, and wished to start their businesses.

Asuka later repeated the same procedure with Sabine's group and presented it as the *récupération et restructuration des groupements soya*. For Sabine, the chief interest was stabilising her petty trade. For some of the 24 other members of her group, agriculture was their main activity and they wanted insecticides on credit for their cowpea farms and to store maize. Very soon, the group of Adjikɛ obtained *vivres PAM* (500 kg of rice, some bottles of vegetable oil and canned fish).[34] Both groups had asked for credit for a mill, which they would manage. The condition posed by the FAIB was that they attended a literacy course on how to manage the mill themselves. The VNU took care of the literacy programme, with the assistance of Baba, the GV secretary. At the end of 1992, Sabine's group obtained the mill and had to prepare for the mill workshop themselves, which they did. The group of Adjikɛ was promised the cassava processing machine, which they did not get until 1993 when the RDV left.

Most women's groups in Togoudo started in the way described above, by the wish of someone from outside, or from inside the village, to form a group.[35] Until 1993, there was not a single group (in the sense of *Groupement Féminin*) formed on the initiative of a woman.[36] This does not mean that women in this area lacked organisational potential. Apart from the everyday organisation of their own income generating activities, there were many rotating credit organisations, initiated and

managed by women, that involved both men and women. There were also labour exchange groups, music groups and social groups for mutual assistance, with defined regulations – one example of which I will give later in this chapter. The point is that the women concerned were not yet accustomed to these so-called *Groupements Féminins*. The situation would probably change rapidly, as it had in other areas. But here, the women were still learning. Indeed, another important side of the implementation of the Community Development Programme in Togoudo (as in other villages) was to initiate those villagers closely involved into the various rituals of meeting with external agencies, and the organisation of speeches and rhetoric on development needs.

Class-room situations for men and women on group matters

The women looked on it as attending school, learning a new thing. The habit, largely taken for granted by the bureaucrats, of starting a meeting with a stated agenda, introducing all participants, appointing officials, are all new settings and rituals for those who attend, together with other factors such as social control, which they must learn if they are not going to have their discursive capacities reduced in these encounters, thus allowing the decision ground to be displaced from them and shifted elsewhere. Hereafter is a piece of the conversation between the RDV and some members of Adjike's group, a few days after the group received the visit of a UNDP mission that suggested they start literacy training and try to form a union of women's groups in Togoudo. To start, the RDV asked what they had retained from the meeting:

1st woman: I think they spoke of literacy in Idaca.

2nd woman: They spoke of literacy, and also recommended that we work on a union so that we can succeed.

The RDV: From these, what do you think are the activities to start now?

3rd woman: What I see: as the RDV is here, he is the one to show us the way, to guide us, as we are just starting.

The RDV: Consequently, when I leave, the group would collapse. Each of you know how to manage your own economic activities to make them work. You are the ones to choose what you like and I will help you in the organisation.

3rd woman: When you put a child to school for the first time, you have to guide him until the moment he is able to take care of himself.

The RDV: If that is what you meant, then I understand, I agree.

These types of classes ended up with decisions to carry out activities that met the requirements of potential funding agencies. Others were meant to prepare for the actual visit, whereby Asuka would try to think out all the possible questions the visitors might ask (and possible answers) with the people concerned. Sometimes, such meetings also concerned the GV. In most cases, a review of village needs was made (mostly on infrastructure, but selected according to what Asuka knew of the field of interest of the coming mission). A way of presenting these needs was

devised and good spokesmen were selected for introducing them, with an indication of the best moment for doing so. The RDV would add:

'When you state the problem, you should then tell them all the things we have already done about it before you move on to asking for their support to complete it. You must show that we are trying to solve our problems by ourselves.'

In most meetings, things did not work out as prepared: some subject was introduced too early, or by someone who was not appointed to do so, or without using the appropriate participatory-exhibiting formulation. Then spontaneously, someone would point out the mistake, in the Idaca language. A very brief conversation would follow to recall what was agreed on and then the meeting would continue, either in French or in Fon. In some other cases, the RDV would forget to review,mix with the group, things he thought were already known, for example, the various positions on the board.

In her group, Adjikɛ did not at first think of the necessity to have someone who was literate. When the need was noticed, they agreed to recruit Chocothéo, who was the secretary of the CAEJ, as a member and secretary of their group. When they started cash contributions, the treasurer collected the 100f weekly then went to the secretary to have them recorded. A few weeks later, she found the procedure inadequate and asked the members to hand their contributions directly to the secretary who gave it back to her every week or so. One day, this group received the visit of a mission who asked about the board members. Most people spontaneously presented Chocothéo as the pencil (secretary) and the box (treasurer), which upset Adjikɛ very much.

One other dimension of these presentation exercises concerned group activities. In most cases, commitment to the group's official activities were minimum. Adjikɛ's group worked on three quarters of a hectare, with the ploughing and the weeding done entirely by paid labour, while none of them worked privately on less than one hectare of land. The president and the treasurer continued to press for their idea of cassava processing. They were still looking for land for a group cassava farm not far from the village. The RDV told them that it was necessary to start the cassava field before he applied for a machine to FAIB. But the women said 'what would happen if after 10 months your machine is not there. We don't want to do it with local equipment it is too hard'. The RDV applied for the machine. When the FAIB mission arrived, he warned them to say that they had already started a two-hectare cassava plot. 'If necessary, you can show her the demonstration plot of the cassava project. But if every thing goes well, then right next week, you should really start your own cassava farm'. Yes they said. That visit was almost successful but there was a mixture of expectations presented, revealing the differing interests of the two subgroups in the group: for credit and for the processing machine. Mme. Landry, the lady of the mission, could not understand:

- What do you want the credit for?
- For trade: we will buy and sell things. We will also cook food for sale.
- Do you want to process cassava or do you want to trade?

- When we process cassava, it would also be for sale. We can start selling before our own cassava is ready to be processed. Then we would already know how to sell.
- People should not put two fingers in the nose at once. Do you want to process cassava or do you want to trade?

The treasurer, shouting with anger over the ladies who had answered until then, said

- We have always spoken of cassava processing and that's why we have already a cassava field. I don't know what they are talking about now. When we process our cassava, we can start the trade with our own money.

By 1993, the machine was not yet there. In the meantime activities have continued, the president and the treasurer enjoying more and more their status and the image of group they represented, while the others liked the social security they felt and the prospect of good things to come: 'we too are someone in the village. People come to visit us and our names are over there in high places. One day something will come'. The idea of credit was not left out and was worked on with their own resources within the group.

The group of Sabine was more lucky. After a few months of literacy training they obtained FAIB credit for a grain mill. But on the arrival of the mill, Sabine quit the village. Her love affair with the head master of the Gbomina school had gone far and she was following him to his new appointment in the south. I discussed this with her when she had already taken her decision:

- Is it true that you intend to leave after all the work you did in this group?
- Yes I will go and I think it is better.
- But here you have the chance with this mill to organise the credit for your affairs!
- Yes but I am a woman. And people in this village don't respect you when you're young like me and you don't have a husband
- So what would you do over there, household work?
- When we get there, I will see. I can sew. The place is bigger than Gbomina, there would be more chance to have clients. Also, it is a privilege to do household work for a husband. Or at least to have the possibility to say yes or no to household work for a husband. Until now, I did not have that. When we are in the group and some women are joking about their husbands, they sometimes say: 'I don't want to cook for him today...' I prefer their situation to mine... I would like to say that now and then too.

The Kluiklui and the Toba groups: two multifunctional groups

As I indicated earlier, there are many local experiences of group formation, where the membership patterns and management are completely different from that forcefully suggested by intervenors. Let me then briefly examine two groups – one female group organized around food processing and another mixed group focusing on music – that are quite different in nature and differently linked to the Community Development Programme.

The Kluiklui group

This is the group to which Pélagie belonged and that processed groundnuts into *kluiklui*. In fact, it was the private enterprise of Nanan, the president, where members came to learn how to process kluiklui, working as free labour for Nanan. Those who showed good skills but did not have the means to acquire the equipment and groundnuts to start up on their own, could always receive capital from Nanan and use her equipment. But she knew perfectly how much one could make out of the processing and so she requested 50 percent of the profit. In this same group, five women were members of a labour exchange group specifically for cultivating groundnuts. This allowed them to sell their own groundnuts at market price to the processing unit, which in fact increased their share of the profit. They had started a rotating credit organisation aimed at equipping each of them with the necessary tools. Two of them had already obtained the tools but the five preferred to continue working for Nanan because, first, they said marketing was easier – wholesalers knew Nanan and collected all the produce at once. They rarely needed to transport things to Gbomina. Second, they would have had too much trouble with their husbands and children if they had established their work at home, because they would then have lacked time enough to devote to their work.

This group was simply enroled by the RDV and presented on each occasion – just as those previously mentioned, and despite the various and complex logics on which they operated – as cooperatives whose members worked together and who shared the profit on an equal basis, as prescribed by cooperative regulations. Asuka, however, did not show much interest in the music group, because, according to him, it was involved in practices (i.e. playing music at funerals performed in pagan ways, drinking alcohol and so on) which his religious beliefs forbade him to encourage and, in any case, the group was not organized strictly for productive activities. Let me briefly present this second group.

The Toba group

The group was composed 25 members but started in 1986 with 10 members who contributed a total of 13,500f, complemented by 9,500f from wage labour on a cotton farm, to buy the musical instruments. In 1988, four members were sent on a three week training course in singing and drum beating in Savalou at a total cost of 10,000f allocated to them by the group. The group performed on various occasions (e.g. funerals, marriage celebraions, and official visits to the village) for cash, the amount paid by the client and negotiated each time according to means and status. Since then, they have charged between 1,000-7,500f, the client also giving two litres of *sodabi*, five packets of cigarettes and providing a hot meal after the performance. When any group member is directly concerned in such an event, she/he is given assistance by the others.

Membership application follows the criteria as indicated above in the case of Adjikɛ. Once accepted, the person is expected to give 2,500f, two packets of cigarettes and two litres of *sodabi*. As far as the organisation of management was concerned, there was the *Agba* ɛgbɛ who acted as president, *Abaniowo* who was his

adviser, and the treasurer, next to whom were the main singer and the drummers. Then, almost outside the group were the *Baba* ɛgbɛ (a kind of male referee), and *Iya* ɛgbɛ (the female referee), both charged with settling disputes and conflicts within the group and between the group and outsiders: 'These people are particularly helpful when we perform on credit for someone, for example, at a funeral, and who is delaying to paying us'.

Examining the life histories of members of the group, one finds that among the 10 founders, there were two labour exchange groups, who came together in 1985 to start a rotating credit organisation. And since 1988, the membership has split into four labour exchange groups. Some new members were already in such a group and others managed to join a group of this kind after becoming members of the Toba group. As they wanted to keep the size of labour exchange groups manageable, and taking into account the distances between the farms and the growing membership, so they split into new labour groups, with the rotating credit organisation – the most visible activity of the group – constituting the glue that held together most of the members.

Every January, they organise a feast. Up to 1989 a goat was slaughtered, and after that the group has slaughtered a cow, part of which is cooked for a common meal, the rest being shared among the members, and given as gifts to certain persons outside the group. At the feast of 1992, various groups were shown operating together, thus reflecting the different subgroups based on kinship, neighbourhood, and occupational criteria, as well as marking out points of conflict over various arguments, and affairs with women. These different recruitment criteria indicated specific but changing networks that were instrumental at the time in relation to the particular achievements of their members. In addition to the common meal, some of these groups, which had been reconstituted many times, continued to gather at particular *cakpalo* or home parties days after the main feast.

To conclude this section, I should mention that not all RDVs have the same attitude as Asuka to these music groups. In Wedeme, another village of the programme, the Toba group was used by the RDV as an entrée for contact with the young men, with whom he later started group-based fish raising activities.

Bridging external and local logic on development

Beyond the simple process of learning about development interface rituals and rhetoric, both men and women involved in these groups are continuously doing their best to bridge different and changing logics. On the surface of this bridging exercise, the modes of group formation, patterns of membership and management of the groups are of a completely different nature ranging from various so-called 'formal' to the 'informal' types. Nevertheless, despite the simplistic approaches of Gaston, the *animatrice*, and also Asuka to group formation, and although the groups studied under the Community Development Programme were quite recent (i.e. existing for two years maximum), careful social recruitment was clearly visible, as illustrated by the composition of the soya group. It was not at all as Asuka seemed to think. There was an explicit attempt by the treasurer and the secretary,

each pushing their own interests, to create groups that suited their options better. Yet when we consider the ways in which the membership issue was treated by Asuka and other CARDER staff (in the case of men's groups) and most importantly, the ways in which the group's productive activities are presented to potential funding agencies, one suspects that the RDV is really not unaware of the logic of these (in this case women's) groups.

Nevertheless, another more complex, phenomenon, that probably escaped the attention of the RDV, is the appearance of subgroups within the large group. This was particularly evident in the Toba group, but also transparent from the women's groups. The first division within the primary soya group highlights differences in spatial residence, but mostly in economic status and self-achievement projects. The group of Sabine does not enjoy great homogeneity in terms of occupation and expectations of the members. Indeed Sabine herself declared that she was not interested in farming activities, but in credit to stabilise her petty trade and food processing. This changed later for other priorities, which she became more aware of as she interacted with the other members of her group. The case of Nanan's group shows this process more clearly, namely, the existence of subgroups generated through the interweaving of individual projects in the context of a specific development project (see Villarreal 1994: 93-140 for a careful documentation of similar processes in a Mexican case). In Dani, the women's group that managed to obtain a refrigerator and start a savings and credit system as well as home gardening eventually split up. To external observers, they presented themselves as a unified organisation with particular members appointed to be responsible for each of the different activities. In fact these activities were almost always private interests of the particular sub-groups, with individually managed revenue, while the cash collected individually from their savings was presented as group revenue from all the activities.

Beyond the encounter: credit for labour

The RDV was busy everyday in the village with the groups, especially the women groups, with the contribution boxes, literacy efforts and eventually the small common plots. Outside the village, he continually sought for *vivres PAM* for them, for animal traction and the cassava processing machine (though less actively for the latter). In the meantime, a phenomenon that quickly spread through all the groups was the allocation of credit for members for their small plots that were planted twice a year, the second time with cotton. Credit of between five and 10,000f was allocated to members primarily for food processing, petty trade, animal husbandry or agricultural labour. Interest on the loans varied from between 10 to 20 percent. The effect that this produced on the group of Adjikɛ was that the two main leaders were able to hold their people together because each of the 13 members stayed in the group with the hope that such credit would be increased each year. In this way, the leaders secured the opportunity of continuing their public relations operation aimed at acquiring the cassava processing machine.

At the level of the GV too – though the General Assembly in December 1991 rejected the idea – credit allocation was launched in 1992 and has been distributed

to 41 growers (out of the 600 registered members) from 13 of the 23 markets. The amount received by these growers ranged from between 10,000f and 40,000f at 25 percent interest per year, the total amount distributed being 595,000f. No possibility existed to escape payment. The debt was deducted directly from their cotton revenues for the year. The GV board concluded that the operation was a success and for 1993 they raised the credit account to 750,000f. This was started immediately after the RDV left the village. Another interesting development of the GV and also out of the reach of the RDV, the AVA and the VNU, was that some of the board members who were defeated in the 1990 elections fell back on their cotton markets where they were already the leading figures. They started demanding further autonomy for each market. Until 1990, each market had a team of local supervisors appointed by the GV, who were fed by the market and received a per diem from the market fees paid by SONAPRA. Some market leaders started arguing that this was no longer necessary, that every market was mature enough to supervise itself and keep the per diem in its own 'box'. This was accepted in 1992. The credit operation also extended to the markets. Formerly, market members did not pay much attention to the common box of the demonstration plot that was held by the market leader. From the end of 1990, a few markets started setting up their own form of general assembly for credit allocation for cotton harvesting. And, by 1992, the situation became general, and had certainly stimulated the GV board in its decision to launch the credit operation despite the opposition manifested by the majority of growers present at the 1991 general assembly. As Agbegui told me in 1992:

> *'That comité de suivi was nothing. There was nothing to say, nothing to do. My deputy who was with me, immediately when elected as president of the GV, took the project with him to the GV and you always see them together (the RDV and him). He thought there was something in it. He was disappointed. I got in the GV too because I am a market leader and supervisor. But with that Asuka, it was too hard to get anything with him. Nothing is happening there really. Things now happen at the level of the market. Everybody manages his market and gives credit to his people. and they are happy with me.'*

Conclusion

More closely than previous ones, this chapter has looked at the actual processing of the policy orientation within the CARDER that concerned the Community Development Programme, and its implementation in Togoudo. Though the settings constituted significantly different epistemic communities, similar processes occurred, of which I wish to underline too in the concluding discussion.

First, although it occasioned within the CARDER and in the village some hot debates on values, images and interests, it ended up passing away as no more than a moderately significant episode in the everyday life of the people. Life goes on: For Ekanyé in the CARDER, and Alele, Dourodjè and Sabine in the village, and finally Dawé in the village and Cewɛ in CARDER, their different degrees of involvement making them perceive the programme very differently in terms of what they could personally achieve from it for their life projects. Furthermore, in none of these cases

was the appraisal of the instrumental value of the programme made in isolation from the other actors involved, or from the arenas and grounds of their actions. The very fact of appraising whether the programme could have a place in one's life trajectory brings one to those social interfaces where values and meanings are negotiated, and interests struggled for. What is also significant here is that through the appraisal, negotiations and struggles related to the Community Development Programme, the latter seemed to lose its very substance and was dismembered into pieces that become meaningful within and beyond the actual context of the programme: fights (and coalitions) over allowances, bureaucratic procedures, future perspectives, allocation of revenues, resource management, definition of group identities etc. When looked at closely, this constitutes not just a deconstruction of a programme, but at the same time an active and inventive creation of social, political and economic opportunities and interactions in various walks of life, the definition of roles in the heat of social action, *à la faveur* of a given programme that broadly defines the ground of interaction. It is doubtful whether social actors often use prescribed definitions of roles as Baba did in relation to the RDV ('this man's position is RDV, which means for the whole village'), or concerning situations or events other than those closely related to the specific piece one is dealing with at the moment. In short, the small pieces of life's realities into which the dismembered pieces of the programme are incorporated become more meaningful to the actors than the actual programme itself, thereby making of the latter, as I indicated at the beginning of the text, an episode, since forgotten.

And that is where the second aspect of the processes at work comes in. By bringing actors together at socially-defined interfaces, the appraisal, negotiation and struggles activated by the programme, once digested (and reduced into manageable pieces), span or go far beyond the grounds and arenas projected by programme designers, or as experienced by its implementers or by the people involved in it. Within CARDER, discussions on procedures, allowances and intervention approaches contributed to the definition and reproduction of spheres of social interaction beyond the single Community Development Programme, such as the operations of credit for labour engaged by different groups in the village. Conscious distinctions might even be attempted, as shown by Agbegui, who tries to separate the credit allocation actions in his market from the general discussions under way in the GV and the *comité de suivi*. In these ways, a programme like the Community Development Programme contributes to the reproduction of the field of rural development, beyond the perceptions that each individual category of actor has of this field, thus making it possible for actors – even though their values and preoccupations of the moment might speak a different language and fight for contradictory interests – to still consider themselves as sharing the same battle or coalition ground of social interaction.

Finally, one readily notes that, as an instrument designed for intended (planned) social change in the field of rural development, the actual development plan covered only a very limited segment of the realities of the field and those of the actors. Neither the concerns and worries of CARDER agents, nor the everyday preoccupations of the villagers found explicit place in the actual formulation and operation of the development plan. Intervention in the villages, supposedly aimed at making

village life more dynamic, ended up being overturned by the dynamism of village life itself. In my view, therefore, the question is not how to bridge these gaps to make policy more relevant to peasants' needs. This does not make much sense. As I have shown in this and earlier chapters, individual and collective lives within contrasting epistemological communities (i.e. among bureaucrats, villagers, etc.) as well as the social processes at the critical social interfaces, cannot be predicted nor modelled. Furthermore, the logic of planned development is not just (or only) for the well-being of the people it addresses, but lies beyond the everyday interests of such people. The logic of the field is precisely the room it leaves to different stakeholders – Ministers, staff as well as peasants – to identify their stakes, and agree or fight for them in grounds and arenas they find relevant. The field cannot exist otherwise. This leads us to understanding why it is that some social scientists – acting also as social actors in the field of rural development – argue for gap bridging while others struggle for a better understanding of these gaps in the policy making and practice of rural development. These processes are indicative of their own entry points and interests in the field of rural development, drawn from the struggle with other actors in the different grounds of the development field. In the pursuit of these, social scientists likewise may (incidentally) generate assets for the self-achievement projects of others, thus producing patterns for structural change, provided, of course, that such inventiveness in the various grounds and arenas of the field are not too constrained by wider structural, political and economic factors.

Notes

1 By 'frames of meaning' I mean the historically, socially and politically constituted but ever changing individual and collective dispositions through which knowledge is constructed, exchanged and transformed.

2 Two sources of information were available to me for an investigation into how the programme started and how it was experienced by CARDER staff in its first months and year. These were the memories of the actors involved and the various documents that give an account of these preliminary activities. I am aware of the limitations of written reports as far as their reliability as a source of investigation is concerned, because they are transcriptions of the ideal situation which the writer wants to project and the image he wants to produce of himself and his actions. In this particular situation, these documents are part of the struggles within the CARDER and its relation with the Ministry around this programme. But that is exactly what makes the present documents interesting because even as they stand, they already show the gaps that exist (which the staff would probably wish to hide) between the neo-populist rhetoric and the actual intervention style deployed within the programme.

3 Undoubtedly during the first months of the programme, an important number of CARDER staff were busy on it: the accounting department allocating cash and cars for the monitoring committee, secretaries typing reports and messages, drivers from the head-office bringing the committee to visit the villages (there were thirty villages each of which hosted a sensitisation meeting by the committee), the village agents in thirty villages gathering data for the village monographs, all the 15 RDRs of the CARDER pulling all these data together with existing ones in order to write the village development plans, etc.

4 This is the metaphor of a person fetching water at the river or the well. Traditionally (and still now in many places) the receptacle used was a round clay pot, a jar. Usually, no one would bend down to the ground to help put the jar on the water fetcher's head. Once the latter has got his/her pot full, he/she would have to take it by him/herself to the hip before people help him/her put it on his/her head. This metaphor is now widely used in intervention contexts, indicating the participation of people in the actions that are meant to improve their situation.

5 In the end, we have here a set of well experienced dispositions for survival, the functioning of this organisation, as well as the state itself, being largely funded from outside (see Chapter 3), which requires that these actors show that they are *à jour*, even if it is only superficially.

6 Just like hot 48 hour messages. As RDRs say, '48 hours hot messages arrive every day on your table, requesting that a given task is done within 48 hours, dropping all previous activities in the meantime *(toute activité cessante)*. Which means that when you start today preparing an answer to a hot 48 hours message, another one may come tomorrow and request that you drop everything because the coming 48 hours should be devoted to the new hot message. But you still need to spend at least 24 hours on the previous hot message! That is the life we have here'.

7 Ekanyé and Cewɛ were both staff of the DSEI, the department of monitoring and internal evaluation of CARDER in which the programme was located. Cewɛ was trained as a soil scientist at the Benin Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. He worked a few years in the CARDER Atacora (the North-Western Province) as RDR. Then he was appointed at the DSEI in Zou-CARDER as the head of *Service Etudes et Synthèses*. Ekanye was a sociologist. He was trained in Benin University and later received his PhD in sociology from a French University. He worked at the DSEI of CARDER Mono (South-West Benin) before he was appointed at the DSEI of Zou-CARDER as *Chargé d'Etudes*.

8 There were two different examples among the RDVs, neither of whom were from the Director's ethnic group. One built very personal relations with him, through his way of addressing him and frequently visiting his home bringing gifts. The second one (Asuka) was exactly the opposite, arguing that he did not need to buy the favours of the Director and would not let the latter step all over him. He was very aggressive and highly self confident in replying to the Director. He was always repeating that he never asked to be appointed and that he could be moved at any time and he did not mind. On the other side, the Director avoided confrontations with him, praising his achievements.

9 This is a Fon saying: *a na ɓo cuku bo so gbo do nyan gbe a?* They wonder why CARDER (i.e.the General Director) would put aside a sociologist and appoint a soil scientist to monitor a community development programme.

10 Most staff had expected the programme to be located at the Department of Production, but the lady refused to have it and declared the whole idea as nonsense. People said she dared to react in this way because the new Minister based his idea on severe criticisms of the styles of the former Minister, her protector, who still held a powerful position in the Polit Bureau of the Party (under Kérékou's regime).

11 But she did not always succeed in exerting this power. People sometimes managed to get to the field when they really wanted to go. Also at the time, she had everything in place to the USA on a four years PhD programme which she took up at the end of 1990. Knowing this, many DPro staff thought it more prudent to show loyalty to the General Director than to the DPro who would be leaving in any case.

12 Dourodjè was senior to CARDER staff members Cewɛ and Ekanyé. He graduated from the Benin Faculty of Agricultural Sciences much earlier than Cewɛ. He was RDR for many years, then functioned as acting DPro for a full year before he went to France for eighteen months of post graduate training in rural extension. Actually, when he returned from France, he was expecting to be confirmed as DPro when the former Minister brought the lady-DPro in from outside CARDER, from the National Research Institute. From an internal arrangement within CARDER, it was suggested he be given the position of

assistant DPro, in charge of training and extension. He rejected it, arguing that he had passed this position years ago. As a result, he was loosely attached to both the DPro and the General Director (with his office in the DPro building) as what was called *Analyste*, which was an innovation of the Zou-CARDER. Later in 1992, Dourodjè was appointed DPro.

13 There was apparently fear from Cewɛ of being shadowed by Dourodjè, especially at a the time the programme was being aggressively 'marketed' to funding agencies. But Dourodjè had one single obsession, being appointed DPro.

14 A special committee came from head office which at the ceremony was led by Dourodjè and Ekanyé. The RDR and the heads of all the other state services were present in Gbomina, including the Head of the District himself.

15 As discussed in Chapter 6, there was no traditionally rooted and legitimately accepted institutional structure in Togoudo, a residential composite that owed its village identity largely to its incorporation into the modern state in the mid-sixties. Therefore, apart from the old men, the *Agba Ilu* or *Vieux sages*, the active groups in the public life of the village (the various committees and boards) are all connected to the state, i.e. to external intervention. Apart from the Mayor and the three village ward heads, the three most important committees according to people (the most visible) were the GV board, the APE (*Association des Parents d'Elèves*), the parents who have children at school, and the managing committee of the village health, the UVS (*Unité Villageoise de Santé*). Then, as far as external intervention is concerned, come less visible committees or groupings around the cotton markets. There were 15 in 1990 and 23 in 1991, each with a board and all those related to the GV. In fact, these markets started as agricultural extension groups USV (*Unité de Suivi et de Vulgarisation*) at the beginning of the project and were later called GCE (*Groupe de Contact et d'Encadrement*). Each of them has a demonstration plot, mostly planted with cotton, the yield of which is sold and the revenue held in a common pot. Another committee mentioned was that of the Catholic Church.

16 They did not cite the new GV storage, the building of which had been going on since 1985, because it was already clear to them that they would have to build it themselves.

17 He belongs to the same category of Tinguédjo in Chapter 6, a *sac au dos* who did an Engineer's degree in cooperative matters at the *Centre Panafricain de Formation Coopérative* in Cotonou.

18 The components of these revenues, *ristournes*, as paid to all GV cotton growers in Benin are the outcome of a long bargaining process between the CARDER, SONAPRA, the funding agencies and the growers. At the time there were market charges and the value of the surplus weight. SONAPRA was charged for every ton marketed because it was assumed to be its job to purchase the cotton and weigh it by the kilo. The peasants are organised to perform this and related work (i.e. they prepare the place for marketing by weeding it, watch the cotton from the time it is weighed until the moment it is collected by SONAPRA, and help to load the trucks that collect the cotton), and the GV is paid for it. As for the value of the surplus weight, it is measured when cotton is delivered to the gins. This weight is obtained in the following way: When cotton is marketed in a village, every grower records five to seven percent less than the real weight of his cotton. Thus, the weight measured at the gin is not less than the sum of the weights of all the growers recorded in the village; otherwise, there would be difficulties in sharing the total revenue among individual growers. The value of the surplus weight obtained, and the market fees, are paid to each cotton market via the GV, almost a year after the purchase of cotton by SONAPRA, that is usually in the last trimester of the year. In the case of Togoudo, especially with the arrival of Asuka, as in many other villages, the attempt is to keep this money at the level of the GV, supposedly for public use.

19 In addition to this and since 1992, it was decided that 30 percent of the net national return on cotton production and marketing would be returned to growers (40 percent for stabilisation funds, 15 percent for the Government and 15 percent for SONAPRA), which all the GVs share, according to the total amount of cotton each has marketed. This is called *Plus value* that counts from the 1989/90 campaign and amounted to 400 millions FCFA for all the GVs of Benin (CME, 1993).

20 Indeed, though every RDV was installed officially and formally in the villages, as in the case of Asuka, not more than three of the eight RDVs got such a central position in their village of appointment. In Dani, for example, another Idaca settlement 50 kilometres to the north where the programme was implemented, the RDV was hardly noticed on the village scene, only as someone loosely in charge of a few women's groups.

21 A provisional storehouse, formerly used as one of the classrooms of the school, actually the former church house, was destroyed by a tornado a few months earlier. All the villagers were requested to contribute to the building of a new store, 500 FCFA for men and 200 for women. But the money collected was insufficient to complete the storehouse. The health centre was intended for child delivery. Such a centre was much needed as many women lived out on the farms and would have to go to Gbomina (no less than 20 kilometres from the farms) before they could visit a midwife, which they therefore rarely bothered to do. Almost all these women delivered at home, some even on the road from the farms to the village.

22 Still, additional funds were necessary before the house could be finished. This was funded by a German foundation through a man from the village who was a director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who served formerly in Germany.

23 The GV is considered as the local funding agency for all public affairs. When a guest has to be hosted, the GV is expected to meet the costs. In some cases the costs even include a gift to the host. But who would pay? After long discussions people suggested that the GV give the money, but as a loan to the local administration. In these discussions, the GV board members would start by protesting very strongly and even threaten to quit the meeting. The RDV would first side with them for some time and then start examining the reasons why the GV would not do something. If one of the board members continued to object, the RDV would get angry, saying that he had been appointed by the state to work with them and could not be in a meeting where no consideration was given to state officials.

24 The cotton production chain is quite complicated and offers various room for manoeuvre to the secretary, who is particularly expert in the matter. He had accumulated a wealth of experience since 1985 and from the various training he had from CARDER. To give just some idea of the complexity of the operations along this chain: first, every grower must indicate the size of cotton field he intends to grow; this information is collected at the level of every market and handed over to the GV secretary. On this basis, an estimate of the quantities of seed, fertilizer and insecticide needed is made for the whole village and transmitted to SONAPRA via CARDER, charged with making sure (since 1990) that every market secretary makes the same calculation for every grower of his market. Formerly, this was done by Baba with the help of the AVA. In due time (before June), CARDER delivers the inputs, distributed to the growers via the markets, with a meticulous recording of the credit thus obtained by every grower. This would later (around April the following year) be deducted from his revenue. When the time comes for the marketing (collecting the cotton) a general plan is made for the village (15 markets in 1989, 23 since 1990), on the basis of a time schedule given by CARDER. This allows the SONAPRA and CARDER staff to check the cotton quality and supervise each market during its operation, making sure that the regulations are kept (e.g. correctness of the weighing machine, and anti-fire precautions). Every market board would prepare itself to offer a special reception to the official delegation (the CARDER and SONAPRA staff and main members of the GV board) on the marketing day. Special weighing bags are rented out by CARDER for which the GV secretary makes sure every grower pays for according to the quantity he sells etc. The market secretaries (since 1990) have to fill out forms for every grower and for the whole market indicating the quality and quantity sold, all of which are checked by GV secretary. Peasants are later paid on the basis of this form while the revenues will be calculated on the basis of the

cotton weighed at the cotton ginnery. Not only errors are possible in any of these steps, but operations can be delayed for a multitude of good reasons (I was sick, my motor bike was broken, growers did not bring their data to me, every one is ready except such a market and if I do not wait for them they will say I am against them, the CARDER district staff was absent, there a mistake in the calculations and I have to start again, some peasants still have to pay for the weighing bags of last year, I was ready to go and get the revenues but the president and the treasurer were not, my wife/sister/father/children was (were) sick and we had to go to the hospital in Gbomina etc.). From 1992, the GV of Togoudo was selected, as part of an experiment, along with a few others, to transfer all cotton operations from the CARDER to the GV. This entailed that no transaction from the GV to SONAPRA would pass any longer via the CARDER. The GV had therefore to be more precise and better scheduled.

25 Here I leave out all the experiences people formerly had with cooperatives. In fact, the agricultural services had always worked on this basis for the extension of technical packages. Groups of people were supposed to have collective demonstration plots. As I have indicated earlier, most cotton markets started as demonstration groups, with a collective plot of about 40x50 m^2.

26 In fact, around 1986/1987, women's and then men's groups (GF and GRVC: (*Groupements de Femmes, Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative*) mushroomed all over the northern Zou area. They attracted attention when passing through the area, with here and there a bright placard announcing the name of some or other women's group. One interesting aspect of this development was the fact that attempts to put peasants into cooperatives was as old as development intervention itself (see Chapter 3) but they had never been as successful as they seemed at the end of the 1980s when the GRVCs and GF blossomed, five to ten years after the revolutionary government had forcefully tried and failed via CARDER to induce peasant cooperatives from socialist models. The basis for the recent upsurge was, among other reasons, the sort of liberalisation of development intervention that occurred from about 1985, when local and foreign NGOs started promoting various sorts of cooperatives (see Daane and Mongbo 1991). From 1990, at the end of the revolutionary regime, most of these groups had adjusted their generic names to these new developments by skipping the R of *révolutionnaire*.

27 Gaston got this idea from attending the meetings of OJRB *(Organisation de la Jeunesse Révolutionnaire du Bénin)*, a national youth organisation linked to the party, that were chaired by Ali Houdou the Minister of Information, where a few youth production cooperatives were formed in towns and villages. They received massive media coverage (all media then controlled by the state) and some administrative support from local state services. It was the period when Houdou, together with a few other young members of the regime, and as an answer to the growing youth unemployment, began to criticise the corruption and the political and administrative practices within the party and launched a populist movement of 'development from below'. It was a kind of reformative tendency that arose too late or too slowly for the upheavals at end of the 1980s as described in Chapter 3. In the case of Tolidji Gaston in Togoudo, Houdou wrote official letters to the Benin representation of the FAO, the Minister for Rural Development, the head and Gbomina offices of Zou-CARDER, and to the various levels of public administration to request political, technical and administrative support.

28 Each time the group was denied access to the land after at least the land preparation work had already been carried out. In the first case, two hectares of fruit trees donated by CARDER had been planted by the group, with one hectare of yam, while in the second case leguminous trees had been planted. Many people were discouraged by this continual process of restarting and left the group. With all the official letters written by the Minister, the young men had expected some 'project' for their group (some funding that would bring direct material advantages), or at least a food donation from the World Food Programme *(vivres PAM)*. But things did not happen as quickly as they had expected, so they dropped out.

29 The explanation given to Nancy was that there were too many small trees on the land which required preparation work before traction could be used and therefore a special machine was needed, unless extra money was invested in paying for labourers specialised in this work (the Somba).

30 Up to 1993, the equipment had never been used: one animal died in 1991 for lack of attention, and Gaston used the second one during a few months for the transportation of agricultural products from farms to Gbomina, before he left at the end 1992 for the Ivory Coast again.

31 More than 40 women gathered at the beginning. The disagreement was about how to start group activities. Some soya seeds were given to the group at its constitution. According to Sabine and some others, the yield from these first soya seeds should be sold and the revenue used to buy maize, cowpeas and groundnut seeds, which would be planted after group members had cultivated the land themselves. Two other women objected to this saying they preferred every member to contribute 100f each week to buy seeds and pay labourers to plough the land. Some of those who quit told me later that they would have been very happy to subscribe 100f each week to a common pot. They could manage to spend some time every week on the group field, but contributing to pay for labourers was unthinkable for them. Though some added that they might do it if they were sure that the group would recruit them as labourers.

32 One day they argued on the group field about the organisation of the work. The point of view of the treasurer was accepted by the members. Then the president became furious and gave her a bad look. On her way home, the treasurer was bitten by a scorpion and she said it was the president who had turned into this animal to exact revenge.

33 *To wɛ enon to b'ɛnon nyi monto*, a Fon saying that does not translate, which plays on the word *monto* (car), *to* (to arrange) and *mon wɛ to* (the way it has been arranged).

34 This provoked uproar from some of the former members who had been dismissed, especially the former president. They wrote a letter to the RDV to protest and requested that they be taken into account for the distribution. They contended that the donation was for the original group as this had been promised at the very first meeting by the white woman who had arrived, 'and we know that when whites make a promise, within 100 years, they stick to it'.They threatened the group members that if they ever used the stock without them, they would remember their life long that they had eaten something. The other women got afraid of sorcery and solicited the RDV (who was against) to accept that the food allocated be shared with the other women, which was finally done.

35 The *animatrice* who came to the village was the first to launch the idea of a women's group after a meeting and discussions with women on the diet and protein value of soya. The RDV gathered what he thought were the women of the original soya group to launch his own ideas for a group. Some male heads of large households simply gathered their women and relatives (as Ekpemi, the Mayor, and others did), and declared that they were henceforth a group.

36 In fact, the cases of women's groups analyzed by Koning and Speets (*op. cit.*), in Dani, are not very different from the present situation. Here too, the movement was launched by an *animatrice* some years before the RDV activated it here in 1989. After that, Aimée, the woman who acted as the local promotor, was employed as a village *animatrice* for the detection of malnourished children. The new groups formed later, originating from a schism of the group that she had started with the support of the RDV.

10 Reflections on my practical and theoretical explorations into the field of rural development

Introduction

In the course of the field research for this thesis, I under went some particular experiences that led me to conclude that there was a need to fundamentally question the way in which notions such as 'intervention' and 'rural development' had so far been approached by development practitioners and social scientists. My adventure started, not with the Community Development Programme on which the discussion in this book is based but, as I mentioned in the first chapter, with the Research & Development Project (R&D) that was to end in mid-1990, following the decision of the funding agency to stop financing it. I had my research proposal neatly prepared to make a farming systems analysis and to look at formal and informal cooperation between researchers, extensionists and peasants geared to developing technologies to improve agricultural production at farm level. The head staff of the project were struggling with field staff and the funding agency to get field activities and funding going, while reassuring me that the project would last at least a further two years. In fact, while most of the discussions I was having with the staff were on farm production, farming constraints and agricultural technology, my very presence was used by head staff as a bargaining card to calm field staff, who were becoming more and more recalcitrant, and at the same time to convince the funding agency to proceed with the funding of the project.

In the meantime, CARDER staff members who were not concerned with the R&D project, appeared uninterested in discussing agricultural production matters. They were anxious about the ending of their project with the World Bank, not because it would hamper agricultural production for peasants, whom they generally treated as ignorant or at least difficult to deal with, but because the ending of this project would put a stop to the flow of the 'working means' vital for their own life projects. In the villages, and from my first contacts and discussions with cotton growers, I thought a peasant 'revolution' was soon to erupt. Peasants seemed to be upset and wanted rid of the exploitative and cheating practices of field agents. But I became confused when I noticed that in their normal social interactions, agents and peasants apparently lived on good terms. These and similar experiences drew my attention to the ways both agents *and* villagers dealt with intervention, and not just to what they stated about it. I went through a number of other experiences that were surprising for me which I have discussed in this book, but here in the concluding chapter I mention only a few in order to clarify the basis of my argument.

I then review how I organised the book in order to make the argument. Finally, I explore some questions about the 'rurality' of rural development intervention, conceptualised in this book as a field of social interaction. But before examining these issues, I need some common ground of agreement with the reader. My point is that I did not limit myself to the accounts people gave of these situations or to what they claimed to have done or not done, but derived my material instead from first-hand experiences, undergone in close contact with the people to whom I refer, who sometimes also used me as an accomplice to their strategies.

The 'intervened' intervening over the 'intervenors'

Men and women, whom local classification would not rank low on the socio-economic ladder, were presented by village agents to externals as the poorest, and encouraged to come together to form groups (so-called cooperative or pre-cooperative groups), in order supposedly to improve their living conditions by working together. A group of ten or more members would then mostly start collective farming, or, less commonly, other activities that were not usually any more substantial and often did not even earn as much as one or two of them already did in their private businesses. However, they would hope that because they had formed a group, 'something good would come to them from outside'.

Another experience that definitely raised doubts as to the relevance of current approaches was my encounter with the Community Development Programme. After dropping my original research proposal with the collapse of the Research & Development project, and while looking for another research focus relevant to my paradigmatic orientation, I discovered that no one discussed on-going CARDER activities with, mentioned the Community Development Programme. They were more interested in national political events, in their worries about the dying project, and in local gossip about interpersonal relations and resource allocations within CARDER. It was only after an incidental meeting with the young men of the programme, and getting to know more of it from Ekanyé, that I became excited and surprised about it. Excited because I thought I had finally found a good ground where the contexts and happenings of the project (which I expected to be many) would be suitable for actor-oriented research and for understanding the discrepancies of views and interests among people who were supposed to have common goals. I was moreover surprised that nobody in the CARDER had mentioned that this programme was running. After all, its stated objective of turning our dying villages into dynamic places, was, I had supposed, the *raison d'être* of CARDER and its agents.

Within the Community Development Programme, I came across other absurdities that raised, even greater, my surprise. One of these concerned the involvement of the RDVs in the village. As I discussed in Chapter 5, after they had dropped their mask of being enthusiastic village dynamisers, I soon realised, interacting with Asuka, Gbédjémin, Tinguédjo, Aniδie and others that these people were more interested in their own careers and life projects than in anything else. They questioned their presence in the village, more from the point of view of whether it fitted

in with their own needs than for making village life more dynamic. Preoccupations with career and material achievements play an important role in the everyday interactions of CARDER agents, in a general culture of 'tripping up' and politicking in order to seize positions, and where kicking someone else out (as we saw with Ekanyé and Cewɛ) is taken for granted. And though most RDVs considered Ekanyé more suitable for monitoring the programme, they felt their material preoccupations to be safer in the hands of Cewɛ. But their enthusiasm was not just a mask. They did try, each in his own way, to immerse themselves in village life and to engage with 'development activities'. When they managed to find their ways into the village scene, getting involved in local conflicts, we have seen, especially in Chapter 9 from the case of Asuka in Togoudo, that they had to face adversity from both within and outside the village. Baba, supported by some persons within the village and in CARDER, insidiously tried to oppose the ideas of the RDV for 'building the village', not because Baba was convinced of any irrelevance of the views of Asuka, nor that he had better alternatives to suggest, but because this intruding of Asuka in the affairs of the GV, the cotton growers' association, greatly disturbed his established management style, which was for his profit and that of his network, but also for their reputation in the village scene. When he and his followers struck on the idea of allocating credit to cotton growers to meet their demands for wage labour at critical periods, this more to reduce the RDV's room for manoeuvre than to solve peasant problems, even though the measure served both purposes in the end. Nevertheless, despite these several different preoccupations and fights within CARDER and the village, and between Asuka and the other stakeholders in Togoudo, these people find the ways to present a coherent and attractive picture of CARDER, of the Community Development Programme and of a dynamic Togoudo village to externals.

The argument of the book and its organisation

On the dismembering of the programme and on the intervened becoming intervenors

In my struggle to make sense of these processes, I argue in the book that the first step to be taken is to free the notions of 'intervention', 'intervenors' and 'intervened' from the static and preset definitions that we generally imply when using them. Indeed, by ignoring processes occurring around development programmes or considering them as 'side effects', by checking project outcomes against formulated goals, and by struggling to devise from such a point of view ways of improving the living conditions of the 'intervened', the 'intervenors' choose or fail to see the alternative ways in which the intervened improve their living conditions and work out their own ways for achieving what they define as 'rural development'. Moreover, if one sticks to the standpoint of comparing project outcomes against formulated goals, one cannot understand the processes through which the discourses and practices of rural development are reproduced at local level and how, in turn, the intervened become intervenors, taking the initiatives of intervention into their own hands, and thus largely deciding on the orientation of affairs within the intervention

context, even if they partly utilise the images made by the intervenors of themselves and their institutions.

Illustrations of this argument in Chapter 9 are, for example, how Asuka, arriving in Togoudo with a mission to make village life more dynamic, became embroiled in local relationships and interests through with which he managed to negotiate the insertion of the programme into the village, and yet keep his own identity as a CARDER agent, specialist on cooperative matters, orthodox christian, and 'forceful man'. He also pushed through some personal projects such as implementing the cooperative plan he had developed during his Master's training, successfully withstanding the challenge from within the GV, and from Gaston and the General Director of CARDER. Similar processes, with different outcomes, occur in other villages of the programme, where the instructions of the General Director and the standard development plan written for the villages take various concrete shapes, depending on the battlegrounds in the village and the negotiating capacities of the RDVs – this, despite the regular monitoring visits and quarterly meetings with head staff.

At the group level, Ekpemi succeeded in getting the RDV, the C/PACA, the RDR and other CARDER staff enroled in his idea about *GRVC familial* – despite the fact the RDV and the C/PACA usually disagreed about cooperative matters – which resulted in his obtaining the ox-plough technology which he had coveted as a solution to his labour management problems. Within the women's groups, as with Ekpemi, the cooperative shape of the groups was meant to conform to formal prescriptions and external standards. However, internally the groups operated as specific categories of individuals, selectively recruited, who went on negotiating and fighting for their own subgroup interests in so far as these could best be served within the cooperative framework. Asuka was opposed to Ekpemi's idea of making a family cooperative, as he was to the idea of supporting Adjikɛ's group to apply for a cassava processing unit before the women had committed themselves to cassava farming. But, in the end, he let himself be convinced by the fact that, as Ekpemi said, when outsiders arrive to visit a GRVC, they do not ask for the identity cards of members. With this idea of deceiving the externals, put to him by Ikpemi – assuming of course that it had not occurred to him before – he then encouraged Adjikɛ's group to present the trial plot of the IITA cassava project as their own farm, provided that they began immediately afterwards on their own farms, which they did only after the RDV left the village in 1993.

Allowing themselves to be enroled, as we see them doing here, does not mean that field staff are passive and easily manipulated. Like the actors with whom they are engaged in these adventures, they have their own interests, partly constructed in the heat of the action (largely discussed in Chapter 9), as a result of the encounters of their life-worlds and expectations (discussed in Chapter 5) with those of other people (detailed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8), whose interests they might also promote. Asuka found himself some challenges: for example, with Baba and his CARDER network, Gaston, and even the women who dropped out of the group, about whom he would then swear: 'they will soon regret it. When things start doing well for the group (i.e. there is help from outside), they will want to come back, but then, they will not be accepted'. Another important reason why village agents were strategi-

cally interested in these ventures and often actively contributed to them, was that these group initiatives were later rhetorically organised by the RDVs into some sort of attractive development discourse to present at the quarterly meetings, but, most importantly, to visitors coming to the village, which then produced a progressive image of the village, showing it to have a dynamic population and a dynamic RDV. On the other hand, although the General Director might scold the RDVs at the quarterly meetings, requesting clear and marketable projects for the funding agencies, and although the other head staff of the programme (mainly the DSEI and Cewɛ) might criticise and make suggestions in order to stamp their authority on the matter, they would also later appropriate these achievements and use them as indicators of how the CARDER was now engaged in an exciting new type of participatory intervention. In these insidious and barely perceptible ways, the small actions and initiatives taken by people at village level – normally considered the 'intervened' – affect the image that intervenors produce of themselves and of the intervention institution.

Such a turning upside down of intervention logic not only occurs in relations between villages and external agencies. It starts from the CARDER head office with the digestion of the policy orientation of the Minister, as I discussed in the first part of Chapter 9. In this instance, one can consider the Ministry and Ministerial order as the intervening side and the CARDER agents as the intervened. Here, I have shown how the policy orientation became an asset for, and also a source of, the coalitions and conflicts that emerged within CARDER, from which new and changing informal organisational charts were produced, together with new or renewed sub-groups and leadership roles, that were more operational in the implementation of the programme than in the official plan. Even the formal arrangements themselves were the product of bargaining that went beyond technical considerations. These processes were debated in Chapters 5 and 9 and concerned the bargaining and politicking that went on within the CARDER around the programme, processes in which not only technical and hierarchical positions counted but also heteroclitic parameters since they were decisive in the operational management of CARDER, though having nothing or very little to do with what is usually presented in official settings. These parameters concerned, for example, regional origin, ethnic or religion membership, family and/or patron-client relationships within the CARDER, but also with Ministers or other individuals external to CARDER, personal charisma, ambitions, and witchcraft, whereby the Director's best allies were no longer their technical staff, but rather the drivers, night watchmen or village agents working in remote villages who become important resource persons in decisions on technical/professional matters. It was by combining all these factors, along with the elements of existing technical and intervention culture, that CARDER staff transformed the policy orientation of the Minister, giving it their own historical imprint, but chiefly, turning it into manageable pieces appropriated in the various interstices of CARDER's everyday social and administrative reality. At the same time, they developed a written and spoken discourse on the programme through which the institution was given legitimacy to integrate the arenas of the 'new', 'fashionable' participatory rhetoric of development intervention.

On differential life-worlds and different arenas and negotiating grounds of development intervention

The differential processes of appropriation and dismembering of the Community Development Programme, in both village and CARDER contexts, varied according to the life-worlds and future perspectives of the stakeholders in the various encounters where the programme or elements of it were dealt with. Chapter 4 looked at the historical emergence of the frame of development intervention in Benin that gave us a picture of the shared stock of experiences, norms and values on which bureaucrats as well as villagers draw in their interactions with each other in matters of development intervention. The life-worlds within each social entity which, following Arce (1993), I call 'epistemological communities', were dealt with in several chapters. In Chapter 5, I problematised the link between state and state agents using an illustration of the selective, opportunistic, and some times involuntary use of state power by state agents. Then the social worlds behind and beyond particular agents were discussed, drawing upon four locally defined categories of agents. The nature of their involvement in the programme appeared to be more linked to these worlds than to their ideological or philosophical convictions about the development of others, and how to go about it. The discussions in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 give us a larger view on the material and cultural background resources of the different categories of actors operating at village level. Apart from clarifying the wide variety of stakes and preoccupations that exist in the village and the dynamic ways in which 'rural development' is daily operationalised, the ethnography reveals that similar processes and rationales of involvement exist where villagers have been in contact with or are aware of the existence of elements of the programme or some local discursive and practical operationalisation of it. In other words, before people *actively* reach out to interact with others and seek consensus with them on various aspects of the programme, they need first to agree among themselves, to appropriate part of the programme as meaningful to their own life trajectories. I here stress the active out-reaching of actors, to remind us, as I did in Chapter 9 where we identified contrasting epistemological communities at the crossroads of the Community Development programme, that this appraisal of the instrumental value of the programme to individual life trajectories does not take place outside the interaction grounds and arenas of everyday life, but in action contexts where some involvement has already started.

It appears therefore that the grounds and arenas are many (even exponential if one imagines the result one might obtain from matrix of the various preoccupations of the different categories of stakeholders), on which bits of a project like the Community Development Programme are dealt with and reshaped in terms of various sorts of social interactions. Clearly, at the crossroads of planned development and everyday realities, there exist wide discrepancies between the constructions that intervenors make of clients' worlds and the actual realities of these worlds. The poverty of plans is further revealed when one compares the actions and dispositions presented and argued for, with the everyday preoccupations and sorrows of the various actors involved, from villagers to intervention officers, not forgetting of course the possible intrusion of social researchers. These various actors give to

development intervention dimensions that are far beyond the conceptual frameworks of designers. Hence, not only is it very hazardous, with the methodological means at our disposal at present, to speak of project failure (see Long and van der Ploeg 1988), but furthermore, the programme itself loses its substance, even its existence in the minds of the people dealing with or using pieces of it in their everyday lives. Indeed, life goes on, and pieces of the programme become a part of life's on-going social interactions and routines. Actors do not keep permanently present in their consciousness the material existence of the plan as a whole, but only when material or symbolic up-dating takes place to keep it alive (e.g. seminars and other public rituals of the sort, missions, official documents circulated, incentives, and per diems). In the villages, the presence of the RDVs keeps people aware of the programme. Nevertheless, new issues and processes that have emerged from the operation of the programme are consciously separated by social actors as having nothing to do the programme per se. In this way, even Asuka spontaneously declared at the beginning that the credit operation launched opportunistically by Baba and his friends from the GV revenue had nothing to do with the spirit of his programme, though he might later try to appropriate it. In fact within the village, specific organisational developments in the GV, the efforts to turn cotton markets, into credit groups, the active use of so-called GRVCs and women's groups to try to solve labour and starting fund problems in farming and in food processing – and petty trade activities involving externally-oriented, self-achievement strategies – they are all relatively autonomous grounds and arenas of the everyday ordinary definitions people impute to rural development. In contrast, within CARDER these definitions derive from debates on positions and prerogatives, on the hierarchical relations between field agents and head staff, on CARDER's resource allocations, intervention approaches; and social interactions with the heteroclitic parameters previously mentioned. Pieces of the programme grafted onto these grounds and arenas are accrued with elements from previous interventions and experiences, and thus neutralise the actual programme, which then has a good chance of getting lost. While the compilation derived from this process can be turned into an intervention devise by which the intervened (be they within CARDER or in the villages) attempt to influence the intervenor, with success as in the case of Ekpemi, but also for Tinkpo (on group experiences of farmers) and Adjikɛ, as president of her group with their shared experiences in cassava processing in Ghana.

It is of crucial importance to learn from all this that our vision of development intervention needs to be turned upside down. Despite the pre-formed development plans, the quarterly instructions of the General Director, and the frequent visits of Cewɛ, can we really maintain that Asuka and other RDVs are intervening in populations who might then cope with the intervention? Where are they intervening, and concerning what? Agricultural matters, cooperatives, labour problems, or family relations? What share does Asuka have in the fact that Sabine, after struggling for two years to win the grain mill for her group from which she might expect sustainable solutions to her credit problems, then decides that her life choice is to move with the school master into an uncertain world because, as she puts it, she too wanted to enjoy the pleasure of saying 'I don't want to cook for him today.'? I have argued that the way to make coherent sense of these multiple stakes

and preoccupations is to conceptualise development intervention as generating a social field made up of a multiplicity of interests, values and strategic actions.

On development intervention as generating a field of social interaction

This is the central core of the argument in this book, which I stated at the outset. It is through putting into practice 'intervention', composed of various interests and normative conceptions of well-being in rural areas called 'rural development', that a whole specific and specialised voluntary sphere or domain of human activity is generated and continuously reproduced. This is what I call *the field of rural development.*

I discussed the various theoretical corners of this conceptualisation in Chapter 2, including the rhetorical and practical reproduction of the field, through a discussion of one concrete happening of the Community Development Programme, i.e. a general assembly of the cotton growers' organisation. I argue in Chapter 3 that the Community Development Programme was a political innovation in the field of rural development. Its rationale must be searched for in the economic and political changes at national and village levels from which it emerged. These developments are rooted in the pre-colonial and colonial history of Benin. The general assembly of the cotton growers' organisation was only significant in relation to the history of development intervention in Benin and in most of the former French colonies of West Africa. Organising the theoretical debates on the field of rural development in this way announced the methodological thread that runs throughout the book. Namely the use of 'microcosms', such as development encounters in the village and government offices, and in the everyday routines in professional, public and private lives, to reveal various 'macro' dimensions of development intervention and social change.

The history of the emergence of the frame of development intervention in Benin was examined in Chapter 4, while the actors, the culture and the language of development intervention were mainly discussed in Chapters 5 and 2, and implicitly in Chapter 9. The settings for my exploration of the field of rural development (the Community Development Programme and the village settings) were outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, and further elaborated in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, which included details on the village settlement process, the social attributes of the inhabitants and the many stakes generated from the interactions between the various groups present and with the state and external bodies. The systematic depiction of the productive life of the village (Chapter 7) revealed the diversified and dynamic nature of the local economy, while discussions in Chapter 8 highlighted the diversity of the living conditions of individuals and groups in the village and of the different ways in which people dealt with survival, self-achievement and well-being. What these discussions together reveal, as I have already pointed out in this concluding chapter, is how development intervention (in it intentions and operational design and implementation) distantiates itself from the life circumstances and everyday livelihoods and strategies of villagers and intervention staff. The analysis of the various gaps or discrepancies identified at the various social junctures in the implementation process, allows us to understand that that gaps are an integral part of the existence

and the functioning of the field of rural development. Attempts to bridge such gaps indicate some misunderstanding of the logic of the field, or a desire on the part of the potential gap-bridger, whether development worker, social scientist or whoever, to enter the field of rural development as a social actor, as an integral part of the game, and stakeholder.

A footnote on the 'rurality' of the field of rural development

Before closing, I would like to recall a point I raised at the beginning; namely, that I do not feel comfortable with the rural qualification of the social field generated in the process of rural development intervention since 'rural' carries an 'agrarian' connotation, and sometimes a rural/urban opposition. There are two reasons for my dissatisfaction: one relates to the enormous self-evident changes that have occurred to date in the socio-economic organisation of rural life; and the second concerns the rationale for my conceptualisation of the field of social interaction.

From the case of Togoudo, we see that despite the dynamism of agriculture and related activities, and the fact that those involved in non-agricultural activities barely manage unless their activities are backed up by agriculture, nowadays the improvement of individual and collective living conditions is significantly linked to the development of activities that are not strictly speaking rural/agricultural in character. Nor are rural households confined to or survive primarily on rurally-generated resources. This is clearly evident from the survey data presented in Chapter 7, and indeed is incorporated into local ideologies on self-achievement, well-being and development, to such an extent that people who have no activity other than agriculture or at least no source of income external to agriculture (even cash occasionally from relatives living in town) are not considered to be completely 'out of water'. The various survival and self-achievement strategies delineated in Chapter 8 show that, whatever their rank on the emic socio-economic scale, and whatever their gender, living in rural areas implies the management of close and distant urban family and working relations, similar to what one might expect in urban and suburban areas. On the other hand, although they continue to be considered villages from an administrative point of view, settlements such as Togoudo, with their considerable population and economic activities have become urbanised, at least in the locally admitted sense of the term.

The general point I am making is that there is a need for social scientists concerned with rural intervention issues to find durable grounds for the practice of their profession on designations other than simply the 'rural'. In the African context, a recent study of the African Development Bank records that during the last 30 years urban population in Africa has shifted from 14 to 40 percent, and that by the year 2020, the urban population is projected to have increased to 60 percent of the total population, without this precipitating any particular additional disasters (BAD 1994). Development intervention might then become, as is already evident, more oriented towards the suburban slums that have resulted from this rapid increase of the urban population. But likewise it would not be appropriate or very innovative for social scientists to substitute a 'sociology of urban or suburban

development' for that of 'the rural', especially since I would argue that most of the processes that we are now documenting from intervention contexts in rural areas are broadly similar to those occurring in urban settings.

When one approaches the realities of development intervention from the perspective of a field of social interaction, it appears even more inconsistent to use the label 'rural'. The various physical and symbolic grounds and arenas I have referred to throughout this book, and that are relevant to a comprehensive study of intervention situations, do not operate entirely in rural settings though they might analytically be related to interventions in rural areas. Moreover I have argued that in their daily interactions over the bits and pieces of an intervention programme actors do not necessarily have to have the reality of the programme in question present in front of them. Indeed, there is nothing specifically rural about the bargaining, negotiations and struggles in which the actors are engaged in the particular physical and symbolic locations described in this book. Even those interactions taking place in rural areas and on agrarian issues incorporate macro-political and economic realities with which actors in other settings also have to deal. In fact, as I have tried to argue throughout, these grounds and arenas are 'micro-cosms' where, for various sakes and stakes, social actors process, generate or reproduce larger and more 'macro' phenomena, whether they operate with or in rural or urban assets or settings, or, as is frequently the case, they become inextricably mixed. If the social sciences have any need at all to segment development studies (in order to throw light on particular historical, economic, or political dimensions), then the differentiation between 'local' and 'global' might be a better alternative to rural and non-rural, especially since, as I hope to have shown in this book, there is no simple determinism between the global and the local.

But here I must bring to an end the argument and close the book. Fortunately the rhetorical construction and deconstruction of social scientists' discourses, especially on issues concerning development intervention – a favourite battleground being in the *field of (rural) development* – carries with it certain collective stakes, so I leave it to the readers and other scholar/stakeholders to take up the baton.

Appendix
The National Conference in Benin: the peaceful shift from the Revolutionary Regime to the *Renouveau Démocratique*

(A short note)

The National Conference: its initiation and preparation

On the 6th and 7th December 1989, the three main bodies of the so-called Marxist-Leninist single-party regime (the Central Committee of the Party, the Government and the Parliament) held a joint meeting, the main objective of which was to examine the very critical political, economic and social situation of the country and the government, and to take measures to institute change. The formal economic apparatus (e.g. the banks, the commercial enterprises, the foreign exchange system) had had reached total bankruptcy. In order to reduce the salary load on its budget, the government had decided, in 1985-1986, to stop recruitment of university graduates but yet was not able (in 1987), to pay the salary of civil servants regularly – there were delays amounting to between five and eight months. This led to a series of strikes by civil servants and students who blocked the functioning of the state apparatus. The mounting crisis was evident in both towns and villages. From the beginning of 1989, the country was thrown into general confusion and turmoil with frequent demonstrations and riots, calling for the dismissal of the President and the Government. There was a widespread sense of the destruction of state authority in most services, in the villages as well as in the army. Indeed, several cases like that of Togoudo were reported where local state authorities accused of corruption were forced to resign; and many attempts at a coup d'Etat were reported.[1] For the Government and its secret police, most of these pressures (from students, civil servants, army, and some villages) were the result of the infiltration of the PCD, whose members were subjected to strong repression.

But the difficulties the government faced did not originate only from within the country. There were also strong, though less visible pressures, from exiled political groups, either directly or via the IMF, the World Bank and some western diplomatic representations in Benin. For the members of the three main bodies of the single-party regime who gathered at the meeting of the 6th and 7th December 1989, it was clear that a breakthrough was urgently needed. This provoked the most spectacular metamorphosis ever witnessed in Benin: those who had adopted intensive use of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric for more than 15 years now claimed to be the artisans of a pluralist democracy. And in final official statement of the Party-Parliament-Government joint session, it was declared that:

> *'The President of the Republic, Head of State, will convene during the first trimester of 1990, a national conference gathering the 'authentic representatives of all the living*

> *forces' of the nation, no matter which 'political side' they belong to, so that they can contribute to the emergence of a 'democratic renewal' and to the development of a healthy new political ambience in our Country.'*[2]

It was also decided that Marxism-Leninism would no longer be the state political ideology and that the PRPB *(Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin)* would stop playing a leading role in national and state affairs. The Government was requested to work towards a pluralist democracy that would allow for open political participation and enlist all potential energies for joint actions against the economic crisis. There was no doubt that the economic, social and political situations had reached a critical stage, forcing the regime (with pressure from the IMF and the World Bank) to make a complete change in the political system. Otherwise, one could hardly believe that a joint session of the three main bodies of the political regime would proclaim an end of Marxism-Leninism, their *raison d'être* and the cornerstone of their whole political order. But, in reality, before the open crisis of 1988 and 1989, not much was left of the so-called socialist construction apart from the strongly-rooted interests of political and economic groups involved one way or another in the regime. Populist socialist types of action were halted in the early eighties: there was a drastic reduction from 1982 in the number of state-owned companies and an end to the recruitment of university graduates in 1986; then, in 1975, and educational reform was launched that resulted, in 1982, in the attempt break away from the French elitist and urban-based system. By 1985, the phrase 'The Party leads the State' *(le Parti dirige l'Etat)*, which suggests that major decisions are to be taken by the Party and implemented by the Government, was no more than pure discourse. Most of the people hanging on to positions in the party were apparently more interested in the privileges attached to them (i.e. social status, housing, cars, easy and uncontrolled access to public patrimonies) than in any ideological conviction. Major decisions on internal and external affairs (including major appointments) were taken by the President assisted by a changing entourage (not necessarily recruited within the Polit Bureau of the Party, nor always within the Party), and supported by his magico-religious secret police.[3] As reported by *Jeune Afrique n° 1591*, the very idea of the conference came during a tête-à-tête between the President and Robert Dossou, the newly appointed Minister of Planning, who was not even member of the Party.

In fact, when taking the decision to call a national conference, the participants to the joint Government-Party-Parliament session did not really intend to hand political power over to other groups. At best some factions within the actual regime would be evicted, whilst others would improve their positions and 'new men' would come in.[4] But they knew that they had their backs against the wall: big mobs in the street, an empty treasury and pressures from outside. There was not much else they could do than try to make this gesture aimed at temporarily calming the situation, and then hope that in the meantime, they could play off different forces against each other and make them co-responsible for the unpopular economic decisions they were forced by the IMF and the World Bank to take before loans or any other financial facilities could be made available to the Government.[5] However the regime was already weakened by its internal contradictions, with factions fighting each

other. In such circumstances, one can understand that, although they participated in taking or validating the decision for the conference, they soon lost control over its organization, while both initiators and organizers failed to keep control over the actual proceedings of the meeting.[6]

The actual conference and the major decisions: a total shift

The conference took place from the 19th to the 28th February 1990 with 488 participants from various social sectors: farmers, students, representatives of trade unions, local organisations, civil servants, NGOs and so-called *sensibilités politiques*.[7] Others invited were the Beninese from the 'diaspora' – so-called important personalities, i.e. people who held important national or international positions (all the former Presidents of Dahomey,[8] former high officials in the World Bank, the FAO, ILO, UN, IFAD). In addition, the Christian Churches, the Muslims and the local religions were represented. During the previous 15 to 20 months, the Catholic Church had contributed to the political debates mainly through official published statements from the Bishops. One of the representatives of the Catholic Church at the National Conference was Mgr. Isidore de Souza, the Bishop of Cotonou, who turned out to be the main mediator of the whole drama. The Conference had appointed him Chairman and most people involved, or who had followed the whole process, agree that he played the determinant role in making the peaceful changes possible.

Very soon, the discussions turned to the legal status of the conference and the fate of its decisions. The consequences of the end of Marxist-Leninist ideology on the Constitution and for all the institutions deriving from it (the Parliament, the Government and so forth) were critically analyzed. The conclusions reached that, since it had been decided to end the Marxist-Leninist ideology, the joint session of the 6th and 7th December 1989 had created a constitutional vacuum, making the Parliament and the Government illegal. Indeed, many articles in the Constitution referred to 'Marxism-Leninism' as the central organizing principle of both Parliament and Government. As 'Marxism-Leninism' was abolished, neither the Parliament, nor the Government could be considered as having legal status any more. Therefore, the only legal political structure existing at the time was the Conference, whose participants were *authentic representatives* of the population. On the basis of this analysis, the participants proclaimed that the Conference was sovereign and that all its decisions were therefore to be assimilated to law.[9] Except for the President, who would remain Head of State (but no longer Head of the Government, nor Minister of Defense as he had been since 1972), the Conference created transitory institutions that would operate until the adoption of a new Constitution as the institutional basis for a new Republic. Nicephore Soglo, a former World Bank high official, was nominated Prime Minister and was mandated to form a transitory Government that would be accountable to a transitory Parliament (the HCR, High Council of State), composed of one representative of each province, the former Beninese Presidents, the Presidents of the various working panels of the conference and the board of the conference. The Chairperson of the Conference, Bishop Isidore de Souza, was appointed Chairman of the HCR. A special resolution was taken in regard to the education system for an urgent reopening of the schools and universities after two

successive years of being declared invalid. Another recommendation of the Conference concerned public accountability and a parsimonious management of national assets *(Moralisation de la vie publique).*

Within ten days, the 488 participants to the conference, supported by on-going street demonstrations, the media[10] and encouraging of messages from all over the world, had completed a radical change in the political regime without any bloodshed. Only the President of the Republic escaped the tidal wave, which was interpreted as a necessary concession for preserving peace in the country, since the President still enjoyed loyalty of the BGP, the best equipped body of the army. The transitory institutions were given the mandate to install all the institutions of the new Republic (Constitution, Parliament, Presidential elections, and Government) within one year (see ONEPI 1990, for the main reports of the conference). The new political discourse, whose key words were *Renouveau Démocratique, Transparence,* that were invented (or adopted) by the joint session of the meetings of the 6th and 7th December 1989 of the former regime, thus emerged definitely, while its initiators were politically evicted, at least temporally.

Notes

1 Some high ranking military were arrested and the major part of the army was disarmed, except for the personal guard of the President *BGP (Bataillon de la Garde Présidentielle)* This section of the army received special treatment, including occasional distribution of food products. People refered to the BGP as 'an army within the army'.

2 'Le Président de la République, chef de l'Etat convoquera au cours du premier trimestre de l'année 1990, une conférence nationale regroupant les *représentants authentiques* de *toutes les forces vives* de la nation, quelles que soient leurs *sensibilités politiques,* afin qu'ils apportent leurs contributions dans l'avènement d'un *renouveau démocratique* et au développement d'une saine ambiance politique nouvelle dans notre Pays'. A few weeks before this meeting of the regime, a conference of Beninese expatriate political and intellectual elites took place in Versailles in France and had suggested exactly this way out. But one should not maintain that the actual decision of the regime was a simple acceptance of the 'Versailles suggestion'. In itself, the idea of a national conference was not new. In 1979, a conference was initiated by the President that was called the *Conférence Nationale des Cadres.* The objective then was to give the floor to the 'cadres' for an open criticism of the actions of the Party and the Government, since most of these 'cadres' refused to adhere to the Party. But the situation at the end of 1989 was far more critical than that of 1979. The symbolic reference used by the President for the gathering of 1990 was that used by King Ghezo of the Danxomean Kingdom (1818-1858) – the symbol of the holed jar – at a moment of his reign when the economic and political situation was also very critical. King Ghezo invited all the sons of the country to come and block up the holes in the jar with their fingers, and by so doing they would save the nation: a call for unity (see *Jeune Afrique, n° 1591*).

3 In Benin, there seems to exist a permanent link between political power and magico-religious power. According to Elwert-Krestschmer (1995), 'vodoun institutions are a centres of local power whose power potential one needs to control, oppress, repress or co-opt if one wants to get rooted, at local level as a state central power'. With Kérékou's regime, there is evidence that the massive anti-sorcery campaign of the mid-seventies provoked better integration of political and magico-religious actors, rather than dividing them. In the early eighties (and although vodoun cults had been forbidden from 1975 and without passing any official act to rrevoke the law) Kérékou used to appear in official public ceremonies with spiritual leaders of local religions, the latter exhibiting symbols of their power (snakes and other artifices). In the meantime, one man managed to reach the highest level of confidence with the President

of the Republic as his magico-religious protector but political adviser. This was Mohamed Cissé (from Mali) who even played determining roles in the appointment and dismissal of Ministers and heads of state enterprises. The editions of the journal *Africa Confidential* of 5th February 1988 (vol 29 n° 3) in fact refer to him as the Minister in charge of the Interior, Security and Territorial Administration from the end of November 1987, which was not officially the case but it at least indicates the important role this man acquired in Benin public affairs.

4 The so-called single party system was by no means a common-purpose or a common-interest political system. Different conflicting interest groups confronted each other right from the start. The mass organs of the Party: the trade unions (UNSTB), the youth association (OJRB, built onto the previous COJ), the women organisation (OFRB, previously COF), the committees for the defense of the revolution (CDR), the revolutionary action groups (GAR) were now and then used by their leaders as pressure groups and political leverage to gain power within the system. Interest groups and ideological trends were also organised around some key personages of the regime. Even though the President of the Republic, with his strong magico-religious and well armed secret police had almost an exclusive hand over important decisions (especially from the mid-eighties), he mostly had to take into account the power balance among the various factions, as well as other considerations such as ethnic and regional balance, commercial lobbies, and major religious groups (vodoun, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim).

5 The measures in the Benin case were not different from the well known remedies proposed by the IMF in those situations. They included the privatisation of most state-owned companies and banks (which of course involves loss of jobs), the reduction by up to 30 per cent of the size of the 45,000 state staff within 5 years, together with a termination (after 1986) of staff recruitment. The ultimate goal was that the state would keep its expenses within the limits of its declining earnings, and pay back the debt of FCFA 600 billion or US$ 2.4 billion.

6 In the report of the joint Party-Parliament-Government session, it was stated that *The Head of State will convene a National Conference.* This meant that full power was given to the President for the organisation of the conference, but it also shows the distrust of the President towards the different factions, and his will to move away from them and make the process of the conference credible for the various forces fighting the regime. The President appointed a commission at the head of which was Robert Dossou, Minister of Planning, a lawyer, university intellectual (former Dean of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Politics) who joined the Government only in 1987. He was in charge of the organisation of the *'Conférence des Cadres'* in 1979. He is an outstanding political personality. He was President of the FEANF, the Federation of African Students in France, and an active militant with Kwame Nkruma in the Pan-Africanist movement (see Jeune Afrique n° 1591). The President delegated his full power to the commission and to its head to decide on who would be invited and who would not, provided that the seats were fairly distributed among all the *forces vives*, so that the conference would create room for fair democratic discussions. Apparently, the President had lost confidence in his traditional partners and did not want them to dominate the debates at the Conference. Such an attitude cut the grass from under the feet of the leading figures of the regime who, though they tried, were unable to exert any manipulation over the process of seat allocation to potential participants.

7 This was the word used in place of 'political parties' and covered the state party as well as all groups who proclaimed themselves to have a political position, provided they handed in an analytical document on the state of affairs in the country and how this could be improved. There were 51 *'sensibilités politiques'* represented at the conference though it should be mentioned that the Communist Party of Dahomey refused to take part in the Conference. This Party was the only well structured political group that had put the Regime into serious difficulties within the country for more than a decade. The Party has been subjected to brutal repression from the police. Many PCD members or sympathisers were jailed, tortured and killed. It is acknowledged by many political actors outside the PCD that, without the perspicacious actions of this party, the changes experienced through the National Conference could not have taken place, at least not at that moment. It seems that the PCD would have preferred a Maoist-type of popular armed unrest that would lead to a spectacular overthrow of the Regime, as happened in Togoudo and in other villages. According to some PCD members, the idea of the Conference was a

treachery. For them, 'It was an invention of reactionary forces aimed at creating an illusion to the people, especially for the petit bourgeois, who, by nature, preferred *ad hoc* and illusive arrangements than radical and more effective solutions'.

8 Dahomey is the former name of Benin, given after the Danxomean kingdom that fought against French colonisation. The name was changed by the socialist regime in 1975.

9 Many members of Kérékou's regime argued against such a reading of the Constitution with regards to the decision to end the 'Marxism-Leninism' doctrine. Nevertheless, they did not manage to develop any coherent strategy against the other conference participants. As some influential party member, who took part in the meeting, later confessed, 'not only was the group was in a minority, but it was already dismantled, even before the conference started'.

10 The conference was broadcast live by the state radio and television. Also during the conference, many debates were organised on television on various topics (e.g. human rights, democracy and development), at which different people debated their views.

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Abbreviations

AKIS	: Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems
ANR	: Assemblée Nationale Révolutionnaire
AVA	: Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole
CA	: Conseil d'Administration
CAETS	: Coopérative Agricole Expérimentale de Type Socialiste
CARDER	: Centre d'Action Régional pour le Développement Rural
CCCE/CFD	: Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique, now Caisse Française de Développement
CDR	: Comité de Défense de la Révolution
CEAP	: Comité d'Etat d'Administration de la Province
CFDT	: Compagnie Française pour le Développement des Textiles
COF	: Comité d'Organisation des Femmes
COJ	: Comité d'Organisation des Jeunes
C/PACA	: Chef Poste Action Coopérative et Alphabétisation
CRAD	: Comité Révolutionnaire d'Administration du District
CRL	: Comité Révolutionnaire Local
C/SS	: Chef Sous-Secteur
DRA	: Direction de la Recherche Agronomique
FAC	: Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération
FAIB	: Fonds d'Aide aux Initiatives de Base
FAO	: United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation
FASC	: Fonds d'Aide et de Soutien aux Coopératives
FCFA	: Franc
GAR	: Groupe d'Action Révolutionnaire
GRVC	: Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative
GTZ	: Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
GV	: Groupement Villageois
HCR	: Haut Conseil de la République
IFAD	: International Fond for Agricultural Development
ILO	: International Labour Organisation
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
MAKS	: Management of Agricultural Knowledge System
NGO	: Non Governmental Organisation
ODIZ	: Opération de Développement Rural Intégré du Zou
OFRB	: Organisation des Femmes Révolutionnaires du Bénin
OJRB	: Organisation de la Jeunesse Révolutionnaire du Bénin
PCD	: Parti Communiste du Dahomey
PDV	: Programme de dynamisation des villages/Développement Communautaire
PRPB	: Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin
RAMR	: Recherche Appliquée en Milieu Réel

RDR	: Responsable du Développement Rural
RDV	: Responsable de Dynamisation du village
SAP	: Société Africaine de Prévoyance
SDR	: Secteur de Développement Rural
SIP	: Société Indigène de Prévoyance
SMA	: Service de Modernisation Agricole
SMDR	: Société Mutuelle de Développement Rural
SMPR	: Société Mutuelle de Prévoyance Rurale
SONACO	: Société Nationale pour le Coton
SONAPRA	: Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole
SP	: Société de Prévoyance
UMAD	: Union des Mutuelles Agricoles de Dassa
UMAS	: Union des Mutuelles Agricoles de Savè
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	: United Nations Children and Enfants Funds
UNSTB	: Union Nationale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Bénin
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development
VNU	: Volontaire des Nations Unies
WB	: World Bank

Summary

This book concerns a Community Development Programme which provides a vehicle for a theoretical discussion of the reproduction of the discourse and practice of development intervention in general, and the concept of rural development as a field of social interaction in particular. The actions on which the theoretical discussion is based took place in various settings: in ministry offices, within the development intervention institution (the CARDER) and at village level. The Community Development Programme ran in all the six provinces of Benin from 1989-1993 and involved five to eight villages in each province. The programme was implemented by the CARDERs, which held a quasi-monopoly over development interventions in Benin from 1975 (when they were created) until they were disbanded in the early 1990s with the demise of the Marxist-Leninist regime

The programme's goal, as formulated in the policy statement, was 'to turn our dying villages into dynamic places'. It was presented as an open ended participatory type of programme, meant to be an original approach to improving the living conditions of rural people, since, according to an assessment made of the village situation, all previous projects implemented had failed to lift rural peoples from their poverty. But looked at closely, the programme seemed more an attempt by the Minister and his close staff to contribute to the general campaign launched by the regime to win back the people's enthusiasm and support, then at its lowest ebb due to the particularly severe socio-political and economic crisis in Benin at the end of the 1980s. The sharp drop in state earnings following the persistent crisis in Nigeria, together with, among other things, the weak management of state resources, had made it difficult for the government to meet its running costs, the most visible aspect being the delay in paying civil servant's salaries, sometimes by as much as five to eight months. A structural adjustment programme was being negotiated with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, together with a restructuring of agricultural services under which staff were to be reduced by more than 50 percent. This was to extend to all civil servants. The Community Development Programme, as with other aspects of the regime's campaign, failed to win back people's confidence. There were street demonstrations and various political and economic pressures, from within and without the country, that finally brought the regime to an end at the famous National Conference of February 1990. This context was neither outside nor above the people but was a part of the everyday reality of intervention institutions and villages alike, and contributed to the making of the socio-political landscape surrounding the programme.

In the CARDERs, the Minister's policy statement – that was to launch this new approach – was incoporated into a state intervention framework and culture that dated back to or had its roots in the colonial administration. It had been reproduced continuously in the process of creating a nation state out of what was a heterogenous Dahomean colonial territory. In the Zou Province, the implemenatation of the programme started with an initiation phase that resulted in almost standard development plans for all the eight villges concerned. Yet the plans had been formulated and presented with a participatory rhetoric that had matched the Minister's orders and the development intervention language then current, while giving to the CARDERs structure and functioning an image of coherency. But behind the coherent image, the programme both reflected and generated many conflictive situations. Ad hoc as well as more stable groupings and leadership emerged or were reproduced out of unspoken criteria and preoccupations as varied as people's regions of origin, ethnic affiliation, religion, patron-client relations, career perspectives, private (family) problems and sometimes purely technical matters. The social interactions in which the actors involved in the Community Development Programme were engaged, generally guided by the various groupings, criteria and preoccupations mentioned above, were determining for decisions which afterwards were presented as state policy. Such interactions were also an integral part of the process of policy transformation to which the Community Development Programme was subjected. They helped to produce both formal and informal 'charts' for the implementation of the programme, which were at odds with the official ones. Nevertheless, the process showed itself to be efficient in reproducing the hidden social realities within the Zou CARDER while at the same time giving it the image of being up to date in the latest fashion of development language and practice.

In the villages, the programme was variously implemented, with very little connection to what had been planned or to the regular injunctions and instructions from the General Director and his monitoring staff. Activities developed in the name of the programme, and particularly the everyday life of these activities, differed from one village to the next depending on a multiplicity of factors, such as the balance of power between local political forces (the socio-political landscape), recent intervention adventures in a village, the particular interests of the village agents appointed to the programme, etc. In Togoudo (the case documented in this book), a significant factor in the implementation of the programme, and a factor that might have played some role in other villages too, was the settlement patterns of the local population. This factor contributed to producing the existing socio-political landscape, to the pattern of the local economy, and to individual and household income generating activities.

In fact, Togoudo, a residential composite of Idaca people who had arrived from villages in the surrounding Dassa hills during the early years of the colonial administration, enjoyed a dynamic and diversified economy. It was linked to the national and regional economy through the market of Gbomina and by frequent short and long term migrations of its inhabitants to Nigeria, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The main income generating activity of the village was agricultyural production, on land over which the settlers held only insecure and problematic ownership rights, a

situation typical for the relatively recent farm settlements of the Idaca, Fon and Ditamari cultivators on Nagot and Mahi territory of central Benin. But for men, the most successful survival and self-achievement strategies in the village were those in which agricultural production was combined with animal husbandry and, in some cases, the trading of agricultural products. For women, in addition to agriculture and animal (pig) husbandry, activities such as food processing (mainly *cakpalo* from millet and maize, and oil and *kluiklui* from groundnuts), trading of agricultural products and petty trade were important for economic and social success. These activities were combined in different ways and in varying degree, depending on several factors relating to the capability and organisational skills and strategies of individuals and groups of actors for mobilising productive resources – chiefly land, labour and credit. One further asset, crucial to self-achievement strategies, was the mobilisation or insertion into the networks of people in different geographical locations. This was instrumental to people's access to labour, credit, market and other external opportunities and depended on (but at the same time protrayed) the local ideologies on development and the different ways in which the people individually and collectively conceived of and worked to improve their own well-being (the local definition of 'rural development').

In Togoudo, the activities within the programme fell broadly into two categories: the building of socio-economic infrastructure in the village, and the formation of men and women's groups whose objective was to create income-generating opportunities. Socio-economic infrastructure had already been initiated by villagers before the arrival of the RDV. These included a storehouse for agricultural inputs (mainly cotton), a maternity centre, a classroom for the village school (with the assistance of a German donor) and the maintenance of water pumps and wells. The buildings were funded, and expected to be funded, entirely from the resources of the GV – the cotton grower's association – and from the cash and labour contributions of villagers. The RDV, taking advantage on his arrival of the pressure put on the GV board by young Communitst Party members, introduced himself as a specialist in peasant cooperatives (which he indeed was) and managed to gain access to the village scene. He smuggled himself into village affairs and was given authority to look at the management of GV resources. This allowed him to secure a significant share of these resources for what he called development work in the village. But this authority was resented and frequently challenged by groups within the village, as well as groups in the CARDER, who felt the RDV's intervention was a threat to their own professional prerogatives and hierarchical position in the village and within CARDER. For the GV Secretary, for individual members of the GV Board and for some CARDER agents who had interests in the existing state of affairs, the involvement of the RDV in the management of the GV was intolerable. These people made various attempts to divert GV resourses to usages other than those agreed upon at the GV general assembly or as dictated by GV byelaws; they favoured an increase in the share of GV revenue distributed to board members; they allocated credit to individual cotton growers; they increased the running cost of the GV etc. In doing so, even though their actions solved the critical problems of some growers, their motives were more to hamper the plans of the RDV than to serve the best interests of village development.

The income generating men and women's groups were formally presented as the cooperative or pre-cooperative ventures of groups of poor peasants working together and sharing the produce on an equitable basis. But in fact they were either family groupings, or made up of members coopted selectively by their leaders on the basis of a number of criteria. Such groups rarely included people from the lowest rank of the locally constructed socio-economic ladder. Furthermore, collective activities were limited to a minimum, while sub-groups were informally constituted within the groups around activities and concerns not disclosed to the RDV (at least he seemed not to know of them) but considered more relevant to the survival needs of the members. In some ways, as had occurred in its incorporation into the CARDER, the Community Development Programme helped reproduce the conflicts, groupings and leadership already existing among actors at local level. Here too, the RDV smuggled himself into the existing village trends in group formation, which were based on a mixture of logics and principles derived from various previous intervention fashions and operations, and all somehow deviant from what were considered good cooperative ways and practice. But the RDV had his reasons for embarking on such trends. Through his contacts with the head of CARDER and potential donors he appropriated the activities started by the groups, using his rhetorical skills to bridge the gaps and presenting all as ligitimate attempts on his part to implement the Community Development Programme in the village.

These activities, supposed to turn the dying village into a dynamic place, actually covered only very marginal aspects of the local economy. Moreover, many of them served only a limited range of the socio-economic categories present in the village, excluding those barely surviving or keeping their heads above water, while including those considered to be the well-off. In fact, the rhetorical presentations of CARDER and the programme in various settings, drawing on different bits of the programme, served more the self-reproducing ends of the intervention itself than they did the development they sought to bring about. They processed old jargons and permanently created their own realities and problems. Within the village itself, and within the CARDER, the programme as such was considered to be irrelevant. People were prone to forget its existence. Any social changes occurring in this context derived from dismembered pieces of the package being incorporated and utilised by individuals to serve the aims of their own daily preoccupations and survival strategies. The pieces were made concrete as they were taken up in the local 'field of rural development', in the arenas and grounds that emerged from putting into practice existing normative conceptions of well-being in rural areas, and developed historically into a specific field of social interaction where policy makers, development practitiioners, social scientists and rural producers engage, as stakeholders, in struggles and negotiations over individual and collective interests. The various pieces are to be found, therefore, in various arenas and grounds where people meet over issues that are important to them but that seem to have nothing to do with the programme itself. In such conditions, structural ignorance, gaps and discrepancies become normal and attempts to bridge them or document the process turn development practitioners and social scientists into stakeholders themselves in the field of rural development.

Résumé

Ce livre traite d'un Programme de Développement Communautaire. Autour de ce Programme, une discussion théorique est engagée sur les processus de reproduction des discours et des pratiques d'intervention pour le développement. Le 'développement rural' y est vu et conçu comme un champ d'interactions sociales. La discussion théorique s'articule sur les actions engagées autour de ce programme dans les bureaux ministériels, dans l'institution d'intervention (le CARDER) et surtout aussi dans les villages.

Le Programme de Développement Communautaire, encore dénommé Programme de Redynamisation des Villages a été conduit de 1989 à 1993 dans les six départements du Bénin et dans cinq à huit villages par département. Il a été exécuté par les CARDER. Ceux-ci détenaient alors un quasi-monopole sur les interventions pour le Développement Rural de 1975 (date de leur création) jusqu'au début des années 1990, fin du régime marxiste-léniniste.

Le Programme se donnait pour but de 'dynamiser nos villages qui, hier florissants, étaient devenus des cités mourantes'. Le programme se présentait comme étant participatif et se voulait développer une approche originale d'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations rurales après que les projets exécutés jusque là ne soient pas parvenus à sortir les populations rurales de la pauvreté.

Le soutien populaire au Régime marxiste-léniniste était alors au plus bas du fait de la crise économique et socio-politique particulièrement sévère au Bénin à la fin des années 80. Le programme semble être la contribution du Ministre et de son entourage à la campagne lancée par le régime pour regagner une certaine adhésion populaire.

La baisse sensible des revenus de l'Etat qui résultait entre autre de la crise persistante au Nigéria et de la gestion déficiente des ressources publiques avait plongé le gouvernement dans une crise financière dont l'aspect le plus visible était le non-paiement des salaires des agents permanents de l'Etat, avec des arriérés de cinq à sept mois. Un programme d'ajustement structurel était négocié avec le Fonds Monétaire International et la Banque Mondiale. Un volet important de ce programme était la restructuration des Services Agricoles par une réduction de moitié de leurs effectifs, comme du reste pour tous les agents permanents de l'Etat. On manifestait dans les rues et des pressions politiques intérieures comme extérieures finirent par mettre un terme au régime lors de la célèbre Conférence Nationale des Forces Vives de la Nation, en Février 1990. Ce contexte particulier n'était pas éloigné des gens. Au contraire, il faisait partie des réalités de tous les jours des

acteurs des institutions d'intervention et des villages et a contribué à modeler le paysage socio-politique dans lequel le Programme de Redynamisation des Villages a été intégré.

Les instructions ministérielles supposées lancer une nouvelle approche de développement arrivèrent au CARDER-Zou. Elles furent traitées dans un cadre et une culture d'intervention d'Etat développés sous l'administration coloniale et reproduits depuis lors durant le processus de création d'un Etat-Nation sur l'hétérogène territoire colonial Dahoméen. Ainsi, dans le département du Zou, le programme démarra par une phase d'initiation durant laquelle, malgré une rhétorique participative qui semblait conforme aux instructions du Ministre et au langage en vogue, des plans de développement quasiment standard furent formulés pour les huit villages. Ces plans donnaient par ailleurs une image cohérente du CARDER et de sa structure.

Mais derrière cette image se cachaient des situations conflictuelles et le programme a contribué à en générer de nouvelles. Il consolida des alliances et des leaderships et en fit émerger de nouveaux, parfois *ad hoc* parfois plus durables. Ceux-ci se constituèrent selon des préoccuppations et des critères divers et souvent inavoués: région d'origine, appartenance ethnique, religion, relations de parenté, relations patron-client, perspectives de carrière, problèmes au sein de la famille, et parfois seulement selon des questions techniques. Ainsi, dans la prise de décisions présentées comme étant des politiques de l'Etat, les interactions entre acteurs impliqués dans le Programme de Redynamisation des Villages ont été déterminantes. Le programme fut l'objet d'un processus de transformation en fonction des critères et préoccupations citées ci-dessus. Les organigrammes réels d'exécution du programme différèrent de l'organigramme officiel. Ce processus de transformation sert de révélateur des réalités sociales cachées du CARDER- Zou tandis que l'institution se donne une image correspondant à la dernière mode en matière de langages et de pratiques du développement.

Dans les villages, l'exécution du Programme de Redynamisation des Villages prit des formes diverses ayant peu de rapport avec ce qui était prévu et ne correspondant pas aux instructions régulières du Directeur Général ou du personnel de suivi. Les actions entreprises au nom du programme et plus encore les mises en oeuvre quotidiennes de ces actions ont varié d'un village à l'autre selon les rapports de force entre acteurs politiques locaux, les interventions récentes dans lesquelles le village a été impliqué, les contigences de la vie quotidienne des acteurs concernés, les intérêts particuliers du RDV chargé de l'exécution du programme au niveau du village et bien d'autres facteurs.

Un facteur qui a joué un rôle significatif dans l'exécution du programme à Togoudo, dont le cas est traité en détail dans ce livre, est lié aux modes d'installation des populations dans la zone. Ceux-ci ont contribué à façonner le paysage socio-politique actuel et l'économie locale avec ses activités génératrices de revenu au niveau des individus et des ménages. Togoudo est un village habité par un ensemble hétéroclite de peuples Idaca venus des alentours des collines de Dassa durant les premières années de l'administration coloniale. Le village a une économie diversifiée, liée à l'économie nationale et régionale à travers le marché de Gbomina et par de biais des fréquentes migrations de courte et longue durée des

habitants de Togoudo en direction du Nigéria, du Ghana et de la Côte d'Ivoire. La principale activité génératrice de revenu du village est l'agriculture, pratiquée sur des terres sur lesquelles les occupants ne détiennent que des droits peu sécurisants et problématiques. Cette situation est typique des terroirs de colonisation récente des cultivateurs Idaca, Fon, Ditamari sur les territoires des Nagot et Mahi du moyen Bénin. Pour les hommes, les stratégies les plus fructueuses sont celles où la production agricole est combinée avec la production animale et, dans certains cas, le commerce. En ce qui concerne les femmes, en plus de l'agriculture et de l'élevage, élevage de porc surtout, ce sont les transformations agro-alimentaire (bière de sorgho, huile d'arachide, craquelin d'arachide), le commerce de produits vivriers et le petit commerce qui sont déterminants pour la réussite.

La façon de combiner et de conduire ces activités varie selon les stratégies des concernés et selon leurs capacités à mobiliser des ressources productives (terre, main d'oeuvre et crédit). Un facteur déterminant de ces stratégies est la capacité à mobiliser des réseaux sociaux couvrant plusieurs localités géographiques et à avoir accès ainsi à la main d'oeuvre, aux crédits et à d'autres opportunités. Tout ceci est à la fois le produit et le reflet des idéologies locales en matière de développement et de la manière dont individus et groupes définissent et recherchent leur bien-être, autrement dit c'est le produit et le reflet de leur définition opérationnelle du 'développement rural'.

A Togoudo, le Programme de Redynamisation des villages a engagé des actions de deux types: la construction d'infrastructures socio-économiques villageoises d'une part, la constitution de groupements autour d'activités génératrices de revenus d'autre part. Les villageois avaient déjà démarré la construction d'infrastructures socio-économiques villageoises avant l'arrivée du RDV: un magasin d'intrants agricoles (essentiellement pour le coton), une case d'accouchement, un module de trois classes pour l'école du village, l'entretien des puits et pompes d'eau potable étaient à la charge du Groupement Villageois (association des producteurs de coton) et des villageois qui se cotisaient. Le RDV à son arrivée, profitant de la pression exercée sur le conseil d'administration du GV par des jeunes du village membres du PCD (Parti Communiste du Dahomey), fit valoir ses compétences de spécialiste de l'Action Coopérative et parvint à accéder à la scène publique du village. Il s'inséra dans les affaires villageoises et se fit attribuer l'autorité de suivre la gestion des ressources du GV, ce qui lui permit de faire allouer une part importante de ces ressources à ce qu'il appelait le développement du village. Cette autorité fut maintes fois contestée et défiée par les villageois comme par les autres agents du CARDER qui vivaient l'intervention du RDV comme une remise en cause de leurs prérogatives et de leur position hiérarchique dans le village et au sein du CARDER.

Pour le Secrétaire du GV, quelques autres membres de son Conseil d'Administration et certains agents du CARDER qui avaient des intérêts dans le *statu quo*, les intrusions du RDV dans la gestion du GV étaient intolérables. Ils firent plusieurs tentatives pour que des ressources du GV soient allouées à des usages différents de ceux dont il avait été convenu en Assemblée Générale et de ceux qui étaient consignés dans le règlement intérieur du GV. Ils firent en sorte que s'accroissent la part des revenus du GV allouée aux membres du Conseil d'Administration de même

que les frais de fonctionnement du GV. Ils lancèrent également une opération d'allocation de crédit aux producteurs pour la récolte de coton. Bien que certaines de ces actions se soient révélées pertinentes et aient contribué à résoudre des problèmes critiques chez certains producteurs, ces décisions d'allocations alternatives des revenus du GV n'étaient pas fondées sur la conviction que ces revenus contribueraient ainsi mieux au développement du village. En réalité, la motivation première était de gêner les plans du RDV.

Les groupements d'hommes et de femmes conduisant des activités génératrices de revenus étaient officiellement présentés comme des groupes coopératifs ou pré-coopératifs de paysans pauvres travaillant ensemble et partageant le produit de leur labeur sur une base équitable. En fait, ces groupes étaient constitués de parents ou de membres sélectionnés par des leaders selon leurs propres critères. Les gens qui auraient été placés au bas de l'échelle socio-économique localement définie n'en faisaient presque jamais partie. Les activités économiques collectives y étaient réduites au minimum. Pourtant, au sein de ces groupes, des sous-groupes informels s'étaient constitués autour d'activités et de préoccupations spécifiques et pour leurs membres, ces dernières contribuaient plus à leur survie et à leur réussite. Mais le RDV ne semblait pas en être informé.

A l'image de sa 'digestion' au niveau du CARDER, le programme de Redynamisation des Villages a favorisé la reproduction de conflits ainsi que l'émergence de groupes et de leaders parmi les acteurs villageois et les agents locaux du CARDER. Comme il l'avait fait pour les infrastructures socio-économiques, le RDV s'inséra dans la dynamique existante de constitution de groupements. Ces groupes s'inspiraient de principes et de logiques disparates, selon des modes diverses et des opérations d'intervention pour le développement variées. Il en découlait des modes de mise en place de groupements et de gestion coopérative que le RDV, en tant que spécialiste en la matière, ne devait pas considérer comme compatibles avec les règles de l'art. Néanmoins, il se trouva de bonnes raisons pour se laisser 'embarquer' dans ces groupes: lors de ses contacts avec le personnel de la Direction du CARDER et avec des bailleurs de fonds potentiels, il s'appropriait entièrement les activités démarrées par les groupes, utilisait ses compétences rhétoriques pour masquer les lacunes qu'il voyait dans les principes de constitution de ces groupes et présentait tous ces évènements comme le fruit de son Programme de Redynamisation dans le village.

Tout compte fait, les activités sensées 'transformer nos villages mourants en cités dynamiques' couvraient des aspects très marginaux de l'économie locale. La plupart ne concernaient en outre qu'une gamme limitée de catégories socio-économiques, et excluaient celles-là même qui sont en train de lutter pour maintenir leur tête au dessus de l'eau.

Les présentations rhétoriques du programme et du CARDER servent surtout à la reproduction de l'intervention plutôt qu'au développement dont elles sont sensées rendre compte. Elles recyclent pour cela de vieux jargons et créent leurs propres réalités. Dans les villages comme au sein du CARDER par contre, le programme n'est pas jugé pertinent par les différentes catégories d'acteurs. Il leur arrive d'en oublier jusqu'à l'existence même dudit programme. Si des changements sociaux se produisent dans ce contexte particulier, c'est que des morceaux issus du

dépeçage du paquet que constitue le programme (ses discours et ses dispositions matérielles) sont incorporés dans les préoccupations quotidiennes des acteurs et dans leurs stratégies personnelles.

Ces morceaux réapparaissent sur diverses scènes locales du champ du développement rural. Ces scènes ont peu à peu émergé de par la mise en oeuvre de conceptions normatives et intéressées du bien-être du monde rural et elles se sont cristallisées en arènes et terrains du développement. Elles ont au fil des temps constitué un champ spécifique d'interactions sociales au sein duquel décideurs politiques, praticiens du développement, spécialistes des sciences sociales et producteurs ruraux engagent des négociations et des luttes sur leurs intérêts individuels et collectifs. Les morceaux de ce paquet peuvent alors être recherchés dans ces diverses arènes et terrains où les gens se rencontrent pour traiter de questions à leurs yeux importantes et qui semblent parfois ne rien avoir de commun avec le programme lui-même.

Un trait caractéristique d'un tel champ est la circulation chaotique de l'information, du fait des divergences d'intérêts et des écarts entre discours et réalités. Ceci découle en fait de constructions stratégiques ou spontanées/tactiques des acteurs impliqués. En tentant de combler ces 'lacunes' et même en ne tentant que d'en rendre compte, praticiens du développement tout autant que chercheurs en sciences sociales entrent dans le champ du développement rural comme parties prenantes, concernées eux aussi par ses enjeux et leurs propres intérêts.

Samenvatting

Dit boek analyseert een Community Development Programma waardoor de mogelijkheid wordt geschapen voor een theoretische discussie van de reproductie van het taalgebruik en de praktijk van ontwikkelingsinterventie in het algemeen en van het concept rurale ontwikkeling als een veld van sociale interactie in het bijzonder. De acties waarop deze theoretische discussies zijn gebaseerd, vonden plaats binnen verschillende contexten van ministeriële bureaus, de staats-ontwikkelingsorganisatie CARDER en op het niveau van het dorp. Het Community Development Programma speelde zich af in de periode van 1989 tot 1993 in alle zes provincies van Bénin en omvatte vijf tot acht dorpen in iedere provincie. Het programma werd uitgevoerd door de CARDERs, die een quasi monopolie hadden op ontwikkelingsinterventies vanaf het startjaar 1975 tot het begin van de jaren negentig, toen het marxistisch-leninistische bewind tot een einde kwam.

Het doel van het programma, zoals het officieel geformuleerd werd, was 'onze stervende dorpen te veranderen in dynamische plaatsen'. Het werd gepresenteerd zonder een temporeel en financieel kader en als een programma met een participatief karakter, bedoeld als een originele aanpak ter verbetering van de levensomstandigheden van de rurale bevolking. Beoordeling van de situatie had immers aan het licht gebracht dat alle tot dan uitgevoerde projecten om de rurale bevolking te verlossen van armoede, waren mislukt.

Maar, nader beschouwd lijkt het programma een bijdrage te zijn van de minister en zijn naaste medewerkers aan de algemene campagne van het bewind om het enthousiasme en de steun van de bevolking terug te winnen. Deze aanhang had een absoluut dieptepunt bereikt door de buitengewoon ernstige sociaal-politieke en economische crisis in Bénin aan het einde van de jaren tachtig. De scherpe daling in staats-inkomsten, als gevolg van o.a. de aanhoudende crisis in Nigeria, alsook van het zwakke beheer van de hulpbronnen van de staat, maakten het de overheid moeilijk de uitgaven te dekken. Deze crisis was het beste zichtbaar in de achterstand in de betaling van de ambtenaren die opliep tot vijf à acht maanden. Er werd met het Internationale Monetaire Fonds en de Wereld Bank onderhandeld over een aanpassingsprogramma en eveneens over een herstructurering van de agrarische diensten waar de staf met meer dan 50 procent moest worden verminderd, in overeenstemming met het algemene plan voor het ambtenarenapparaat. Noch het Community Development Programma, noch andere onderdelen van de overheidscampagne slaagden er in het vertrouwen van de bevolking terug te winnen. Betogingen en politieke en economische druk van binnenuit en buitenaf resulteerden

uiteindelijk in de befaamde nationale conferentie van februari 1990. Deze bijzondere omstandigheden gingen niet buiten de mensen om maar vormden onderdeel van de werkelijkheid van alledag binnen zowel de interventie-organisaties als in de dorpen; zij droegen bij aan de vorming van het sociaal-politieke landschap rond het programma.

De beleidsbeslissing van de minister die een nieuwe aanpak moest inluiden, werd binnen de CARDERs verwerkt in een stelsel en cultuur van staatsinterventie waarvan de basis was gelegd tijdens het koloniale bewind. Sindsdien werd dit steeds gereproduceerd tijdens het proces van opbouw van een nationale staat in het heterogene, koloniale territorium van Dahomey. In de Zou provincie begon de uitvoering van het programma met een initierende fase die uitmondde in vrijwel standaard ontwikkelingsplannen voor de acht betreffende dorpen. Toch werden de plannen geformuleerd en gepresenteerd met de nodige retoriek omtrent participatie, in overeenstemming met de opdracht van de minister en met het gangbare ontwikkelingsinterventie- taalgebruik, terwijl aan de structuur en het functioneren van de CARDERs een beeld van samenhang werd gegeven. Maar achter een dergelijk beeld van coherentie vertoonde en creëerde het programma vele conflict-situaties. Zowel tijdelijke als meer stabiele groeperingen alsook leiderschap ontsproten of werden gereproduceerd vanuit zeer verscheidene onuitgesproken criteria en preoccupaties, zoals de regio van origine van de mensen, etnische achtergrond, godsdienst, patroon-clientrelaties, carrière-perspectieven, privé of familie problemen en soms zuiver technische problemen. De sociale interacties waarin de actores die te maken hadden met het Community Development Programma waren verwikkeld – doorgaans geleid door de verschillende groeperingen, criteria en zorg zoals hierboven genoemd – waren bepalend voor beslissingen die achteraf werden gepresenteerd als overheidsbeleid. Zij vormden eveneens een integraal onderdeel van het proces van beleidsverandering waaraan het Community Development Programma was onderworpen. Zij droegen bij aan de tot stand koming van zowel formele als informele 'richtsnoeren' voor de uitvoering van het programma, in beide gevallen afwijkend van de officiele plannen. Toch bleek het proces er in te slagen de verborgen sociale realiteiten binnen de CARDER Zou te reproduceren, terwijl tegelijkertijd het beeld werd gegeven van een organisatie die voldeed aan de laatste mode op het gebied van ontwikkelings-taalgebruik en praktijk.

Het programma werd in de dorpen op verschillende wijze uitgevoerd, zonder veel verband met wat geplanned was of met de regelmatige bevelen en instructies van de Directeur Generaal en de toezichthoudende staf. Acties ondernomen in de naam van het programma, en in het bijzonder de alledaagse gang van deze activiteiten, verschilden van dorp tot dorp, afhankelijk van tal van factoren zoals de bestaande machtsbalans tussen lokale politieke krachten (het sociaal-politieke landschap), de recente interventie-avonturen waarin het betreffende dorp betrokken was, de bijzondere belangen van de RDV (de functionaris op dorpsniveau belast met het programma) enz. Een belangrijke factor bij de uitvoering van het programma in Togoudo – de casus die gedocumenteerd is in dit boek – en die ook enige rol kan hebben gespeeld in andere dorpen, was het nederzettingspatroon van de lokale bevolking. Deze factor droeg bij aan de totstandkoming van het bestaande sociaal-

politieke landschap, maar ook aan het patroon van de lokale economie en aan de inkomen-verschaffende activiteiten van individu en huishouden.

Togoudo – een residentiële compositie van Idaca-mensen die zich daar aan het begin van de koloniale periode vestigden vanuit de Dassa heuvels – genoot in feite een dynamische en gediversificeerde economie, enerzijds door de verbinding met de nationale en regionale economie via de markt van Gbomina en anderzijds door de herhaalde korte en lange migratie van Togoudo inwoners naar Nigeria, Ghana en Ivoorkust. Landbouw vormde de belangrijkste inkomen-verschaffende activiteit in het dorp. Deze werd uitgeoefend op land waarop de kolonisten een onzekere en problematische titel bezaten, een situatie die kenmerkend is voor de relatief recente agrarische bedrijfsvestigingen van Idaca, Fon en Ditamari in Nagot- en Mahi-gebieden van midden Bénin. Maar, de meest succesvolle overlevings- en succes strategieën van mannen in het dorp waren die waarbij agrarische productie werd gecombineerd met veehouderij en, in sommige gevallen, met handel in agrarische produkten. Voor vrouwen waren activiteiten als voedselverwerking – vooral *cakpalo* van gierst en mais, en olie en *kluiklui* van aardnoten – handel in agrarische produkten en, in het algemeen, de kleine handel, gevoegd bij akkerbouw en veehouderij (varkens), belangrijk voor economisch en sociaal succes. Deze activiteiten kwamen in verschillende combinaties en op verschillende schaal voor, afhankelijk van verscheidene factoren verbonden met bekwaamheid en organisatorische vaardigheden en strategieën van individuen en groepen van actores om produktie-hulpbronnen, vooral land, arbeid en crediet te mobiliseren. Bepalend voor het succes van de zelf-verbeterings-strategieën was ook het vermogen om netwerken te mobiliseren of deel te nemen in netwerken van mensen in verschillende geografische plaatsen. Een dergelijke participatie was van belang voor de toegang tot arbeid, crediet, markt en andere kansen van buiten. Dit alles hing af – maar is daarvan tevens een afschildering – van de lokale ontwikkelings-ideologieën en de verschillende manieren waarop mensen individueel en collectief denken over en streven naar welvaart en welzijn, dus van hun praktische definitie van 'rurale ontwikkeling'.

De activiteiten binnen het programma in Togoudo konden in grote lijnen in twee categorieën ingedeeld worden: het bewerkstelligen van sociaal-economische infrastructuur en de formatie van groepen mannen/vrouwen voor inkomensgenererende mogelijkheden. Dorpelingen werkten reeds aan de realisering van sociaal-economische infrastructuur met een opslagplaats voor agrarische benodigdheden – vooral voor de katoen – een kraamkliniek, een lokaal voor de dorpsschool (met steun van een Duitse donor), en het onderhoud van waterpompen en putten. Deze infrastructurele werken werden – althans, dat was de verwachting – geheel gefinancierd uit middelen van de GV, de organisatie van katoenproducenten, en met bijdragen in geld en arbeid van de dorpelingen. Bij zijn aantreden maakte de RDV gebruik van druk op de GV leiding door een aantal jonge mannen, PCD leden (Communistische Partij van Dahomey), en presenteerde zich als specialist op het gebied van boeren-coöperaties (wat hij ook werkelijk was) om zo toegang te krijgen tot het het openbare leven van het dorp. Hij wrong zich in de publieke dorpsaangelegenheden en verkreeg het nodige gezag zich te mengen in het beheer van de GV middelen. Dat gaf hem de mogelijkheid een belangrijk deel van deze middelen te bestemmen voor wat hij noemde 'ontwikkelingwerk op dorpsniveau'. Maar zijn autoriteit

werd herhaaldelijk ter discussie gesteld en ondergraven door zowel groeperingen in het dorp als in de CARDER. Zij meenden dat de interventie van de RDV een bedreiging vormde voor hun eigen professionele voorrechten en hiërarchische positie binnen het dorp en binnen CARDER. Voor de secretaris van de GV, enige personen binnen de GV-leiding, en enige CARDER-functionarissen, die allen belang hadden bij handhaving van de bestaande situatie was de uitdijende rol van de RDV in het beheer van de GV onverdraaglijk. Zij ondernamen verscheidene pogingen om een deel van de middelen van de GV te bestemmen voor andere doelen dan was overeengekomen tijdens de algemene vergadering van de GV en die in de GV-resoluties waren opgenomen. Zij verklaarden zich er voorstander van dat mensen in de leiding een groter aandeel zouden krijgen in de GV opbrengsten, dat aan katoenproducenten een crediet-toekenning zou worden gegeven, dat meer beschikbaar zou worden gesteld voor de kosten van beheer van de GV, enz. Hoewel hun acties van belang bleken bij de oplossing van enige netelige problemen bij een aantal producenten, was hun bedoeling meer het hinderen van de plannen van de RDV dan het op de beste manier dienen van de belangen van dorpsontwikkeling.

De inkomen-genererende activiteiten van de mannen- en vrouwen-groepen werden formeel aangeduid als coöperaties of pre-coöperaties van groepen arme peasants die samenwerken en de productie op basis van gelijkheid delen. In feite ging het hierbij of om groepen van familieleden of om leden die door enige leiders zelf waren uitgekozen op grond van verschillende criteria. Mensen die laag stonden op de lokaal gedefiniëerde sociaal-economische ladder, waren bijna nooit lid van deze groepen. Daarenboven werden zogenaamde collectieve produktieve activiteiten tot een minimum beperkt, terwijl er binnen de betreffende groepen informeel subgroepen werden gevormd rond specifieke activiteiten en belangen waarover de RDV niet werd ingelicht, althans hij scheen er niet van te weten. Juist deze activiteiten werden van groter belang geacht voor de bestaansbehoeften van de leden. Op enigerlei wijze en net als in het geval van de verwerking binnen de CARDER, droeg het Community Development Programma bij aan de reproductie van conflicten, groeperingen en leiderschap zoals die al aanwezig waren bij actores op lokaal niveau. Ook hier wrong de RDV zich in de bestaande tendenzen van groepsformatie in het dorp, tendenzen gebaseerd op een mengsel van logica en principes, voortkomend uit verschillende vroegere interventie-modes en projekten en allen op de een of andere manier afwijkend van wat te beschouwen zou zijn als een goede manier en praktijk van coöperatie. Toch vond hij goede redenen om zich in te laten met deze gang van zaken in het dorp. In zijn contacten met CARDER superieuren en potentiële donoren eigende hij zich de door de groepen gestarte activiteiten volledig toe. Hij gebruikte daarbij zijn retorische bekwaamheden om tekortkomingen in de organisatieprincipes van de groepen te verdoezelen, alles presenterende als zijn legitieme pogingen het Community Development Programma in het dorp uit te voeren.

Deze activiteiten, bedoeld 'om het stervende dorp te veranderen in een dynamische plaats', bestreken hoe dan ook slechts zeer marginale aspecten van de lokale economie. Daarenboven ging het hierbij vaak om een beperkt aantal socio-economische categorieën van in het dorp aanwezige mensen; niet zij die nog net overleefden of streden om het hoofd boven water te houden, maar zij die beschouwd werden

als de beter gesitueerden. De retorische presentaties, bij verschillende gelegenheden, over CARDER en over het programma, waarbij gebruik gemaakt werd van kleine onderdelen van het programma, dienden in feite meer de zelf-reproducerende doelen van de interventie dan de ontwikkeling die zij verkondigden teweeg te brengen. In deze retoriek wordt oud jargon verwerkt en ontwerpt men constant eigen realiteiten en problemen. Zowel binnen de dorpen als binnen de CARDER, beschouwde men het programma als zodanig van geen belang. De mensen waren geneigd het bestaan ervan te vergeten. Alle sociale veranderingen die in deze context optraden kwamen voort uit onderdelen die losgemaakt waren van het totale programma, die geïncorporeerd en gebruikt werden door individuen ten dienste van hun eigen dagelijkse zorgen en overlevinsstrategieën. De onderdelen werden concreet gemaakt doordat ze werden opgenomen in het lokale 'veld van rurale ontwikkeling', in de strijdperken en op terreinen die naar voren kwamen door bestaande normatieve opvattingen betreffende welvaart en welzijn in rurale gebieden in praktijk te brengen. Zij ontwikkelden zich historisch in een specifiek veld van sociale interactie waarin beleidsmakers, ontwikkelingswerkers, sociale wetenschappers en rurale producenten als belanghebbenden bezig zijn met strijd en onderhandelingen over individuele en collectieve belangen. De onderscheidene onderdelen kunnen daarom worden gevonden in verschillende arenas en op terreinen waar mensen met elkaar te maken hadden in verband met onderwerpen die belangrijk voor hen waren maar die niets te maken schenen te hebben met het programma zelf. In zulke omstandigheden worden structurele onkunde, leemtes en tegenstrijdigheden normaal. Pogingen om deze te overbruggen of om deze processen te documenteren maken ontwikkelingswerkers zowel als sociale wetenschappers zelf tot belanghebbenden in het veld van rurale ontwikkeling.