A problematic social innovation: The commercial camp of the Boffi Pygmies

Case Study to the camp « France » at Grima

Central African Republic

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Recalls

• The Boffi Pygmies
• Space organisation of Boffi pygmies and villagers
• Social relations between villagers / pygmies
Sketch of space organisation of Boffi pygmies

Non appropriated space (borders...)

Commercial camp (or « relay camp »)
(2-3 months depending on seasonality)

Temporaries production camps (weeks)

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Family visits, courtesy, « Zengui » celebrations

Village Base
(majority of the time)

Villages Plantations

Pygmies plantations

Road facilitating trade

Mbaere river « Hard limit »

(Roulet et al., 2007)
Local history

• Ngotto, Grima, Bambio: very old and important villages from the beginning of the 20th Century (CFSO factories).

• Old road system Boda-Ngoto-Grima-Bambio built in 1925 (mainly for rubber transport).

• Opening of the so called « 4th parallel » road in 2005.
Study Area map

- **Boffi Villages**
- **Banda-yanguéré villages**
- **« New town »**
- **« Satellites camps »**

☆ Of which « Aka » pygmies camps (permanents or temporaries)
Movements of the villages towards the new road

- In two phases, since 2006:
  - 1 - Displacement of Pygmies
  - 2 - Displacement of villagers

Ex: Banga, Zoundodé, Boundara....
Particular case of Grima

Events chronology

1- June 2006 – Establishment of « France » camp by pygmies of Grima and installation of local traders from Boda.

2- No displacement of primary village (water, infrastructures)

The various actors

- The villagers (5 talks)
- The traders (3 talks)
- The administrative authorities (1 talk)
- The Pygmies (2 talks)
• The direct speech...
  – Maintenance of infrastructures (pygmie school of the MC at Grima,...).
  – Pygmies emancipation by access to school, health, etc., at the village...
  – Natural resources overexploitation by merchants, who arm the pygmies with the detriment of the rightfull owners, the villagers...

• What is left unsaid...
  – Management of the bushmeat income (no problem with Gnetum harvest), but conflict for bushmeat.
  – Pygmie domination (work force, control of trading exchanges).
  – Differences of perception of the territory.
Non appropriated space (borders...)

Mbaéré River « hard limit »

Huts of village 1

Huts of allochitone village

Huts of pilot village

Pineapple « Inter-villages limit »

Pineapple « Inter-villages limit »

« Forest of the pilot village »

Village 1

Village 2

Terroir

Terroir

Main Road

Communautary forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named forest

Named savannah

Old site of pilot village

(Roulet et al., 2007)
• The direct speech...
  – Support to Pygmie emancipation (barter of clothes « that allows pygmies dress »,...)
  – Pygmies don’t want any more working for villagers...
  – The forest belongs to «all natives of Lobaye »...

• What is left unsaid...
  – Maintenance of barter and so unequal exchange
  – *Gnetum* is less interesting than bushmeat
  – All merchants come from the same big family from the town of Boda (political supports)
The authorities (Mayor of Ngotto, gendarmerie squad)

• The direct speech...
  – Concentration of the population under control of the heads of village.
  – Maintenance of base infrastructures (school, health and schooling of pygmies children).

• What is left unsaid...
  – Judges and juries with pygmies
  – Possible political problem
The Pygmies

Difficulties of communication and speaking control by villagers or by traders

• The direct speech...
  – Refusal of work in the fields of villagers
  – Charge of bad treatment by villagers
  – Mainly harvest of *Gnetum* and not bushmeat
  – Knowing of the problem of children schooling

• What is left unsaid...
  – Desire of emancipation
  – Direct access to market
  – Advantages of sedentarisation (fields, schooling) but also of nomadism (anarchic harvest of non-wood-forest-products, specifically bushmeat)
Conclusion

• Rightfull emancipation of semi-nomadics populations / Semi-nomadic way of life without constraints in the use of forest.

• Capture of the main part of bushmeat rent by villagers / Territorial management and relative durability of natural resources exploitation

• Typical situation of the so called « Tragedy of commons ».

• One possible solution : recognizing the villagers territories in return of a real integration of pygmies in the natural resources management institutions
Thank you for your attention...

Merci de votre attention...