

Dryland Networks Programme

ISSUE PAPER

**Conflicts and Alliances
Between Farmers and Herders:
A Case Study of the 'Goll'
of Fandène Village, Senegal**

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Translation: Jean Lubbock

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Co-existence between farmers and herders in the same area is often thought to be a source of potential conflict so far as access to and use of available resources are concerned. This does not mean, however, that these two groups are naturally antagonistic. As in most of rural Senegal, the association between agriculture and animal husbandry has always been the rule rather than the exception. Unfortunately, the breakdown of this traditional production system, along with the establishment of new and often exclusive and inappropriate rules, have played a crucial role in the process of disrupting the past balance. Rules relating to natural resource management are often designed to meet the needs of the dominant production system. In areas where the production system is mainly agricultural, natural resource management patterns do not give sufficient weight to the specific needs of minority systems such as animal husbandry. In this part of Senegal, the traditional production system was agro-pastoral, but pressure on land as a result of groundnut cultivation has accelerated the increasing specialisation of the production system, thus diminishing the area available for grazing. A well-known adage in this region holds that "herder and field are natural allies", indicating the reciprocal, complementary relationship which has always existed between agriculture and animal husbandry. However these are now at risk.

¹In June 1992, a multi-disciplinary team, using the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method, with the support of USAID, conducted a study on natural resource management in Fandène. This case study also draws on the results of this PRA process in which the author took part. However, the points of view expressed here are his alone.

The following is an account of the experience of a village in the western groundnut-growing basin of Senegal, Fandène.

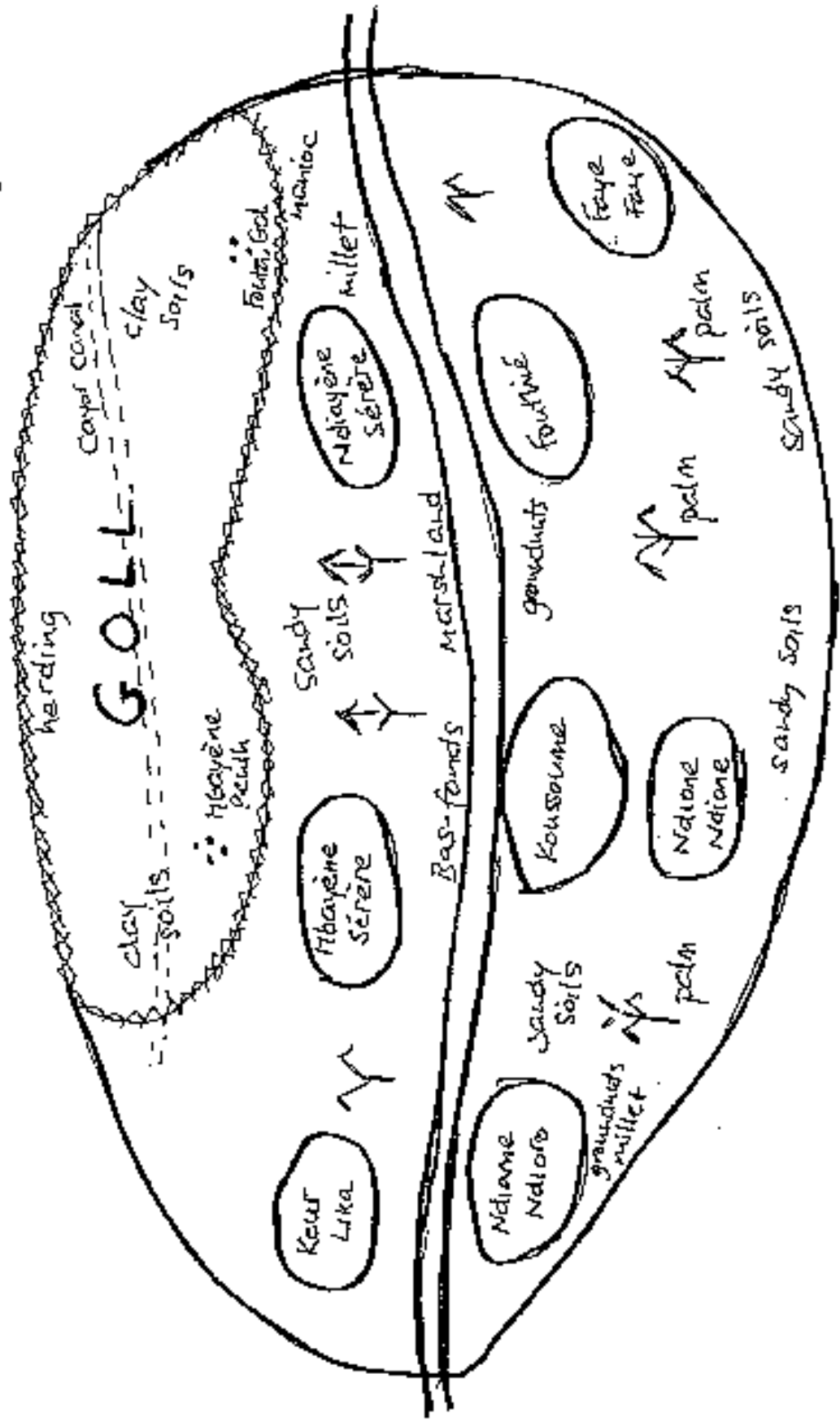
Context

Fandène is a Sérère village. This ethnic group is found in Central Senegal and the people are mainly farmers. The Sérères of Fandène, who were traditionally major producers of groundnuts and millet in particular, faced with a gradual deterioration of agricultural production conditions, have increasingly gone over to exploitation of the Borassus palm. This very versatile tree now provides the bulk of the people's cash income. While it has long played an important part in the income structure, the growing vulnerability of rain-fed crops has increased the local people's interest in this tree. This has led to the development of an increasingly complex system for managing these palm trees. Over the years, animal husbandry has suffered increasing marginalization as a result of heavy agricultural pressure on land. However, there is a pastoral enclave within the lands of Fandène village. The herders moved in some 30 years ago onto land known as Goll, abandoned by farmers as a result of harsh climatic conditions.

The village lands comprise three types of soils with different properties and potential. The south-eastern part is made up of sandy "dior" soils mainly given over to millet and groundnut cultivation. The central area is made up of sandy/clayey "deck dior" soils on which the palm is grown. This part also contains a low-lying marshy area with rich soils and a shallow water table suitable for vegetable growing in the dry season. Property rights over this land are very strict. The far north of the territory, Goll, is made up of ferruginous soils unsuitable for cultivation, which explains why it has been left fallow for

MAP OF FANDENE VILLAGE

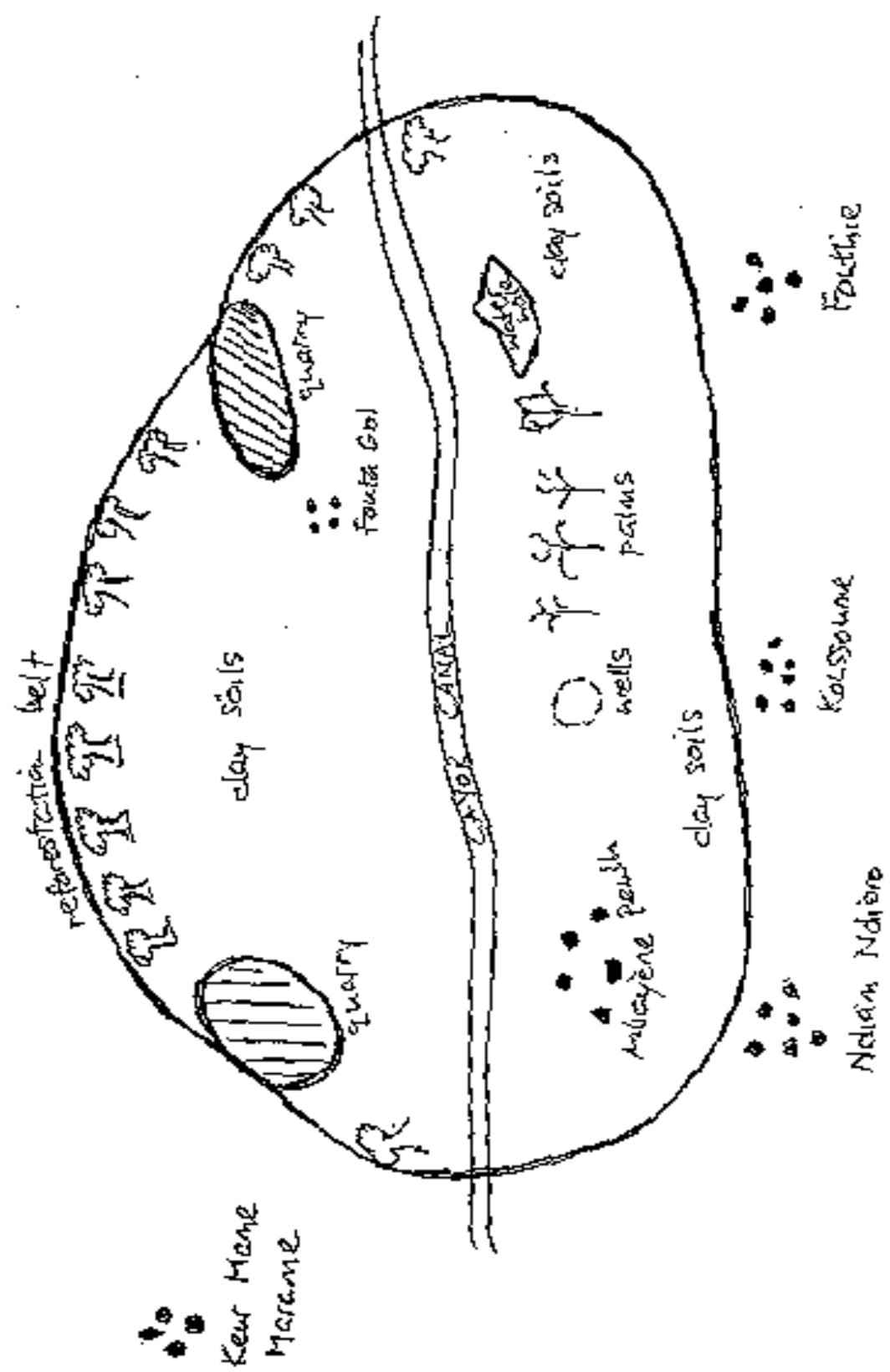
Drawn by a group of villagers



Source: ReMAPs, June 1992

ReMAPs = Resource Management and Planning in Senegal

MAP OF GOLL
(19 June 1942)



Source: RE MAPS

Drawn by a group of
villagers

more than 30 years. Changes in soil structure are the result of serious water erosion which has stripped the top soil. However, the name of the area (Goll means forest in Sérère) shows that it used to be covered in trees. In fact, oral tradition maintains that this area was thickly forested and teeming with wild animals. What is left of this ancient forest is now merely shrubby savannah.

It is this area, which is now much coveted and fought over, to which this study is devoted. Having been left uncultivated for several decades, it was gradually taken over by herders for pastoral purposes. There are now two Peuhl (Fulani) settlements, Mbayène Peuhl and Fouta Goll, in this zone. The Sérères had encouraged the Peuhl to settle, in order to ensure that long-term neglect of that part of their territory was not taken to mean that they had given up their property rights. This transfer of use was made much easier by the fact that, to begin with, the Peuhl only stayed in the area during the rainy season before moving on to richer areas of pasture in the dry season. Furthermore, the map of Goll indicates the presence of a water hole which, although now at a low level, certainly had something to do with the Peuhl settlement. As they came to stay longer in Goll, some herder families settled down permanently, leaving a few members to migrate with the herds during certain periods of the year. In the dry season, the Peuhl became involved in small-scale market gardening, using water from the well.

This trend towards sedentarization substantially altered the picture since, so long as the Peuhl presence in Goll was temporary, any claim they might make to ownership rights could easily be dismissed by the former owners. Furthermore, the mobile nature of pastoral activity has always posed a legal dilemma in marking out a pastoral area belonging to a herder community. Long-term occupation eventually gave the herders a sense of belonging to the

area, although hitherto their informal contract with the former owners had prevented them from making any type of concrete investment - such as planting trees - which could have suggested that they were seeking to appropriate the land for themselves. In the past, cohabitation between the Peuhl and farming communities, especially the Wolof, another ethnic group living in this part of Senegal, has given rise to certain conflicts. One of these conflicts between the Peuhl and a Wolof village, sparked by livestock belonging to the herders straying into the farmers' fields, led to the Wolof setting fire to a large part of the herders' village.

Transhumance is now organised in such a way as to avoid problems of this type. Just before the onset of the rainy season, the animals are driven towards a large forest, known as Kagne, and only return to Goll after the harvest. The marginalization of herding in the groundnut-growing basin, of which Fandène is part, makes it difficult to move livestock around within the area because there are few transhumance routes. Furthermore, sporadic conflicts do break out between the Peuhl and Sérère or Wolof communities with regard to use of shrubs in Goll. For example, it is said that commercial exploitation of the kinkeliba shrub (*Combretum micranthum*) by Sérère and Wolof women often causes conflict with the Peuhl. In particular, the fact that the Wolof cut the branches of the shrub, thereby halting its growth, often leads to problems with the Peuhl for whom these shrubs provide an important source of additional livestock feed. Until recently, resource management conflicts in Goll did not go beyond this type of problem. In particular, ownership of the land was never really an issue, in view of the faint hope at the time of recovering Goll for agricultural purposes. For the Peuhl, the most important thing was to be able to go on using the grazing and, for the Sérères, there was no point in recovering land which was unsuitable for cultivation. Traditional Sérère owners

and herder users were therefore always able to live together without disputing the land.

However, the situation suddenly changed with the prospect of the construction of the Cayor canal through the middle of Goll. The canal is a huge government project whose primary objective is to supply Dakar with drinking water from a lake located 300 km away. The canal should enable the villages along the route to become involved in irrigated farming and market gardening in the dry season over a total area of approximately 8,000 hectares. In an area where rainfall is very low and uncertain, it is not hard to see the importance of such a prospect for the targeted rural communities. The implications of such a project in Goll are all the more substantial in that the abandonment of agricultural activity in this part of the territory was mainly due to the lack of water. The project will therefore arouse keen interest in those parts of Goll crossed by the canal and has brought different interests into play around the ownership and use of the land.

1. The Sérères insist that they have ownership rights over this land and are therefore mainly concerned to have these recognised. However, meeting their claim, which would mean dispossessing the herders, would be especially difficult, because, in legal terms (under the law governing state property), leaving the land uncultivated for several decades could be taken as failure to exploit it actively. This is why the Sérères are less keen on resorting to formal structures than in coming to an informal arrangement with the Peuhl to settle this problem.
2. The Peuhl, evoking the law governing state property, are also claiming rights by virtue of their long settlement in the area and failure by the

Sérères to exploit it actively. However, the situation is no more easy for them since the law to which they might refer is ambiguous as regards the notion of "active pastoral exploitation", especially in areas which are mainly devoted to agriculture. In fact, so far, the rather reductionist view of this concept which, as far as most people understand it, should be backed up by concrete evidence such as crops or trees, excludes pastoral "exploitation" except in areas where herding is the dominant activity. The mobility of pastoral people and the areas they use is not adequately taken into account in enforcing legislation relating to natural resource management. This may be why the Peuhl are adopting a cautious attitude in this situation and also seem to favour a strategy of dialogue.

3. The Rural Council stands by its power to allocate and withdraw allocation of land in the Rural Community. It invoked this power recently when allocating, against considerable opposition, parts of Goll to people outside the Rural Community. This interference by the Rural Council complicates the situation further by provoking a second type of conflict in connection with access to Goll and in this case setting the local people against the interests of people and institutions from the outside to whom plots have been allocated. Experience in other parts of the country has already shown that decisions taken by Rural Councils have not always been in the interests of local people. This is the structure to which people from the outside who wish to use land in Goll present their requests. The risk of local people being dispossessed of all or part of this land is therefore quite real if no appropriate strategy is adopted. We should remember that, in terms of the policy of decentralization operating in Senegal, Rural Communities which bring together a certain number of

villages (between 20 and 40) are endowed with certain prerogatives including that of allocating and withdrawing allocation of land located within the boundaries of the Rural Community, as under the Law of 1964, all land becomes the property of the State which entrusts its management to these institutions.

There are, therefore, two types of conflict whose origins and settlement processes are governed by quite different mechanisms. The first type sets the interest of the local Sérère, Wolof and Peuhl people against those of outside institutions or people, in this case the Rural Council and agribusiness sector wishing to take advantage of the construction of the canal. The second type of conflict is internal and involves the rights of the herders and those of the Sérères. It is interesting to note that farmers and herders have put together an alliance as a strategy to oppose the expropriation of Goll by outside interests. As they point out, settlement of the internal conflict can only come about if collective property rights are secured through an alliance between Sérères, Peuhl and Wolof. This situation makes at least one thing clear: farmers and herders, by agreeing to defend Goll collectively, are implicitly recognising the possibility of setting up a co-management system.

Faced with the rather complex situation which has arisen, the two communities have set up a strategy based both on an alliance against external aggression and on mechanisms to resolve their internal conflicts through dialogue.

A) Alliances against external forces

Since the idea of building the Kayor canal was put forward, various shareholders in agri-business projects have begun to pay court to the Rural Council with a view to securing land in Goll. It is said that some land has already been allocated to someone from the outside and other requests are being considered. Faced with this phenomenon which is likely to become more widespread in the future, the local people, especially the Peuhl and Sérères, have forged an alliance whose aim is to secure their rights over the part of the territory which is coveted by outsiders. Three main strategies have been adopted to this effect: taking part in and, if necessary, taking control of formal land management structures, especially the Rural Council, alliances with influential people and keeping a step ahead of the rules.

1. Gaining entry to and control over the Rural Council.

Considering that the structure which has the power to decide on the allocation of land and the withdrawal of allocation of same is the Rural Council, the best way to secure local people's rights over Goll is to ensure that they are represented within that structure. This is what lies behind the efforts made especially by young people to gain representation within the Rural Council in order to be able to monitor any deliberations dealing with any part of the Fandène land, but especially Goll. Young people are now part of the Rural Council and have managed to influence its decisions so that their interests are not neglected. In this particular case, although the herders are under-represented in the Rural Council, the

new alliance between them and the farmers has allowed Rural Councillors from the village to ensure that herders' interests are taken into account.

2. Alliances with influential people

This strategy has mainly been developed by the herders, many of whom look after livestock belonging to influential people residing in Thiès or Dakar who might be able to help the community to safeguard its living space. The interests of these people are to some extent linked with those of the herders, since making the latter's situation more secure could help to stabilize the system of using livestock as a form of capital accumulation. The aim of making alliances with senior government officials or politicians is mainly to get them to intervene to prevent land in Goll being allocated to people outside the community, which could eventually lead to the exclusion of local people. In fact, this strategy has been given more urgency by the new issues which have arisen, having been developed by the Peuhl since their tragic conflict with the Wolof. It should be remembered that pastoralists have always been in a very precarious situation in respect of access to and use of natural resources in agricultural areas. This is why, failing any legal mechanism to safeguard their interests, they are looking to find other ways of resolving the difficulties.

3. Staying one step ahead of the law by demonstrating occupation

Use of land for pastoral purposes in agricultural areas does not, according to current understanding, seem to be considered as a legally recognised system of exploitation. The Peuhl, Sérères and Wolof, the

three communities which share the land, have therefore decided to set up a joint development plan. In the first instance, a belt of trees is to be planted right around Goll, in order to give concrete expression to the physical boundaries of this area of community property. This belt of trees will thus give the lie to the argument which might be put forward that the land is not being actively exploited. It is a way of being one step ahead of any decisions that the Rural Council could make to take all or part of Goll away from the local people. It is interesting to note that this plan, which will be set up if the expected outside technical support is obtained, provides for supervision of the plantations by the herders themselves. Local people think that this management system is the best way to guarantee the sustainability of the programme as the Peuhl are the only community living in Goll. Furthermore, giving responsibility to the Peuhl in this way reflects a concern that the latter should find the best possible way of integrating pastoral and agricultural activities within Goll.

B) Resolving internal conflicts through dialogue.

This strategy of alliances is mainly designed to deal with conflicts with parties outside the community, but does not resolve the dispute between Peuhl pastoralists and Sérère farmers. This example shows that when the immediate interests of a community are put at risk, groups within that community can form alliances to fight the danger, even if there is latent or open conflict within the community. This is therefore a two-tier strategy in which it is agreed that conflicts with outside interests, i.e. with the outside world, must be settled before tackling conflict within the community. It is interesting to note that mechanisms to resolve conflicts between the two communities systematically exclude resort to formal or

official structures. The Rural Council, which is the body managing the community lands, has not been approached. Its involvement could even make it more difficult to reach agreement. The village community has its own conflict resolution authorities and mechanisms. In this particular case, the Goll management committee, made up of Peuhl and Sérères, is responsible for handling the conflict and it was, moreover, the structure which suggested the above-mentioned development plan. The aim of this on-going process is, in the long term, to establish a system in Goll which will enable farmers and herders to exploit its resources together. People are already thinking of ways to take herders' specific needs into account, in particular marking out a corridor to allow livestock to reach the future canal to drink and better management of transhumance, in order to reduce the risk of crop damage by wandering animals as well as to respect Goll's carrying capacity. To this end, regular meetings are held between farmers and herders.

Some lessons to be drawn

1. The experience of Fandène shows once again that the level of interest in natural resources depends to a large extent on their economic value. However, in an area where rules governing access to natural resources are designed largely with reference to the dominant production system - agriculture - pastoral communities tend to be placed in a permanently precarious position which prevents them from contemplating any rational system for managing resources.
2. In rural areas, for local people customary rights usually take precedence over modern law. The Peuhl avoid making explicit reference to modern

law because the latter is very ambiguous with regard to the notion of pastoral exploitation. In this particular case, the ambiguity of the law eventually made it possible to set up a joint plan whose main aim is to ensure that Goll is managed as community property by the Peuhl and the Sérères. The new development scheme will attempt to safeguard the interests of the two communities.

3. The relationship between farmers and herders in respect of access to natural resources is not always one of conflict, so long as rules governing access to and management of resources are clearly defined and accepted by everyone. But this is only possible if the rules of the game are laid down by the community itself and not imposed from the outside. The case of Fandène provides a good illustration of the potential for joint management of resources by groups with apparently conflicting interests. Furthermore, when powerful outside economic interests threaten local resources, alliances between farmers and herders become possible. The joint management plan suggested by herders and farmers is based on this logic.
4. Conflict resolution is mainly handled by the village community's own authorities and resort to formal structures is exceptional. This is particularly true in relation to land-use management. Formal institutions, especially the Rural Community, play a marginal role in local resource management and conflicts relating to such resources. It is extremely rare that a conflict cannot be settled within the village community itself and has to be brought before the Rural Council. And even on the rare occasions when that does happen, the conflict tends to be between two communities and not between two sub-groups of the same community.

5. When they cannot find anything in legislation which could protect their interests, herders tend to fall back on social solidarity networks to defend those interests. Lobbying can be very effective and shows how people are able to adapt their strategies to the statutory and social context.
6. Farmers and herders have different concepts of what constitutes their territory. Whereas the former tend to think in terms of a fixed area (which may involve several villages), to the latter, territorial limits are very elastic. So while the Peuhl in Fandène may claim rights of access to the resources of Goll, they could do the same in relation to other grazing areas they have been using for a long time.
7. Common property resources can be the subject of very strict planning and management as in the case of Fandène. However, rights of access and management of these resources by local people must be made very clear. It is true that the threat of dispossession has played a major part in speeding up land-use planning by the people of Goll.
8. The ambiguous nature of current regulations is a factor in speeding up the process of resource degradation. When systems of access to and management of natural resources are not explicit as to the rights of local people or when these place the latter in a precarious situation, this usually leads to lack of motivation to establish sustainable management mechanisms for these resources. Until the joint plan for Goll was set up, the precarious position of the Peuhl had not encouraged them to contemplate long-term, planned land management in Goll. On the contrary, the feeling that the territory could be taken away from them at any time had made them rather cautious.

9. In this particular case, the fact that the Sérères and Peuhl were on familiar terms was conducive to social stability and heading off conflicts. We are dealing with a diffuse but extremely powerful social mechanism for preventing open conflict. This type of relationship precludes any form of violent conflict between the two communities, who are therefore obliged to settle any conflict amicably, however high the stakes. Familiar relationships take the heat out of conflicts and make them easier to resolve, as the communities have no choice but to live together.

CONCLUSION

This example demonstrates that communities are able not only effectively to manage internal conflicts over access to natural resources, but to go further and allow the various sub-groups to forge alliances against outside interests which could endanger their rights of access and use in respect of natural resources. The establishment of a joint development plan proves that, despite the fact that their interests are quite often wrongly deemed to be conflicting, farmers and herders can both use a given economic resource provided that they themselves define the rules of the game. More importantly, the experience of Fandène has shown that, in the final analysis, rational and sustainable local resource management is possible within the framework of community ownership of those resources. All that is needed is that the rights of the local people in respect of these resources should be explicitly recognised and that they should be responsible for defining management mechanisms and rules.

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