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LAND RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF INTEGRATION: PASTORALISTS' STRATEGIES IN A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Land Rights and the Politics of Integration:
pastoralists' strategies in a comparative view.

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Abstract

In this working paper we will depict and compare two cases of farmer-herder relations, one in Burkina Faso, the other one in North West Cameroon. In both research sites, the herders are Fulbe agro-pastoralists and ethnic minorities. While one case is marked by integration; the other one is increasingly violent. To understand the different situations we want to relate the two case studies to differing patterns of land use. In a second step, we will link them to pastoralists' strategies in the struggle over access to land. Finally, we will look at local discourses on Fulbe identity which relate to pastoralists' quest for land.

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Land Rights and the Politics of Integration

In the investigation of land rights, there seems to be a clear focus on what we call 'the landed' groups: i.e. those who claim ownership over the land and exert political control over it (cf. Downs & Reyna 1988, Shipton & Goheen 1992, Berry 1993)[2]. There is, however, a flipside: 'landless' groups and individuals who do not own the land they use and settle on. Most pastoral and agro-pastoral groups will certainly be considered 'landless' in this respect, while, at the same time, they are integrated into a larger overarching society built around landed institutions (founding clans, earth priests, etc.).

Integration, as Schlee (2001b: 43) suggests, may be seen as the fitting of groups into overarching, systemic connections. The joint construction of regional socio-political units, described in this working paper, corresponds to this idea, which is contrary to the notion of integration as subordination of minority groups into a dominant *Leitkultur*. As various studies demonstrate integration is not necessarily opposed to conflict, which, under controlled and contained conditions, may rather be a means of integration (Schlee 2001a, Elwert 2001a, 2001b: 2546). Hagberg (1998: 20), in his study on dispute settlement between agriculturalists and agro-pastoralists in western Burkina Faso, differentiates between various forms of conflict resolution, making clear that the use of violence does not contribute to the resolution of the underlying disputes. We observe similar outcomes in our cases, but we also see that violent conflicts are likely to be generalised and coupled with stereotypes along ethnic lines. The authority to sanction such violent outbreaks may serve as an indicator of who (e.g. state or local community) is referred to as the overarching unit of integration. Land rights and access to land are important factors supporting social, political, and spatial integration.

Landedness and landlessness are relative and mutually contingent ascriptions. They reflect and, at the same time, define socio-political relations and social identities (cf. Hann 1998, Juul & Lund 2002). At the heart of being identified as landed or landless are property rights over land, intertwined with notions of belonging and spiritual bonds. When looking at land rights, two concepts are relevant and have to be distinguished clearly: property and ownership. Property has widely been identified as a bundle of rights and powers (cf. Gluckman 1965, Berry 2002). Ownership, on the other hand, implies an abstract, exclusive right over an undivided whole. Property rights are temporary, fragile and subject to continuous negotiations; ownership is

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[2] Exceptions to the exclusive focus on 'landed' groups are the edited volumes by Bassett & Crummey 1993 and Juul & Lund 2002.

durable and can only be nullified by expropriation (Bergh 1996). Both notions of property and of ownership are common in contemporary African legislation and are often at the heart of struggles over land. Nevertheless, full ownership (in terms of land) is more of a theoretical than practical concept, since land remains under the ultimate custody of the state.

Comparative Fulbe Studies

This working paper looks at a particular set of groups at the other end of the landed-landless spectrum. We will focus on the pastoral and agro-pastoral population, namely Fulbe herders, in their relation to farming neighbours.

 Comparative studies on pastoralists in Africa, and the Fulbe in particular, are numerous.[3] It is remarkable that where pastoralism is identified with ethnic groups, or serves as an ethnic marker, the Fulbe are, next to the Tuareg, the major group in Western Africa; East Africa and the desert, meanwhile, are populated by a wide variety of ethnically specified pastoral groups (Blench 1999). With an estimated population of thirteen million[4], the Fulbe are one of the largest ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa, stretching from Senegambia into Sudan and Ethiopia, and from Mali to the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Talking of herders, thus, almost inevitably means taking into account concepts of 'Fulbeness' (*pulaaku*) and commonalities in terms of religious, social and moral standards. We want to make clear that we do not follow an essentialist approach. We see Fulbe society as highly differentiated, in terms of hierarchical stratification as well as in terms of geographical and cultural diversity and dispersion (cf. Azarya 1999). In comparing Fulbe strategies in the struggle over access to land in two contexts, we focus on socio-economic and political factors defining or limiting the respective frames of action. At the same time, we are interested in exploring the range of strategies, that are considered compatible with apparently fluid and negotiable concepts of 'Fulbeness' by the actors themselves.

 To understand contemporary outcomes, it is useful to follow a historical approach, taking into account the effects of colonialism and the role of the post-colonial state in respect to land rights and citizenship. Hereby we would like to emphasize that we do not interpret changes over the past century in evolutionary or romantic terms, i.e. opposing the peaceful past to a conflict-ridden present (cf. Breusers et al. 1998 for a critical assessment). Instead we agree with Burnham (1999) and Wilson (1995) that the Fulbe have frequently faced crisis and have developed a broad

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[3] For example Azarya et al. 1999, Botte et al. 1999, Botte & Schmitz 1994, Diallo & Schlee 2000, to name only a few.

[4] SIL, http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=FUB; viewed on 12/12/02.

repertoire of strategies to deal with it. Even though Fulbe identity might commonly be associated with pastoralism, they do not necessarily go hand in hand, and each of them might have an independent future (Burnham 1999).

Another theme in comparative Fulbe research is the contrast between farmer-herder relations in the Sahel and the savannah zones. Southward Fulbe migration into the savannah is a relatively recent phenomenon and has confronted the herders with new ecological, social and political contexts. Researchers (Bassett 1993, Blench 1994, Diallo 2001) point out that farmer-herder relations in the Sahel are characterised by economic complementarity while, in the savannah zone, resource competition prevails. Ecologic, economic and political factors are accounted for this contrast. This distinction, however, cannot fully explain different patterns of farmer-herder relations. As this working paper shows, the historical, economic and political conditions in the two cases differ considerably, although both are located in the savannah region. Also within the countries we can observe variations: Hagberg (1998) gives a detailed account of the violent character of farmer-herder relations in western Burkina Faso, whereas Breusers (forthc.) points at the high level of social and cultural integration of both groups in the country's north. For Cameroon's North West, Kaberry (1960) and Boutrais (1995/96: 722-772) provide us with an image of conflictive relations, while Moritz (2002) describes mutual dependency and peaceful interactions in the Far North.

Comparing farmer-herder relations in the context of multi-ethnic societies, we hence follow a three-dimensional approach, i.e. analysing differences and similarities along geographical, historical and social axes. Furthermore, to capture the complexity of social relations and the dynamics of social interaction, we have to take into account different levels of discourses (local, regional, national), also going beyond ethnic boundaries.

Two Cases: political and historical backgrounds

a) Burkina Faso's central south
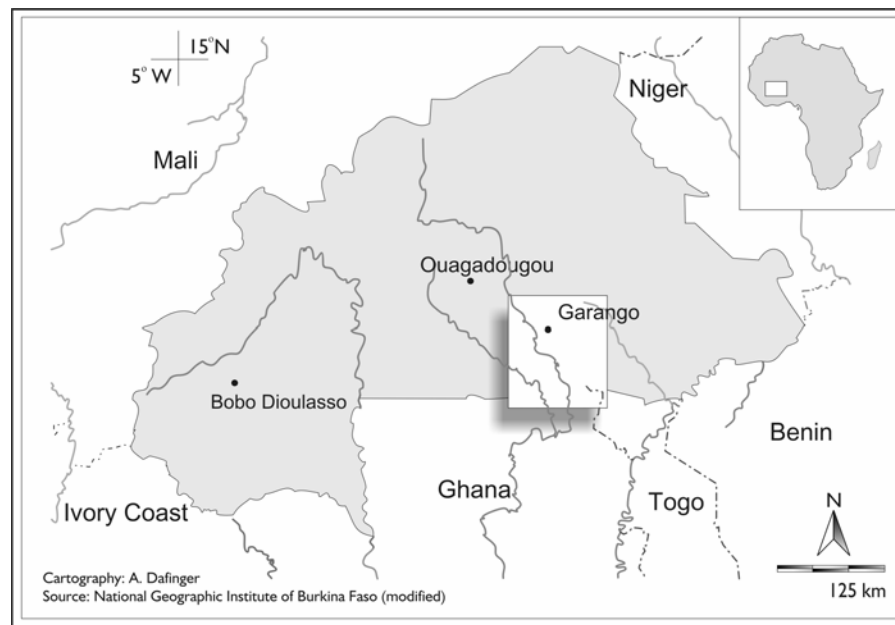
Map 1: The research site in Burkina Faso

The area of research covers 80 x 90 km in the western half of Boulgou province in the central south of Burkina Faso. It is part of West Africa's forest savannah belt with moderate rainfall (600 – 1000 mm) during a three-month rainy season. Ca. 350,000 cultivators and 35,000 cattle-herders (Pare and Yameogo 2001: 26) share the area's most important resources: land and water. The two groups in question, the agro-pastoral Fulbe and the farming Bisa account for about 95% of the population. Unanimous versions of oral history claim that the two groups migrated together at the same time, assumingly 400 years ago (Dafinger 2000, Izard 1970); several other waves of migrants that followed later were integrated into the existing ethnic pattern. A large part of the Bisa (the farming) population is thus in effect of different ethnic – mainly Mossi – origin (cf. Dafinger 1998, Lahuec 1983) and seems to have significantly shaped what is now conceived as a Bisa cultural and political system. The Fulbe, on the other hand, have largely prevented non-Fulbe from being incorporated into their pastoral society through rules of endogamy, with the exception of slaves who were taken by the Fulbe among the farming population, and a limited number of interethnic marriages. This in part explains why the 'first-comer principle' (cf. Kopytoff 1987), a major argument in legitimizing land rights, political supremacy or

marginalization in West African societies, plays no role in interethnic discourse, though it is important in structuring intra-ethnic and inter-clan relations among the farming people.

Both groups, Bisa and Fulbe, are socially interwoven in several ways: they maintain an established exchange system that includes agricultural for pastoral produce and vice versa; farmers in general leave their cattle with their Fulbe neighbours; constructing houses for the herders is a welcome source of additional income for many farmers. This historical and present integration of the two groups into an overarching social, economic, and political system, leads to the general mutual recognition of both groups. The Fulbe presence is in general not contested, despite individual clashes that recur when fields are destroyed or water holes are turned into gardens. The mutual integration of both groups, hence, is not a monocausal process but rather based on a fabric of several interdependencies. Occasional interethnic marriages, moreover, (i.e. Bisa women marrying into Fulbe families) help to reaffirm individual inter-family ties across the groups, involving both men and women in inter-group relations. Contrary to the Cameroonian case described below there is no gender biased repulsion on either side.

b) The Fulbe in North West Cameroon
The North West Province, commonly known as the Western Grassfields, covers an area of ca. 18,000 km² with a population of ca. 1.2 million people[5]. Compared to the arid climate and limited vegetation in Burkina Faso, it represents a favourable ecologic environment. The sub-tropic climate with only four to five months of dry season (more than 1,500 mm rainfall), the volcanic soil and the absence of trypanosomiasis render it a very fertile region, supporting agriculture as well as cattle husbandry (Boutrais 1984).

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[5] Statistisches Bundesamt 1993: 38.
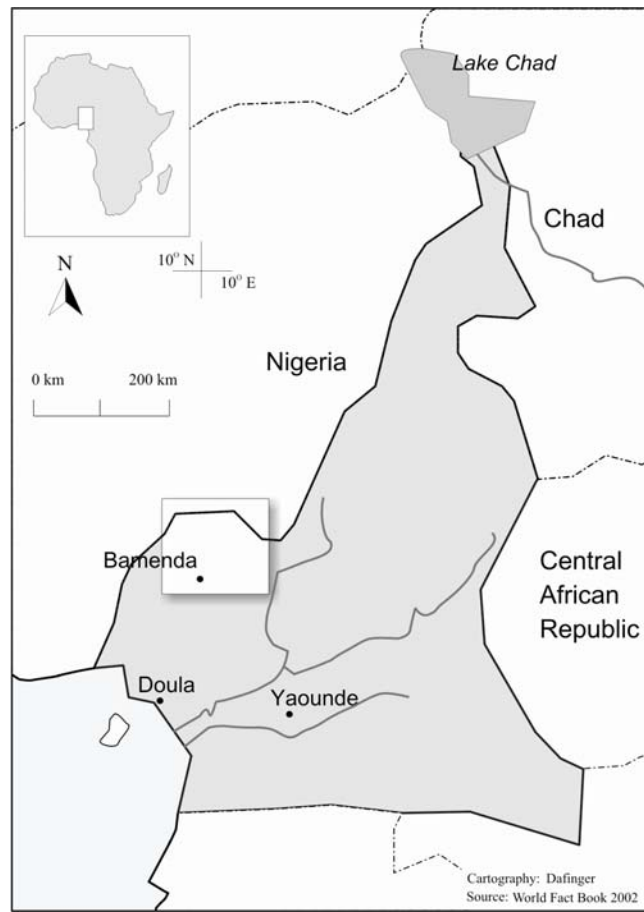
Map 2: The research site in Cameroon

The majority of the population are subsistence farmers and belong to linguistically separate communities which share common features of socio-political organisation. The Fulbe agro-pastoralists amount to 5 to 10% of the population (Boutrais 1995/96: 524-537). They entered the area as late as the early 20th century along with the advent of German and British colonialism and settled in the scarcely inhabited highlands which offered excellent pasture conditions (Boutrais 1984, 1986). Subsequently, more pastoralists followed with their families and herds. While the population density was relatively low and farming and pasture lands abundant, crop damages were a recurrent problem. To this day, neither farmers and herders, nor the colonial and post-colonial administration have been successful in negotiating a satisfactory way of combining the two extensive economic systems (cf. Boutrais 1995/96: 772-802, Njeuma & Awasom 1988, Frantz 1986, Pelican forthc.).

While farmer-herder relations on an everyday basis are comparable to the situation described in the Burkina case, the spatial pattern varies considerably and separates herders' and farmers' settlements. At the same time, there is a clear social stratification of and within the ethnic groups,

based on land rights and belonging. The farming communities claim the status of first-comers and see themselves as 'owners' or 'guardians' of the land. Fulbe herders initially were welcomed by local chiefs and the colonial administration, which both saw a profitable opportunity in the pastoralists' presence (tribute and tax collection). Nevertheless, the Fulbe's presence has also been contested. Farmer-herder relations were repeatedly overshadowed by crop damages. These led to serious clashes and open conflicts in which women, who are the actual farm workers and food producers, raised their voice, demanding the pastoralists' expulsion on the grounds that the latter continually disrespected their efforts and endangered the farmers' livelihood by appropriating more and more land. They blamed their husbands who claimed the fields near the village for cash crop production and required the women to work their farms further in the bush. They also accused the traditional authorities of siding with the herders and following their personal interests to the detriment of the farmers. The structural imbalance between men and women, chiefs and commoners has negative impacts on farmer-herder relations, as frustration and hatred are channeled against the Fulbe (cf. Boutrais 1995/96: 712-764, Pelican forthc.).

In all, the cases reveal several strands of commonalities and differences: the Fulbe are minorities in both areas and farmers as well as herders are agro-pastoralists to varying degrees, combining cattle raising with subsistence farming. While economic categories get increasingly blurred, they are central to self- and mutual ascriptions of ethnic identity.

Against these comparable backgrounds the descriptions of the two field sites also underline the particularities that account for the socio-political differences. Divergent historical and political (i.e. statal) trajectories and specific intra-ethnic social structures appear the most relevant in the line of this argument.

'Landed' and 'Landless'

Landholding systems, land rights and regulations can be seen as the outcome of social relations, i.e. as society's task in securing property rights. But it is likewise legitimate to invert the argument and to change the perspective. Land rights could, instead, be seen as the structuring centre of social systems: the core around which social relations are built. 'Landed' and 'landless' in this perspective are primarily social markers which structure religious, economic and political hierarchies. This change of perspective allows us to depart from the dichotomy of landowners versus non-landowners and to look at land rights in terms of social relations (cf. Dafinger forthc.). Following Hann's (1998) approach we see property rights not as relationships between a

person and an object, but between persons with respect to an object. In the same way, property in land is aspired to by individuals and groups not only because of its material significance but its capacity to regulate relations between people.

The above change of perspective also requires broadening the scope of analysis. Studying land rights and tenure, we must not only look at those who own or control access to land, and how land is acquired and secured; the analysis needs to include those who relate to land in other ways. Land ownership thus becomes only one (albeit an important) argument in 'the landed discourse'. Economic assets of land may even be completely detached from property rights. Temporal use rights and/or access rights to specific resources overlay territorial ownership. The power of naming the land and the construction of the religious or social landscape may contradict or fully ignore other property rights.

In both countries land is state property. Beyond this comparable legal framework, however, economic and historic trajectories reflect and create sufficient room for manoeuvres in state policy as well as individual and group strategies.

a) Burkina Faso

The land occupied by Fulbe in Burkina's central south is conceived as the property of the ('landowning') farmers' clan. Officially, all land has been declared state land. Elders, chiefs, and earth priests are socially/traditionally entitled to allocate tracts of land to members of the village communities and, occasionally, to outsiders (i.e. settlers from neighbouring communities). Rights to receive land for usufruct (farming, herding, construction) are acquired either through membership in the landowning clan, through social integration into the local community by submission to the religious and political authorities, or by social and economic affiliation that involves no religious and only limited political subordination as in the case of Fulbe herders. These transitions, however, are only gradual if different intra-ethnic layers are taken into consideration.

In the workshop 'The Landed and the Landless: strategies of territorial integration and dissociation'[6], we suggested that being landed is a relative and contingent attribute that defines the relation between two social groups or individuals. For example, from the perspective of a farmer a blacksmith may be considered landless in terms of property rights; at the same time, in terms of belonging and, being an autochthonous, he would be counted as landed.

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[6] The workshop was held May 27-29, 2002 at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale.

landed				landless
Dominant farmers' clan	'Spin-offs'; joint migration;	Farming late-comers	blacksmiths	Herders (Fulbe)
Landed property		Clan is a landowner elsewhere	No landed property	
Spatially integrated into village community				Spatially separated from village community

The line between landed and landless, therefore, is not one-dimensional, but has several layers, corresponding to the multiplicity of rights and relations to the land. There are, however, overarching principles and processes that help to deal with and explain the broad scope of layers. A crucial point, as we see it, lies in the *power to name*, or define, the land[7]. If one understands power as a societal consensus, created through public discourse, as Arendt (1986) does, then, the power of naming the landscape, to borrow Bourdieu's (1987: 838) terminology, is shared, to differing degrees, by all social groups and individuals. The so called landless still have their say (verbal or non-verbal) in the definition of the land and in this way over the allocation of resources. To name the land – e.g. to call a place a 'village' or not – i.e. to have the power to do so, can have far reaching consequences, as we shall see (below). In the modern landscape, where political rights, access to infrastructural resources, etc. are tied to 'village communities' (as administrative titles), mere 'settlements' are excluded from these rights by definition. To call land 'civilised' or 'settled', or to perceive it as 'untamed bush' is at the very heart of struggles and debates over claiming different access and property rights; especially in terms of farmers and herders.

What can be derived from this, too, is that landedness has its inherent logical boundaries. The more exclusive territorial claims are, the lesser the social control will be: a landowning farming clan (*les autochthones*) is recognised as such, only because of the 'landless' – those groups to whom it spatially, temporally or otherwise shares out its land. Excluding (or expelling) others would maximize the possible economic benefit, but deprive the landholders of their political or social authority and their embeddedness in a wider social network. Land, we may thus say, is of a 'polymorphic nature', it is – among others – an economic as well as a social asset. Both aspects, though, are not fully compatible. As a consequence the above line is also an axis of integration. It helps define (and redefine) the social position of individuals and groups vis-à-vis each other.

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[7] Berry (2002: 107-108) and others have repeatedly stressed this point.

Being 'landless', too, holds its benefits as those who control the land depend on sharing its resources with those who do not. Sharing the land is a major integrative social mechanism.

b) North West Cameroon
In Cameroon the situation looks different. In addition to the landed-landless spectrum on the local level, as shown in the Burkina case, there is another layer; this time a landed-landless dichotomy, which is defined by and in relation to the state.

   Colonial and post-colonial governments grappled with the question of how to coalesce customary and modern land tenure, i.e. how to combine land ownership and property rights. Approaches to nationalise and privatise land were already introduced by the German and British colonial regimes and fully implemented with Cameroonian independence. Through control over land, the government attempted to exercise control and political power over people and their economic production. When confronted with the problem of recurrent crop damage, the British administration decided to intervene into farmer-herder relations and to take control over the allocation of land. They split the land into farming and grazing areas, assigning these to farmers and pastoralists, respectively. Thereby another layer of landed-landless attributions was created: farmers and herders are both only given usufruct rights in the respective zones. Under the aspect of land control, both social groups are 'landless', since the power of controlling land use and attribution is vested in the state. The only possibility to become 'landed' in this sense is through legal acquisition of tracts of land whereby full and exclusive ownership is achieved. Acquiring a land certificate is a distinctively individual strategy and requires a fair amount of economic and social capital. The majority of farmers and herders are not able to do so and, therefore, remain 'landless'.

   This shift of control over land from the local to the national level had serious impacts on the power balance between farmers and herders, which still pertain. The farming communities, their chiefs in particular, felt deprived and disempowered. They demanded to be integrated in administrative procedures in order to gain back political and economic power. The pastoralists, on the other hand, were confronted with increasing hostility from the farmers and relied on the administration's intervention and protection. Both farmers and herders lost power in the sense of negotiating a societal consensus over land rights among themselves. The state, meanwhile, gained power by following the policy of *divide et impera*. Already in colonial times, and increasingly after independence, the Cameroonian government – like in many other African countries – encouraged market-integration and intensification of agricultural and pastoral activities.

Programs to familiarize and assist people with cash crop production and cattle raising (*élevage*) were introduced; marketing structures and transport systems were built up. Many individuals made use of these opportunities to improve their economic status. Competition over land and landed resources increased; people became more and more aware of its monetary value and the need to exclude potential competitors. Nowadays, some of the wealthy farmers and pastoralists have undergone the procedures of acquiring land certificates. This gives them long-lasting security and control over their production means, encouraging substantial investments.

Acquiring and selling exclusive property rights over land and landed resources is only possible when land is not necessarily seen as community property and a shared resource, but rather as alienable and dividable. This differentiation seems crucial for the argument and thus deserves closer examination.

Sharing and Dividing

We suggest a clear differentiation between principles of shared use of land and landed resources, on the one hand, and of division into tracts of exclusive property on the other. Although both principles generally tend to coexist within the settings, we see clear emphasis on either in the respective contexts.

a) Burkina Faso

Local transethnic[8] relations in the Burkina example are marked by a high degree of territorial integration. This includes a shared use of land, a shared localized identity, and, moreover, a shared social, political and economic landscape. This arrangement of mutual dependency and the philosophy of sharing are best exemplified through an analysis of the settlement pattern: the mentioned ratio of 90% farmers and 10% herders is maintained throughout the region and throughout most of the annual cycle. There is no large scale spatial segregation, except for three months out of the year when most cattle (not people!) move to rather uninhabited stretches along the areas between two rivers. Spatial differentiation takes place on the local level, where almost all permanent Fulbe settlements are politically, and very often historically, attached to farmers' villages. Here, distances of up to four kilometres may separate Bisa (farmers') and Fulbe (herders') clusters. The Fulbe settlements, however, are generally referred to by the name of the

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[8] Burnham (1999) distinguishes transethnic from interethnic: transethnic referring to relations between members of a multiethnic community which forms the basic and integral unit of analysis while interethnic implies ethnic groups as the starting point.

neighbouring Bisa village. This is just an outward expression for the conception of a shared locality: the overall landscape is not divided into separate farming and pastoral zones, but farmers' clans and herders' lineages together form local communities. It is these communities that divide spatially: into farmers' zones, mainly for settling and cultivation, and the so-called 'bush land', meant only for occasional farming use and largely left to the herders. Temporal boundaries overlay these spatial divisions and let herders use the fields after harvest or ban them from particular tracts in the bush during rainy season.

Conflicts that occur along these spatio-temporal boundaries are therefore mainly local affairs between neighbours, who often have established social, personal, and often friendship ties. The close proximity of cattle and crop, on the other hand, inevitably leads to a high number of such incidences that remain permanent low-level conflicts.[9]

What we see in this case is not only groups living together, but the spatial and temporal sharing of land and resources, plus the common locality that is constructed and constantly re-constructed through mutual action: the maintenance and transgression of these boundaries, the conflicts over these transgressions and their regulation.

The normative background, however, sets limits to any such actors' strategies. Overt denial of each other's rights and too far-reaching transgressions will meet with resistance within the own group. The background of a shared landscape (i.e. a shared social and environmental locality) is bestowed with a power in a most Arendtian sense: a power that is generated in discourse and mutual action.

b) North West Cameroon
The territory of North West Cameroon is divided into farming and grazing areas which are reserved for the exclusive use of farmers or pastoralists, respectively. The first demarcation of land was carried out in the early 1940s. Despite the fact that not all areas have been mapped out fully, there is a shared understanding by the authorities and population how to roughly identify farming and grazing areas. In many cases, natural features (elevation, vegetation, streams) are used to define the boundaries. In other cases, clear boundaries are not set until it becomes necessary.

Transhumance is a common practice and causes most of the crop damage. The herds are taken to the lowlands for three to four months during the dry season. To reduce the potential of crop

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[9] Corresponding to Hagberg's (1998) term of 'dispute' in non-violent conflicts.

damage, transhumance tracks and transhumance areas have been identified and demarcated. Also, the dates for herd movements are set and announced province-wide.

All these administrative measures have been introduced with the aim of reducing farmer-herder conflicts and to regulate their co-existence. Land and landed resources have thereby become the main focus. Land is delimited spatially and, with the exception of transhumance areas, fixed over time. Land and landed resources are restricted to exclusive use and negotiations over boundaries are reduced to a minimum. Any deviation from the aspired land tenure model is supposed to be approved by the administration (e.g. farming on designated plots within the grazing area).

Nevertheless, farmer-herder conflicts are frequent and seemingly more persistent and violent than in Burkina Faso's central south. There, the principle of sharing has developed over time, and arrangements are based on common definitions of the landscape. The principle of division, as it is dominant in North West Cameroon, on the other hand, was introduced by the colonial administration. It only partly rests on common definitions or shared agreements between farmers and herders. This becomes obvious in contested cases, where both sides claim exclusive usufruct rights. Often, the parties involved are not able or willing to negotiate a solution on the local level and insist on legal claims. The case then has to be treated by the administration, which works in cooperation with local authorities. Contested land claims are clarified and compensation is negotiated. It frequently happens that farmers or herders do not agree with the outcome of such cases and resort to various forms of resistance (e.g. refusal to pay compensation, continual farming, poisoning of cattle, physical violence etc). It becomes clear that since a basic consensus is missing, claims over land can only be successfully attained through force, and force generates resistance and violence.

In an ideology of sharing, potentially all members of the society have access to land and its resources. The spatial and temporal degrees of the sharing depend and change with numerous factors (economic cycles, duration of residence, personal ties etc.). Boundaries are not fixed but negotiated and confirmed through action and experience. In a divided landscape social groups do not integrate along the landed – landless axis, but rather form distinct units that compete for exclusive land rights.

Sharing serves social integration and generates power based on a common definition of the landscape. Permanent low-level conflicts may thus be seen as part of the process of constructing a common economic, social and political landscape. Dividing the land breaks up this dialogue, boundaries of exclusive territories need to be maintained by force (another Arendtian argument) and integration is deferred to a higher level: the new defining authorities, mainly the state and

agents of governance. We do not want to oversimplify this model: No society and no transethnic relationship could possibly be called either shared or divided. Instead, both concepts exist at the same time, most likely on different levels.

national :	Landed	
		landless
local :	landed ◆————————————◆ landless	
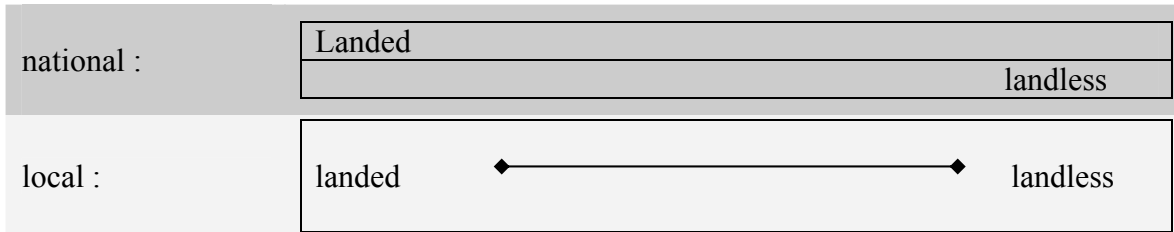
Thus actors, may oscillate between different layers, and contextually draw on ideologies of either division or sharing depending on which strategy is more convenient or feasible. Looking at these individual actors brings us to the third pillar of thought, namely the idea of 'voice' and 'exit' (Hirschmann 1970).

'Voice' and 'Exit'

Looking at the different backgrounds (a landed-landless continuum in a shared landscape, or a sharper distinction in an ideology of dividing) the key question seems to us how these principles and their distinctions are generated and maintained, and how they in turn shape the socio-political reality of everyday life. In other words, we need to look at the intentions and possibilities of individuals or small-scale groups and see how they navigate between the different layers.

The strategies of the herders differ significantly in the two cases. The Cameroonian example may best be described as 'raising the **voice**': making explicit claims to exclusive tracts of land, getting engaged in local politics and political networking. The Fulbe in the Burkina case, in turn, lay much emphasis on keeping a low profile, adhering to an ideology of 'exit'**:** they claim their rights to specific resources, but do not claim an overall, territorially perceived ownership of all landed assets within a delimited area.

It does not come as a surprise that in the Cameroonian case increasingly violent, though singular, clashes have come to mark interethnic relations, whereas in Burkina's savannah region, incidences are less aggressive but rather frequent. This tendency to overt violence in one case, and to permanent low-level conflict on the other, however, is only the most obvious. Social and political relations between the groups – and between the groups and the state – show a significantly different pattern in a variety of other ways. As we take a closer look at the actual

strategies, we want to stay with this terminology of 'voice' and 'exit'. Hirschmann (1970), in his work on "voice, exit and loyalty" in firms, organisations and states, defined 'exit' not as much as the physical act, but rather as the withdrawal from communication and participation; a point that seems especially important in looking at the cases presented here.

a) Burkina: the 'exit' option

Despite the longstanding integration of farmers and herders in Burkina's central south and the herders' omnipresence in everyday life, the Fulbe show a remarkably low profile in many other fields. They refrain from participating in local politics and rely on being represented by the village chief in administrative matters. The rate of school entry heads towards zero.[10] Modern infrastructure, such as modern wells or health posts, which increasingly shape the landscape, hardly ever makes its way into Fulbe settlements. This is not only due to the bias of the local administration and NGOs (or G-NGOs). Most Fulbe communities in the region are quite reluctant to invest in education or engage in the application processes for modern resources. One precondition, to give an example, to apply and eventually be granted a health post or a modern safe water pump, is that the applicants act as an organised local community: an officially recognisable village. To do so, the community needs to be identified with a delimitable area of land, it needs a minimum number of inhabitants (200-300),[11] and has to fulfil several other criteria, some of them as fuzzy as 'showing signs of permanence'.

Local relations between the herders and their farming neighbours show a similar pattern: Fulbe communities tend to split up at a low threshold (compared to the farmers) and disperse over several farming communities. Tracts of land the herders use for cultivation and settling are negotiated with individual landowners (although generally recognised by the earth priest and village chief), but not with the superordinate landowning clan or group, as other non-landowners (blacksmiths, so-called late-comers, etc.) might do. Relations to the land therefore always remain indirect, based on individual ties. At the same time, it reduces incentives to invest in the land and deprives the Fulbe from gradually acquiring further land rights.

This undoubtedly can be seen as efficient risk management. Spreading over several communities and extensive, instead of intensive, socio-spatial networks can provide the necessary alternatives in social or ecological crises. It creates an option for 'exit' – in the literal sense. In a

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[10] The overall rate for the Province is 6%. This, however is the official figure, and 'real' numbers can be estimated to be up to two times higher.

[11] Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Sécurité 1999.

wider understanding this is already 'exit', as opposed to 'voice': it is a partial withdrawal from participation in the local socio-political arena.

At the same time the exit-option evidently minimises the potential of 'voice'. Claims that could be made to access and use specific resources, lack their force. By refraining from engagement in local politics, negotiating as individuals with individuals, and almost always small in number, the Fulbe communities deprive themselves of their weight in village affairs. In fact, 'raising their voice', ultimately leads to 'exit' (forceful claims to resources lead to counterforce, which the weaker Fulbe cannot stand up against).

However, this option for 'exit' is also a powerful argument in the local discourse: while it weakens the individual herder's position, it is also a major incentive for the farmers as a group to cooperate and to concede rights, in order to maintain the overall social system. Exclusion of the herders, i.e. provoking their collective 'exit', would significantly weaken the village community. Any out-migration reduces the number of people in the social network the land-owning clan controls.

b) Cameroon: 'raising the voice'
The exit-strategy is also familiar to the Fulbe in North West Cameroon, but has been increasingly disputed. The slogan 'don't make *pulaaku*' has become popular among members of the younger generation who see their future vested in 'voice' instead of 'exit', i.e. political participation, confrontation in cases of exploitation by powerful individuals (including office holders), claiming civil rights and legalising entitlements etc. (cf. Davis 1995).

This call for 'voice' instead of 'exit' is embedded in long-term and short-term developments: With the introduction and reinforcement of the dividing principle, i.e. dividing the land as well as separating the economic and social groups, the government set the frame for competing resource claims. In the context of democratisation processes and the national discourse of 'autochthony' versus 'allochthony' in the 1990s (cf. Awasom 1999, Nyamnjoh & Rowlands 1998) 'raising the voice' became a strong argument in the political discourse. It became clear that all social groups were required to express and 'fight' for their interests, i.e. to prove themselves as powerful competitors to the government as well as potential and actual opponents.

Most pastoralists have prospered over time. Many have invested part of their wealth in political and social networks (e.g. education, pilgrimage), immobile assets (mainly housing) and in formalising their land rights. Economic and social costs involved in settling and integrating in a new place, therefore, have become considerable. In the pastoralists' perspective as a group, 'exit'

equally is no argument in the local discourse. While in the Burkina case, farmers need the herders to maintain their overall political and social system, the relationship seems antagonistic in the Cameroonian case. Here, farmers would actually welcome the herders' departure, reducing the number of competitors over landed and state resources. Moreover, a substantial number of Fulbe in North West Cameroon have the economic and political resources required to express 'voice'. Finally, 'voice' as a promising group strategy is embedded in an ideology of division, where claims are not addressed to the farmers but to the next higher authority, namely the state.

'Raising the voice', i.e. claiming land rights, citizenship and political representation, has an impact on Fulbe identity. The herders in North West Cameroon do not identify themselves with Nigerian origin or a nomadic lifestyle as often ascribed to them by farmers or even government officials. They aspire the status of 'autochthones' who bear a local identity and belonging (Pelican forthc.).

The slogan 'don't make *pulaaku*' is a strong expression of how Fulbe identity is challenged, reinterpreted and adapted to local circumstances. *Pulaaku* literally means 'Fulbeness' and here refers to the evasive strategy of the herders. By 'raising their voice', the pastoralists do not loose their Fulbe identity. Instead, they 'fight' for the survival and recognition of Fulbe (agro-) pastoralists as distinct units in the local and national arena.

Conclusion

In this working paper two examples of farmer-herder relations have been interpreted in terms of different modes and degrees of relation to the land. Two essential principles that guide the fundamentally different modes of 'landed' relations have been identified: an ideology of sharing versus the idea of a divided landscape. It has also become clear, however that there is no clear-cut division between the two categories: both will generally exist simultaneously, and actors use the plurality of layers.

In the analysis of these strategies we have suggested that the ideology of a shared landscape in the Burkina example encourages an evasive behaviour on the side of the herders. As a result, the balance of 'voice' and 'exit' establishes a stable local system of social integration and (more or less) permanent low-level conflicts. Actors, despite individual intentions to over-exert the strategy of 'voice', constantly reaffirm the ideology of sharing.

The situation in Cameroon helped to illustrate the predominance of division. Land rights are almost exclusively tied to ownership; integration through common relation to land and locality is

largely absent. The power of naming, i.e. defining use-zones and spatial boundaries is, along with the legitimate force to maintain these divisions, deferred to the state. Integration, here, happens on a 'higher' level, that of the nation-state.

The juxtaposition of the two examples also shows that the power of naming, i.e. defining politically relevant groupings, deciding about access and use rights to land and resources, almost inevitably goes hand in hand with providing the frame for integration. Determining who is in or out, and deciding on the normative rules of inter-group and interethnic relations is a local affair, and negotiated between the groups that share the land. Where land and resource use is divided and exclusive, it is delegated to the defining superordinate body: the state and other agents of governance, in the Cameroonian example.

In part we have looked at the origins and possible causes of these respective principles: in the Cameroon example colonial regulations created a divided landscape at an early point, in the Burkina case, longstanding relations and a shared history (along with an abundance of land and mutual interdependencies) can partially explain the ideology of sharing.

What seemed more important to us, however, was to investigate the causes that **sustain** these principles: individual intentions to gain maximum access to resources appear to be the driving force in both cases. Where land is primarily an economic asset, exclusion of others and struggles for exclusive ownership may be an adequate strategy. Where land is a social value, as it helps define social relations and positions groups and individuals in the social hierarchy (along the landed – landless axis), sharing out the land to non-landowners may be much more profitable.

In both cases the nation-state plays an important role, by providing room for manoeuvres and, depending on the case, by more or less encouraging a divided use of the land. It is also the state, along with an increasingly market oriented economy that will determine the prospects of these systems.

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