

Review Article

Difficult Cohabitation between Agro-Industries and Displaced Populations: Where Does The Problem Come from?

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Abstract: The study is essentially qualitative and aims, through a comprehensive approach, to clarify the factors that foster the relations of opposition between the Société des Caoutchoucs de Grand-Béréby (SOGB) and the populations who were evacuated in the department of Grand-Béréby for its installation. In this article, we hypothesise that the process of installation of state companies on rural arable land and their concessions to the private sector is a source of conflict. The data from the 27 interviews conducted with the different actors highlight the following main conflict factors: the lack of transparency in the signing of contracts, the non-respect of certain contractual clauses, the claim to arable land within the SOGB perimeter, and the claims to land within the SOGB perimeter for village extension. The results of this study show that the "development of San Pedro and its hinterland" project, which saw the construction of the bridge over the Sassandra River at Soubré, the Port of San Pedro and the installation of SOGB, did not really meet all the expectations of the populations, which is the reason for the persistence of conflicts in the area.

Keywords: Difficult cohabitation, Agro-Industry, land conflict, dislodged populations, Grand-Béréby.

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INTRODUCTION

Côte d'Ivoire has long been regarded as the "economic lung" of West Africa, and since 1882 has focused its economic policy on agriculture. As soon as the country gained independence in 1960, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, then President of the Republic, confirmed the central role of agriculture in its development strategy (F. Verdeaux, 2011). Thus, real encouragement is given to 'land development' (R. D. Boussou, 2016).

The favourable political climate, based on social peace and economic liberalism, was the driving force behind the country's agricultural development. This led to the creation and growth of several individual and industrial state plantations, notably SODEPALM for oil palm, CIDT for cotton, SODESUCRE for sugar, SAPH/SOGB for rubber, etc. At that time, the country was referred to as the 'Ivorian miracle' or 'economic boom' (V. Boussou, 2017).

The creation of industrial plantations led to numerous transfers of rural land from village communities to the state (J. G. Ibo, 2012). The economic crisis of the 1980s led to a steady decline in the price of export commodities and the indebtedness of the state (B. Losch, 2003; N. Bamba *et al.*, 1992). The scale and persistence of this crisis have had a serious impact on national public finances. Thus, in order to ensure the necessary rebalancing and hope to continue to benefit from aid and loans granted to the state by the Breton Woods institutions, the Ivorian government was forced to apply stabilisation policies and structural adjustment programmes (J. D. Geslin, 1996). These programmes proposed, by means of various corrective measures, to re-establish macro-economic balances and international competitiveness, and to allow the Ivorian economy to move resolutely towards sustainable development (N. Bamba *et al.*, op cit). The possible alternatives for reducing the state's burdens included liberalising trade, reducing the role of the state and refocusing on its policy-making and public service functions, 'downsizing' public and parastatal enterprises, and privatisation (M. B. Kouadio, 2004).

This situation led to the privatisation of agro-industrial companies, notably SAPH, SOGB, SODEPALM, etc. This privatisation led to the creation of other companies such as: SIFCA, SIPH, (staff share for SAPH); Béréby Finance, (private shareholders for SOGB); TRCI for DHE Anguédédou; SUCRIVOIRE, SUCAF-CI for SODESUCRE; PALMAFRIQUE, PALM-CI for SODEPALM (P.Y. N'Cho, 2004). For their development, these agribusinesses have opted to extend their land holdings by acquiring other rural lands. These extensions of agricultural areas provoke the anger of the indigenous populations.

Consequently, shedding light on the main factors that foster antagonistic relations between the Société des Caoutchoucs de Grand-Béréby (SOGB) [1] and the indigenous populations, the historical owners of the land mobilised for the installation of this company, is an important objective, especially for this area of south-western Côte d'Ivoire, which is prey to upheavals that could hinder the development of agriculture.

This text is based on the hypothesis that the way in which state companies are installed on rural land and their concessions by the state to private economic operators contain the seeds of conflict. Indeed, when land is transferred to the state, the indigenous populations holding land rights are consulted at the grassroots level. However, they are excluded at the stage of the concession between the state and the managers of the concessionary company.

This study is essentially based on data collected in 2016 and updated in 2019. This return to the field has made it possible to identify new factors in five (5) villages where conflicts persist between the complex and the local population. In particular, the villages of Ouéoulo, Tèklébo, Trahé, Héké and Kako. Indeed, this new dynamic highlights the issue of non-compliance with certain contractual clauses between the stakeholders and also the debate around the lack of transparency in the signing of contracts, potential sources of land conflicts.

The methodology is based on the 'stakeholder theory'[2] (World Bank, 2002), which makes it possible

to list the visible or more or less hidden actors involved in the land game with the SOGB, with social, political and economic overlaps in Grand-Béréby. As the issue of the installation of the SOGB and its relationship with the local population is very sensitive in the study area, the choice of tools was based on in-depth (individual) interviews. The survey took into account local people from the villages that were cleared when SOGB was created (Tiépé, Haméné 1 and 2, Ibo, Hinklo, Petit Boua, Trahé, Debablé, Djihimbo, Soklobléké, Klo, Héké, Petit Paris, Pataké and Oulidié) and those not evicted but affected by the occupation of their land (Kako, Ouéoulo, Klotou, Tèklébo, Djoro, Irepoué, Batcha, Oulibio). For this return to the field, 18 interviews were conducted in the 5 villages (Tèklébo, Trahé, Kako, Héké and Ouéoulo) selected for this phase of the study. In addition, we interviewed members of the associations of the deguerpis villages (AVD and UVD) and the local administrative authorities. Our sample was based on a reasoned choice. The idea was first to choose the villages that had been evacuated or that had lost their cultivation land when the SOGB complex was created. Secondly, we were interested in people who might have knowledge of the history of the SOGB installation in order to have information on the conflicts between the stakeholders.

On this basis, the surveys involved three (3) natives per village, for a total of five (5) villages that represent the platforms on which the populations of the deguerpis or displaced villages have resettled. Three (3) representatives of the Association des Villages Déguerpis (AVD) and three (3) members of the Union des Villages déguerpis (UVD). In addition to these actors from the indigenous populations, three (3) officials from the SOGB and three (3) administrative authorities (sub-prefect, deputy, departmental director of agriculture) were interviewed. This is therefore a purely qualitative study that is part of a comprehensive approach (M. Weber, 1922).

This article is in three parts. The first part briefly reviews the history of the installation of agro-industrial plantations. The second part deals with issues relating to the installation of the SOGB in Grand-Béréby, the study site. The last part deals with factors relating to the persistence of conflicts between SOGB and local populations.

1-Installation of agro-industrial complexes in Côte d'Ivoire: a historical phenomenon

In order to better understand the elements structuring the explanatory factors of this case of conflictual relations between privatised state companies and local populations, it is necessary to look at the history of the installation of the so-called 'SODEs' in Côte d'Ivoire.

[...] Effective stakeholder engagement thus requires an understanding of their interests and degree of influence.

¹ Created in 1972, the Société des Caoutchoucs de Grand-Béréby (SOGB) was originally called the Société d'Applications Techniques, Agricoles et Caoutchoutières (SATAC), then the Société des Caoutchoucs de Côte d'Ivoire (SOCATCI) and finally SOGB, privatised in 1995.

² The World Bank (2002: 40) postulates that some 'vocal' stakeholders are demanding, well organised and influential. Others are invisible and unheard, perhaps because the authorities do not recognise their organisation. Others may be opposed to the project, and still others are trying to gain advantages for themselves

Colonial and post-colonial history provides several signs of the phenomenon of land cession for the establishment of state companies in Côte d'Ivoire. For J. G. Ibo (2012), the first sign goes back to September 1893, i.e. a few months after the erection of the Ivorian territory as an autonomous colony by decree of 10 March 1893.

Thus, as guardian of the French Pavilion and Resident of France between 1870 and 1883, Arthur Verdier was allocated a 5 million hectare forest plot in Côte d'Ivoire on 20 September 1893. This assignment was transferred to the "Compagnie Française de Kong", which he himself had set up in the early 1880s. In the San Pedro region alone, the Compagnie Française de Kong held 270,000 hectares of land under the same agreement. In the region of Kokumbo (Toumodi), the transfer covered 30,887 hectares (J.G. Ibo, *op cit*).

The second sign of the phenomenon dates back to 1904. Indeed, in accordance with Article 10 of the decree of 23 October 1904, on the organisation of the domain in French West Africa, it is stated that "vacant and unowned land in the colonies and territories of French West Africa belong to the State" (*op cit*). In other words, all cultivable areas that are not developed from a given period, in all the territories of these different countries, become state property or these areas are returned to the public domain (N. A. Aboli 2018). It could therefore be argued that the state claims to be the 'true' landowner (S. K. Mlan, 2015a; 2015b), as it alone has the right of ownership over all land as implicitly stated in the article. This denies the rights of local or indigenous people to 'their land', according to the same article.

This land policy weakens (more or less) or renders obsolete the local land tenure systems of rural populations. J.G. Ibo (2012), quoting Houphouët (speech given in 1963), expresses it well in these words: 'Land forming the collective property of the indigenous people or which the indigenous chiefs hold as representatives of indigenous communities can only be ceded to private individuals by way of sale or lease after approval by order of the Lieutenant-Governor, in the Administrative Council. The occupation of the part of these lands which would be necessary for the creation of urban centres, for constructions or works of public utility, is pronounced by the Lieutenant-Governor, in the Conseil d'Administration, who decides on the compensations that this occupation may entail. The idea is that these areas or portions of land cannot be subject to local transactions without the agreement of the colonial authority, which is now the indisputable owner and has the final say in the administration and control of the land.'

The third sign of the phenomenon is the creation of a network of classified forests or parks in Côte d'Ivoire. This process concerned more than 5

million hectares spread over the entire territory of the colony. This phase consisted of the retention of plant and animal areas for use as tourist sites. One example is the classified forest of Niégré, created in 1937 and covering an area of 101,000 hectares in Godié country. In order to do this, the colonial authorities displaced the people of the Godié village of Baléko in the early 1920s to resettle them on the colonial road from Gagnoa to Sassandra (J.G. Ibo, *op cit*).

In addition to these classified forests, the creation of national parks also responds to this policy. For example, the Comoé National Park, which was created in 1929 as a reserve, became a park in 1968. It alone covers 1,149,000 hectares in the Bouna region. This national heritage has also become international heritage, belonging to UNESCO, as does the Taï Park.

The fourth sign of land acquisition by the state authority for the benefit of its companies can be observed in the 1960s. After independence, the role of the state was to be further asserted. An extract from President Houphouët-Boigny's speech to the National Assembly on 15 January 1962 is illustrative: 'We have no factory to nationalise, but to create, no trade to nationalise, but to better organise, no land to distribute, but to develop. It is in this spirit that, while recognising the right of Ivorian citizens to own the land they have developed, the State, through a bill that the government will submit to the National Assembly, will be recognised by all as the sole owner of uncultivated land (forests and savannahs), of the subsoil, of rivers and lagoons. From now on, it is the State that will distribute the available land to all citizens with a view to better production' (F. B. Houphouët, 1962).

To put this political will into practice, a law was proposed to the National Assembly, which passed it on 20 March 1963. However, this law was never promulgated because of the sensitivity of the issue of local land tenure.

In this context of legal vacuum, the Ivorian Head of State (H. B., Houphouët), as a pragmatic politician, made the following statement during the 5th Congress of the PDCI on 30 October 1970: "Everywhere, or almost everywhere, there is talk of land redistribution. Côte d'Ivoire is three-fifths the size of France with 5 million inhabitants, including our foreign brothers. There is enough arable land for everyone, and there is a lack of manpower. The Government and the party have therefore decided, in the interest of the country, to recognise that any Ivorian citizen of origin or adoption, who puts a plot of land to use, regardless of its size, has the right to use it on a permanent basis and may pass it on to his heirs' (J.G. Ibo, 2012). It is this statement that has been 'compressed', and interpreted to give the famous slogan-law that has caused a lot of ink to flow: 'the land belongs to the one who develops it'. In the 1970s, this

slogan-law became a real political slogan (M. Koné, 2006). The interpretations of the effects of this slogan on the dynamics of agricultural land colonisation in Côte d'Ivoire are diverse and varied. The most common interpretation is that this slogan accelerated the 'race to the forest'.

In order to fill this legal vacuum, Decree No. 71-74 of 26 February 1971 established a state procedure for validating land transactions and obtaining a land allocation in rural areas (J. G. Ibo, 2012).

We therefore note with Ibo that, in view of the historical perspective of the phenomenon of massive acquisitions of rural land, the state is the main captor and referrer of socio-foncier dynamics in the Ivorian environment, (J.G. Ibo, op.cit.).

2-Brief history of the installation of the SOGB

Even if the creation of the SOGB is part of the development policy of the South-West (with the ARSO), the history of its installation is a fact that has been considered by local actors at the macro level, as a means of developing the country, and at the micro level, as a factor in the development of Grand-Béréby and its hinterland.

Before any analysis, let us look back at the Kroumèn people. For B. Holas (1980), the natives told us that in the time of the Portuguese navigators, a fisherman once saw a large pirogue housing more people and more things than the largest hut in his village. The men in it had white skin. The men waved to him to make contact with him. But the frightened fisherman replied "krou, krou". The white men thought that was the name of the black man. So they called this coast the Krou Coast and the men who lived there Kroumèn or Krooboyes.

But another version of the origin of the name Krou has been the subject of several questions by many authors, without finding satisfactory answers. It is not impossible that the word Krou is only a transformation of the term Krâo; this is indeed what Payne, Koelle and Baumann maintain (quoted by A. Schwartz, 1993). The Kroumèn people are therefore an ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire, belonging to the large Krou group, settled in the southwest of the country. They are found in the localities of San-Pedro, Grand Béréby and Tabou.

Sometime after independence, the government, in an effort to make Côte d'Ivoire a great agricultural country, decided to undertake huge projects to develop the agricultural sector, which they saw as the engine of

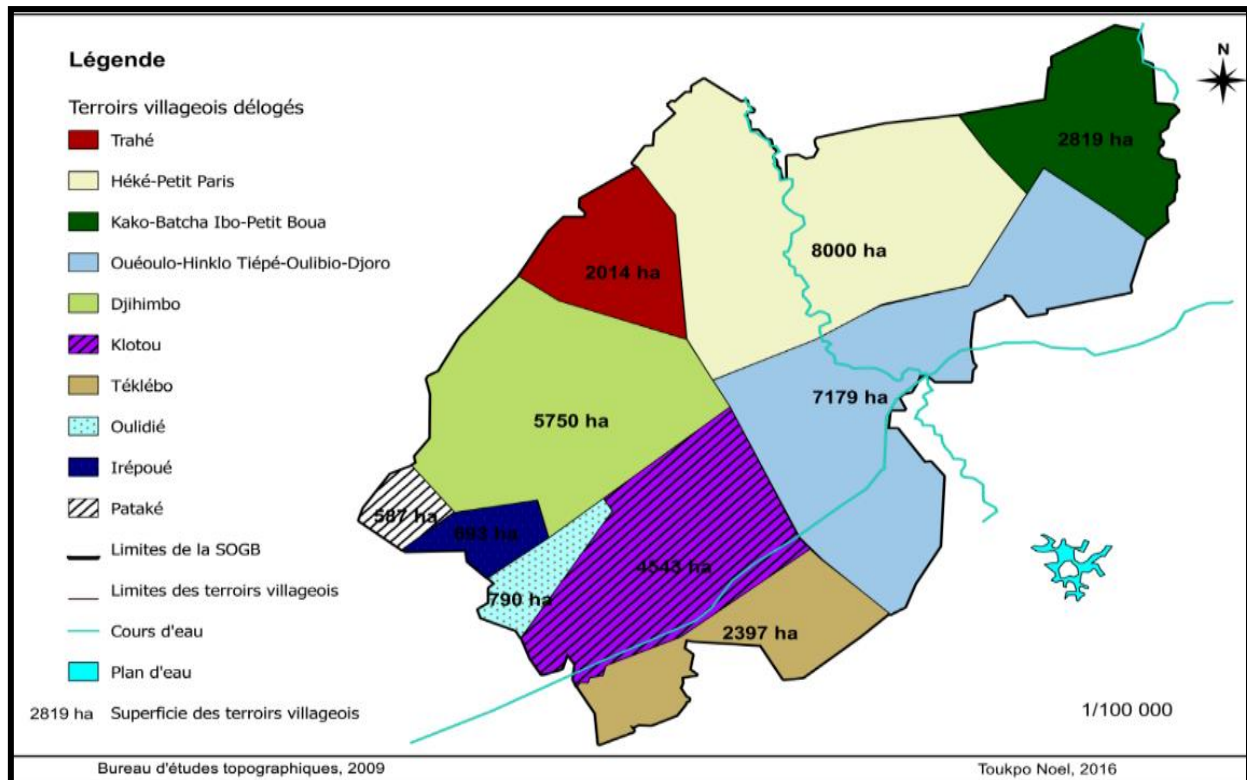
the economy. Hence the slogan, "The success of Côte d'Ivoire rests on agriculture" was the main source of motivation for many national and foreign investors in this sector (MINAGRA, 1999). Thus, in order to get away from the excessive dependence on coffee and cocoa, the Ivorian government implemented a policy of agricultural diversification (MINAGRA, op cit). This led to the introduction of certain crops such as oil palm, cashew nuts, rubber trees, etc.

Rubber cultivation has developed thanks to actions undertaken by the State. From 1970 onwards, rubber promotion programmes were implemented through projects to create industrial and village plantations. During the same period, the Ivorian state, which was engaged in a dynamic modernisation of the sector, undertook the creation of a plantation in the south-west of the country with rubber cultivation as its main activity, Protocole (2008), in partnership with private shareholders. Even when it has a majority stake, the state is in most cases only a 'sleeping' shareholder, leaving the private partner, whether a minority or not, to manage the company, N. Bamba *et al.*, (idem). The state in this dimension becomes an absentee planter, leaving the foreign partner free to manage the company, (N. A. Aboli, op cit).

This relinquishment of management power may be the result of a reasoned choice, particularly in the case where the fixed assets are too large to find buyers for the production. It is then possible for the State to retain ownership of the productive capital and to entrust its management within the framework of formalised contracts. This situation of state vacancy sometimes makes relations between the company and the local residents difficult.

The motivation for the indigenous people of Grand-Béréby was a way to participate at the macro level in the development of the country but, it is also a way for them to get their region out of the enclave, (N. A. Aboli *et al.*, 2018). The objective of the state was essentially based on a logic of development of all the regions of the country in order to avoid rural exodus, thus in the concern to maintain the populations, especially the youth in rural areas.

For the creation of the SOGB, the State of Côte d'Ivoire had 95% of the shares and the Michelin Company 5% (Protocole, 2008). Initially, the space mobilised (34,772 hectares) by the state was occupied by Kroumèn villages (20 villages in all). Of these villages, 13 (indigenous Kroumèn) were evicted (with the destruction of their crops).



Map-1: Location and size of areas occupied by the SOGB

Source: our 2016 surveys

There are three categories of villages concerned by the installation of the SOGB. These are

- Villages that were evicted and lost their land, and whose populations have merged with other villages (V1);
- Villages that have been evicted but have relocated to the part of their land that has not been affected by the project (V2);
- Villages whose territory is affected by the SOGB project but which have not been evicted (V3) (see table opposite).

Table-1: List of 23 villages affected by the installation of the SOGB

V1	V2	V3
-Ibo	-Trahé	-Kako
-Petit Boua	-Héké	-Oueoulo
-Tiépé	-Djihimbo	-Klotou
-Hinklo	-Irepoué	-Téklébo
-Hamene1	-Pataké	-Batcha
-Hamene2	-Oulidié	-Djoro
-Soklobleké		-Oulibio
-Klo		
-Debablé		
-Petit Paris		

Source: our 2016 surveys

The promise made to them is to rebuild modern houses with basic social facilities, including schools, village water supply, health centres, etc. Years later, the promises are not kept, while the land is already planted with rubber trees. This led to repeated land conflicts between the complex and all the populations whose land was affected by the SOGB's installation.

Thus, discussions, with a view to reaching a resolution initiated in 2008, led in September 2009 to

the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the parties in conflict. But despite all the efforts made through the signing of this memorandum of understanding, which was seen as the beginning of a lasting peace, the conflicts persist and have been getting worse over time. Since 12 July 1974, fears and grievances have been expressed by the leaders of the villages concerned to the administrative authorities. These grievances have not been satisfactorily

addressed. The populations remained discontented and bruised.

However, it is because of numerous promises made by the administrative authorities that the transfer or 'grab' was accepted by the indigenous populations. From then on, there was a tug of war between the company and the local populations, Kroumèn. This plunges the two parties into repeated land conflicts.

Worse still, with the privatisation and takeover of the company by Socfin [³] in 1995, the conflict intensified and made the cohabitation between the complex and the populations more difficult and worrying.

3-Factors explaining the persistence of conflicts around the SOGB complex

Land conflicts are generally triggered by a combination of causes that cannot be determined a priori. However, certain factors have a determining influence on the dynamics of conflicts. In the context of this study, the cases of conflict specifically revolve around the relationship between the indigenous populations and their neighbour (the SOGB agro-industrial complex). Several factors revealed by the fieldwork structure the persistence of these recurring conflicts.

3.1 Lack of transparency in the signing of contracts

It is generally observed in Africa that the occupation of land on a large scale by public or private investors in the agro-industrial sector takes place in a contractual vacuum. Little precise information is available on the companies established in these countries (exact surface area under lease, number and type of jobs created, number of places available for indigenous populations, land revenues and redistribution of land royalties, in particular). Also, the long-term leases (emphyteutic leases) negotiated by agribusiness companies give them firmer and more secure rights than small farmers and indigenous people, who generally have no rights to the land they occupy.

The case of the SOGB in Côte d'Ivoire and the Kroumen people of Grand-Béréby also leave us with a documentary void that could be considered as a formal contract binding the stakeholders (N. A. Aboli, *op cit*). According to the interviewees, during all their claims, one question remains unanswered: the existence of a schedule of conditions or a formal contract structuring

their relationship with the SOGB. Each time the population addresses the managers of the complex for any kind of claim, they are referred to the State in the following terms: "Go and see the State to settle your problems with it, we report to the State...". Also, when they turn to the administrative authorities who are supposed to solve the problems at the local level, the discourse remains the same: "It is the State of Côte d'Ivoire that installed them, so let them work...". This situation seems to put these local actors in an imbroglio, as it is difficult for them to have a direct interlocutor to discuss in order to find real solutions to the land issue. The comments of the indigenous people interviewed testify to this: 'No, it's a problem; it's too heavy, because when you leave you are told to go and see the State, who is the State, the State is yourself. (Village chief of Oueoulo). The question of the reconstruction of the villages of the local residents, which was a prerequisite for the discussions before the effective start of the project, also seems to be a utopian question for the customary rights holders. According to some of the respondents, those in charge of the complex explained to them that this issue had not been addressed during the privatisation process. This means that the terms of reference, if they exist, are not available to the populations, or that the content does not mention anywhere that the (private) SOGB was to rebuild villages for the displaced indigenous populations.

According to those in charge of the complex, the SOGB does not have the necessary means to take charge of the reconstruction of the villages that the State of Côte d'Ivoire, through the sub-prefect of Grand-Béréby at the time, had promised to the population. Also, it must be noted that no local public administration such as the local Ministry of Agriculture detachment has any copy of the lease contract or the schedule of conditions. As the departmental director of agriculture in Grand-Béréby said when we asked him about the issue of the contract between the parties involved, he informed us that even the local ministry of agriculture is not bound to the contract. His testimony here is revealing: "The Ministry of Agriculture does not have copies of the contract, we do not have the file in hand, but what I do know is that the contract was signed between the State and SOGB for a period of 99 years. It dates from 1995, from privatisation to 99 years later...". Large-scale land acquisitions in Côte d'Ivoire, as in other countries in Africa, are characterised by the lack of public information on transactions and on the process leading to the location of land, the determination of surface areas and the actual transfer of land, both at the local level and by the central administration. There is no public reporting on land applications, provisional or final allocations. And information on projects is not always available to the general public or to local residents. According to the indigenous populations, the state should have retroceded the land rather than privatised it, but without consulting the customary law holders. However, this land will now be in the public

³Socfin is a Luxembourg holding company whose main shareholder is the Bolloré group (39% of shares). This holding company owns industrial oil palm and rubber plantations in many African and Asian countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, DR Congo, Cambodia, Indonesia, Sao Tome).

domain of the state even if the long term contract (99 years) comes to an end ^[4].

The problem of the ambiguity that currently structures the paternity of these lands in this period of identification of the terroirs of rural communities is worrying. Should the perimeter be identified in the names of the holders of customary law in order to allow their progeny to benefit from this space at the end of the SOGB contract? This is one of the concerns of the local residents, who strongly believe that at the end of the SOGB's mandate, even if those who are making the claim today are no longer living, the area will inevitably revert to future generations as it was passed on to them by their descendants. On the other hand, several crucial pieces of information for a balanced partnership between the communities and the company are almost unavailable at the local level, notably on the exact area conceded to the company, the date of the beginning and the duration of its contract, the existence of a schedule of conditions, the identity of the other partners. In short, the indigenous people have not been given any receipt or document stipulating the areas ceded to SOGB and the compensation paid. All the documents are in the hands of the company and the state, which is considered to be the main transferor, according to the testimonies. Although it is mentioned by the stakeholders that the space occupied by the SOGB is under a long lease, the populations do not have any document indicating this. The confidentiality of this document poses serious problems for the population, leaving them in the dark about the background to such cohabitation, which is so important for these premises and for future generations.

3.2. Non-compliance with certain contractual clauses

Non-compliance with contractual clauses is generally one of the essential bases of land conflicts between indigenous populations and agro-industrial complexes. In most cases, in order to obtain the approval of the indigenous populations and get them to agree to the implementation of projects in their localities, the administrative authorities give hopeful speeches to local residents. These promises are very often directed towards the most essential needs of rural populations. In particular, the implementation of community projects such as the construction of schools for the youngest children, the construction of health centres, the construction or reconstruction of villages that have been cleared, the electrification of villages, etc.). In this study, the field survey shows us that the

⁴The long lease. It is concluded for a period of between 18 and 99 years. It is defined as a "long-term lease of land to enable the tenant to invest in its development" (etymologically, it is a lease with a view to afforestation, which implies a long duration). Some of these leases may provide that all or part of the rent is paid at its capitalised value from the signing of the lease; this is similar to a system of sale for a limited period.

essential elements of the triggering of this land conflict are structured around the non-respect of certain contractual clauses. Indeed, according to the indigenous populations, when the State of Côte d'Ivoire was to create the SOGB rubber plantation, a certain number of presses were held by the administrative authorities. The sub-prefect in charge of the dossier at the time was responsible for the reconstruction of villages that were to be cleared by the project, the electrification of these villages, the supply of drinking water, the construction of schools, the construction of community health centres, etc. However, this mission, who was entrusted to ARSO, which was mandated to carry out the various infrastructure projects, never saw the light of day. Our investigation was able to observe the traces of the machines that cleaned the different platforms on which the buildings were to be constructed. All of the people who answered this question testified to this. The words of a citizen of the village of Ibo underline it so well: "You see indeed when they told us to leave our sites that they were going to find new sites, they tried to do certain things, they made a village pump in Tèklèbo, I did not go to all the other villages but most of the small villages, those who had asked for the tables, the tables, all that has not been done". Although some donations were made in some of the villages that were evacuated, one of the promises that consisted of the reconstruction of the evacuated villages never materialized. This question is at the centre of all the claims of the populations frustrated by the attitude of the administrative authorities and the SOGB, which more and more seems not to be a priority anymore. It is no longer on the agenda. A village chief, who, according to his explanations, saw the events unfold while his father was village chief at the time, went on to say that the state had promised them the reconstruction of their villages into modern villages with all the amenities that should accompany them. He said. "Precisely...By promising us, first settle on the cleared platform and ARSO will come and build a modern village with all the amenities. A modern village means everything, i.e. building houses with all the administrative facilities, the school, then water... And until now the state has not kept its promise. While waiting for the state's promise, we started to work. The first reaction was that ARSO said not to build on the cleared platform first, but you expect them, ARSO, to come and do something. That is, to rebuild a modern village. That's what we've stayed in until now. We have started to work. The day that ARSO is ready to come, it will do what it can do" (Héké village chief).

3.3. The claim to arable land in the SOGB perimeter

A number of significant factors emerged from the interviews, revealing a potential disappearance of arable land for food crops and cash crops in the localities surveyed. These factors are (i) a decline in food crop production in the villages, (ii) a lack of land for some nationals of the villages that have been

evicted, (iii) the clandestine extension of the area of land held by the SOGB.

Decline in food crop production in the villages

Food crops are most often grown on fallow land, with a fallow renewal system that consists of varying the cultivable space to allow the soil to renew itself. This technique requires land availability and arable land for cultivation. It cannot be said often enough that land is a precious and vital asset. Among the peasantry, the possession of land, whether small or large, fertile or unproductive, is a source of social pride and economic and existential security. The Krou populations of this locality have lived for several decades in this atmosphere of insecurity or landlessness. In the villages surveyed, the land or cultivable areas used to produce food crops are becoming increasingly scarce in the face of the rise of perennial crops considered more profitable (cocoa, rubber cultivation, etc.). But when a small portion of land seems to be within the reach of the people of a given village, and they apply to the SOGB for the production of food crops, the demand remains unsatisfied. This is the case in the village of Ouéoulo, where the chief entered into negotiations with SOGB officials in order to obtain a few plots of land for a number of applicants. This approach remained unsatisfied because, according to SOGB officials, all the land is under a long term contract (99 years) with the state, so it is impossible to give it to anyone, whatever the reason.

Lack of land for some of the people in the evicted villages

The indigenous populations of the villages that have lost all their cultivation land, their plantations, etc., find themselves in a more difficult situation. Since they no longer have any land resources, these people, who historically were customary owners, are becoming landless peasants. As society is dynamic and the population is increasing, these indigenous populations are now becoming 'non-indigenous' and are facing serious integration problems. They apply to the SOGB for a retrocession of land for rubber plantations, but this is not granted. They are deprived of land that should be used to grow perennial crops on their behalf.

Land is the primary means of production for farmers who, generation after generation feed the world's people. This means or factor of production is at the same time the only means of living and supporting their families for hundreds of millions of small farmers on all continents. Behind international investments, there are serious human rights issues at stake. Local farmers need access to their land, which is a vital asset for them. As the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food reminds us, "access to land and security of tenure are essential for the enjoyment of the right to food (Olivier de Schutter, 2010).

Extension of the SOGB onto land not covered by the initial project

According to the minutes of the meeting preceding the installation of SOGB, the space negotiated by the State was 30,830 hectares. However, following the claims of the population, it was discovered that the space held by the complex amounts to 34772 hectares, a difference of 3943 hectares illegally occupied by SOGB. Therefore, the indigenous people want the boundaries of the complex to be moved at least 3 kilometres away from the villages. This will allow some land applicants to obtain plots for their vital needs (agriculture and village extension).

3.4. Claiming land within the SOGB perimeter for village extension

This important case of land grabbing reported by the populations met around the SOGB perimeter is a current event. According to the local residents, during the session on space at the complex, the administrative authorities did not take into account certain aspects, notably the size of the population. There has been a very significant increase in population. The corollary is the lack of space for the extension of villages. It should be remembered that one of the main arguments given for the creation of the complex was the under-exploitation of a gigantic arable forest in which there were no houses or plantations inside. The installation of the SOGB created a gradual depletion of individual spaces as a result of the increase in household population, farmers and living spaces. The Chief of the village of Trahé explains the reasons for signing an agreement: 'We signed the contract because we had asked SOGB to move back, i.e. 3 kilometres, before they started making their field'.

The local residents, noting the insufficiency of their space for the construction of new housing, are demanding space within the perimeter of the complex for the younger and future generations. For them, this issue is inescapable because it represents the vital minimum for the many homeless people who are crowding the evicted villages. There are more and more attempts to get the land back in the villages. The chief of Ouéoulo expresses his bitterness here: 'They want to replant while we have no space to build, you have to see this village that you see here, on more than 6,300 and some hectares, we have 200 and some lots, that is, if you do the maths, we have only 50 people per lot'. Again, this complaint was rejected by the company's officials.

Also, some villages that no longer have land for new crops or space for the extension of villages are asking for the SOGB to be withdrawn four kilometres from the villages, because for them it is no longer a question of thinking in terms of economy, but rather of subsistence. For them, land is now a vital asset for which no planning policy has foreseen its depletion so

soon. Peace in the SOGB settlement area is very precarious, due to many pitfalls and blunders.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this work was to analyse the conflictual relations between the SOGB agro-industrial complex and the local populations in order to identify the factors that explain their persistence.

In 1970, during the process of setting up the complex, meetings were held and promises were made to the population in the presence of the sub-prefect of Sassandra, the representative of the political bureau of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), representatives of the private partner (Michelin), representatives of ARSO (the South-West Regional Development Authority in charge of rebuilding villages and building other infrastructure) and the representatives (chiefs of the villages) of the villages impacted by the project.

However, none of these promises and accompanying measures has been fulfilled. More seriously, in 1995, when the SOGB was privatised, the transfer of use rights was made between the State and the private company, without involving the historical owners of customary rights (indigenous populations). Indeed, the failure to respect these contractual clauses accompanied by injustices, the misunderstanding of local populations, corruption, the 'theft' of land and intimidation have set the stage for numerous claims that converge on the attempt to recover the land at any price by the historical holders of customary rights, even though the lease that SOGB claims to have taken advantage of seems to run from 1995 to 99 years.

The motivations for these claims are, among others, the lack of transparency in the signing of contracts, the non-respect of certain contractual clauses, the claim to cultivable land within the SOGB perimeter, and the claims to land within the SOGB perimeter for the extension of villages, appear to be the main factors exacerbating the already existing tensions.

From the above, it can be said that the 'development of San Pedro and its hinterland' project, which saw the installation of SOGB, has not met all the expectations of the population.

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