

Rights contestations through community mapping in Cameroon

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Introduction

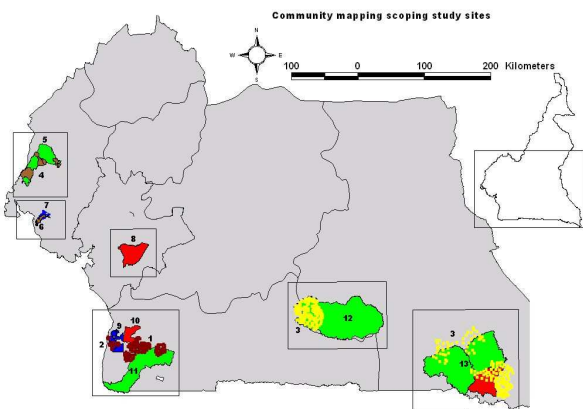
Community Mapping (CM) has been used in Cameroon for local level planning conflict resolution, participatory learning, forest and wildlife management and recently, in community rights contestations and analyses. It has been used to analyze access conflicts between communities and agro industries, protected forests, timber concessions and forest reserves. In view of its popularity as a communication medium between experts and communities, variations and increasing sophistication of its tools and techniques and the diversity of actors, there is interest in better understanding and employing this learning and communication approach.

One reason to improve understanding of CM in Cameroon and extend its potential value is due to its potential usefulness in carrying out forest policy analyses with local communities without the need for linguistic exchange. Thus in this systematic, national scoping of community territorial mapping, we examine methods used, the organizational philosophies and objectives of the facilitators; how the tools and techniques used are linked to social groups, their perceptions and manner of use of space, some outcomes and the role of Government in the processes.

Methods

This scoping focused on parts of the forest zones of Cameroon: south west, littoral, south and east provinces. See study sites below.

Figure 1: scoping study sites



Three types of mapping products were anticipated in this study and for ease of interpretation were categorized into 3 types: *Type 1* community maps—*ephemeral maps*—conceived using local materials (stones, sticks, lines on the dirt-ground, etc), sometimes copied onto Kraft paper, but focusing on very small-scale land use characterization, were ignored as most lacked the essential conflict element and higher spatial scales required in forest policy support. These are also the mostly common maps produced in CM activities. *Type 2* community mapping products, comprise a combination of ephemeral mapping, *sketch-mapping* and geographic information system (GIS)—more elaborate with use of coloured pencils with emphasis on territorial borders; often copied onto Kraft paper and sometimes integrated into a GIS were collected. *Type 3* community mapping products comprising mainly of representations of use areas, mostly points in space, using global positioning systems (GPS) were also collected.

Although *type-3* map products lacked possibilities for estimating surface area, they depicted conflicts across significant spatial extents. Additional methodological aspects also included: what the mapping activities sought to achieve; the tools, i.e., materials used; the techniques—approaches used in representing spatial information; the local actors and their perception of territory; the philosophies of the facilitators and the role of government and relevant authorities. Available spatial data (hard and soft copies) were collected, interviews carried-out and available documentation collated where available for use in re-constituting and characterizing the information.

Findings

Three sets of finding have been developed: Our first case is the **Korup and Boa plains—south west region** This territorial mapping within sought to represent perceptions of customary use zones within the Korup national park and within CDC agro industrial plantation lease holds respectively. The Korup case used *type 2* and *3* tools and techniques but focused on developing a territorial perception only, without attempting to negotiate retrocession of territories with any State department. The Boa plains community mapping used both tools, techniques and got the National Cartographic Institute involved in a bid to acquire para-legal recognition of the maps produced.

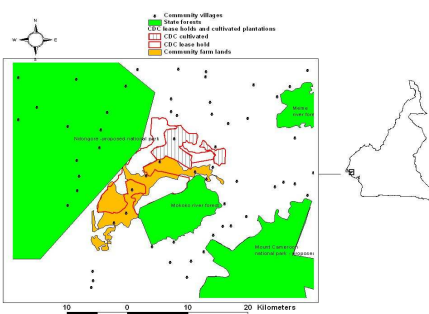


Figure 2: Boa plains community mapping

Areas were estimated in both cases but detailed retrocessions only occurred in

the Boa case as the collaborative management of a protected area that motivated the Korup case was perhaps too uncertain and has still not been adopted by the State. Both mapping exercises involved Bantu communities, being generally territorial, therefore ‘borders’, though fuzzy were key elements in the mapping. In terms of participation ethics though both were driven from outside the Boa case had more local ownership than in Korup.

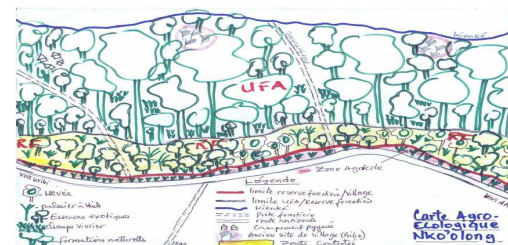
Loungahe-Kopongo, littoral and Kienke-south contestations present the second case. During this Loungahe-Kopongo (UFA 07002) and Kienke (UFA 09026) study, *type-3* mapping, focusing on indicative use of spatial resources, and more associated with pygmy populations than to their Bantu neighbours was used. This uncharacteristic use of a combination of *type-1*, *type-2* and *type-3* by Bantus (who generally go for boundary mapping) was initially a surprise. Upon analyses of the background to the contestations it became obvious that perhaps Bantus would use *type-1* mapping where contestation over resources are longstanding, where the State seems uncompromising, where there is need to demonstrate intense use, and when there is a possibility of retrocession (Kopongo, Ngonga, Kienke).

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Type-2 mapping using GIS-enhanced borders was not used like in Korup and Boa. Instead *type-3* was used to complement the detailed land use (*type-1*) using signs and objects of different sizes to depict variations in importance of different activities.

Figure 3: *Type-1* community mapping in Kienke

In both cases submissions have been made to Government including the unimplemented Prime Ministerial decree n° 95/531/PM of 23rd August 1995, authorizing creation of enclaves (UFA 07002). In both cases also, facilitation has been done by local NGOs as opposed to international organizations in the Korup case (World Wide Fund for nature) and Boa cases (Mount Cameroon Project).



Perceptions of use conflicts between **Bagyeli and Baka pygmies with industrial plantations, protected areas and timber concessions** present our third and final case. Here the non-exclusive territorial perception of space by pygmies emerges clearly. The main techniques are *type-3* wherein GPS are used to represent forest products collection, burial sites, fishing points, hunting etc, with little or no evidence of inter-racial territorial border representations (e.g., Korup). The consistency of this ‘borderless’ representation is so strong with pygmy populations that where fuzzy boundaries are represented in a *type-3* mapping, it is obvious that such is a territorial perception introduced by the facilitator. *Type-3* representations also depict early stages of contestation where it is sufficient to simply ‘indicate’ use. It compares with the UFAs 07002 and 09026 where there is uncertainty over outcomes. Still like in Korup the enormity of achieving territorial retrocession tends to dissuade the technique away from territorial *type 2*.

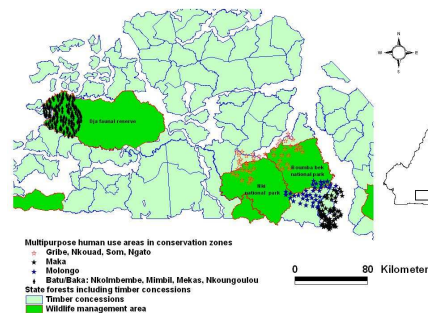


Figure 4: *Type-3* representation of use zones by Baka communities

A number of the Baka maps were endorsed by official government stamps and the facilitators report successes in getting projects and park management authorities to collaborate with Baka populations in joint management of hunting zones and timber concessions.

Conclusions

CM will represent more effective communication when facilitators

hand over the baton to communities. At the moment more time and resources are invested in CM activities than its usefulness for communities. The apparent simplicity of CM encourages facilitators to start implementation before fully considering ethics. Where there is real chance of retrocession CM tends to be most effective such as in Boa. Retrocession was also found to happen more readily with the private sector than with Government. Government’s role remains ambivalent; endorsing community map products but seeming uncompromising in responding to retrocession demands. Mapping tools and techniques represent investments and there is a direct positive relationship between investment and expected outcomes.