

Climate variability and political insecurity: the Guera in Central Chad

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The Sahel is a zone in which ecological stress and political instability are part of history and of people's daily lives. To understand the dynamics of recent developments in this area a study should take as starting point 'instability'. The objective of this research is to study the socio-cultural changes and individual responses of people living under conditions of persistent ecological stress and political insecurity. Domains on which this research focuses are: social relations and networks, interethnic relations, conflict and conflict management, mobility, cultural expressions (oral traditions, story telling, and ritual). The approach is historical and anthropological. As case study area is chosen the Guera, a region in Central Chad where both ecological insecurity and political instability are and were very prominently present and have affected and still do affect people's lives. The results of the first period of fieldwork (8 months) will be an ethnographic account of the political ecology of insecurity in Central Chad. The second objective is to enlarge the basis for comparative work within the ASC itself and in collaboration with African and European partner institutes. The third objective of this project is to create collaborative relations with Chadean and European research institutes and to develop a longer-term research programme that will foster high quality social science research in Chad in these domains, and aims to enhance Chadean research capacity. This programme is expected to run over a period of 5 years.

Objectives

Three broad objectives will be served with this research project:

- On the institutional side the general objective is to broaden the basis for collaboration with African and European partners by extending ASC-research into a new area, Western Central Africa. A specific objective will be to enhance the possibilities for social science research in Chad itself;
- At a more practical level this research project aims to enlarge the basis for comparative research within ASC itself and with African and European partner institutes;
- At the scientific level the general objective of this project is to deepen our understanding of people's responses to fluctuating, insecure climatic, economic and political conditions and the dynamics of economic and socio-cultural transformations under these conditions.

Over the years ASC-researchers have created a certain number of collaborative links with institutions and individual researchers in a number of Sahelian countries. With this project these links will cover all the countries from Senegal to Chad, and the ASC-researchers hope to be able to create a functioning research network, across this zone in collaboration with its African (Université du Mali, Université de Noackchott, Université de Ouagadougou, Université de Niamey, PRASAC, Point-Sud, LASDEL, Université du Tchad, CEDC) and European partners (IIED, CIRAD, IRD, EHESS-SHADYC, MPI, Leiden University, Wageningen University, University of Amsterdam), and through existing networks such as APAD. A fruitful collaboration between these partners within Africa itself and on an intercontinental basis will help to enlarge the basis for comparative research on a number of themes that have emerged as key areas for research, looking at the history of Sahelian countries and at current trends in the domains of politics, economics and climate. In the following pages we will elaborate these themes and develop a number of concrete research activities on a short and medium term.

Within the African Studies Centre itself the project crosscuts the major themes, EEE, AinA and CPI. The programme will focus on political, economic and social actors on the one hand, fitting into the work of AinA, but will also address issues of resource management and conflict, denial of access to resources, ecological variability fitting into the framework of EEE and CPI. The emphasis on resource conflict relates to the role of actors identified in the themes covered by the working group “Networks of Uncertainty”.

Key themes for research in semi-arid West Africa

Following the droughts, economic decline and political unrest, which have marked much of the history of semi-arid zones in West (and East) Africa¹ an enormous amount of research has been done on the ways in which African people have dealt with hazards, adversity and have managed to adapt to changing conditions and develop new strategies to contend with change. Initially, local rural (and urban) people were depicted mainly as vulnerable and poor victims, who were unwillingly undermining their basis of existence by overexploiting scarce and vulnerable natural resources that caused the desert to advance and pushed the poor to the cities. Pushed by scarcity people came into conflict over distribution and access to resources, causing local clashes, ethnic conflicts, civil wars. All this was compounded by the lack of well-targeted policies to counter these tendencies, corrupt governments, and well-intended but poorly designed development efforts by bilateral and international donors.

This picture is by now outdated in the light of all the research over the past decades and alternative views on the dynamics of all kinds of trends in Africa’s drylands have been developed. One of the most important changes in this respect has been that the inhabitants of drylands have been given back their ‘capacity to act’. There has been an increasing attention on local actors, who have constantly accommodated adverse conditions and have creatively developed new ways of responding to change. This has been manifested by the growing attention for local knowledge, decision-making, and there has been a lot more recognition for the rationality of what people do under adverse conditions and for the fact that their decisions cannot be only leading to their ruin or the further deterioration of their conditions.

Secondly, there has been a complete shift of paradigm within ecology, away from scenarios of unremitting degradation of natural resources due to ill-adapted and unsustainable management towards ideas acknowledging disequilibria and variability as the prime characteristics of semi-arid and arid ecosystems (Behnke & Scoones 1993, Scoones 1995). There has also been more attention for the influence of global climate change and changes in El Niño type phenomena on the variability of climate and the degradation of resources. This perspective questions the unsustainability of local technologies for resource management and the relevance of received notions of ‘rational’² resource management strategies developed mainly in Western contexts for semi-arid Africa.

Following this there has been an increasing recognition of the role of mobility and flexibility in the responses of local people to contend with adversity and change. This viewpoint challenges received methodologies for studying livelihood and land use strategies, which were mainly focused on decision-making and analytical frameworks in relation to factors *in situ*, hardly ever beyond the confines of the village or the regional market. This opens the perspective to study the interlocking of international labour and commodity markets, and the variability of climate conditions on a regional and continental basis to local decision-making.

¹ The history of semi-arid southern Africa is so different because of the role of apartheid that its is left out here

² As opposed to the irrational strategies of local actors

Fourthly, all over the Sahel and the Sudan population mobility tend to move in a specific direction, away from the Sahel and Sahara either towards the Maghreb in the north where Arabs and Berbers, and young males have moved to look for employment, or towards the south, into the Sudan, but also into the coastal countries. Sahelian pastoralists can now be found in the savannah and forest zones as far as the Nigerian coast in the neighbourhood of Lagos. This influx of both cultivating and nomadising populations not only in the cities, but also in the rural areas is expected to continue, because of the better economic opportunities in these southern areas and the periodic droughts in the Sahel and possibly climate change on the long run (WALTPS 1994). By the sheer number of these immigrants problems will arise to provide them sufficient fertile land to cultivate crops and to pasture their animals. Co-ordination and technological problems will arise in the allocation of land to these diverse modes of land use, and coupled with increasing scarcity this is predicted to lead to increasing tensions and problems along ethnic and national lines and possibly more conflict.

Lastly, in the domain of politics the notion of the state and governance have received critical attention. It is increasingly acknowledged that official political structures and state law are not the only source of political decision-making and legal and public authority. Over the past decades politics has become ever more informal. This informalisation has influenced all aspects of public life, from the corruption of legal authorities to party politics, the mobilisation of ethnic sentiments for political purposes, the regulation of access to resources, the functioning of markets and marketing channels, the functioning of government agencies. More attention for local politics and local systems of governance have made possible a more realistic approach to systems of regulation of access to resources and resource management, ethnicity and interethnic relations and conflicts of all sorts.

Of course, all these issues cannot be covered within this single research project, but they all impinge upon any research conducted in semi-arid zones and need to be part of the analytical and contextual background. Below we will work out these themes in detail and try to link them to the Guera, a department in Central Chad where we will concentrate our fieldwork over 2002-2003. The fieldwork must thus be seen as an element in an on-going research effort that dates back to our thesis work (M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D.) and subsequent research projects in which we participated as researcher or supervisor in Mali, but also in other countries. In doing so we add new regional and thematic elements, and expand the relevance of the coming fieldwork in this area to the larger issues in West Africa described above.

Insecurity, society and culture

Over the years we have been particularly interested by the role of instability and insecurity in the lives of rural poor people. For these categories of actors the facts are hard to deal with. The 'hardness of facts' has constantly been part of daily life (Hastrup 1993) of most inhabitants of the Sahel. One could argue that society has been organized around insecurity in the form of fluctuating resource availability and market prices for food, and oppressive political systems (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1995).

However, the distribution of the hardness of facts has not been equal. The consequences of these hazards have been divided unequally because society has been organized in such a way that people have different risk positions (Beck 1992). They occupy structurally different positions in relation to hazard, because of differential access to resources, political position, social status and personal capacity. As Iliffe (1987) showed in his work on poverty in African history, poor people have always been there. Social hierarchies have been mechanisms to give the poor a place in society and we should not think too much of the real import of 'African solidarity' under these extreme conditions. In a lot of

cases there are no resources for solidarity (Sobania 1990, De Bruijn 1999, Van Dijk 1994). In other cases people are simply denied life chances by those superior in power or capacity. Slaves were in the worst position, e.g. in times of hunger they were expelled from society (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2001, 2002a). Power relations are created and processes of social exclusion are the basis of the game. Migration out of poverty is also a very old phenomenon

Such social hierarchies developed in various polities all over the Sahel. A common characteristic of these hierarchies is the division of labour between free and non-free people and a distinction between nobles, vassals, and slaves. It can be argued that these hierarchies are a reaction on the ecological instability these polities have to deal with, to divide the risks. In times of real scarcity the lower strata, the slaves, were the first to leave (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 2003a).

Inter-group and interethnic relations between (ethnic) groups that employed different strategies to contend with adversity often formed the basis for complementary strategies. Especially during the 20th century when there came an end to raiding and plunder, exchange relations between herders and farmers developed that also cushioned some of the extremes of the climate (De Bruijn *et al.*, 1997). Special institutions have developed to make the integration of strangers into host societies easier (Shack & Skinner 1979). The last decades have shown fundamental changes in these relations. Farmer-herder conflicts are reported to be on the increase, though the evidence is debated (Hussein *et al.*, 1999, Breusers *et al.*, 1998, De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2002b). Political conflict, the constant presence of violence, the presence of arms and politics of opposition groups may have a severe impact on these local conflicts. This link between conflicts on the local level and higher levels will be at the centre of this research.

Mobility is an important element or cultural expression of societies living under political and ecological stress. '*La condition sahélienne*' as Gallais (1975) labelled it, the ensemble of circumstances exerting pressure on local actors forcing them into a nomadic and mobile existence. Especially pastoral groups have developed a mobile lifestyle, even to the extent that their society is organised around mobility and being flexible, i.e. a 'travelling culture' (Clifford 1992, De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2003b). In the last decades this mobility has taken different forms due to high political instability in some areas and successive drought in other areas, both leading to a situation in which people are forced to move. One may find these people in circumstances in which nomadism has turned into a peripatetic lifestyle, which comes near to forced displacement (cf. de Bruijn 2002a & 2002b, de Bruijn & van Dijk 2003b, 2003c, 2003d). The extension of this phenomenon and the plight of these people are hardly known and will be at the centre of this research.

Within cultural studies lots of work has been done on the socio-cultural aspect of migration (see e.g Clifford 1992, 1997, Appadurai 1991). However, these studies have mainly concentrated on mobility in the context of modernization and globalization. Forced migration, displacement and the like have been less well covered from an anthropological point of view (cf. De Bruijn 2001). Given the large numbers of people adrift in Sub-Saharan Africa (Van Dijk *et al.* 2001), research on how people experience migration is very relevant.

People are dealing with these climate and political insecurities by a myriad of decisions and strategies that not only have an impact on individual lives but also on the form of several institutions: land tenure, law, social networks, etc. Sahelian societies can be seen as being a response to these insecurities. Socio-cultural form arises and is conserved in the dynamics of developmental systems. 'Form and meaning arise in the context of an active and mutually constitutive engagement between organism and their environments..'. Thus every individual represents an active locus of creative change (Ingold 1991:241-2). By creating a livelihood people use their environment, they react on it, they structure it to a certain extent and they develop new pathways into the future (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2003c, 2003d). Living

in poverty is not easy, neither is it to live in a situation of political oppression or in the margins of a society. People on both ends of the spectrum have developed ways to talk about their situation, to have food every day and to interpret their past and see towards the future.

Climate variability and climate change

The Sahelian climate is characterised by strong fluctuations in rainfall in time (across the seasons and within seasons) and in space. All over the Sahel, rainfall figures of the last 40 years show a downward tendency indicating a progressive deterioration of the climate. After a relatively wet period in the 1950s and 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s were particularly dry with some improvement of rainfall during the 1990s (UNDP 1992, Put 1999, Beauvillain 1995). Whether this trend can be explained as resulting from climate change ensuing from the greenhouse effect as predicted by some global circulation models (GCMs) (Van Den Born *et al.* 2000) or whether these fluctuations fit within the range of 'normal' historical fluctuations of the climate is unclear. Dry periods, often accompanied by famine, are of all times (cf. Tymowsky 1978, Gado 1992) and people have dealt with them for centuries.

However, it is a fact is that the recent climate history of the Sahel marked by an increasing variability of rainfall has profoundly influenced people's decision-making with regard to agriculture, economic activities. Recent research on the relation between strategies of farmer and herdsmen in response to climate variability and climate change in Mali and Burkina Faso has shown a number of tendencies (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2003c, 2003d). People tend to become more mobile, migrating to southern areas that are more humid and to towns. Changes in farming technology can be observed and people tend to change their preferred livestock species. Research in Chad, and other Sahelian countries on climate change and reactions in society hints at the same tendencies of more population mobility and changes in technologies (Beauvilain 1996, Raynaut 1997, Mortimore & Adams 1999).

These reactions are part of a number of options people have when rainfall diminishes. They co-evolved with other changes in the political, social and economic spheres. For instance during the colonial time power balances were restructured so that new processes of social inclusion and exclusion were appearing, for example with respect to the regulation of access to natural resources. This made the effect of the various climate crises during the 20th century differ from other periods (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2001, 2002). Globalization in the form of international migration, the increase in access to information and the input of development projects and emergency aid which have reduced the loss of human life and suffering through food aid and better medical coverage also influences the effects of decreasing rainfall.

Chad is a particular case in this respect. In the first place hardly any information has been collected on the consequences of climate variability during the decades of drought, since a civil war raged through the country during the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, international emergency aid, development projects and the improvement of infrastructure have not taken place. The question how local actors have dealt with drought and famine, and how the droughts have impacted on people's livelihoods is particularly urgent. Research on this topic is virtually absent.

Political instability

Though political instability is part of '*la condition sahélienne*' it needs specific attention in the case of Chad. In different parts of the Sahel violent conflict occurred over the past decades. Important conflicts are the Tuareg revolt that began in the beginning of the 1990s in Niger and Mali, the conflict in the Casamance in Senegal, the border conflict between

Mauritania and Senegal, conflicts in the east of Niger (Tubu) and numerous local conflicts between farmers and herder, farmers and farmers and herders and herders. The civil war in Chad that started around 1965 and continued in different phases until the beginning of the 1990s differs from these conflicts in its length and its extension over a national territory (Buijtenhuijs 1976, 1987)

These conflicts have some general elements in common: the contrast between North and South, the opposition Islam versus Christianity/animism, the opposition pastoralism versus cultivation economies, all play a role in the majority of the conflicts. It is clear that 'ordinary' people suffer from these periods of political unrest. It leads them to migrate to other areas; it destroys culture, social networks, and leads to an insecure and uncertain economic and social situation. There are only very few studies of the long-term impact of such political conflicts on the lives, livelihoods and socio-cultural institutions of ordinary people (see Hutchinson 1996, Nordstrom 1998).

The history of the various Sahelian countries is full of political unrest and of instability, of dry periods, hunger, etc. When examining the history of the territory, which is today called Mali a succession of unstable polities, all with its exploitation of the common citizens/ordinary people, based on slave economies, on war and violence, appears. Chad is also a good example of a territory that suffered from different regimes of exploitative polities (Kanem, Baguirmi, Wadai) during the 17th, 18th and 19th century, which are based on predatory accumulation (Reyna 1994).

The civil war of Chad is part of successive periods of political instability (cf. Azevedo 1998). We must also not ignore the impact of the violence used by the colonial army and later administration to force people into a rhythm and life the coloniser could handle (i.e. payment of taxes, recruitment for the army, forced settlement, forced labour, etc.) (Lanne 1984). The 20th century also marked important changes in land tenure arrangements, displacement and mobility of people, etc.

The effects of such long periods of violence in a country cannot be underestimated. Recently, the issue of the economic consequences of political instability in Africa has been put on the agenda by OECD (see Azam & Morrisson 1999). It has been estimated that per capita GDP in Chad was 30 percent lower in 1995 than in 1960 (Azam & Morrisson 1999:135). Per capita food production of millet and sorghum did not increase from the early 1960s to 1991-93, whereas the population doubled between 1960 and 1993 (ibid: 137). Chad figures quite poorly compared to other Sahelian countries where food production has been able to keep pace with population growth (though on a country basis, there are still structural deficit areas) and where some real economic growth has materialized (though all these countries still figure among the poorest in the world).

Just as the long-term effects of ecological instability are visible in the socio-cultural set-up, livelihoods, institutions and individual decision-making the same must be true of political instability coupled with a high level of violence, the threat of violence, banditry, and many localised conflicts, which were able to erupt in the absence of a state-controlled monopoly on violence. The consequences in terms of human suffering, loss of economic production, forced displacement, retarded technological development in comparison to neighbouring countries and damaged infrastructure are immense and may have had a decisive impact on local actors' decision-making.

In the Sahelian zone of Chad both sources of instability discussed, ecological and political, come together in a very specific mix. Research on how people have accommodated this particularly hard facts, and have managed to survive is not only of scientific but also of human interest. It may shed light of a side of human experience, which is rarely treated within social science.

Scarcity and (resource) conflict

The idea that increasing resource scarcity leads to more (violent) conflict has gained currency and analytical credibility in the past decades. Rapid population growth, ecological decline and an increasing number of violent conflicts seem to confirm the causal relation between these phenomena. Not only among policy makers and researchers this idea has become popular, but also among the common people.

The implicit assumptions underlying this hypothesis are derived from a neo-Malthusian frame of reference. Millions of poor Africans, who do not have the resources, knowledge or the capital to develop a sustainable way of using natural resources, become increasingly poor because of environmental decline. Poverty, lack of adequate technology and knowledge, and the slow growth of employment in other sectors of the economy have caused this crisis. People move to cities and try to expand agricultural and industrial activities at the expense of already vulnerable ecosystems (UNEP 1999). Consequently, these people have no choice to engage in a Darwinian struggle for survival and to fight off the others who compete with them for the use of the resources they need for their survival. One of the problems in the Guera is that population density is quite modest compared to other areas in West Africa. So there must be other factors that play an important role here.

Most observers regard degradation as the result of land use systems that have become maladapted because of population growth and their technical inadequacy to deal with soil erosion and high levels of exploitation of soil nutrients. Scarcity is therefore human-induced. Environmental change is for example defined as 'human-induced decline in the quantity or quality of a renewable resource that occurs faster than it is renewed by natural processes' (Homer-Dixon 1999: 64). Similar definitions, emphasizing the human factor in environmental decline circulate in policy circles around desertification, deforestation and other phenomena related to ecological degradation (see e.g. UNDP 1991).

However, the relation between human agency, resource scarcity and conflict is hotly debated (see Gleditsch 1998, Schwartz *et al.*, 2000). Much of the discussion centres on the notion of causality. To establish the precise relation between environmental scarcity and violent conflict, however, one first needs to ascertain that there is indeed growing scarcity of natural resources. Secondly, this scarcity needs to be perceived as such by the parties involved in violent conflict. Thirdly, scarcity should be one of the reasons for the various stakeholders to engage in conflict and resort to violence. Lastly, It should be proven that violent conflicts are indeed on the increase, compared to the past.

Indeed, enormous methodological problems are attached to establishing precise relations between environmental scarcity, conflict and violence. The relation between population growth, ecological degradation and increasing resource scarcity has also seriously been challenged by recent evidence from research on ecological changes in more densely populated zones and semi-arid areas in East and West Africa. By this research, the thesis of unilinear and progressive ecological decline and growing scarcity is challenged. African ecological environments, and especially mountain areas such as the Guera, display much more variety than commonly assumed, resources are very unevenly distributed and processes of environmental change are much more varied and complex. What appears to be degradation may well be part of normal natural variability resulting from fluctuations in rainfall and other drivers of the ecosystem (Ellis & Swift 1988).

People, local resource poor farmers and pastoralists, also actively manage and anticipate on future changes and demands. Historical reconstruction has shown in various instances that what was taken as a degraded ecosystem with an increasing population, actually showed a remarkable improvement compared with the past. More trees, forested land and biomass were present the productivity of the agro-ecosystem had improved, because of

investments of local people who are always supposed to be will-less victims of ecological decline and population growth (Tiffen *et al.* 1994, Fairhead & Leach 1996, Basset & Koli Bi 1999, Mortimore & Adams 1999).

Scarcity, far from being an absolute phenomenon, has to be set within its socio-political and legal context. Various groups of actors have differential access to resources and are differently affected by drought, rainfall variability, population growth and ecological degradation. “The environment [i.e. scarcity of resources] is not neutral in its effects on the poor; environmental quality is mediated by society, and society is not undifferentiated. Access to and the distribution of environmental ‘goods’ is uneven” (Adams 1992:87, cited in Salih 2001). People occupy uneven “risk positions” vis-à-vis ecological calamities, and are differently affected by scarcity of resources, oscillations in resource availability and ecological decline. Specific groups, because of their status, may be denied access to economic assets and specific ways of resources use, or may be excluded when it comes to distributing resources and/or income over society (De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2001, 2003a). Their responses to ecological constraints will differ systematically, as well as their predisposition for conflict. Therefore, a focus on the relation between environmental change and violent conflict should also take into view the differential distribution of the costs and benefits of conflicts and violence, the social and political cleavages leading to conflicts, and also concentrate on those who benefit from these events.

According to the scarcity and deprivation thesis, the poor should be the first to engage in conflict, since they are the most directly affected by resource scarcity. This is not the case in the majority of the conflicts related to environmental scarcity. The principal reason for this is that the poor do not have the means to engage in conflict (weaponry) and do not have access to political resources to solicit sufficient support to be successful. It is even irrational to engage in conflict, for they cannot win anything. It is therefore that to understand the relation between scarcity and conflict we should focus on local people’s perspectives, on the organisation of local communities and the relations of the individual and collective strategies with high-level politics and conflicts.

Therefore, models derived from political science, which take large-scale phenomena as the basis of analysis and presuppose a linear relation between scarcity and conflict are eventually flawed. Conclusions drawn at the national and international level cannot be downsized to the regional and local level. Actors at these lower levels do not act based on the same assumptions as postulated at the international and national level. For one, ecological change is not a predictable and linear phenomenon. Consequently, local actors cannot be expected to act accordingly and much more detailed research needs to be done to investigate the dynamics of small- and medium-sized changes in the ecological environment and their relation to violent conflicts and the behaviour of local actors under these conditions.

institutes. There are a number of historical works on the pre-colonial history of some of the empires on the current territory of Tchad (Kanem. Ouaddai, Baguirmi and son (a.o. Reyna 1992, Lange 1993), there are some eyewitness reports by French officers, who have served in Chad (Chauvenet 1999, Djian 1996), some travel writing (Gide 1934, Nachtigal 1903). However, compared to other African countries the harvest is very little in terms of theses, articles in journals, archival research, oral traditions, ethnography and geographical monographs.⁵

Why then a choice for the Guera mountains? It is not a particularly known (or unknown) area in the context of Chad. However, the choice for the Guera will allow us to compare our field of study in Mali and Chad to a certain extent, since both areas are mountain areas inhabited by 'nomadic' Moslem livestock keepers and 'sedentary' pagan cereal farmers, against the background of a harsh, semi-arid climate, and a large variety of micro-ecosystems because of the relief and a large variety of cultural and social forms. Moreover, mountainous areas in the Sahel have played a special role in the political history of the zone. They have functioned as a refuge area for people who fled the exploitative practices of surrounding polities or who hid for pillaging groups. This historical given has led to a special exploitation of these areas. Intensive (sometimes terraced) farming systems were developed by the population and specific ways of exchange between the mountains and the adjacent plains developed. Comparable regions in this respect are the Dogon plateau in Mali (Gallais 1965, 1975; Van Beek 1992), and the mountain range to the east called Hayre (Gallais 1975; De Bruijn & Van Dijk 1995), the Aribinda area in Burkina Faso (Guillaud 1993) the Jos plateau in Nigeria (Netting 1968), the Kapsiki mountains in Cameroon (van Beek 1978), the Nuba mountains in Sudan (Manger 1994) and the Guera mountains in Chad (Fuchs 1970, Vincent 1987).

The ethnic composition of these areas is quite diverse, and composed of several groups that have migrated successively into the mountain area. In- and out-migration of the area is normal and the linguistic diversity is enormous. Even when people claim to have the same ethnic origin, such as the Dogon plateau in Mali, people speak different dialects and languages, which are not mutually intelligible. Outsiders often labelled them under a common derogatory name such as Haabe (Fulfulde for pagan) in Mali and Cameroon, Kirdi (pagan) in Cameroon and Chad, Hadjerai in Chad, Nuba in Sudan, Kurumba in Burkina Faso.

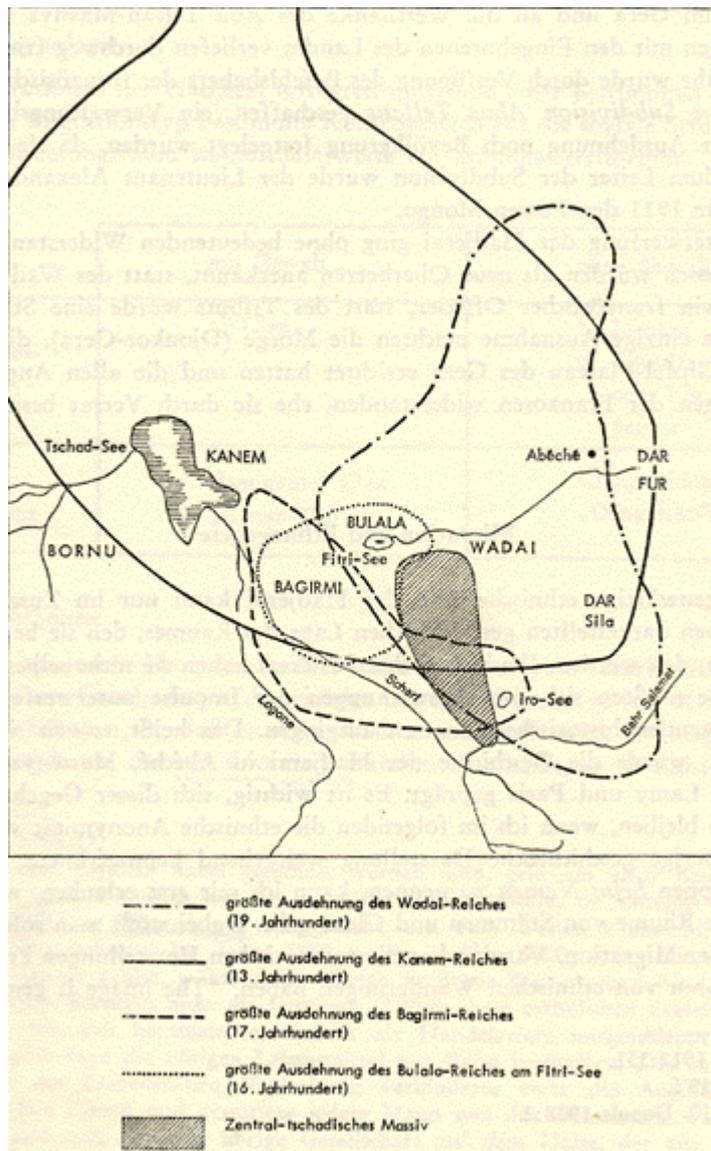
The colonial history of these areas is marked by the impact of pacification, which allowed the people living in villages on the mountains to descend to the plains and allowed more outsiders, mostly nomadic pastoralists to enter the area to look for pasture. This historical development led to the specific exchange of products and of land between both population who were in the past each other's enemies. So it is not unjustified to claim that the social constellation of these mountain areas is formed through (a combination of ecological and) political instability.

In the long history of political formations in the area the Guera can be characterised as a refugee area. The mountains offered protection to people who fled political turmoil or slave raiders from neighbouring areas. The Guera has always been situated at the periphery of the big empires, and was not or only partially incorporated in these empires. Some parts of the Guera are inhabited by 'ethnic' groups that are literally composed of people who fled slavery (Fuchs 1970).

The main empires surrounding the Guera mountains were Kanem around Lake Chad (13th century), Bulala around lake Fitri (16th century), Bagirmi west of the Guera (17th-19th century) and Wadai east of Guera (19th century). During the Wadai period the southern Guera was ruined by the slave raids. By the end of the 19th century the Guera came under the reign

⁵ We will not give a complete bibliography here, because of lack of time.

Map 2: Historical map of Chad



of Rabeh who overruled the Wadai. In 1911 the French colonized the area without any difficulties or resistance from the Hadjerai.

In the Guera one group of Hadjerai have a history of independent political formation. These are the Kenga who live in the northwestern part of the area. Other groups have been collaborating with and fighting against Baguirmi and Wadai but all in varying degrees and differently through time. During the time of the heydays of Wadai (19th century) the southern part of the Guera was almost completely emptied (people) by slave raiding activities. The lower mountains did not give enough protection. In the northeastern part some groups are known for their ferocious resistance to the soldiers and raiding bands from Ouaddai (Fuchs 1970: 51-58).

The demographic history of the Guera is one of immigrating groups, of groups looking for refuge from other area's and the Hadjerai are composed of many these various immigration waves. Until today the Hadjerai groups make a distinction between the people who came first and those who came later, the strangers. This is narrowly linked to the dominant religious cult in the region: the Margai. The priests of this cult were also the political leaders in a sense. Relations to land through this cult differ per group, but regulation

of access to land follows similar principles. Not all Hadjerai groups are linked to the Margai cult to the same extent. The eastern groups (a.o. Moubi) are more islamized than the western groups (Kenga and Dangaleat) among whom the Margai cult is most widely spread. Since the colonisation Christian, mainly Catholic missions have entered the area and a sizeable portion of the population has converted to Christianity (Fuchs 1970, Vincent 1962).

Arabs and Fulbe, both groups associated with the keeping of animals and with Islam, also populate the Guera. They came more recently in the region. The Arabs came from different directions. The main group is from the Sudan: Arab Misirié (Hugot 1997).⁶ Some of them settled more permanently in the region others trek through the region when they undertake the yearly transhumance from the North to the South during the dry season, and back during the rainy season. Other groups of pastoralists nomadise in the area during the rainy season. Relations between the Hadjerai and the Arabs are comparable to herder-farmer relations as known throughout the Sahel.

The Fulbe have a longer settled history than the Arabs as they settled in the area during the Baguirmi period, but mainly in the south, around Melffi. Next to these settled Fulbe nomadic Fulbe come through the Guera looking for pastures or on their transhumance to the South of Chad. Relations with 'sedentary' population can be typified with exchange.

The settled Arabs and Fulbe cultivate cereals like the Hadjerai; the nomadising Arabs are often owners of or share in the exploitation of an oasis in the North. The transhumance through the area as well as settling in the area became much more easy in the 20th century when the colonizer (the French) established 'peace' in the area (Djian 1996, Chauvenet 1999). It seems that integration of these 'strangers' was relatively unproblematic, although this is hard to tell from the historical records we know. What was the reality of these interethnic relations?

Contemporary history of the Guera

The Guera played a special role in the civil war that dominated Chadian politics and daily life for most of the postcolonial years. One of the trigger events of the civil war took place in Mangalmé in the northeastern part of the Guera. The people there were fed up with the high taxes they had to pay under the regime of Tombalbaye, Chad's first president after independence. Their tax-riot in 1965 gave impetus to the emergence of the FROLINAT that became the main opposition force from the 'North' to the official government, dominated by the 'South' in this time (see Abbo 1997, Buijtenhuis 1978). In the discourse on parties in the conflict the Guera became part of the North and the Hadjerai became people to be watched.

Mangalmé is only one part of the Guera, and in fact a small village, where the dominant Hadjerai are Moubi. The riot in this village may have been the expression of the sentiment of many more ordinary villagers who could not stand the regime of Tombalbaye and his people. Among the Moubi there was serious disagreement about which position to take in the conflicts that developed after this tax revolt. Later many Moubi joined FROLINAT. Villages became divided between the 'rebellions' and the 'government'. Even leading to the splitting up of villages, to the rupture of families, and a general atmosphere of fear and resistance towards any authority (Fuchs p.c.; for a study about these type of processes in Chad see Pairault 1994 about a region south of the Guera; Abbo 1997).

It also led to internal trouble in the rest of the Guera. An important example is the Islamic conversion campaign that went together with the rebellion's effort to conquer the area. The northern Moslem rebels despised the Margai cult and forced people to abandon it. The role of Islamic scholars in this movement is not clear. During this time of trouble many people were

⁶ A researcher at PRASAC, Pabame, focuses in his PhD research on these Arab groups in the south.

killed both by the rebels and by the government. Villagers were forced to pay taxes to the rebels as well as the government. This state of terror brought many to the decision to move and leave the Guera. Some of them settled in the south and others went to N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. This mobility was a consequence of social dislocation, but also of poverty, of fear and anxiety and of conflicts that appeared between various groups and within groups (cf. Bennafla 2000).

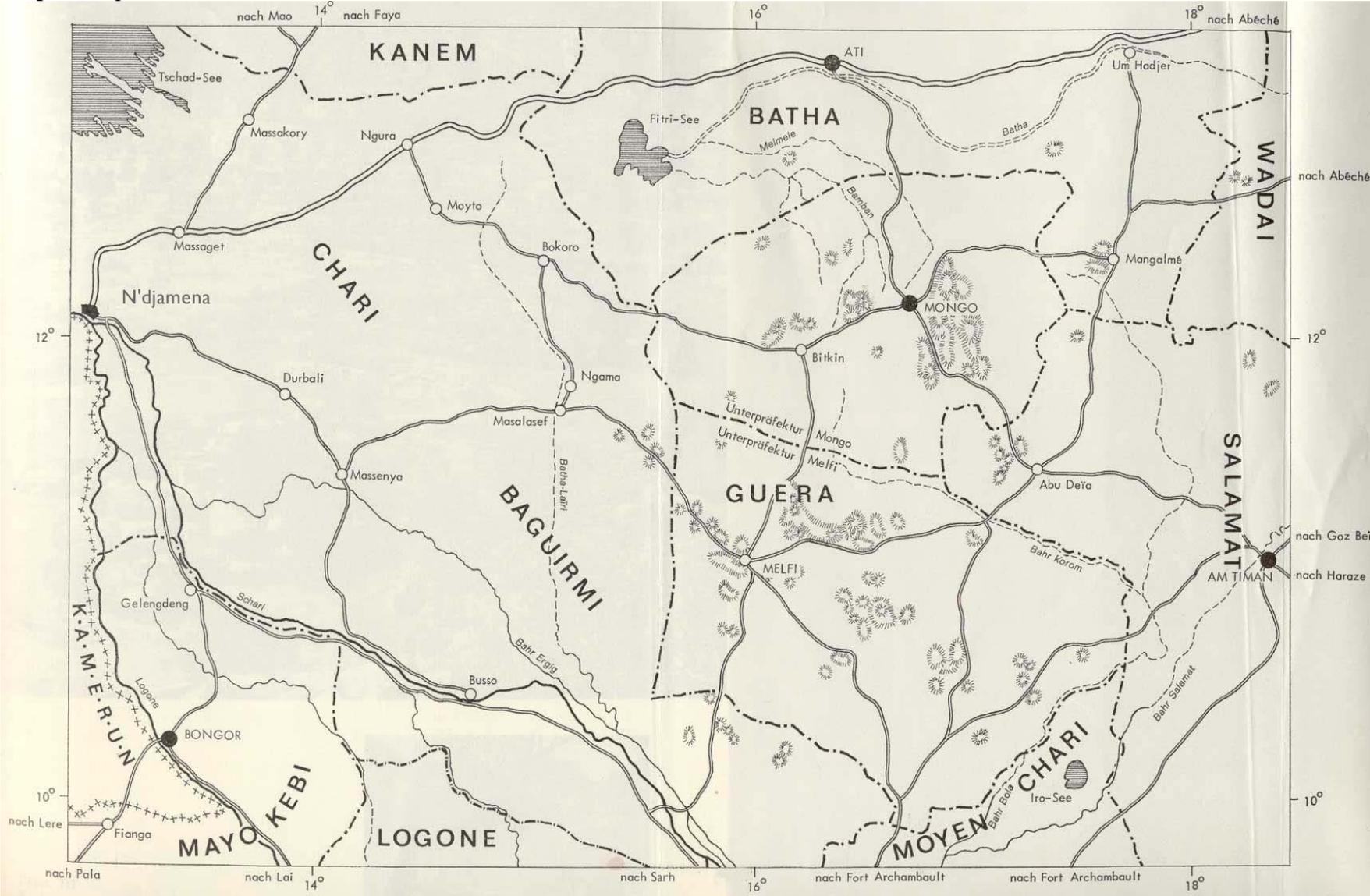
The first phase of the rebellion is thus reported as having had profound impact on the Guera and its people. What happened after that is hardly known, and certainly not documented. Apart from sporadic mention of the Guera and its capital Mongo, in publications related to the skirmishes of the civil war (see Buijtenhuijs 1976, 1987, Lanne 1984), no information relates to events or conditions in the area. There are some statistics available in data bases of the CNAR (Centre National de l'Appui à la Recherche) and in publications related to climate (Beauvillain 1995, 1996, Sabaye 1996). Some data are available from CILSS. It seems from the information we have that the Guera became less of a battleground for the rebels than it was in this first period. The struggle went to the North and the South. However, the high basic level of violence that existed everywhere in Chad must have had its corollary in the Guera. The tensions between rebels and government people could hardly calm down in this situation. Furthermore, the vagaries of the climate in the form of droughts must have taken its toll as well in the form of famine. In addition, the outflow of young men and people (to the war) must have had a sizeable impact on food production in the area. The impact of the basic level of violence has on the relations between Arabs ('people from the North', 'Goranés') and the Hadjerai is not clear. An effect of the war in the North and the dessication of the North was a migratory move of nomads from the north to the South, also to the Guera (see Pabame, Research PRASAC). They settled in the Guera. This period is also marked by more tensions between different Hadjerai villages (p.c. Pere Franco).

These developments may also have been a reaction to changing ecological condition in the area and to the new aspirations people acquired through contacts with others already settled in the Guera and the south of Chad. Analogue to other Sahelian areas the 1970s and 1980s were marked by drought in the Guera. Only in the 1990s rainfall recovered (cf. Beauvillain 1995). For Mongo rainfall figures show a serious decline in rainfall at the end of the 1960s and beginning of 1970s and also in the 1980s. It seems that plagues and pests have also been rather destructive. The effects of the drought and rainfall decline in the northern parts of the Guera have been more important as a result of the migration of other groups into the area.

The civil war in Chad has come to an end, except some troubles in the northern part of the country (Guetta 2002). The relative peace in the country is reported on a national level. The Chadian government is a government of the northerners. In fact it is a state governed by pastoralists/nomads. And the role of the regional and local administration in their ways of resolving problems can only be suggested. (cf. Buijtenhuis 2001; Fuchs 1996).

On a regional and local level conflicts are still part of daily reality as is reported in the newspapers almost everyday clashes between farmers and herders, violent unrest around elections, are reported. Another factor that may lead to new instabilities is the oil exploited in the south (Beassemdda 2002, Guyer 2001). These recent violent situations bear the consequences of 40 years of civil war in them.

Map 3: Map of the Guera



In 1997 and in 2000 famine was reported for the country. This was not only the situation in the North, but also in the south of Chad. Every year some localities in Chad do have problems to produce enough food (FEWS-net various reports). At the same time NGO's come anew in the country, and around the development of an oil industry benefits for the population are also visible, mainly in the form of transport, the construction and improvement of roads. The 'highway' from Ndjamenà to Abéché coming through Mongo was under construction in 2001 (own observations).

These developments will surely affect the way people organize their lives and the way they create a new living after a long period of national problems. It is however a question if the present situation means less violence for the people than the previous situation. At present people are as always confronted with ecological problems that may be rather violent for the poor who have no means to improve their risk position; people are involved in local conflicts that may be translated into national politics and create a lot of unpredictable violence.

Climate change and conflict and violence in the area may have had two consequences: increasing conflict between various population groups, and increasing mobility into the area and out of the area to other areas. For both conflict and migration it is not known how the different instabilities played a role. We can only suggest their role on the basis of experience in other Sahelian regions. We are now in a so-called post conflict situation. The actual reality in which people live today in the Guera and beyond may resemble the same dynamics as are present in the Nuba Mountains, as Leif Manger formulated it: 'whatever settlement that will be reached in this new century will have to reflect realities, just and unjust alike, that were established in the preceding centuries' (Manger 2001:86).

Research questions:

The central question of the research is how do people internalise, integrate and understand political and ecological insecurities or uncertainties and express them in cultural styles: mobility, conflict, interethnic relations, social relations, oral traditions, social institutions, land tenure practices? During our fieldwork we will concentrate on two fields of investigation, which have presented themselves as extremely relevant in both former research in Mali and in contacts with Chadian colleagues: 1- the extension of mobility and different forms it has taken and will take (description, history, perceptions/cultural understandings); 2- the increasing number of conflicts and violence people have to deal with, around the organization of the use of social and natural resources (description at local level, history at local level, understandings of conflicts), 3- a focus on the daily realities related to these fields of investigation and the differences in consequences between genders, status groups, ethnic groups, .

Mobility

One of the angles of this research concentrates on the way migration and mobility from and into the Guera has taken its form. This research takes a historical perspective and will relate actual migrations to past migrations. Arabs as well as Hadjerai will be part of the study and both societies are approached as 'mobile' societies. The construction of these societies is not only taking place in the Guera but also on other places and not by Hadjerai or Arabs in isolation but always in interaction with and in response to other groups and social categories.

From previous visits to Chad and with the information from Chadian researchers it was possible to discern two possible mobility 'routes' that can be part of this research. During the civil war, many people from the Guera have moved to N'Djamena or its surroundings. In

N'Djamena the Hadjerai community is quite large. Also Arabs and other nomads from the area may be found in N'Djamena. Around N'Djamena there are a number of villages that were established during the civil war by people from the Guera who fled the problems of their zone and started a new life there. Another possible case study area is Bousso where a large community of Guera people (a majority of Moubi) settled during the civil war.

The stories of these migrant people and their relatives and friends who stayed behind in the Guera may answer some of the questions that are central in this research. How many people moved? Was there a division in gender or age? What consequences did their mobility have on the civil war and the other way around? How is this mobility related to changes in the ecological environment? What exactly motivated these people? What changes occurred in their social lives, in their culture, in their religion, and how did they experience these changes? Do we deal with a rupture in their lives or with continuity and how do they perceive it themselves? What can we relate about dynamics of their society, the community in which they live today? Is the Guera still part of their lives or not?

Next to these 'settled' communities as starting point of research it must not be forgotten that many people who fled the Guera will not have had the chance to settle in a community with their 'own' people. An attempt will be made to find the peripatetics, the displaced people who have not found a place to settle 'permanently' but who depend for their survival on others and who have become the most marginalized people of society. These displaced and peripatetic people have a different perspective on life and have different access to various natural and social resources than the cases mentioned above. They live around villages, and we may also find them in towns like Mongo and N'Djamena. These are the people who are not registered, who are non-existent for the administration (cf. De Bruijn 2002 fc., De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2003b).

Conflict

The image the Hadjerai have in Ndjamenena is also easily used to explain the numerous clashes that are reported between mainly Arabs and Hadjerai in the Guera. Indeed reports are numerous and clashes have become mortal. People have arms and use these. The discourse is that the Arabs are protected by the local officials who protect the rights of the people from the North better than from the South. In the Guera the Arabs are people from the North and not the Hadjerai. Clashes are not only between Arabs and Hadjerai, that could easily be explained as clashes between herders and farmers, but also between Hadjerai groups and between Arab groups. If these clashes are indeed worse and more numerous than in the past is still to be seen. How these clashes are linked to problems that come from the situation of civil war for 40 years or that are born out of resource scarcity (population growth and decrease of land quality) is to be seen. How do these conflict link to the land tenure system that existed in the area, religious cults and their regulatory function for access to land, and socio-cultural change in the form of conversion to world religions such as Islam and Christianity?

The research on violence and resource conflicts starts at the regional level with the collection of contextual data on climate, land use, demography, physical conditions, composition of the population and the fluctuations and dynamics in these characteristics, particularly drought, pests, forced displacement, changes of political regime, and an assessment of the major events during the 25 years of political unrest. Subsequently some contemporary hot spots with respect to violence, ethnic tensions, and resource conflict will be selected for in-depth case studies. For this the extended case study method will be used. The point of departure will be a political ecology approach. The case studies will focus on current land use practices and their evolution over time especially in relation to the recurrent droughts and military insecurity, the regulation of access to natural resources and systems of

governance at the local level and their evolution over the past decades in the context of the civil war, the responses of local farmers and pastoralists to fluctuations in resource availability, local perceptions on climate, violence, mutually held ideas and prejudices of farmers and pastoralists about each other, case studies of conflicts and their ramifications to higher order regional, ethnic and national politics, and militia.

A methodological approach: Actors moving through time and space: pathways

Even though the region is the focus of research, this does not mean that the research will limit itself to this area only. For the study of mobility an area in the Guera will be selected from where migrants will be traced towards their destination. Interviews will be done on the history of individuals and families developing their 'pathways' as they take decisions. Therefore this study will extend to the north, east, west and south, anywhere the mobility itineraries will lead the researcher. The research on conflict focuses too on the region but in relation to conflict, but conflict and mobility are of course closely related, since much of the mobility can probably be explained out of violence and conflict.

For the research on population mobility, a similar exercise will be done with families and individuals who remained behind. The interviews will focus on individual experiences the 'pathways' of people: very individual histories of people and their families (see de Bruijn & van Dijk, *fc.*), but also on the way in which villages, social groups etc were transformed by change.

In a somewhat abstract manner decision-making units may range from an individual to larger units such as villages, regions, states and even international organisations. Within each of these units (or by the unit in the case of an individual decisions are taken in interaction with its environmental conditions. The following dimensions can be used to differentiate between various categories of decision-making units: 1- scale: actor-structure relationship; 2- time horizons in decision making; 3- the role of the environment in the internal organisation of the decision-making; 4- the process character of decision-making; 5- the assets of the decision-making unit; 6- risk positions: i.e. the structural differences in exposure and vulnerability to the consequence of risk.⁷

Special attention will be given to the role of risk and uncertainty in the evolution of pathways as the prime characteristics of the environment in which decision-makers have to operate. The following assumptions underlie the concept of pathways:

- A) The environment of decision-makers is inherently unstable;
- B) Decision-makers proceed on a step-by-step basis in a high-risk environment. Consequently, decision-making is an iterative process and the resulting pathway does not necessarily have an intrinsically planned or rational character or follow a logical order;
- C) Past decisions have to be taken into account, because they have constituted the pathways and the condition of the decision-maker and his/her mental set-up in the present;
- D) Decisions are made within a specific context by decision-makers with a specific history. Variation in decisions therefore need not to be based on the synchronic attributes (such as resource endowments), but can also arise from life history.
- E) Decision-makers co-ordinate their decisions explicitly and implicitly.

So, the fieldwork will initially concentrate on a specific region. However, given the focus on decision-making and the fact that individual actors and families and larger units of decision-making, either move through space or maintain supra-regional links, which have to be taken

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into account, the research will spread out from there to other parts of Chad (and possibly other countries and even Europe).

Sources of information

The general infrastructure for research in Chad is extremely weak. Databases with statistical indicators are lacking, unreliable or show great gaps, due to the uncertain political situation for a long period of time. Some effort has been made to compile basic data at the level of the CNAR (Centre National d'Appui à la Recherche), which has offered to collaborate and open up its files for this research project. Another important source of information will be the institutes for agricultural research in N'Djamena, who participate in PRASAC (Pôle de Recherche Appliquée pour les zones de Savanes en Afrique Centrale), which will act as Chadian partner in this project. Documentation can be found at CEFOD (Centre d'Étude et de Formation pour le Développement), where all the archives, periodicals and literature relevant for Chad can be found.

Points of reference throughout the study are the ethnographic films made by Peter Fuchs (1976) and the maps of the area based on aerial photographs of the 1950ies. We hope they will help us to reconstruct the history of the region.

Time schedule

For the first period of 8 months the practical objectives are to collect sufficient scientific material to write 3-4 scientific articles on Chad each, and possibly a book on the Guera, and to create a basis for further scientific collaboration with Chadian colleagues. With PRASAC an agreement has been reached to try out this collaboration for two years, to allow joint publications with Chadian researchers on the basis of the first 8 months of fieldwork in the subsequent years. At the end of our stay we aim to draft a larger research programme to be funded by an outside donor to develop the most interesting themes emerging from the first fieldwork period. Funding possibilities will be explored in N'Djamena with the representation of the European community and other multilateral agencies. This larger programme is expected to run 2004-2006/7

12 sept 2002	arrival in Ndjamena
12 sept – 30 oct	contacts in Ndjamena archival research (CEFOD) visit to Mongo, first trip into the Guera Second trip into the Guera Migrant communities in Ndjamena study of Arabic (during the whole period)

After this first period we will definitively define the different locations where we concentrate our fieldwork

Nov-Dec 2002	'Fieldwork' on various locations in the Guera Archives and library of CEFOD, CNAR and Veterinary laboratory
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Dec 23 2002- Jan 10 2003	Holidays
Jan 10- February 28	In depth studies Visit of filmers Using the film material of Fuchs?
March 2003	Taking pictures for the book to be made with Mija Hesseling Fieldwork and archival study continued

April 2003

Trip to Bousso
Fieldwork & archival studies continued
Seminar at CEFOD with the group of Gilbert
PRASAC

During our stay in Chad we will live in N'Djamena and take turns in doing field trips to the Guera region. A lot of work has to be done in N'Djamena, such as the setting up of a good network of researchers and other interesting people for the continuation of the work after these 8 months, archival research, literature review, exploration of existing databases. We hope that it will be possible in the framework of the different institutions to have regular meetings so that the comparison of our data will be made with research in other areas. This is also necessary to encourage the creation of a network of collaboration in research.

During this period Han and Mirjam will try to divide the work by choosing different 'fields' and concentrating on different domains. Han will concentrate on local conflicts in the Guera, Mirjam will concentrate on mobility in the Guera and beyond. These two general themes cannot be separated very strictly and both researchers will gather information on both subjects and therewith supporting each other's research.

Planning for the next 5 years:

A number of PhD projects under the joint guidance of Chadian and ASC senior researchers, so as to build capacity in Chad, and continuation of our own fieldwork on the basis of shorter (1-2 months) stays.

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