

# The role of state in the management of farmer-herder conflicts in South West Burkina Faso

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## 1 Introduction

In times of environmental degradation, economic transformation and political uncertainty in West Africa the problems of competition for and conflicts over natural resources are of growing concern. Farmer-herder conflicts as conflicts of interest about access to and/or use of natural resources are common and widespread in West Africa (Ouedraogo, 1996). The management of those conflicts, especially between herders and farmers, is of increasing interest. For a better understanding of the dynamics of conflict and conflict management the roles of actors in the arena of conflict management but also the institutional arrangements and the determinants of collective action governing this process have to be analysed (North, 1990).

In the South West of Burkina Faso conflicts between farmers and herders are frequent and sometimes violent. They can originate from competition for resources caused by population growth, migration and land degradation. Differences between farmers and herders in cultural values and in the acceptance of modern and traditional law may contribute as well (Hagberg, 1998). Their conflicts can be expressed as a mixture of social tension/avoidance, political action and violent action (Turner, 2003).

The state has to contribute to an efficient conflict management structurally as a legislator and personally as an alternative mediator, if conflicts between farmers and herders escalate. In a framework of on-going social, political and legal changes (land tenure reform and decentralisation) in Burkina Faso the state acts in a tensed field of new challenges and already existing obstacles.

This paper explores to which extent the state fulfils its role as a mediator and donor of frame condition in the arena of conflict management between farmer and herders in Southwest Burkina Faso.

## 2 Material and Methods

From October 2001 to June 2003 a multi-disciplinary study on conflict management was undertaken in the Poni and Nounbiel Provinces in South West Burkina Faso. This area is dominated by crop production, related to the relatively high annual rainfall between 1000 and 1200 mm.

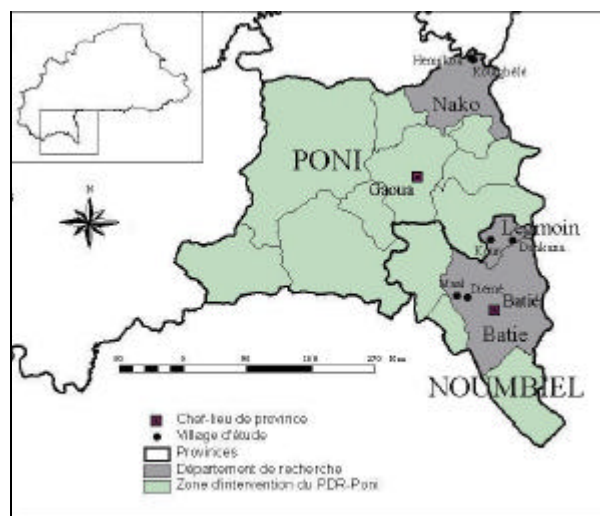


Figure 1. The research area and sample villages in South West Burkina Faso

Based on previous PRA surveys and personal information from local project agents six villages (Maal, Djeme, Kour, Dankana, Kourgbélé, and Hemkpa) were chosen covering the two provinces. Criteria for the choice were: potential for conflict and co-operation, expression of conflict, socio-demographic composition and geographic allocation in the provinces. In a first field phase a basic inquiry in all 375 village households (HH) took place, based on a previous study partially carried out by INCO/INERA in 1999/2000, recording household composition, agricultural resources and migration. A second field phase followed, based on a multi-stage selection of households (HH) to be studied more intensively. In each village, at least 30% of the total number of the HHs were questioned, however not more than two HHs per compound (a compound is formed by one or more households, which are member of the same family, e.g. the father's household together with the households of already married sons). The criteria of the selection resulted from the objective of the study. All Fulani (first activity: cattle keeping) and nearly all farmers with larger-scale livestock activities were interviewed. The stratification of the relatively homogeneous group of farmers with small-scale livestock activities took place on the basis of the manpower (household members between 14-50 years) on the HH's disposal. Within the respective stratum, HH were selected at random.

In total, 124 households and the local authorities in the villages participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

**Table 1. Number of total households in the villages and number of households in the intensive survey**

	Total no of households	No of households investigated
Herders (Fulani)	64	24
Farmers (Dagara, Birifor, Lobi):	311	100
With livestock at a larger scale <sup>1</sup>	23	19
Manpower <sup>2</sup> $\geq$ 3	116	31
Manpower $<$ 3	159	42
Other migrants	6	4
Widows	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>124</b>

<sup>1</sup>More than 10 cattle and/or 20 heads of sheep or goats.

<sup>2</sup>Manpower was calculated as household members between 14 and 50 years.

The questionnaires covered natural resource management, social relations and conflict management.

Also representatives at the meso (Prefect, High Commissioner, Technical Service, Development, Research Projects and NGOs) and macro level (government, parliament) were interviewed to understand their involvement in and perception of conflict management, evaluation of on-going political processes like land tenure reform as well as their propositions for future conflict management between farmers and herders.

### 3 The state as a mediator in the arena of conflict management

To explore the role of the state as a mediator, the different actors in the arena of conflict management, their roles and relationships needed to be defined. Then, the involvement of the different mediators, the strategies and degree of satisfaction with the outcomes of the management process of farmers and herders were examined.

#### 3.1 Conflicts

With the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s the situation in the South West of Burkina changed remarkable. Migration of Fulani pastoralists, forced by the droughts from the north and political changes from the South (crisis in the Ivory Coast) brought new challenges to the region. Over the last decades farmer-herder conflicts, especially between the local agricultural ethnicities and Fulani pastoralists became more and more visible, frequent and violent.

In total, 111 conflicts were reported by the 124 households during the last three years. 97 of these (87%) were typical farmer-herder conflicts about crop damages caused by livestock (74 were reported by farmers, and 23 by the herders). Only these will be discussed here.

Box 1. A 'typical' farmer-herder conflict:

My family and me, we have *champs de case* and some *champs de brousse* – which are a bit far away. Last year, while it was time for harvesting the Yams in the *champs de brousse*, my wife and me, we were guarding the fields over there. But my wife was falling asleep, so cattle came in and destroyed the Yams tubers. We followed the traces and found the Fulani herder with the cattle. It was one from the settlement nearby our village. We started to shout at him, because he said, he would not pay. Then, we informed our RAV and he started to talk with the Fulani. In the end, they paid 20.000 FCFA. We had asked for more, because they could afford more, but this was better than nothing.... Yes, you can also ask the Technical Service for estimation of damage, but then you have to pay them too, and you can never be sure..... You know, the animals, you cannot drive them like bicycles, so you always will have problems like this..... (Source: Dagara farmer)

Even if, as primary cause for conflict the obvious crop damages were mentioned, the underlying causes for the expression of conflicts were manifold and embedded in a spectrum of fears about effects of newcomers or 'outsiders' on today's traditionally accepted social, ecologic and economic structure. This also included a vague fear about a today's loss of rights for future 'insider' generations when outsiders come in, even if resources like land were still available.

#### 3.2 Actors, roles and relationships

The two central actors in the arena were the farmers and the herders. The farmers (Dagara, Birifor, Lobi), referred to as 'autochthonous', were the 'first-comers' in the region, engaged primarily in crop farming with some small-scale livestock activities. Strong relationships among farmers existed because they were members of the same family or clan. The 'neighbourhood support' as a pre-dominant pattern of co-operation strengthens the collective character and could be seen as an investment in social capital among the farmers.

The herders were mainly settled Fulani who arrived in the villages in recent years. Their share in the local population differed between 0% (Kourgbélé) and 34% (Kour). In all villages they lived separated from the main village quarters. Primary activity was large-scale cattle keeping with a households herd size mostly varying between 50 up to 100 heads. The grazing distance mentioned was up to 40 km, depending on availability of water and grazing

resources. As a secondary activity the herders also mentioned crop production. Relations between the farmers and the Fulani herders differed among the villages and varied from total disregard (Hemkpa) to friendships (Kour).

Box 2. Relations and co-operation between farmers and herders (in the view of a farmer):

Yes, you can have relations to them (*the Fulani*): you can sell to them your products and you can buy e.g. their chicken, because they have bigger breeds. My sons are working for them on their fields - for money, but I don't like it... I don't know why, but I don't like it. Now my sons do it secretly. People say, it would be good for the soil to let the cattle on the fields after harvesting, but the cattle from the Fulani comes from the bush, so they will bring with the manure many seeds of ill weeds, I think, so I don't want it, too. My neighbour, he is friend with one of them, and last year he (*the Fulani friend of the Dagara farmer*) was coming and ploughing his fields with his draught-oxen, as my neighbour was ill, that was good.... If you're at the same time farmer and herder, then it would be good, even in bad years you will have your animals, and it would be good for your soil, too. But a farmer and a herder is difficult... you know, like a man with two wives: They (*the two wives*) can cope with each other for a while, but if there is even the smallest thing happening, immediately you will have a big clash and they will never again speak a word to each other. (Source: Dagara farmer)

Other actors are the local authorities: The 'Chef de terre' (Earth Priest) is a traditional authority and acts as a mediator between the living people and the ancestors. His medium is the land and whenever there is a question of custom, he will be consulted. Therefore, he is kind of a 'living land-register', knowing the different boundaries and their history of evolution. The succession follows the principle of male-inheritance in the first 'first-comer' family. The Fulani chief represents the settled Fulani e.g. in village meetings. He is responsible for all Fulani-internal questions and problems and serves also as a link between the settled and the transhumant herders. The 'RAV' (Responsable Administratif Villageois, local administration officer) is a newer authority in the villages. In the revolutionary times of the 1980s this authority (position) was created by the state and the RAV was elected by the local population, nowadays he is proposed by them and nominated by the Prefect (head of the department). The RAV serves as a non-traditional link between the autochthonous and migrant local population and the departmental administration. In the investigated villages he also was the 'door opener' for new arriving Fulani. According to all RAVs interviewed one main task was the mediation in case of conflicts between farmers and migrant herders. A crisis or conflicts of competence between the Chef de terre and the RAV was never mentioned, explained by the clearly divided responsibilities and duties.

At the departmental administration level the Prefect was addressed for conflict resolution, sometimes with the help of police officers, when management at the local level failed. Then, the different technical services at the department level were responsible for the estimation of compensation in case of damage. In the case, that conflict management at this level also failed, an engagement of the 'Haut Commissaire' (High Commissioner) and/or the law court, as the next hierarchical regional administration level would be necessary.

Other actors in the research area were the two development projects, the PDR-Poni (Projet de développement rural) and the PDR-Sud-Ouest, as well as a research project (EU-funded INCO-DC project). Their role was related to activities in local and regional natural resource management. Farmer/Herder organisations or other forms of NGOs were rare in the research area and performed locally limited special tasks (e.g. rice production, horticulture, cattle vaccination, credits...), but initialised and supported mostly by the above-mentioned projects.

In general, the degree of organization in the researched villages was very low. A last group of actors may be summarized as ‘urban elites’ or ‘sons of the village’ which followed a career in the public service e.g. as (ancient) members of the National Assembly and now influence opinions and/or decision-making processes in their home villages.

These formal and/or informal duties and obligations and the participation in the village’s decision-making processes form the base for the actors’ role. But reputation, personality and experience influenced to which extent the different authorities can realise their tasks.

### 3.3 Conflict management

#### 3.3.1 The strategies and the degree of satisfaction

The mediators in the management of the 97 conflicts encountered between farmers and herders act at different (hierarchical) levels. These different levels occurred with the following frequencies:

- inter-personal level (among concerned): **22%**
- at local level with mediator: **55%**
  - RAV (37.1%)
  - RAV with Fulani Chief (12.4%)
  - RAV with Chef de terre (2.1%)
  - Chef de terre (2.1%)
  - RAV with Chef de terre and Fulani Chief (1%)
- at departmental level: **13%**
  - RAV with Police (1%)
  - Prefect and others (e.g. the Technical Service) (12.4%)
- Law Court: **0%**

In 10% of the cases the culprit could not be identified. At local level the RAV as a mediator alone or assisted by other local authorities was involved most frequently (53%), while the Chef de terre was rarely involved (5%). The Fulani chief was able to assist in 13% of the reported cases, always in association with the RAV, while the Chef de terre mediated two cases on his own and three others together with the RAV and the Fulani chief.

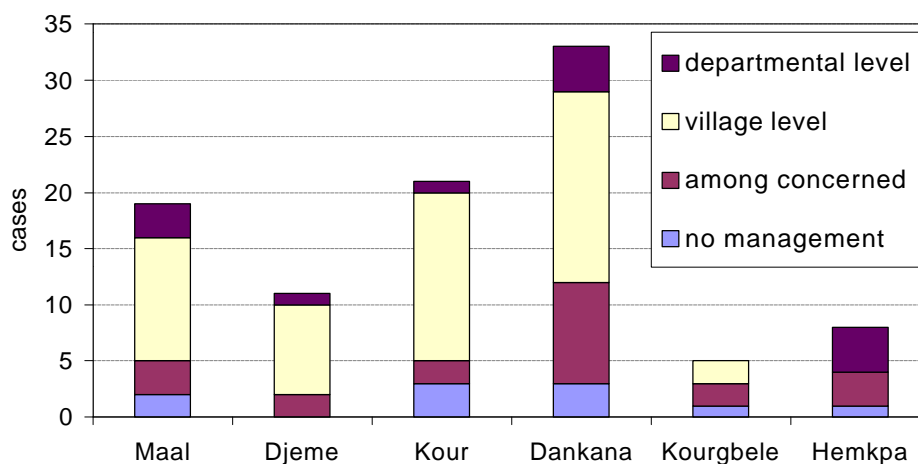
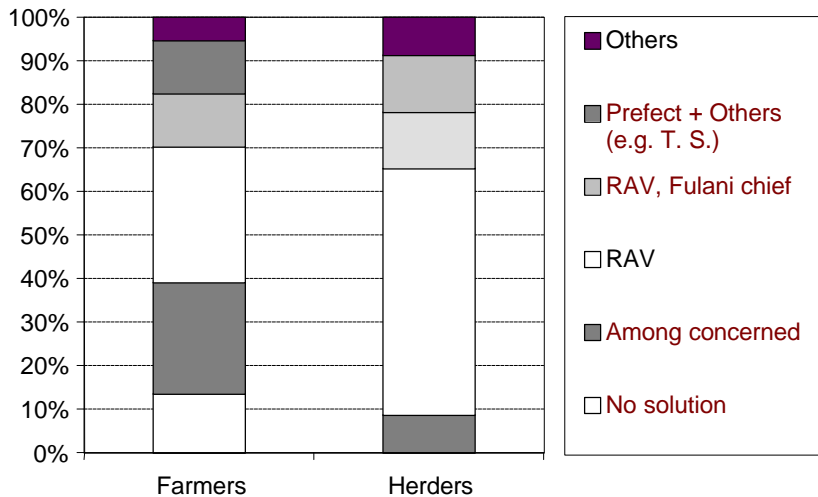


Figure 2. The different level of mediation per village

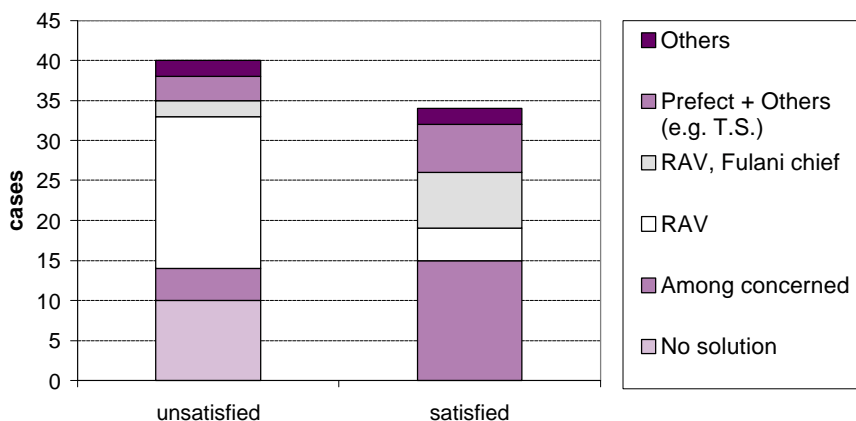
13% of the reported disputes could not be settled in the village and had to be transferred to the departmental level for a solution. In Hemkpa arbitration by the Prefect and/or technical service took place four times and none of the eight conflicts was managed by the RAV. Here the RAV was declared as 'too young and inexperienced' to be a competent mediator.

Both parties preferred management at the village level (Figure 2). Conflict management among only the concerned parties was said to be rare and difficult if the field and herd owner did not belong to the same ethnic group. Therefore, the Fulani clearly preferred the RAV as a mediator. The RAV was engaged in 70% of all cases reported by the Fulani.



**Figure 3. Preferred mediators (% of cases) in the conflicts reported by farmers and herders**

The degree of dissatisfaction with the result of the management process (compensation payment) varied considerably between the two concerned parties. All Fulani were satisfied with the different types of conflict management but more than half (54%) of the autochthonous farmers complained of no or inadequate compensations.



**Figure 4. Farmer's dissatisfaction and satisfaction with different mediators for the reported cases**

In this context one informant at the meso level feared the beginning of a 'commercialisation of

conflict'. It could be interpreted as a moral hazard problem, when farmers showed opportunistic behaviour in claiming more damage than really caused by the Fulani herds. Dissatisfaction of the autochthonous farmers was particularly the case for arbitration by the RAV (Figure 4). As an alternative mediator the interviewees mentioned the Prefect, which would mean leaving the village level. This was avoided by most of them because of the costs (e.g. transport costs of the technical service) and feared persisting resentments between parties. Therefore, conflict management by the department was not perceived as a good option, even if there was dissatisfaction and the risk of moral hazard at the village level. Asked for a better future conflict management, both parties preferred the management at the village level even with the existing institutions, 21% proposed the foundation of a village committee.

### 3.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the different mediators

Conflict management among the concerned appeared to be the most effective management in social and economic terms. Therefore, the concerned farmers and herders were mainly responsible for the development of efficient conflict management under the juridical level and without violence. Though existence or the built-up of social capital will not preclude conflicts, it will help to find a solution without long-lasting resentments among those concerned (Brockhaus et al., 2003).

In spite of the high degree of dissatisfaction by autochthonous farmers with the RAV's arbitration his opinion in cases of conflict was the most important for 70% of the 124 households interviewed, and 56% trusted him as the best decision-taker for all parties. His role was accepted by the traditional local authorities as well as by the local autochthonous and Fulani population. Therefore, he played a central role in the arena of conflict management.

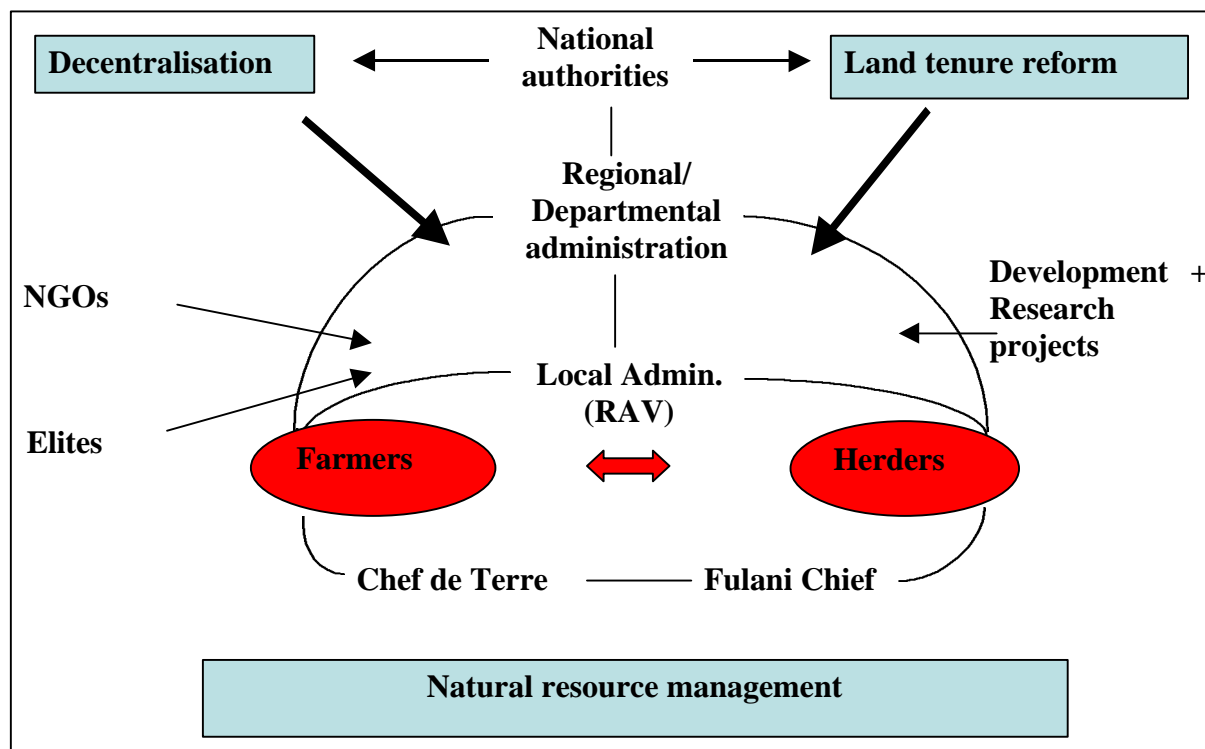


Figure 5. The arena of conflict management

The RAV's strength as a mediator resulted from his great potential influence on and the trust by all parties concerned as well as from his proximity in space and time. To the high degree of trust in the RAV might contribute that in spite of the fact, that he is a state authority, he is not

perceived as such by the local population but still as a 'son of the village'. However, the RAV's limit or weakness to fulfil his role was that the realisation depended on his personal motivation and capacities. Furthermore its future role is impaired by the fact that the RAV today is not elected but proposed and nominated by an obscure process, and succession by inheritance and not by abilities has started (case Hempka).

The strength of departmental/regional state authorities as described by the informants was the hierarchical power, the state force, in some cases by the help of the police. But in the perception of the local actors the state failed to be a real alternative, because its decision taking lacked transparency and therefore trust. The challenge for the state would be to arrange more transparent processes in estimation and judging of the damage, especially to avoid a further risk of 'conflict commercialisation'. Also the lack of proximity in space and time was perceived by the locals as a problem. Another problem, mentioned by the departmental authorities like Prefect, High Commissioner, Technical Service and Police, for active involvement in conflict management were the limited financial resources. Cases were described where even no fuel to start a mission in a village was available. One other obstacle for state's involvement in and support of efficient conflict management was seen by informants at the meso and macro level in the rotation principle for Prefect/HC, which led to a lack of continuity and therefore consistence in decision making.

## **4 Political frame conditions**

Conflicts and conflict management cannot be reduced to only social or ecologic or economic terms. Conflicts have a complex history with multiple factors of social, political, economic and ecologic nature, determining their evolution and expression. The frame conditions with impact on the arena of conflict were various and ranged from more general processes like decentralisation to concrete regulations for land tenure in Burkina Faso. The key issue is natural resource management, as it combines the above mentioned factors and exerts a strong influence on socio-political, ecological and economic local realities.

### **4.1 On-going political processes related to NRM**

Decentralisation and land tenure reform were mentioned by all informants at meso and macro level mentioned as a political processes with a strong impact on natural resource management and therefore on the arena of conflict management between farmers and herders. For some of them decentralisation was the most important process, other judged the land tenure reform (RAF, Rèforme Agraire et Foncière) of greater importance. In addition, regulations related to pastoralism were mentioned by informants of meso and macro level, particularly by the Technical Service (Animal Production) at departmental and province level. Decentralisation is defined as the transfer of decision-making power from the central government to decentralised local-level entities. It aims at more participation of the local population in decision making processes and therefore more demand-oriented decision making as possible with a centralised structure. Decentralisation should not be confused with deconcentration, defined as the redistribution of decision-making authority and financial management responsibility among different levels of central government.

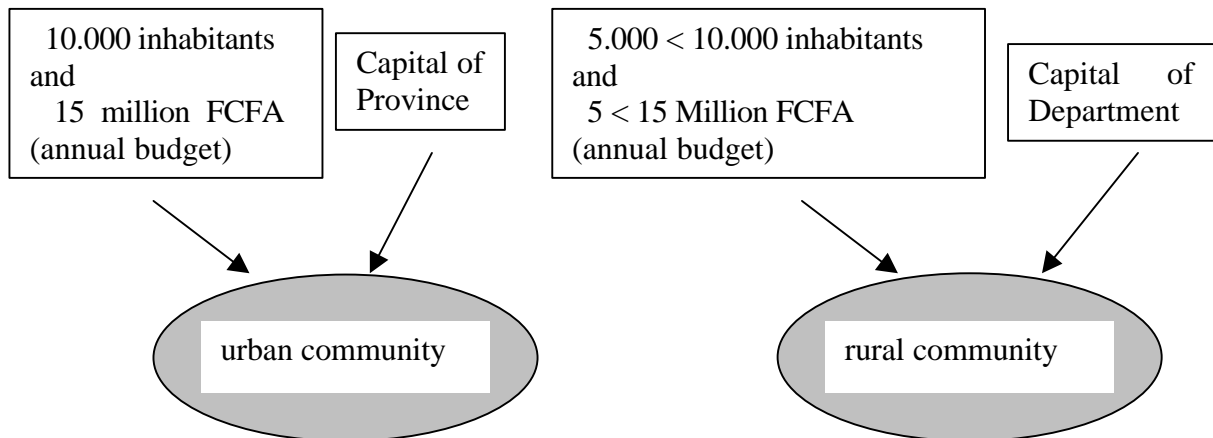
In Burkina Faso a political reform process started with the new constitution of the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1991, aiming at the reorganisation of territorial administration in local communities. This decentralisation process is based on five texts over decentralisation from May 1993 and became more concrete and precise in August 1998 with four laws concerning decentralisation, the *textes d'orientation de la décentralisation* (TOD) au Burkina Faso. A first change of the TOD took place in July 2001, a second change with four new laws in August 2003. Today, the administration in Burkina Faso is organised in two different structures:



- a deconcentrated structure, composed by four different levels of administration districts without legal personality, without financial sovereignty and represented by a nominated agent (13 regions with governors, 45 provinces with High Commissioners, 350 departments with Prefects and ca. 8000 villages with RAVs),
- a decentralised structure, composed by territorial entities, with own legal personality, with financial sovereignty and represented by elected agents (13 regions and a non-specified number of urban (elected Majors) and rural (Prefect-majors) communities).

The today's administrative reality does not yet consider the mentioned 13 regions, neither as deconcentrated nor as deconcentrated units. They were introduced by the changes of the TOD in 2001, first as deconcentrated units, but still not implemented. By the new laws from August 2003 the regions should become decentralised entities up to 2011. Previously, the 45 provinces were supposed to be decentralised entities, now they will be left as deconcentrated units. Also the appearance of the two other decentralised entities is still limited – up to now only 49 urban communities exist in Burkina Faso.

The distinction of the communities in 'rural' and 'urban' depends on the number of inhabitants and the volume of the annual budget. As an exception all province capitals are nominated as urban communities and all department capitals as rural communities.



**Figure 6. Distinction between urban and rural communities (adapted from Rothe, 2002)**

Today, in the rural communities a *Conseil special* with members announced by the Prefect supports the tasks of the director, the Prefect-Mayor. Elections are planned between 2003 and 2006. Since the elections in 1995 and 2000 the urban communities have got an elected Mayor (as executive agent) and an elected Conseil Municipal (as advisory body). With the transfer of competences and resources they obtained all the power needed to be a decentralised entity. Today, only 18% of the population is affected by the decentralisation process in the urban communities. Even if the expected decentralised rural communities were implemented, the percentage of the affected population would not reach 50%.

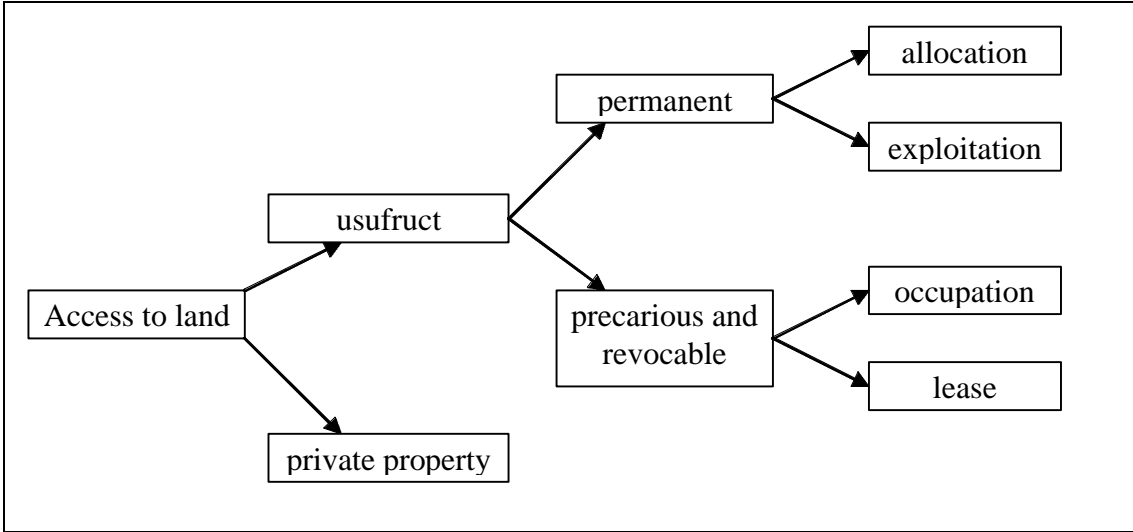
The process of decentralisation is accompanied by the *Réforme Globale de l'Administration Publique* (RGAP), and the *Rèforme Agraire et Foncière* (RAF). The RAF aims at the reorganisation of land tenure to enhance productivity and to guarantee the social justice and contains regulations concerning property, access to land and land rights as well as the organisation of natural resource management.<sup>1</sup> As part of the decentralisation process, the transfer of resources from the centralised state to the decentralised local communities includes

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning (RAF, 1984) it was also a mean to limit the force of the traditional chief. Recent reflections about the RAF embedded the traditional chiefs into the decision-making process and take the value of the traditional rulers and their experience into account.

the transfer of land tenure. In the terms of the TOD of 1998 it is stipulated that the local communities dispose of communal-owned territory that consists of the parts of the state-owned land transferred by land titles by the State. This must be seen in context with the RAF of 1984, which basically nationalised all land, and the changes of the RAF in 1996, which implemented the possibility for the State to transfer land tenure rights to legal personalities and private persons. Therefore, the local communities as decentralised unities can manage and use communal territory themselves.

In the RAF, access to land and land rights for private persons are organised in two different structures, private property and usufruct (use right linked to land titles). Private property remains an exception compared to the still dominating national property (Ouedraogo 2001). The resulting limited land market in Burkina Faso constitutes an exception in the West African context (Stamm 1996).

According to the RAF, the precondition to buy land is the holding of a use right. Usufruct tiles are subdivided in two groups: permanent land titles (allocation and exploitation) and precarious, revocable titles (occupation and lease).



**Figure 7. Access to land according to the RAF (adapted from Pickardt, 2003)**

However, the population takes only rarely advantage of these official land titles, partly because of lack of information, and partly in order to avoid the payment of taxes and fees linked to them. The majority of the Burkinabé citizens, especially those located in rural areas continue to use natural resources in the traditional way. Such customary rights are taken into account by the RAF by allowing continuing occupation for subsistence without any administrative permission or accordance of a land title. Only new clearings need to be authorised by the administration (Ouedraogo 2001).

The mentioned decentralised structures (regions, urban and rural communities) should be supported by the deconcentrated structures (regions, provinces, departments, villages), particularly in the realisation of economic, social and cultural development. At village level, the community is supposed to be organised in a *Commission Villagoise de Gestion des Terroirs* (CVGTs). The CVGT, created in the frame of the RAF, is an administrative structure for land use planning and development, with decisional character but without legal personality. The competences of the CVGT are the inventory of the village territory, the guidance of land use planning, management and development of the land, the implementation of activities, the attribution, the evaluation and the withdrawal of the land as well as the

evaluation of these activities. The CVGT is composed by an assembly, an office, sub-commissions (number depending on local conditions) and an evaluation and control committee. Several CVGT can found a CIVGT (inter village commission). The implementation of the CVGTs and CIVGTs, partially executed by private organisations, has yet not reached very far.

Additional to these processes, also the implementation of a law related to pastoralism is on-going in Burkina Faso. This law, aiming at a sustainable development and the peaceful integration of pastoral, agro-pastoral and silvo-pastoral activities, was introduced in November 2002 and gives regulations for the access to pastures and for the transhumance. In May 2003 a national workshop to reflect about the application of these more general regulations took place.

The realities observed in the research area show the existence of a gap between the above mentioned political processes and visions and the *de facto* situation. Indeed, the research area seems not yet to be touched by the above-presented frame conditions: In spite of the fact that in Burkina Faso, the village represents an administrative entity, the village boundaries are not yet registered officially. None of the six research villages can fulfil the criteria to incorporate the status of a community: the most populated village, Dankana, counts less than 1000 inhabitants and is therefore far from reaching the threshold of 5 000 inhabitants, and the villages do not dispose of any budget, since they are composed of subsistent, autonomous compounds that are contributing little to the monetary market system. When asked about decentralisation, the interlocutors only gave a shrug. A realization of the articles on land tenure and resource management mentioned in the RAF could not be observed. The most common statement on the RAF was: “*La terre appartient à l’Etat*”<sup>2</sup>, what does not hinder at all the persistence of the customary land tenure system. Even the village as administrative entity doesn’t play an important role, and family linkages remain the dominant structure.

## **4.2 Potentials and obstacles**

Potentials and obstacles are related to the political visions behind the on-going reform processes, the attempts for implementation as well as to the complementariness and/or contradictions with the actual status quo in Burkina Faso and thus in the research area.

The informants at meso and macro level potentials saw the main potentials of the processes in the development and the mobilisation of the civil society in Burkina Faso, as well as in a stronger land tenure security by formalized regulations for access to land, land use and land management. Therefore, the plurality of local interests should become more visible and negotiable, which would lead to more participation of local actors and actor groups in decision making processes, e.g. processes related to the management of natural resources, and a strengthening of local-level negotiation processes. The reduction of conflict potential at local level could then be a result of these processes. The observed dynamic of institutions in the research area, that is particularly related to the roles and partition of competences of the Chef de terre as a customary and the RAV as a modern institution, is a strong potential for an effective synthesis of ‘customary’ and ‘modern’ regulations and arrangements. A strengthening of already existing local institutions and their harmonization with other planned local structures like the CVGT can support an effective conflict management at village level.

The obstacles for attaining such a development are manifold. Firstly, the informants mentioned the lack of capacity building – lack of capacities and competences not only in the population (e.g. because of a high rate of illiteracy, a low organisational degree in the

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<sup>2</sup> „The land belongs to the state. “

research area, low economic power), but also in the administration itself. The main obstacle was seen in the limited access to information and the deficient distribution of information about the reform processes in administration and population. Secondly, the lack of implementation and definition of competences between the new structures (e.g. rural communities and CVGTs) were mentioned. Up to now in the research area, no implemented rural community and no active CVGT have been implemented. The lack of applicability and of regulations for the implementation of the RAF was also mentioned. This led to a situation of insecure land tenure, and the informants feared a black market for land without any formalisation and an open door for abuse. These obstacles, as a result of the gap between political vision and rural realities, can lead to a marginalisation of rural areas, by the decentralisation, which aims at the opposite as well as by the RAF (Hilhorst et al., 2003). By the informants also an exclusion of actors, e.g. the pastoralists, was feared, particularly the transhumant pastoralists. For them, a participation in local decision making processes will be difficult. In this context, the readiness of the 'autochthonous' population and other local actors for an inclusion of all actors in decision making processes must be seen critically. The invitation and participation of settled Fulani herders in village meetings (even if it was organised by development and research projects) was only rarely observed in the research area. Also, the expectations in the law related to pastoralism and its implementation are not yet fulfilled, as remarked by informants from the pastoralists' side. In addition, informants of the macro level mentioned the weak political lobby of pastoralists at the national level. This can lead to a marginalisation of pastoralists and their stakes in Burkina Faso. The hesitant progression in the approximation of political visions and field realities was explained by informants, among others, with the plurality of powerful stakeholders at national level, with no or little readiness in an abandonment or partition of their actual power.

## 5 Conclusions

The state disposes of a great potential in the arena of conflict management in both roles, as a mediator in case of conflict escalation and as a donor of frame conditions, but it seems, that it is too weak to fulfil his responsibilities and tasks.

The RAV as the state authority at village level disposed of trust by the farmers and the herders, but his role was limited due to the lack of support by the higher administration levels and was strongly depending on his personal capacities. At the district level the regional/departmental authorities often failed to perform their mediating role due to formal (financial and technical) and informal (distrust) reasons. Therefore, the challenge for the state will be the development and support of local institutions for efficient conflict management. Decentralisation includes a strong potential for such a development, but processes of political and economic transformation in West African countries (like in many other developing countries) are often driven by an outside force under fashionable principles like 'good governance' or 'globalisation' with no or less specification. This may lead to a 'top down approach' with little political willingness for implementation, little grass root participation and rejecting or simple consumer behaviour of the local population (Sawadogo, 2001). The process of decentralisation in Burkina Faso is no exception in this wider context, and for the land tenure reform the same assumption may be valid. Here, the challenge for the state will be to learn from local realities and to animate a more bottom-up dominated process, which takes into consideration all actors to avoid a marginalisation, of actors and of rural areas. The potentials, which are embedded in the dynamic social and political environment in Burkina Faso, are not yet realised.

## 6 Bibliography

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