

**THE DANGERS OF NATURAL RESOURCES DECENTRALIZATION:  
DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT, (LOCAL) DEVELOPMENT AND THE  
MAKING OF A *BIG MAN* IN THE DIMAKO COUNCIL, CAMEROON**

by

**Gildas Allan Ofoulhast-Othamot**

Bachelor of Science Political Science, magna cum laude (*Mention d'Excellence*), Université de

Montréal, 2002

Master of Arts Political Science, Concentration in International Development Policy and

Administration, University of Florida, 2005

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2011

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This dissertation was presented

by

Gildas Allan Ofoulhast-Othamot

It was defended on

18 October, 2011

and approved by

B. Guy Peters, Maurice Falk Professor of American Government, Department of Political  
Science, University of Pittsburgh

Martin Staniland, Professor, International Affairs, Graduate School of Public and  
International Affairs

Harvey White, Associate Professor, Public Administration, Graduate School of Public and  
International Affairs

Dissertation Advisor: Louis A. Picard, Professor, International Development, Graduate  
School of Public and International Affairs

Copyright © by Gildas Allan Ofoulhast-Othamot

2011

*This work is dedicated to the late Général de Corps d'Armée (GCA) Ofoulhast-Othamot  
(08/14/1955-03/27/2006) who will be missed forever.*

“And herein is that saying true, one soweth, and another reapeth”, John 4:37.

**THE DANGERS OF NATURAL RESOURCES DECENTRALIZATION:  
DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT, (LOCAL) DEVELOPMENT AND  
THE MAKING OF A *BIG MAN* IN THE DIMAKO COUNCIL, CAMEROON**

Gildas Allan Ofoulhast-Othamot, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2011

Abstract

Throughout the world decentralized experiments in natural resources management are being attempted on the assumption that through the inclusion of those who were formerly excluded - local/rural communities and governments- the management of those resources as well as local/rural living conditions shall be improved. In Cameroon, following the 1994 landmark *Forest Law* which transferred some powers, resources and responsibilities to local actors, two primary modes of decentralized forest management were conceived community and council forests. Whereas, in the more than fifteen years since the 1994 reform, community forests have been the object of intense scholarly attention, the study of council forests has lagged behind in spite of the fact that earlier studies had highlighted the predicaments of the overall forest management decentralization. This study sought to fill that gap in the literature.

The central question addressed in this dissertation was straightforward: why did the forest management decentralization fail to achieve the goals of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and local development in Dimako Council? In order to answer that question, the dissertation examined the case of the Dimako Council and the Dimako Council Forest. That case was significant because it represented the first experiment in natural resources management by an

elected local government in the entire Congo Basin, the second largest reservoir of tropical forests after the Amazon.

The empirical research found that the forest management decentralization in Dimako Council failed to achieve the goals of SFM and local development because the Mayor of Dimako, taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by the forest law, captured the council forest and utilized it for power-building purposes, thereby earning him the status of a *Big Man*. Overall, the main contribution of the study is to show that the decentralization theory of natural resources management instead of solving the ‘bad’ governance issues that it reportedly identified in the first place has in effect extended and entrenched the reach of the patrimonial state as well as aggravated the state of affairs in Dimako, leading to questions about its relevance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>XXVI</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 DECENTRALIZATION AS THE PANACEA? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.5 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.6 PERSPECTIVE OF THIS STUDY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.7 THE <i>BIG MAN</i> CONCEPT/PARADIGM.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.0 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1 A CONCEPTUAL MUDDLE.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1.1 Defining decentralization .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.1.2 Types of decentralization .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.1.2.1 Deconcentration or administrative decentralization .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.1.2.2 Fiscal decentralization .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.1.2.3 Devolution or political decentralization .....</b>	<b>33</b>

2.1.2.4	The confusion surrounding devolution and democratic decentralization.....	33
2.1.3	The meaning of decentralization in Cameroon.....	36
2.1.4	Decentralization in this study .....	36
2.2	THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RECORD.....	38
2.2.1	Decentralization of public services provision and delivery and natural resources management .....	38
2.3	SUMMARY .....	52
3.0	METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	53
3.1	THE RESEARCH METHODS AND THE FIELD INVESTIGATION .....	53
3.1.1	The approach used: the case study and qualitative methods .....	54
3.1.2	Operationalizing the variables .....	55
3.1.2.1	Sustainable forest management and the forest management plan .	56
3.1.2.2	Measuring local development .....	58
3.1.2.3	The independent variables .....	59
3.1.3	Documents/archival records .....	59
3.1.4	Direct observations .....	60
3.1.5	Interviews .....	61
3.1.5.1	Locating the interviewees .....	64
3.1.5.2	The structure of the interviews .....	65
3.1.6	Accuracy and reliability of the council figures .....	66
3.2	ANALYZING THE DATA .....	68
3.2.1	The method used: grounded theory .....	68



3.2.2	The coding process.....	70
3.2.3	An iterative process .....	71
3.3	SUMMARY .....	72
4.0	THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF FOREST MANAGEMENT DECENTRALIZATION IN CAMEROON .....	73
4.1	ABOUT CAMEROON.....	74
4.1.1	History and politics.....	76
4.1.2	Economy .....	79
4.2	THE FORESTRY SECTOR.....	80
4.2.1	The Forestry sector in the national economy.....	81
4.2.2	Forest policies before 1994.....	83
4.2.3	Forest policy from 1994 and onwards.....	84
4.2.3.1	Objectives of the 1990s reforms and main innovations.....	84
4.2.3.2	Community and council forests .....	87
4.3	COUNCIL FORESTS .....	89
4.3.1	What is a council forest? .....	89
4.3.2	The gazetting process .....	90
4.3.3	The management inventory and the council forest management plan.....	92
4.3.4	The Environmental Impact Survey.....	93
4.3.5	The start of timber harvesting and the modes of operation .....	94
4.3.6	A complex reality .....	96
4.4	THE <i>PROGRAMME D'APPUI AUX FORETS COMMUNALES DU CAMEROUN</i> .....	98

4.4.1	The <i>Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun</i> .....	99
4.4.2	The PAF2C .....	100
4.4.3	The Technical Center on Council Forestry .....	102
4.5	SUMMARY .....	104
5.0	THE DIMAKO COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL FOREST .....	105
5.1	PRIOR HISTORY BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE COUNCIL.....	106
5.2	POPULATION.....	107
5.3	VILLAGE ORGANIZATION.....	108
5.4	ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION .....	110
5.5	LOCAL ECONOMY .....	112
5.5.1	Local economy under SFID .....	112
5.5.2	The local economy today .....	114
5.6	THE MAYOR OF DIMAKO .....	115
5.7	THE DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST PROJECT .....	117
5.7.1	The <i>Aménagement Pilote Intégré</i> de Dimako project (1992-1996) .....	118
5.7.1.1	The forest research and rural development phase.....	119
5.7.1.2	Confronting the practical reality .....	120
5.7.1.3	A new beginning.....	122
5.7.2	The <i>Forêts et Terroirs</i> project (1998-2001) .....	123
5.7.2.1	The <i>gestion de terroir</i> approach.....	124
5.7.2.2	The legacy of API-Dimako and <i>Forêts et Terroirs</i> .....	125
5.7.3	The <i>Forêt Communale de Dimako</i> .....	126
5.7.3.1	The 2001 management plan .....	128

5.7.3.2	The revised management plan (2006).....	132
5.7.3.3	The forest monitoring commissions.....	134
5.7.3.4	The revenue sharing formula.....	141
5.7.3.5	The sudden increase of revenues .....	143
5.7.4	A promising experience or an ominous presage of things to come? .....	144
5.7.4.1	The self-harvesting mode.....	145
5.7.4.2	The <i>logger-mayor</i> and the capture of the council forest .....	147
5.8	SUMMARY .....	150
	RESULTS: DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE MAKING OF A ‘BIG MAN’ IN THE DIMAKO COUNCIL .....	152
6.0	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IS DEAD! .....	153
6.1	IF YOU CAN DO AWAY, DO AWAY WITH IT OR THE DISREGARDING OF THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN .....	154
6.1.1	The minimum diameters .....	155
6.1.1.1	The after-the-fact change of diameters .....	158
6.1.1.2	Logging by orders or ‘skimming’ the forest in search of <i>ayous</i> ....	161
6.1.1.3	The stock recovery rate .....	164
6.1.2	The logging rotation cycle.....	167
6.1.2.1	The <i>récolement</i> .....	170
6.1.2.2	Logging outside of boundaries .....	174
6.1.2.3	Forest management on the cheap .....	177
6.1.2.4	A lot of abandoned timber.....	180
6.1.3	Reforesting the forest .....	184

6.1.3.1	The Council Nursery.....	185
6.1.3.2	The plantation <i>en layons</i> .....	190
6.1.3.3	The reforestation efforts in jeopardy? .....	193
6.2	THE POWERLESS FOREST MONITORING COMMISSIONS .....	197
6.2.1	The CCG or the phony village organization .....	198
6.2.1.1	The main objective all along .....	201
6.2.1.2	The meetings issue.....	203
6.2.1.3	The confusion over its role? .....	205
6.2.2	The Monitoring Commission at the rescue? .....	208
6.2.2.1	The dysfunctional CSE rotation .....	208
6.2.2.2	The compensation issue .....	212
6.2.3	The only one standing.....	213
6.3	THE ABSENCE AND SILENCE OF THE FOREST ADMINISTRATION	
	214	
6.3.1	The general lack of enforcement of forest laws .....	215
6.3.2	Complicity and corruption .....	218
6.3.3	The ambiguity surrounding council forestry rules and regulations .....	222
6.4	SUMMARY .....	225
7.0	FORET NA MONGUI OR THE MAYOR'S FOREST .....	227
7.1	ACCOUNTING FOR (NO) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT .....	228
7.1.1	Where are the development projects? .....	229
7.1.1.1	The reality on the ground .....	231
7.1.1.2	A story of incomplete, overestimations and fictitious projects .....	238

7.1.2	Education as the answer? .....	246
7.1.3	The deliberate local confusion? .....	253
7.2	COMPLETING THE FOREST TAKEOVER .....	257
7.2.1	The imbroglio over the rental agreement and the operating costs .....	257
7.2.1.1	A costly agreement .....	259
7.2.1.2	The alleged siphoning off of the forest revenues through the FCD operating costs.....	264
7.2.1.3	The council operating costs .....	269
7.2.2	Popular discontent and the decline of the 10 percent.....	275
7.2.2.1	The decline of the 10 percent .....	276
7.2.2.2	Growing tensions over the allocation of money.....	281
7.3	SUMMARY .....	284
8.0	BEYOND DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: THE MAKING OF A <i>BIG MAN</i> .....	285
8.1	THE MAKING OF A <i>BIG MAN</i> .....	286
8.1.1	The quest for hegemony .....	287
8.1.1.1	A ‘small’ local elected official among many .....	291
8.1.1.2	Building political power through the council forest project .....	293
8.1.2	The President of the Republic in the East .....	296
8.1.2.1	The First Lady connection <i>et la récupération politique</i> .....	299
8.1.2.2	Mister Untouchable.....	301
8.2	YES-MAN COUNCILORS ( <i>THE BENI OUI OUI</i> ) .....	306
8.2.1	Divide and conquer.....	308

8.2.1.1	The mayor reigns with ‘terror and fear’ .....	310
8.2.1.2	Witchcraft and the power of the dark side .....	315
8.2.2	Elections and the <i>politics of the belly</i> .....	319
8.2.2.1	Cooptation and the fear of losing their jobs .....	323
8.2.2.2	Feeding the rooster before the market day .....	327
8.3	SUMMARY .....	331
9.0	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: THE HARD LESSONS FROM THE EASTERN FRONT .....	332
9.1	SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS .....	333
9.2	DISCUSSION .....	336
9.2.1	The lack of financial resources and central obstacles .....	337
9.2.2	Technical assistance and the capacity argument: the CTFC as the answer? .....	339
9.2.3	Downward or upward accountability? .....	343
9.2.4	A revised theory of decentralization? .....	351
9.3	LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	355
9.3.1	Limitations of the study .....	356
9.3.2	Implications and suggestions for further research and policy .....	357
	EPILOGUE .....	359
	APPENDIX A .....	362
	APPENDIX B .....	365
	APPENDIX C .....	367
	APPENDIX D .....	368

<b>APPENDIX E .....</b>	<b>369</b>
<b>APPENDIX F .....</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>APPENDIX G.....</b>	<b>375</b>
<b>APPENDIX H.....</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>APPENDIX I .....</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>390</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Formal semi-structured interviews conducted .....	63
Table 4.1. The ten most logged species by Cameroon’s formal forestry sector, 2006.....	82
Table 4.2. PAF2C activities as of August 2010.....	102
Table 5.1. Tree species found in the Dimako Council Forest (all diameters) .....	127
Table 5.2. Total council (TC) and FCD revenues, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)* .....	143
Table 6.1. Species diameter in the FCD management plans.....	158
Table 6.2. Percentage of the two most felled species in the FCD, 2004-2009* .....	162
Table 6.3. Stock recovery rates for the FCD main felled species.....	165
Table 6.4. Logging rotation cycle, 2006 management plan.....	167
Table 6.5. Comparison of the 2006 management plan logging rotation and actual cycles in the FCD* .....	168
Table 6.6. Comparison of PAO and FCD felled volumes, 2007-2009 .....	171
Table 6.7. Officially reported volumes and percentage of abandoned timber in the FCD, 2004-2009*.....	181
Table 6.8. FCD Nursery plants 2007-2009 .....	186
Table 6.9. Five years reforestation targets for the FCD in the two management plans (in hectares) .....	191
Table 6.10. <i>Plantation en layons</i> , 2007-2009 .....	192



Table 6.11. Reforestation costs, January-July 2009 (CFAF million) .....	196
Table 7.1. Dimako Council development projects expenditures, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)*. 232	
Table 7.2. Development projects expenditures, January-July 2009 (CFAF million) .....	243
Table 7.3. Local development priorities in five selected villages of Dimako Council, 2000.....	251
Table 7.4. FCD machines, fuel and lubricants expenditures, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)* .....	260
Table 7.5. FCD operating costs, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)* .....	265
Table 7.6. Dimako Council operating costs, January-July 2009 (CFAF million) .....	271
Table 7.7. 10 percent to ‘eat’ distributed in selected villages of Dimako Council (CFAF thousand)* .....	276
Table 7.8. 10 percent to ‘eat’ expenditures from the FCD revenues, January-July 2009 (CFAF thousand).....	278

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. Data analysis model.....	71
Figure 5.1. A view of downtown Dimako, March 2010.....	105
Figure 5.2. Petit-Pol village, February 2010.....	109
Figure 5.3. The main entrance of the Dimako Council Forest, February 2010 .....	117
Figure 5.4. The former compound of <i>Forêts et Terroirs</i> hidden behind the trees, February 2010 .....	123
Figure 5.5. The 2003 revenue sharing formula for the FCD revenues .....	142
Figure 6.1. Abandoned timber in the FCD, February 2010.....	180
Figure 6.2. Various tree species in the FCD nursery, January 2010.....	185
Figure 6.3. Abandoned plants in the nursery, January 2010.....	188
Figure 7.1. The unfinished B-Market in downtown Dimako, February 2010 .....	228
Figure 7.2. The unfinished community center ( <i>foyer</i> ) in Petit-Pol village, February 2010.....	239
Figure 7.3. Dimako City Hall (DCH) front porch, January 2010 .....	254
Figure 7.4. The old 'Bull', February 2010 .....	258
Figure 7.5. The Front end loader also known as 'The 966', February 2010.....	261
Figure 8.1. Mayor Mongui (with the white hat) being mobbed during his arrival for the rally in honor of the appointment of his nephew, 6 March 2010 .....	287
Figure 8.2. “Dimako’s Youth behind President Paul Biya” reads the banner, 6 March 2010....	296

Figure 8.3. Inside DCH Deliberation Room a banner says “Dimako people thank you *Maman* Chantal Biya” for the appointment of the mayor’s nephew, 6 March 2010 ..... 319

## **LIST OF BOXES**

Box 1.1. Definition of key terms used in this study.....	26
Box 4.1. Gazetting process steps for the PFE forests .....	91
Box 6.1. CCG members' Requests to the Mayor of Dimako, 2009 .....	205
Box 7.1. Dimako Council villagers' list of 'actual' development projects, 2004-2010* .....	236
Box 7.2. Anonymous request by Dimako populations (3 January 2009) .....	241

## **LIST OF MAPS**

Map 4.1. Cameroon.....	75
Map 5.1. Area divisions of the FCD according to 2001 Management Plan (hectares) .....	129
Map 5.2. Dimako Council Forest FEU and AAC divisions according to the 2006 management plan.....	133

## ACRONYMS

**AAC:** Annual Allowable Cut (*Assiette Annuelle de Coupe*)

**AC:** Annual Coupe (*Assiette de Coupe Annuelle*)

**ACFCAM:** Association of Forest Councils of Cameroun (*Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun*)

**AFF:** Annual Forestry Fee (see *RFA*)

**ANAFOR:** National Forest Development Support Agency (*Agence Nationale d'Appui au Développement Forestier*)

**API-Dimako:** Pilot Integrated Management project of Dimako (*Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako*)

**BIP:** Public Investment Budget

**CADBAP:** Active Community for the Bakoum-Pol Development (*Communauté Active pour le Développement Bakoum-Pol*)

**CAR:** Central African Republic

**CBNRM:** Community-Based Natural Resource Management

**CCG:** Consultative Management Committee (*Comité Consultatif de Gestion de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*)

**CDKO:** Dimako Council (*Commune de Dimako*)

**CEFAM:** Local Government Training Centre (*Centre de Formation pour l'Administration Municipale*)

**CFAF:** Central African Franc (*Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine*)

**CIRAD-Forêt:** Forestry Department of the International Cooperation Centre on Agrarian Research for Development (*Département Forêt du Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement*)

**CPDM:** Cameroon's People Democratic Movement (see *RDPC*)

**CRDKO:** Dimako Rural Council (*Commune Rurale de Dimako*)

**CRTV:** Cameroon Radio and Television

**CSE:** Monitoring Commission of the Dimako Council Forest (*Commission de Suivi de l'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*)

**CTFC:** Technical Center on Council Forest (*Centre Technique de la Forêt Communale*)

**DCH:** Dimako City Hall (*Hôtel de Ville de Dimako*)

**DFNP:** Domaine Forestier Non Permanent (see NPFE)

**DFP:** Domaine Forestier Permanent (see PFE)

**EIE:** Environmental Impact Study (*Etude d'Impact Environnemental*)

**ELECAM:** Elections Cameroon

**FEICOM:** Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (*Fonds Spécial d'Équipement et d'Intervention Communale*)

**FCD:** Dimako Council Forest (*Forêt Communale de Dimako*)

**FEU:** Forest Exploitation Unit (*Unité Forestière d'Exploitation*)

**FMU:** Forest Management Unit (see *Unité Forestière d'Aménagement*)

**FNCOFOR:** National Federation of Forest Councils of France (*Fédération Nationale des Communes Forestières de France*)

**FFEM:** French Global Environment Facility (*Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial*)

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**GIC:** Common Initiative Group (*Groupe d'Initiative Commune*)

**GIS:** Geographic Information System

**GTZ:** German Technical Cooperation (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*)

**HIPC:** Heavily Indebted Poor Country

**IFI:** International Financial Institution

**IMF:** International Monetary Fund

**ITTO:** International Tropical Timber Organization

**IVAC:** Elementary and secondary schools part-time teacher (*Instituteur vacataire*)

**MINADER:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (*Ministère de l'Agriculture et du Développement Rural*)

**MINATD:** Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (*Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Décentralisation*)

**MINEF:** Ministry of Environment and Forests (*Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts*)

**MINEFI:** Ministry of Economy and Finance (*Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances*)

**MINEP:** Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature (*Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Protection de la Nature*)

**MINFI:** Ministry of Finance (*Ministère des Finances*)

**MINFOF:** Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (*Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune*)

**MHD:** Minimum Harvesting Diameter

**MMD:** Minimum Management Diameter

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization

**NPFE:** Non-Permanent Forest Estate (see DFNP)

**NRM:** Natural Resources Management

**NTFP:** Non Timber Forest Product

**PAF2C:** Support Program for the Development of Council Forests in Cameroon (*Programme d'Appui aux Forêts Communales du Cameroun*)

**PAO:** Annual Operating Permit (*Permis Annuel d'Opérations*)

**PDC:** Council Development Plan (*Plan de Développement Communal*)

**PFE:** Permanent Forest Estate (see DFP)

**PSG:** Simple Management Plan (*Plan Simple de Gestion*)

**RDPC:** Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (see CPDM)

**REM:** Resource Extraction Monitoring

**RFA:** Redevance Forestière Annuelle (see AFF)



**RIL:** Reduced Impact Logging

**ROC:** Republic of Cameroun (*République du Cameroun*)

**SAP:** Structural Adjustment Program

**SDO:** Senior Divisional Officer (*Préfet*)

**SFM:** Sustainable Forest Management

**SFID:** Société Forestière Industrielle de la Doumé

**SSV:** Sales of Standing Volume (*Vente de coupe*)

**UFA:** Unité Forestière d'Aménagement (see *FMU*)

**UN:** United Nations

**UTO:** Technical Operational Unit (*Unité Technique Opérationnelle*)

**USD:** American Dollar

**ZICGC:** Community-managed Hunting Zones (*Zone d'Intérêt Cynégétique à Gestion Communautaire*)

**Exchange rate** (Topa et al. 2009, xviii)

Pre-1994: 1 USD: 250 CFAF

After 1994: 1 USD: 500 CFAF

## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I came to forestry and Cameroon almost by accident. Indeed, I had never intended to undertake this dissertation on the topic of forest management decentralization, or for that matter conduct fieldwork in Cameroon. Though, I always had been fascinated by the dynamic nature of the country, the original intent of the dissertation project was to conduct a study on the National Program of Administrative Reform of Gabon (PNRA), where a few years before I had been an intern at the General Committee for Administrative Reform (CGRA), the implementing agency. I already had contacts there and was familiar with the country's customs as well as administrative culture, and, I thought, this would constitute an asset for the speedy completion of the degree.

In 2006-2007, when I raised the issue with my then-advisor, later the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr Louis Picard, he remarked that my original topic was too broad and thus needed to be circumscribed. Furthermore, he suggested that I select another country instead of my native Gabon, for he argued that would be an intellectual asset as well as eye-opening. Eye-opening for what? It was unclear at that stage. By chance, besides the PNRA, I was interested in both Cameroon and political and administrative decentralization. Therefore, I decided to embark on the decentralization journey in that country.

Alas, at least in the beginning, the search for the scholarly literature on political and administrative decentralization in the country proved fruitless. Instead of political and administrative decentralization, the majority of works focused on the forest management

decentralization started since 1994. I thought the choice was evident, study forest management decentralization and see where it leads. That is how I arrived at forestry.

At first, I was concerned that understanding foresters' language would prove a challenge and that the project turns into a technical study instead of investigating the decentralization phenomenon, which was my original intent. I still harbored these concerns until I arrived in Cameroon in the fall of 2009. I, then, realized that understanding foresters' language was critical in understanding the (political) story on the ground. The dissertation which follows is the story of this adventure into the decentralization journey and the difficult quest for sustainable forest management and (local) development. It is a journey which, passed the first doubts, has made me aware of issues I used to take for granted; a journey which has allowed me to take a 'fresh' look at forests and the environment in general. And it is a journey which I am glad I embarked on.

-----

The completion of a study like a doctoral dissertation, although a personal endeavor, owes a lot to numerous people. Before I set out to acknowledge all those people, I have to first and foremost thank the Lord God Almighty because during this grueling experience I realized that I could not have made it without His intervention as well as blessing. For their help and support, I thank the following three congregations Gainesville's St Augustine Church, Pittsburgh's St Paul's Cathedral and Tampa's St Lawrence Catholic Church. Furthermore, in Tampa, two priests deserve my special acknowledgment because in some way they made it possible for me to complete this project. First, visiting Father Daniel Francis, C.Ss.R.-Congregation Sanctissimi Redemptoris-a Redemptorist priest for his mission at St Lawrence in March 2009, and then in-house priest Father Bill Wilson for his insistence that I hold on to this project. Both priests really

epitomize all the people who stood by and believed in me when I contemplated moving away from this costly and exhausting project. Both have my eternal gratitude.

The second set of people I want to extend my special thanks are my committee chair as well as members at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) and the Department of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. The first acknowledgment goes to my longtime advisor and chair Dr Louis Picard. Thank for you for providing me guidance as well as assistance throughout this ordeal. The second acknowledgments are directed to my other three committee members Drs Martin Staniland, Harvey White, and B. Guy Peters all of whom I thank from the bottom of my heart for agreeing to be part of this project. Although not a member of my committee, I want to thank GSPIA's Dr Louise Comfort not only for her encouragement during my time in Pittsburgh, but most importantly for stressing the analytical perceptiveness of new institutional theories. At another level, I salute my fellow GSPIA classmates of 2006, especially my dear friends Victoria Racz, Benjamin Rubin, and Jungho Park. Finally, Barbara, Renée, Julie as well as the rest of GSPIA staff deserve my appreciation for helping me during my stay in Pittsburgh, and even after. Thank you.

It is fair to say that this study would not have been possible without the help of several people disseminated throughout the world. First, in France, I thank Alain Karsenty of CIRAD-Forêt for pointing out early on the distinction between the RFA, community and council forests as well as suggesting, based on the lack of knowledge on council forests, that this be the main focus of this study. Second, I am grateful to Benjamin Singer for sharing his 2008 Dimako's experience. In Libreville, I want to express my eternal gratitude to Jean Ngouélé, formerly of the *Direction Générale des Bourses et Stages* (DGBS Gabon) and Laurent Ndong, DGBS

representative in Washington, DC who over the years have made sure that my annual government scholarship got renewed.

In Yaoundé, several people individually deserve my recognition. First, for providing guidance in the infancy of this project, I acknowledge Samuel Assembé Mvondo of CIFOR-Cameroon. Second, I thank Vincent Ndangang, council forestry's *point focal* at MINFOF, for introducing me to Baudelaire Kemajou. Third, I am grateful to Baudelaire Kemajou, director of the CTFC for providing assistance and putting me in touch with then-CTFC *chef d'antenne regional pour l'Est* Adolphe Ondoua. Fourth, I recognize Apollinaire Nankam of CTFC for pointing to the center-rich web database as well as other web ressources regarding council forestry. Fourth and finally, Dr Mireille Sandji Etogo of the *Université de Yaoundé II* (Soa) deserves my thanks for assistance in retrieving library materials.

Now I turn to the East Region, the site of fieldwork. First, in Bertoua, my appreciation is extended to Alain Bié, in charge of archives at the regional delegation of the Ministry of Environment (MINEP); Marcelin Mekok Balara, divisional delegate of MINEP for Lom et Djerem, for support in retrieving the archives of *Forêts et Terroirs*; Eric Kaffo Nzouwo and Enow Kenneth as well as the other forest administration officials who for obvious reasons I cannot individually recognize. I am also grateful to Patient Fossi Anoh, Aladji Maïssagé, and Mrs. Nankam of the Bertoua's *Hotel de l'Est*. Finally, for providing assistance as well as office facilities in Bertoua, I am truly endeared to Adolphe Lamont Ondoua.

In Dimako Council, my thanks are extended to the Mayor Janvier Mongui Sossomba who, although this study is highly critical of him and his accomplishments, made this nonetheless possible by agreeing in the first place that it takes place; to the First Deputy Mayor André Zéla Noumendjala and Moïse Nyonse Tchounkeu, then Dimako Council Secretary

General (SG) for organizing my fieldwork in the council; Poum Bimbar, Dimako municipal tax collector (RM) for answering my questions on the financial dimension of the Dimako experience; and finally, Alain Ebalé in charge of the council forest technical unit for answering my questions on the forest management side.

Overall in the entire East Region, I salute all the chiefs, councilors, and CCG members, informants, local and regional authorities, officials at various government ministries as well as non-government agencies and the people of Dimako who have greeted me well and accepted to answer my numerous requests for information. Because of their desire of privacy, I cannot individually thank them, but just note that, in spite of their early reticence, they have provided the bulk of the materials for this study and without them this project would have gone nowhere. That is why, to protect their privacy, all dates as well as names have been changed and withheld. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

For their assistance in the field, I thank my friends, guides as well as drivers in Yaoundé and Bertoua-Dimako Joseph Anderson Minyelle and Georges Mentoumbé Logo. I cannot forget Christophe Ambémé for taking care of my accommodation while in Yaoundé. Also for their assistance for this dissertation, I want to thank Victorien Ndounou who over the years has been there for me as well as for his help in resolving most of the technical issues encountered during the writing process. I thank Arland Nguéma Ndong for teaching me how to utilize the bibliographic software *Endnote*. To my dear friend Dr Michael Echemendia, I thank you for standing with me along the way as well as for your thoughtful comments on the first draft of this dissertation.

For their faith, advice and support, I show my appreciation to Geoffrey and Serge Ongali, Kadmiel Onodje, my 'big brother' Janvier Mali, Dr Leopold Engozogo, Dr Martin Bosman and

Professor Jeffrey Okogbaa, Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Wukari in Taraba State, Nigeria. My appreciation also extends to my friends Lisbeth Chambrier-Voua and Yasmine Kassa; My friends and brothers Willie Boussamba and Sani Obiang for believing in me; and finally, Narcisse Meillon for the numerous stimulating conversations on African politics.

The (almost) last set of appreciation is directed to the Sandjis' brothers, and really the entire Sandji family. First, Patrick Sandji who introduced me a couple years ago to my wife and for arranging my stay in his native country. Then, Paul Ahanda Sandji or 'Paulo' for an extraordinary sense of humor as well as remarkable address book. I cannot both thank you enough. My appreciation will last until the end of times.

Before I conclude, I thank Christophe Othamot and my families: The Ofoulhast-Othamots, in particular Nancy Celia, Audrey Lydia, Manye-Doria, and Evrard; the Soumankys for the support and the belief in me, and finally, the Morancies, in particular Chris and Geneille, for taking care of my family while I was away.

I end with a special word of thanks for my wife Nikel who for the last six years has been continually at my side. I thank her for her patience, support and love, and since the birth of our first daughter Kailynn (KTOO), for taking charge of the family while I was busy searching the world over. Thank you also for helping me with the tables as well as figures. To Kailynn, for allowing daddy to finish this project and for warmly welcoming Aubrey (AROO), daddy is *really* proud of you.

From the Great *Sunshine* State of Florida, *Go Mighty Gators!*

Gildas Allan Ofoulhast-Othamot  
Tampa, FL  
26 September 2011

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“Cameroon is a strange country. Here, Catholics are polygamous; Protestants appear to be happy; Muslims drink beer; and the largest Yaoundé’s mosque is located off Pope John Paul the second’s avenue” (A departing French *Coopérant* to a former government minister).

“Complexity” is the key word to describe Cameroon’s political, social, and economic configurations” (Victor T. Le Vine 1971, xix).

‘Decentralization, more power to the people!’ That could be the cry heard all over the world since the end of the bipolar world, which saw the demise of the Communist Bloc and the end of the era of the clash between the two superpowers the United States and the Soviet Union, and the unabated rise of free markets as the organizing principle of the political, economic, and social world. It is as one writer, to qualify the numerous experiments in decentralization the world over, exclaimed like a “devolution revolution” is happening (Snyder 2001, 93).

In Cameroon as part of the Congo Basin region, the second largest reservoir of tropical rainforests in the world after the Amazon (Topa et al. 2009, 14)<sup>1</sup>, the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs), assisted by domestic actors, have, following the country’s 1986 economic crisis, since the mid-1990s attempted to enact forest policy reforms

---

<sup>1</sup> Besides Cameroon five other countries -the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo- comprise the Congo Basin region. Together those six countries hold more than 198 million hectares of tropical forests (Topa et al. 2009, 14).



based on the international discourses of free markets, decentralization, participation and indigenous rights, sustainable development, Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), conservation and the like (Brunner and Ekoko 2000; Ekoko 2000; Essama-Nssah and Gockowski 2000; Karsenty 1999; Oyono 2004a, 2005a; Silva et al. 2002, 72-74). This resulted in a slew of policy reforms among which the 1994 *Forest Law* stood as the major piece of legislative act and turning point in Cameroon's forest policy since independence in 1960. Indeed, a Cameroonian observer noted that following the 1994 reforms, "legal and regulatory provisions entrench "sustainable forest management" as a key element in the organization of this sector" (Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 91).

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the decentralization of natural resources management (NRM), in this case the forest management decentralization, in Cameroon through a case study of the Dimako Council and the Dimako Council Forest or *Forêt Communale de Dimako* (FCD) located in the forest-rich East Region in the south of the country. More specifically, the dissertation will take a critical look at the decentralization theory and show that the theory alone is not the answer to problems of governance such as natural resources conservation and depletion as well as development at the local level as claimed by some theorists. As such, the study fills the gap in the literature on forest management decentralization and council forests, decentralized forest management, local governance, decentralization and development in Cameroon.

The major contribution of the study shall be to demonstrate that, by providing new opportunities for local elected officials to wield 'unfettered' new powers, the decentralization theory of natural resources management instead of solving the 'bad' governance issues that it reportedly identified in the first place has in effect extended the reach of the so-called

patrimonial state – a state mostly dominated by ‘personal’ rule rather than the ‘rule of law’ - as well as entrenched and aggravated the state of affairs in Dimako, leading to questions about its relevance. The implication of this study is that unless the larger political system is transformed, the pattern described in Dimako is more likely to get repeated across different scales of government.

## **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Before the mid-1990s reforms, the Cameroonian state was the sole owner of forests (Carret 2000, 44), and thus legally in control of the forestry sector and of all the timber revenues from forest harvesting. The 1994 *Forest Law* and the ensuing changes sought to alter the situation through decentralizing the sector. About the 1994 *Forest Law*, Peter Geschiere commented “Cameroon’s new forest law is heavily ecological in tenor. Its major concern is to guarantee that the continuing exploitation of the forest resources-which has become crucial for the national economy since the crash of world market prices of Cameroon’s main cash crops [coffee, cocoa, and cotton]-will be ‘sustainable’: that is, will not endanger the regeneration of the forest” (2004, 238).

Apart from the World Bank’s own objective of increasing fiscal revenues from timber harvesting (Carret 2000, 44), the reforms had three main aims: to promote local communities’ participation in forest management; to contribute to poverty reduction; and to improve the sustainable management of forest resources (Oyono et al. 2007, 3). Among the various transformations that the 1994 *Forest Law* initiated in the country, for the purpose of this study

four major provisions of the law stand out: community forests; timber revenues sharing; council forests; and community hunting zones (Oyono et al. 2007, 3-4).

First, for the first time in the history of the country, and of the Congo Basin region, the Cameroonian state allowed forest-adjacent people to create their own community forests which they could self-manage for up to twenty-five years (Oyono et al. 2007, 7). Second, the law created avenues for local communities as well as local councils (*communes*)<sup>2</sup> to benefit from timber harvesting revenues through revenue sharing mechanisms, with the most notable provision being the distribution of a forest tax known as the Annual Forestry Fee (*RFA*) between the central state (50 percent), the local council (40 percent) and the forest concession-adjacent community or communities (10 percent).<sup>3</sup> Third, the law provided for the creation of local council forests that the state, in contrast to community forests' twenty-five years management limit, would cede to local councils as their full property, thus under their sole management.<sup>4</sup> Last but not least, the law created Community-Managed Hunting Zones (ZICGs).

Among the abovementioned provisions, those pertaining to community forests and the *RFA* are the ones that have been heavily investigated (see Egbe 2001; Etoungou 2003; Karsenty

---

<sup>2</sup> Some authors in their translation have equated the French word *commune* with the English commune/communal. That is misleading as a translation especially when one starts talking about *communal forest* instead of *council forest*. A more appropriate translation of the French *commune* would be simply (local) council, since in its original meaning a *commune* equals the lowest level of (formal) local government in a country. In Cameroon for instance, because of this confusion some local authors or speakers use the term *communal forest* instead of the more appropriate council forest, thus bringing more confusion into the matter to an unperceptive observer.

<sup>3</sup> As an illustration, from 2000 to 2008, about 122 million USD were redistributed to approximately 90 different (rural) councils (see Cerutti et al. 2010, 134). Moreover, in spite of local objections from the forested regions, that system was changed in late 2009 by the country's parliament lower house the National Assembly. The new system set up an equalization fund with the aim of redistributing part of the *RFA* revenues to all local councils, not just those of the forested regions, the sole beneficiaries since 1994. The new formula sharing still reserved 50 percent for the central state. However, out of the remaining 50 percent, 20 percent were now reserved for the local council of the adjacent forest concession, 20 percent to be redistributed to all local councils while the last 10 percent for the local community or communities was left unchanged (see MINATD, MINFI, and MINFOF 2010; and ROC 2009b).

<sup>4</sup> At this stage, a council forest can simply be defined as a forest that has been gazetted and legally transferred to a local council (see section 4.3 for the legal definition of a council forest in Cameroon).

et al. 2010; Morrison et al. 2009; Oyono 2009; Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009; Sharpe 1998), while the study of ZICGs and council forests has lagged behind. Specifically regarding council forests -the object of this study- various observers have attributed that lack of scholarly scrutiny on at least two main reasons. First, is the reluctance of local councils from the outset to take advantage of the law provision, preferring instead to receive RFA revenues (Bigombé Logo 2006; Nguenang et al. 2007, 1).<sup>5</sup> The second reason centers on the fact that since 1994 international donors' support in the country has primarily gone to community forests to the detriment of council forests. In fact, it is only lately, as some observers have noted, with the scandal of illegal logging happening within community forests that donors' emphasis has shifted to council forestry (Nguenang et al. 2007, 1).

Notwithstanding those two reasons, the result is that apart for a few scholarly and general studies on the emergence of council forestry in the country (see Assembé-Mvondo 2005; Assembé-Mvondo and Oyono 2004; Assembé-Mvondo and Sangkwa 2009; Oyono 2004c; Zülsdorf et al. 2008), very little is known about the actual consequences of the forest management decentralization which ushered in the creation of local council forests. This is especially the case in relation to both how local councils manage their forests, that is achieving the goals of SFM, as well as the utilization of council forests' timber revenues for the pursuit of local development (improving the living conditions of local councils' inhabitants), the two goals of Cameroonian policymakers (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008; Oyono 2009, 15). Clearly, a gap in the literature exists at this level that this dissertation seeks to fill.

---

<sup>5</sup> Related to that argument are both ignorance of the law and the indifference of local councils, which are primarily located in rural areas, as well as the complexity of the process of acquiring a council forest. This led to a situation where in 2007 for instance, whereas there were 167 community forests in existence, only five council forests had been officially created (see Oyono et al 2007, 3; 5). Additionally, this state of affairs was aided by the fact that to receive RFA revenues local councils had just to be located in area where timber harvesting was occurring compared to the council forests situation where the forest had to be first gazetted as well as created before a council could start to earn the revenues, a process described in Chapter 4.0 that could take several years.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS

Since this dissertation investigates the forest management decentralization in Dimako Council which led to the creation of the Dimako Council Forest, it asks one central research question. Why did the forest management decentralization in Dimako Council fail to achieve the goals of SFM and local development? In other words, what accounted for the failures of the theoretical predictions of improvement in forest management as well as enhanced local development prospects following the transfer of powers, resources and responsibilities from the central state to the elected Dimako Council local government?

Based on the empirical and theoretical literature on decentralization and natural resources management/governance, the study argues that the forest management decentralization has failed to achieve the goals of improving forest management (SFM) and local development (improving local villagers' livelihood) because the Mayor of Dimako, an elected official, has taken advantage of the new opportunities provided by the forest law and captured the forest as well utilized the timber revenues not just for personal enrichment, but more importantly to advance his own power-building agenda. In other words, the Mayor of Dimako has *financially* and *politically* benefited from the forest management decentralization, for the forest resources, which represent money, have allowed him to build, strengthen, and expand his power unto the national stage, thereby earning him the official status of a *Big Man* (see below for more on that concept and the theoretical perspective adopted in this study).

The dissertation argues that this state of affairs would not have been possible save the forest management decentralization. Put another way, the *Big Man* in Dimako was a creation of the forest management decentralization and the decentralization theory.

### 1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Multiple reasons abound as to the significance of Cameroon and the Dimako Council as the subject matters of this study. First, as mentioned above the country sits in the second largest reservoir of tropical moist forests in the world (Greenpeace 2007, 1). What is more, Cameroon's tropical forests cover about 40 percent of its 475,000 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>) territory (Topa et al. 2009) and timber harvesting represents almost 7 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while creating around 45,000 direct and indirect jobs (Morrison et al. 2009, 5). Second, because of deforestation fears, the World Bank singled out Cameroon in the 1990s along with nineteen other countries as a target country for forest policy reform (Lele et al. 2000, 1; see also Sharma et al. 1994), thus de facto making it a primary case to study in the Congo Basin region.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, at least concerning the institutional framework, the country is generally regarded as having a 'progressive' forest policy architecture because of the reforms implemented since 1994 (Morrison et al. 2009, 5). The Cameroonian case is significant because the 1990s reforms have made it a laboratory and a springboard for forest policy reforms in the entire Congo Basin region (see Greenpeace 2007; Minnemeyer et al. 2000, 7).

For its part, aside from being located in the forest-rich East Region, the country's largest one in terms of surface area, and the site of a French logging company, the *Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumé* (SFID), for more than fifty years, the Dimako Council case is significant for several reasons. First, for about a decade starting in 1992 until 2001, the council

---

<sup>6</sup> As an illustration, the World Bank's 1991 forest strategy estimated that 17 to 20 million hectares/year were lost in the developing world and that tropical moist forests were inevitably shrinking (Lele et al. 2000, 1). Furthermore, out of the twenty countries singled out by the 1991 forest strategy with threatened tropical moist forests, besides Cameroon, six other African countries, most of them in the Congo Basin Region, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Madagascar, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), then Zaire, were included (Sharma et al. 1994, 17 footnote 21).

hosted two French-funded pioneer technical assistance projects, API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs*, designed to study, promote, and help implement SFM in Cameroon. Second and related to the above point, the Dimako Council, because of both projects, was the first local government -led by an elected mayor- in the entire country, and in the Congo Basin region, to officially benefit from the transfers of powers, resources and responsibilities over a natural resource culminating in the creation of the first council forest the Dimako Council Forest (FCD) (see Assembé-Mvondo and Oyono 2004, 79; Assembé-Mvondo and Sangkwa 2009, 98). Third, since the inception of council forestry in the country, as of 2010 only five council forests were in activity with the FCD being the oldest one having started timber harvesting operations in 2004 (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 6).<sup>7</sup> In theory, sufficient time has elapsed to afford the researcher a unique chance to explore and assess the Dimako experience.

Finally, at the theoretical level, the case is pertinent insofar as it had the potential to validate or reject the theoretical expectations of the decentralization and NRM theories of improved forest management as well local development. As Jesse Ribot (2003, 54-55) has argued elsewhere, unlike the previous wave of decentralization centered on the provision of public services such as education, roads, and so on, decentralized natural resources management is a source of revenue and power which can help local governments provide basic services and be legitimate, so it deserves a chance to be attempted (see also Larson 2003, 223). Thus, in theory, the decentralization of natural resources holds the promises of improving local livelihoods as well as the sustainable management of natural resources.

---

<sup>7</sup> Until December 2009, four council forests were in activity in Dimako, Moloundou, Gari-Gombo and Yokadouma councils, all in the East Region (see Om Bilong et al. 2009). In January 2010, Djoum Council Forest located in the southern Council of Djoum officially started timber harvesting operations (ACFCAM, and CTFC 2010, 21).

## 1.4 DECENTRALIZATION AS THE PANACEA?

To be fair, decentralization simply defined at this stage as the transfer of powers, resources and responsibilities from the central state to the subnational levels, whether regional or local, as a policy goal did not start in the 1990s (see Cohen and Peterson 1996, 3-5; B. Olowu 2001; D. Olowu 2001; Picard 1983; Ribot 2002a; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983). But since the failure of centralized approaches to governance in developed as well as developing countries, it has taken an unprecedented turn (see Andersson 2002b; Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004; Hope 2000; Manor 1999, 39; World Bank 2008; Wunsch 2000, 501; Wunsch and Olowu 1990).<sup>8</sup> The view of decentralization as the answer to the central state governance failures is best summarized by Pranab Bardhan when he observes that:

On account of its many failures, the centralized state everywhere has lost a great deal of legitimacy, and decentralization is widely believed to promise a range of benefits. It is often suggested as a way of reducing the role of the state in general, by fragmenting central authority and introducing more intergovernmental competition and checks and balances. It is viewed as a way to make government more responsive and efficient. Technological changes have also made it somewhat easier than before to provide public services (like electricity and water supply) relatively efficiently in smaller market areas, and the lower levels of government have now a greater ability to handle certain tasks. In a world of rampant ethnic conflicts and separatist movements, decentralization is also regarded as a way of diffusing social and political tensions and ensuring local cultural and political autonomy (2002, 185).

Decentralization is not only sought as an answer to the failures of centralized governance, but also on account of its purported benefits which, according to popular and scholarly literatures, range from increasing efficiency and effectiveness, alleviating poverty, empowering

---

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the ubiquitous presence of decentralization as a worldwide policy objective could be seen by looking at the figures of the premier international development institution, the World Bank. In a 2008 review of the World Bank's financial support to decentralization of public services delivery in its client countries, it was estimated that from 1990 to 2007, the agency specifically committed about 10.6 billion USD to the endeavor (World Bank 2008, 7).



local citizens and promoting local democracy as well as accountability, good governance and local development and so on (see Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Arghiros 2001; Bako-Arifari 1997, 4; Bird and Rodriguez 1999; Crook 1994, 2003; Crook and Sverrisson 2001; Grindle 2007a, 2007b; Johnson 2001; Manor 2002; Naab 2005; Parker 1995; Parker and Kirsten 1995; Parry 1997; Ribot 2002b, 2005, 2009; Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010; Steiner 2007).

In the area of natural resources management, since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, forests, fisheries, wildlife, water and natural resources more generally have become a major policy area in national as well as international circles on account of their ecological, social, and economic value(s) (Assemb -Mvondo 2006a, 2006b; Lassagne 2005). The fact that tropical forests have become such a global policy terrain of contestation is not surprising to some extent, for as Alan Grainger noted “for centuries, these forests were a dark, distant, and mysterious ‘other’. Mahogany, ebony and teak were miraculously translated from the steamy, dripping jungles into the urban jungle of the metropole. There then arose a colonial discourse of environmental crisis, in which the spread of deserts could be prevented only by managing forests with modern scientific tools” (2008, 324).

The situation was purportedly rendered urgent by the fact that in the case of forests for example, past degradation and deforestation figures were alarming. In fact, between 2000 and 2005, it was estimated that because of agricultural conversion a net global annual loss of 7.3 million hectares of forests on average took place of which 5.8 million hectares or 79.5 percent were primary forests, primarily in Africa and South America (Charnley and Poe 2007, 302). Though since the 1990s, deforestation rates have abated, the concern still remains about other issues such as forest degradation which could lead to simplification of forest structure,

biodiversity loss, and alteration of forest ecosystem processes and functions (Charnley and Poe 2007, 302).

Hence, confronted with such issues of natural resources degradation and depletion and bolstered by the findings of common property theory as well as successful local efforts at natural resources management (see Benjaminsen 1995; Degnbol 1995; Goldman 1998; Ostrom 1990), policymakers, scholars, environmentalists argue that powers be transferred to local level actors (Agrawal 2001b). The rationale for this transfer of power from the central to the local level is purportedly to avoid Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968).

The key point about the decentralized model advocated at the local level is the belief that it shall lead to more efficient, flexible, equitable, accountable and participatory local governance outcomes (Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004, 421). Undergirding this shift to more local-level forms of Community-based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) are four assumptions. First, local people are reasonably knowledgeable about local ecosystems compared to outside experts; second, more benefits can be obtained from managing the resources rather than using it totally; third, a group capable of managing the natural resources exists; and fourth, control over the resource shall be the prerogative of the community (Fortmann, Roe, and van Eeten 2001, 171).<sup>9</sup> All these assumptions have been challenged by recent scholarship apparently to no avail (see Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Blaikie 2006; Kumar 2005; Purcell and Brown 2005).

Broadly speaking, in the current decentralization of natural resources management being advanced, two models have emerged (see Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004). Whereas the first one seeks to transfer property rights from the central state to local individuals as well as

---

<sup>9</sup> According to Meynen and Doornbos three strands of thought are currently driving the natural resources management emphasis to the local-level: neo-liberal public choice advocates concerned with efficiency, market deregulation, and privatization; the 'good governance' agenda, still neo-liberal but with an accent on accountability and transparency; and finally, populist advocates found in community-based approaches (2004, 238-239).

communities, the other one aims to formally transfer central powers to local governmental units (Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004, 421; see also Larson 2003). Generally, as judged by the number of published studies, CBNRM still dominates the study of decentralized natural resources management.

Next, in spite of the purported virtues of decentralization, the empirical record is mixed on the impacts of decentralization the world over on some of the benefits outlined above (see for example Andersson 2002a, 2002b; Heller, Harilal, and Chaudhuri 2007; Khadiagala and Mitullah 2004; Larson and Soto 2008; Matose and Watts 2010; McDermott and Schreckenberg 2009; Meynen and Doornbos 2004; Nijenhuis 2010 ; D. Olowu 2001; Pagdee, Kim, and Daugherty 2006; Wunsch 2001). A writer observes, for instance, that the same arguments advanced in favor of decentralization are sometimes used in defense of centralization, thus leaving one to question the overall merits of decentralization (De Vries 2000).

In Cameroon for example where local councils and communities since 1994 have been able to benefit from forest resources through the sharing of forest taxes as well as community forests, scholars have documented the travails of the forest management decentralization experiment starting with difficulties in the implementation of the law, funds' embezzlement and misappropriation, corruption, increase of local conflicts, elite capture, resistance of central authorities leading to the recentralization of the process (Assembé-Mvondo 2006a, 2006b; Bigombé Logo 2002, 2003b; Brown and Lassoie 2010; Etoungou 2003; Geschiere 2004; Karsenty et al. 2010; Oyono 2004a, 2004b, 2004d, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009; Oyono, Kouna, and Mala 2005; Oyono et al. 2007).

The main conclusion of the empirical research in the country has demonstrated that the expected benefits in terms of improvement of local democracy and governance, equity,

betterment of living conditions, poverty alleviation, social vulnerability, and sustainable management of the forests have yet to be materialized (Oyono et al. 2007, 1) for the reasons mentioned above. That is not to say that some positive outcomes have not been noted such as local communities' greater awareness of their rights and benefits as provided by the new law (Bigombé Logo, Guedje, and Joiris 2005; Oyono et al. 2007).

## **1.5 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In this expanding literature on decentralization of public services delivery and natural resources management, the theories which seek to explain the success and failure of decentralized experiments can be categorized into three main schools of thought.<sup>10</sup> The first school, the 'traditional' literature, is most epitomized by public administration and political science scholars such as the late Dennis Rondinelli and Shabbir Cheema (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Rondinelli 1981; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983), but also Dele Olowu and James Wunsch (Olowu and Smoke 1992; Olowu and Wunsch 2004b; Wunsch 2001; Wunsch and Olowu 1990, 1997). Over the years, these scholars have focused on the decentralization of public services provision and delivery in areas such as primary healthcare, education, water provision, education, sanitation and the like. Concentrating on formal local governments' structures, the findings of these scholars have highlighted the lack of financial resources, personnel, training and capacity, as well as continued central control as impediments to the emergence of effective local governments.

---

<sup>10</sup> On the whole, despite this neat classification, all three literatures are relevant for the study of forest management decentralization, and more importantly intersect with each other as can be seen by the various collaborations among these scholars.

The second school is the ‘democratic decentralization’ and accountability school represented by Jesse Ribot, Anne Larson and Phil Oyono among others which argues that insofar as sufficient powers have not been transferred to local communities or governments and that representation and downward accountability are lacking, decentralization shall not achieve its officially stated goals because the theoretical expectations are presumed on the basis of complete transfers of powers (Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Kanté 2006; Larson and Ribot 2004; Larson 2002, 2004, 2005; Oyono 2004a, 2004b, 2004d; Oyono and Efoua 2006; Ribot 1999, 2002b, 2003, 2005, 2008a, 2009). Richard Crook and James Manor (Crook 1994, 1996; Crook and Manor 1998) can also be included within that school.

Finally, the last school of thought is best represented by studies of CBNRM as well as more recent studies of municipal and local governments’ natural resource management. Building on collective action and common property theories, Elinor Ostrom’s groundbreaking *Governing the Commons* (1990), and new-institutionalist theories, these theorists include Arun Agrawal, Krister Andersson, Clark Gibson, and Pablo Pacheco to name a few (Agrawal 2001a; Agrawal and Chhatre 2006, 2007; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Andersson 2004, 2006; Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004, 2006; Andersson and Ostrom 2008; Andersson and van Laerhoven 2007; Bartley et al. 2008; Ferroukhi 2003; Gibson and Lehoucq 2003; Kaimowitz et al. 1998; Kauneckis and Andersson 2009; Pacheco 2005).<sup>11</sup>

For this strand of thought, success depends on cooperation between the various actors involved in decentralized natural resources governance. Furthermore, for some new

---

<sup>11</sup> Three strands of the ‘new’ institutionalism can be distinguished: economic/rational choice; historical institutionalism; and cultural/organizational neo-institutionalism. Together, the approach “share a commitment to understanding the sources and consequences of institutions-defined as relatively stable sets of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe and proscribe particular courses of action-although their particular conceptions of institutions and their analytical foci vary” (Bartley et al. 2008, 163). Peters (2008, 3-4) for his part distinguishes four major approaches in (new) institutional theory: the normative approach of James March and Johan Olsen; rational choice; historical; and finally, empirical institutionalisms.

institutionalists within that strand, understanding the interests of local politicians or mayors, the ones usually receiving powers when they are transferred to local elected governments, is critical to understanding the success or failure of decentralized forest governance.

Overall, the literature, especially the decentralized natural resource governance one, converges around four findings. First, popular participation in local decision-making is important for the success of decentralization efforts; second, downward accountability of local elected officials to local populations is critical; third, local governments need to possess the technical capacity to perform the new responsibilities; and fourth, a secure source of revenues to take on the new transferred tasks should exist (Andersson 2006, 26).

## **1.6 PERSPECTIVE OF THIS STUDY**

Of all the three abovementioned schools, only the last school, especially the rational choice new institutionalism, centers its attention on the political interests, that is the motivations, of the elected officials (mayors) receiving the transferred powers. To be sure, though, as mentioned above, in the past politics, in the form of central bureaucratic obstacles and lack of political commitment for instance, has been blamed for the failure of previous decentralization efforts, it remains that politics, especially the local one, as a variable influencing the outcomes of more recent decentralization experiments has been overall neglected (see Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004; Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2006). That is the case because for the most part local elected officials have been portrayed in the literature as the ‘victims’ of central states’ reluctance to cede powers, resources and responsibilities.

Although in a number of cases, this might have occurred, the fact of the matter is that local politics, and the interests of local elected officials, as an analytical focus have not received the attention it deserves. On the other hand, in recent years, some decentralization scholars analyzing the reasons why government decentralization occurs in the first place have challenged conventional arguments that the occurrence of the phenomenon was in response to fiscal crisis; pressures from the international community; pressures from below; or sociostructural causes (O'Neill 2004, 39). Kathleen O'Neill, for instance, has argued that internal party pressures and electoral incentives dictate the decision that governments adopt to decentralize. In fact, for the author, decentralization is an electoral strategy of political parties whose support appears to decline nationally while subnationally, that is at the regional or local levels, it looks more promising (O'Neill 2003, 2004, 2005). Overall, these authors have argued that decentralization reforms are the result of *intentional* political calculations from national politicians to entrench their power (see Boone 1998, 2003; Dickovick 2005; Eaton 2001; Montero and Samuels 2004a, 2004b; O'Neill 2003).

Even though the focus of this literature is not on the outcomes of decentralization reforms, these studies are significant to the extent that they have added a 'new' perspective that can be useful when studying decentralization outcomes. Indeed, by emphasizing the political determinants or logic of decentralization, that literature has also reminded scholars that those local elected officials receiving powers are not benevolent officials, as it is so often portrayed in the literature, and that decentralization involves a redistribution of power with 'winners' and 'losers'. In sum, their argument has been that politics and local elected officials' political interests should be an integral part of the explanation (see Andersson 2006; Andersson, Gibson,

and Lehoucq 2004; Andersson and van Laerhoven 2007).<sup>12</sup> By pointing this, these scholars have reminded us that the interests of the local elected officials receiving the transferred powers, resources and responsibilities do not necessarily coincide with the official goals of the decentralization program (see Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2006, 579). That is why it is essential to separate the two.

Recognizing this is even more important today because though the current literature has alluded to the risk of elite capture of decentralized natural resources management experiments as a variable accounting for their success or failure, save a few scholars, it has also been largely silent on the political objectives underlying this phenomenon in spite of the fact that “forest is power” as Barrie Sharpe aptly notes (1998, 41). Certainly, as mentioned above, one of the main explanations for Cameroon’s forest management decentralization not achieving its goals has revolved around the fact that the elites –at national, regional and local levels- who have reportedly captured and derailed the process have *only* been interested in the capture of forest revenues for personal enrichment/benefit (see Bigombé Logo 2004; Bigombé Logo 1996, 2003a, 2003b; Bigombé Logo 2006; Etoungou 2003; Morrison et al. 2009; Nkoum-Me-Ntseny and Logo 2004; Oyono 2004c).

---

<sup>12</sup> In fairness, the ‘democratic’ decentralization school led by Jesse Ribot by arguing the importance of downwardly accountable local elected officials for the success of decentralization efforts, has recognized the inclusion of local interests in the analysis. Where these authors differ from the approach chosen here is that ‘democratic’ decentralization theorists seem to believe that downwardly accountable local elected officials exist, ‘out there’ and that one needs simply transfer powers to them instead of the current situation of powers being transferred to upwardly accountable officials. Clearly, this study does not agree with that view that local beneficent officials are ‘out there’, rather it argues that the overall structure of incentives (downward and upward accountability, sanctions, monitoring, enforcement of laws and so on) dictate or not the behavior of local elected officials. Thus, in a different set of incentives, a local elected official can be either downwardly or upwardly accountable in the neo-institutionalist approach. Finally, it can be argued that the lack of attention on local elected officials receiving decentralized powers, responsibilities and resources was understandable to the extent that community forests have been dominating the study of decentralized natural resource management. Indeed, whereas villages elected representatives could sit on the management ‘board’ of community forests, in decentralized local government natural resources management, one is talking about elected officials, generally elected mayors, at the helm of these schemes.



However, as this study shall argue, and as shall become apparent by the end, this explanation and the others advanced above are insufficient to explain the phenomenon which occurred in Dimako Council. That is why, the study argues that decentralization be conceptualized as *another* political process, subject as any other to the same vagaries of the political system. Indeed, as Nancy Thede notes:

in order to adequately comprehend the process and impacts of decentralization, it is necessary to conceptualize it first and foremost as political process; that is, as a series of conflicting -although sometimes convergent- initiatives by different groups and individuals attempting to promote specific interests and ideals, and translating differential symbolic and material investments or stakes in the potential outcomes of the change in the local balance of power that decentralization represents (2009, 105).

That is to say that there are no inherent reasons why local elected officials receiving the newly transferred powers would behave differently than any other elected official at the central scale, or at any other, given the fact that all operate within the same political structure and their incentives are structured by it. Achieving success -defined as the achievement of the official goals of any given decentralization program- is contingent upon understanding local elected officials' behavior as well as their operating environment, that is the larger political structure within which those behaviors take place. As Agrawal and Gibson put it "all local interactions take place within the context of larger social forces" (1999, 637).

As such, even though this study agrees with the abovementioned overall findings of the literature (popular participation in local decision-making; downward accountability of local elected officials; local governments' technical capacity; and a secure source of revenues) regarding the reasons of failures, the study also builds and supplements the arguments advanced by new institutionalist theorists of decentralized governance such as Andersson, Gibson, and others (Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004, 2006; Andersson and van Laerhoven 2007) who

have highlighted the need to adopt a critical local political perspective in explaining the success or failure of decentralized forest management efforts. Indeed, in opposition to some decentralization scholars who view the local scale as endowed with inherent properties, what is called the ‘local trap’ (Purcell and Brown 2005), the study argues that the scale does not matter, for the local is subject to the same problems as the center once it is recognized that power as well as power asymmetries are at the heart of the process (see Reed and Bruyneel 2010, 2).

This, in reality, means, as the Dimako case study shall demonstrate, that a focus away from the relations of power involved in decentralized experiments as well as from the larger structure within which they take place leads, as mentioned before, to the extension, entrenchment and aggravation of the governance model to other scales -in this case the lower one- that the decentralization reforms seek to eliminate in the first place. In other words, the decentralization reforms in the end only serve to entrench the status quo.

Finally, though this study builds on the approach of new institutionalist scholars, it is important to emphasize that the perspective taken here differs in two main ways. First, in contrast to the new institutionalist authors cited above, the study stresses that not only do local politicians seek to *stay* in power, but, more importantly, they also seek to *expand* their power at higher levels, most especially at the national level where political power still remains concentrated in a number of countries.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in order to achieve their aims, they need resources, especially financial ones, and, depending on the institutional context they operate into, they shall strive to use whatever resources at their disposal. In that view, congruent with the current institutional incentives in place in Cameroon, the Mayor of Dimako as the main local

---

<sup>13</sup> The *expansion of power* dimension of local elected officials is the key difference of this study in comparison to for instance Andersson, Lehoucq or Kauneckis and other theorists who have only emphasized *the staying in power/entrenchment* incentive of local elected politicians.

elected official shall seek to use the forest management decentralization to further his own political objectives. In effect, the Dimako Council Forest, which represents timber revenues, is considered a resource, as any other, for the achievement of the higher aim of acquiring *more* political power-national prominence- which is synonymous to achieving *Bigmanship* status.

Second, by blending the new institutionalist approach (for the promises as well as perils of institutional theories see Peters 2005) and the *Big Man* concept/paradigm (see below), the study augments the validity of the approach as well as filling an important void in the literature by showing that local politicians' interests negatively affect the prospect of successful forest management decentralization through their search for personal power.

## **1.7 THE *BIG MAN* CONCEPT/PARADIGM**

As the title of this study suggests, the *Big Man* is a major concept/paradigm that shall be utilized throughout this dissertation, in particular towards the end. Though it is not addressed in the decentralization literature, it is congruent with the new institutionalist perspective adopted in this study as the reader shall discover. The concept, though it has evolved over the years, has a long theoretical history. Two particular conceptualizations of the *Big Man* are of importance for this study (for more recent discussions on the Big Man see Diamond 2008; Smedt 2009).

The first one is the classical anthropological *Big Man* described by Marshall Sahlins in his 1963 seminal article, *Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia*. While attempting to explain the causes of the “western Melanesian underdevelopment against the greater Polynesian chiefdoms” (Sahlins 1963, 286), Sahlins focused on the organization of both societies, especially their types of leadership. In fact, Sahlins

argued that while the Polynesian paramount chief ruled through formalized institutions which allowed him to capture the economic surplus and ‘invest’ it in development, Melanesian islands’ lack of hierarchical structures of powers impeded their development. Furthermore, in Melanesia, instead of paramount chiefs, the types of leaders which emerged in these chiefless societies were self-made men, called *Big Men*. For Sahlins, institutional, political and economic development was inhibited by this type of leader who relied on personal networks of power instead of formalized institutions.<sup>14</sup>

Sahlins defined a *Big Man* as “one who can create and use social relations which give him leverage on others’ production and the ability to siphon off an excess product-or sometimes he can cut down their consumption in the interest of the siphon” (1963, 292). However, because the *Big Man* was a self-made man and had no hereditary or formal authority, his ‘power’ and prestige came from his personal followers whom he provided favors but also was beholden. This meant in practice that because of this lack of institutional power, it was hard for the *Big Man* to summon the resources necessary for extracting the economic surplus to be used for investment, for this would in turn signify the end of his status.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> To be sure, whereas in Melanesia, “small, separate, and equal political blocs” were the norm, in Polynesia, the society was organized along “an extensive pyramid of groups capped by the family and following of a paramount chief” (Sahlins 1963, 287). In Polynesia while there was only one chief at the top, in Melanesia, the lack of ‘concentration of political power’ meant that the struggle was permanent among local actors to achieve the *Big Man* status.

<sup>15</sup> The following summed up the contrast between a *Big Man* and a paramount chief. “The Melanesian big-man seems so thoroughly bourgeois, so reminiscent of the free enterprising rugged individual of our own heritage. He combines with an ostensible interest in the general welfare a more profound measure of self-interested cunning and economic calculation. His gaze, as Veblen might have put it, is fixed unswervingly to the main chance. His every public action is designed to make a competitive and invidious comparison with others, to show a standing above the masses that is product of his personal manufacture. The historical caricature of the Polynesian chief, however, is feudal rather than capitalist. His appearance, his bearing is almost regal; very likely he just *is* a big man- “Can’t you see he is a chief? See how big he is?””. In his every public action is a display of the refinements of breeding, in his manner always that *noblesse oblige* of true pedigree and an incontestable right of rule. With his standing not so much a personal achievement as a just social due, he can afford to be, and he is, every inch a chief” (Sahlins 1963, 289, emphasis original). Finally, one has to remember that these ideal types developed by Sahlins

Building on the insights of Sahlins, the second *Big Man* is the one described by Jean-François Médard in his 1992 article *Le "Big Man" en Afrique: Analyse du Politicien Entrepreneur*. That *Big Man*, which Médard argues can be found in a number of African countries, main characteristic from Sahlins' is that he or she relies on accumulating or holding several political or state offices at multiple levels of government (Médard 1992).

By holding these disparate political or state offices, the goal here, in a context where the state is *itself* seen as a resource, is to amass the financial resources which are going to help establish the *Big Man* status as well as strengthen it. Hence, in contrast to Sahlins', this *Big Man* is first and foremost seeking political power, not solely recognition, though the enterprise is a global one because it involved displaying economic, social and political resources (Médard 1992, 172). As Médard argued, the politician *entrepreneur*, that is the *Big Man*:

Takes advantage of his access to the state to enrich himself. [And] on the basis of those economic resources already accumulated, he invests one part of his wealth in various economic undertakings; at the same time he converts another part of his wealth into a symbolic capital, in the form of political supports, by redistributing it. The art of redistribution is the key to [obtaining] legitimacy and therefore of accumulating political capital. Political capital in turn allows [one] to extract more economic resources. The important thing here is not so much the nature of the controlled resources at the start than the process of interaction between those resources. *The interchangeability [échangeabilité] between resources has for consequence, that seeking political power and seeking wealth is the same thing, since if one needs to acquire political power to get rich, one also needs to be rich to keep it* (1992, 172, emphasis added).

Médard's use of the concept *Big Man*, as in this study, comes from the translation of the French word *grand*, which simply means big. As he acknowledges "the term which spontaneously comes to mind to designate [the political elites in Africa] is that of "big man", because it is used by the man on the street in Francophone Africa, but particularly because it is

---

have been criticized, especially because it has been argued the differentiation in practice is not as neat as the author had first portrayed (see for instance Médard 1992, 171).

indeed this image that the political elites deliberately project to the intention of the local population” (Médard 1992, 168).<sup>16</sup> In Dimako Council, the term also reflects a type of dichotomous-hierarchical view of the world from local villagers, which divides the world between the haves, *les grands*, and the have nots, *les petits*.

Based on Sahlins and Médard’s above conceptualizations, a *Big Man* in this study refers to a political actor who either holds an elective or administrative office and who uses that position to acquire financial and political resources to achieve national prominence, that is ‘maximum visibility’ (Daloze 2003, 271).<sup>17</sup> As in both authors, thanks to the financial and political resources the *Big Man* of this study has been able to create a ‘loyal’ following as well as allies strong enough for him to extend his power.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is important to note that several types of *Big Man* exist. In fact, *Big Men* can be found at the local, regional, and national levels (see for instance Daloze 2003; Laurent 2000).<sup>19</sup> In a country like Cameroon, as in most Francophone Africa, which has inherited the French centralized pattern of government, the national level is where most of the politicians seek to ultimately establish themselves and display their power. Thus, a ‘true’ *Big Man*, usually residing

---

<sup>16</sup> Of particular importance to this study, Médard distinguishes three paths to achieving the *Big Man* status. Of the three paths, the passages from the politico-administrative to the economic sphere; and from the economic to the political sphere strictly speaking constitute the only avenues leading to a *Big Man* status. However, as it shall become clear by the end of this study, the paths described by Médard are not exclusive, for the path of the Mayor of Dimako, though at a later stage an economic operator, was primarily achieved through his position as an elected official at the helm of a council forest.

<sup>17</sup> Note that the term political actor is meant to include actors such as politicians or civil servants. This is the case because a *Big Man* does not always have to hold an elective position (see note 17 below).

<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that the *Big Man* is able to satisfy all his or her followers. Indeed, as Médard (1992, 189) has argued, and as it shall become apparent by the end of this study, part of the dissatisfaction with a *Big Man* revolves exactly around the (perception of) lack or insufficiency of the redistribution of the accumulated resources.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre-Joseph Laurent studied *Big Men* in a small rural Sahelian town located at the border of Burkina Faso and Ghana. Of interest here that small rural Sahelian town is mainly dominated by one *Big Man* who happens to be a *marabout*. Then, four other *Big Men* follow. By decreasing order, they are a church pastor; the central state local representative; a local economic operator (*entrepreneur*); the local mayor; and finally a merchant (*commerçant*) (for more see Laurent 2000, 170-171). Note that the local mayor only comes in fourth place in that classification. Jean-Pascal Daloze for his part notes that the *Big Man* model “applies to all types of elites including other important categories in sub-Saharan Africa, like “traditional rulers,” some religious and even top military leaders” (2003, 271).

in the national or a regional capital, is defined as one whose power extends at the national level and radiates downward. Indeed, in Cameroon, the term ‘weekend mayors’ has been used to designate, as well as lament, those local elected officials, who, though elected mayors of local rural councils, prefer to dwell in the capital Yaoundé (see Soh 2004).<sup>20</sup> The obvious objective being to use their local elective position to either seek national office or strengthen the already acquired national position.

## **1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2.0 presents the conceptual framework as well as reviews the literature on decentralization and natural resources management and governance. Chapter 3.0 outlines the methods used in this study as well as the data analysis process. Chapter 4.0 describes the institutional and legal framework of forest management decentralization in Cameroon. Then, before presenting the results of the field investigations, Chapter 5.0 introduces the East Region as well as the Dimako Council and the FCD. Of particular importance in this chapter is a genesis of the capture of the FCD by the Mayor of Dimako as well as of the predicaments of the whole Dimako experiment.

The results section which includes Chapters 6.0, 7.0, and 8.0, illustrate how the mayor of Dimako has captured the council forest and how neither SFM nor local development has occurred. Indeed, the evidence presented in both Chapters 6.0 and 7.0 appear to show that the Mayor has harvested the forest in ‘unsustainable’ ways as well as allegedly misappropriated and

---

<sup>20</sup> In theory, this is supposed to abate because the 2004 political and administrative decentralization laws for instance prohibit mayors from concurrently holding other positions in the state apparatus such as government ministers, lawmakers (*députés* or senators), or senior civil servants (see ROC 2004b).

personally benefited from the forest revenues. More importantly, Chapter 8.0 demonstrates how thanks in large part to the council forest project and the patronage of the Dimako native and Cameroon's First Lady Chantal Biya as well as the political exploitation of this relationship, the Mayor of Dimako has morphed from a mayor of a small impoverished rural council into an influential national politician. Collectively, these chapters show that the decentralization reforms appear to have extended the national 'bad' governance model currently in vogue at the local level.

Finally, after summarizing the main findings of the study as well as discussing them in light of the broader literature on decentralization, forest management and development, the latter part of the conclusion brings the theoretical and empirical parts together and proposes a 'revised' theory of decentralization which puts politics and power firmly at the center and suggests doing away with the major theoretical assumptions of the current theory. The dissertation ends by indicating the main limitations of the approach taken here well as the implications for further study of forest management decentralization.



### Box 1.1. Definition of key terms used in this study

**Capture:** seizing of the benefits designed for an entire group by one person or a group of person.

**Political Power:** The definition adopted here is adapted from Jean-Patrice Lacam who defines it as “the capacity to systematically have one’s ideas prevail during decision-making processes involving critical issues and this, as part of one’s control of the political agenda” (Lacam 1988, 25).

**Local government or local council:** In Cameroon, since the 1996 Constitution, two tiers of subnational governments exist: the region and the council. This study is concerned with governments at the local level, so both concepts of local government or local council are used interchangeably. In Cameroon, **local councils** “occupy the lowest rung of the government administrative ladder in Cameroon. They are charged with the responsibility of executing local development projects, delivering basic social services and executing other tasks aimed at ameliorating the living conditions of citizens within their respective jurisdictions” (Njoh 2011, 103). In other words, local councils are legally responsible under central supervision of economic, social, and cultural development matters. Finally, “Under public law [they are] given judicial personality and financial autonomy” (Morrison et al. 2009, 7). In addition, local councils include both urban and rural areas, though since 2004, legally the distinction between urban and rural has been abolished. **Councils** are generally headed by an elected mayor, or an appointed government delegate in major cities assisted by an elected deliberative body called the municipal council. Both the mayor and the councilor which together comprised the municipal council are elected for a five-year term renewable.

**Governance:** by opposition to government, the act of including other non state actors into the management of public affairs. Environmental governance involves “a range of formal and informal institutions, social groups, processes, interactions, and traditions, all of which influence how power is exercised, how public decisions are taken, how citizens become engaged or disaffected, and who gains legitimacy and influence” (Reed and Bruyneel 2010, 2). Management here is the formal act of administering an organization or any other entity.

**Sustainable Forest Management (SFM),** based on the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO): “involves managing forests to achieve one or more objectives with regards to production of continuous flow of goods and services without undue reduction of their inherent values and future productivity” (see Mendoza and Prabhu 2000, 659).

**Institutions** “are defined as formal and informal rules that are, in fact, followed by most affected individuals. Such rules structure *incentives* in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. **Incentives**, then, mean the rewards and punishments that are perceived by individuals to be related to their own actions and those of others” ( Andersson 2002a, 6).

## **2.0 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE**

“Decentralization is rapidly replacing God, Country and Motherhood in popular favor (...) All major shades of opinion seem to ascribe to decentralization great powers of social and/or moral regeneration” Norman Furniss, *The Practical Significance of Decentralization* (1974, 958-959).

This chapter reviews the literature on decentralization in general with particular emphasis on the literature on decentralization of government as well as of forest management. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section defines the concept as well as discusses the conceptual difficulties that have arisen in the study of decentralization. Before concluding the chapter, the second section reviews selected empirical works dealing with the success and failure of decentralized experiments along the lines of the literature briefly mentioned in the introduction.

### **2.1 A CONCEPTUAL MUDDLE**

This section reviews the conceptual issues that have arisen in the study of decentralization. The section commences with a discussion about the definition as well as the types of decentralization and ends with a presentation of the meaning of the concept in Cameroon.

### 2.1.1 Defining decentralization

Decentralization, Philip Mawhood argues, “is a word that has been used by different people to mean a good many different things (...) too often the word seems to convey only what the public relations department wants it to mean (1983b, 1). As Mawhood suggests defining decentralization has been a problem from the outset; indeed, as he points out decentralization is used by various people to mean different things. The same conceptual quandary noted by Mawhood was also observed by John Cohen and Stephen Peterson who commented that the literature is marked by its size and diversity as well as “linguistic preferences, invention of new terms, and inconsistent use of established terms [which] creates methodological confusion in any comparative review of decentralization” (1996, 13). However, for conceptual clarity, the meaning of decentralization in this study has to be delineated.

To begin with, several authors or schools of thought have advanced various definitions of the concept. In public choice theory for example, decentralization is defined as “a situation in which public goods and services are provided primarily through the revealed preferences of individuals by market mechanisms. Decentralized governments are regarded as having better knowledge of local or grassroots preferences, either in the sense of having access to information previously denied to them, or in the sense of observing preferences with less noise” (Hope and Chikulo 2000, 28-29).

Conversely, for an author such as Brian Smith, decentralization involves:

The delegation of power to lower levels in a territorial hierarchy, whether the hierarchy is one of governments within a state or offices within a large-scale organization. Decentralization may be clearly distinguished from the dispersal of the headquarters’ branches from the capital city, as when part of a national ministry is moved to a provincial city to provide employment there. It may also be distinguished from delegation, when a superior entrusts a subordinate with some of the former’s responsibilities, though decentralization will involve delegation

when the subordinate, whether it be an individual bureaucrat or an elected assembly, takes part responsibility for a designated area within the territorial jurisdiction of the organization or state concerned (1985, 1).

What is more, for Smith decentralization “entails the subdivision of the state’s territory into smaller areas and the creation of political and administrative institutions in those areas” (1985, 1). In his definition, the author limits the use of the concept of decentralization to devolution or political decentralization, not delegation or deconcentration as other scholars have done (see below).

Building on Smith, the ‘democratic decentralization’ school defines decentralization as “any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy” (Ribot 2002b, 6). The emphasis here is on the formal transfer to outside actors and various organizations, not only governmental entities as in Smith’s above. For some theorists of this school, such as Agrawal and Ribot:

When powers are transferred to lower-level actors who are accountable to their superiors in a hierarchy, the reform can be termed deconcentration. This is true whether lower-level actors are appointed or elected officials, because elections can still be structured in ways that make elected officials upwardly accountable. When powers are transferred to lower-level actors who are downwardly accountable, even when they are appointed, the reform is tantamount to political decentralization (1999, 475).

Finally, the most enduring framework, ‘the majority view’ (Cohen and Peterson 1996, 12), that has guided the study of decentralization in the last twenty years is the one put forward by Dennis Rondinelli, John Nellis, and G. Cheema. In effect, in a 1983 study, decentralization was defined as “the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resources raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies, (b) subordinate units or levels of government, (c)

semiautonomous public authorities or corporations, (d) areawide, regional or functional authorities, or (e) nongovernmental private voluntary organizations” (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983, 13). Furthermore, four types or forms of decentralization were distinguished: deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and privatization (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983, 14, see below for more).<sup>21</sup>

Since that early definition, the concept of decentralization has morphed over the years,<sup>22</sup> and to account for the evolution Cheema and Rondinelli now define decentralization as “not only the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within government but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society” (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007, 6). What is more, “in this expanding concept of governance decentralization practices can be categorized into at least four forms: administrative, political, fiscal and economic” (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007, 6).<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> In a 1981 article, Rondinelli argued that two forms of decentralization could be distinguished: functional and areal. Whereas, functional decentralization “focuses on the transfer of authority to perform specific tasks or activities to specialized organizations that operate nationally, or at least across local jurisdictions”, areal was “always primarily aimed at transferring responsibility for public functions to organizations within well-defined sub-national spatial or political boundaries— a province, district municipality, river basin or geographical region. Usually the transfer or delegation of authority is to an institution that may legally perform those functions only within a specified geographical or political boundary” (1981, 137). Furthermore, a second distinction was made between three degrees of decentralization, namely deconcentration, delegation and devolution (1981, 137-139). Finally, it is important to note that despite its dominant status in the study of decentralization, not everyone agrees with the 1983 framework outlined by Rondinelli.

<sup>22</sup> According to Cheema and Rondinelli (2007, 2-3), in the 1970s-1980s, decentralization was conceptualized as deconcentration; in the mid-1980s as political power sharing, democratization and market liberalization or expanding the scope for private sector decision-making; and finally, in the 1990s as the inclusion of civil society organizations to the state governance. On the other hand, Olowu (2001, 4-11) distinguishes four phases of the evolution of the concept and practice: 1945-1960s ‘development of an efficient and democratic system of local government’; early 1960s-late 1970s ‘receding of local governments’ independence’; late 1970s-late 1980s ‘local governments as service providers and with decentralization as an approach to the reduction of the central state role in the economy’; and 1990s-present ‘democratic decentralization’. Finally, Cohen and Peterson (1996, 3-4) divide the history of decentralization into three phases: the early 1960s’ focus on decentralization as an administrative approach to local-level governance; the early 1980s’ service delivery focus; and finally, the early 1990s’ democracy promotion emphasis.

<sup>23</sup> Because these ‘newer’ types differ a little from the earlier types the study does not present them in detail. Suffice to say that for Cheema and Rondinelli *administrative decentralization* includes deconcentration, delegation and “decentralized cooperation of government agencies performing similar functions through ‘twinning’ arrangements across national borders” (2007, 6-7); *political decentralization* or devolution refer to “organizations

In spite of the disagreements over its actual meaning and forms, the various authors reviewed here agree that decentralization includes a transfer of powers from the center to local entities, be they local representatives of the central government, elected local governments, and communities or private organizations (non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for instance). Additionally, all these definitions in one way or another include Cheema and Rondinelli's three major forms deconcentration or administrative decentralization; fiscal decentralization; and devolution or political decentralization. Last but not least, from an early focus on government institutions over the years the concept has evolved to include outside actors such as civil society and private economic firms (see also Allen 1999, for the evolution of the concept of local government to today's local governance). Instead of government decentralization, today scholars talk of decentralized governance to reflect the shift in emphasis (see Cheema and Rondinelli 2007).

### **2.1.2 Types of decentralization**

Although most scholars have relied on the Rondinelli's framework to conceptualize decentralization, some have also excluded Rondinelli's privatization and delegation, because as Ribot (2002b, 4) argued, privatization relies on an exclusive logic in contrast to the inclusive

---

and procedures for increasing citizen participation in selecting political representatives and in making public policy; [and] changes in the structure of the government through devolution of powers and authority to local units of government" (2007, 7). *Fiscal decentralization* refers to the "means and mechanisms for fiscal cooperation in sharing public revenues among all levels of government; for fiscal delegation in public revenue raising and expenditure allocation; and for fiscal autonomy for state, regional, or local governments" (2007, 7). Finally, *economic decentralization* includes market liberalization, deregulation, privatization of state enterprises, and public-private partnerships (2007, 7).

public logic of decentralization.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for Ribot and other scholars, decentralization only combines three forms deconcentration or administrative decentralization; fiscal decentralization; and devolution or political decentralization or what some have called *democratic decentralization*, a point that shall be critiqued below. Hence, in the following lines, the study only reviews these three most common forms referred to by the literature.

#### **2.1.2.1 Deconcentration or administrative decentralization**

Deconcentration or administrative decentralization is defined as the “dispersal of agents of higher levels of government into lower level arenas” (Manor 1999, 5). It is an intra-organizational process which entails the transfer of selected administrative functions from the central government to lower level ministerial entities or agencies (Hope and Chikulo 2000, 30). Finally, the main distinction between deconcentration and devolution is that while the former focuses on efficiency and effectiveness of the central administrative system, the latter is concerned with political and popular participation as well as empowerment aims (D. Olowu 2001, 3).

#### **2.1.2.2 Fiscal decentralization**

Fiscal decentralization could be seen as a separate type of decentralization, but also as a cross-cutting issue (Ribot 2002a, iii), for, as it has been remarked, powers transferred without revenues are meaningless. In effect, “decentralization must be attended both by some fiscal decentralization (since that supplies financial resources) and by some deconcentration or

---

<sup>24</sup> Manor (1999, 4-5) for instance excludes delegation and privatization from his definition of the concept insofar as privatization entails transfers outside the political system and delegation has rarely been attempted or succeeded as he observes.

administrative decentralization (since that supplies bureaucratic resources required for implementation). If it is to have significant promise, decentralization must entail a mixture of all three types: democratic, fiscal and administrative” (Manor 1999, 7).

### **2.1.2.3 Devolution or political decentralization**

For James Manor, devolution or political decentralization consists of a “transfer of resources and power (and often, tasks) to lower level authorities which are largely or wholly independent of higher levels of government, and which are democratic in some way and to some degree” (1999, 6). Overall, devolution consists in the development of effective local institutions of collective decision making; the devolution of authority to local-level political institutions; the deconcentration of administrative capacity, and the allocation of finances and the control of personnel to lower level administrative organizations; and finally, the establishment of and support for viable democratic local political processes (Picard, Groelsema, and Lawrence 2008, 155).<sup>25</sup>

### **2.1.2.4 The confusion surrounding devolution and democratic decentralization**

To begin, some scholars equate ‘democratic’ decentralization with political decentralization or devolution (Larson and Ribot 2004; Manor 1999; Olowu and Wunsch 2004b; Ribot 2002b, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2009). In the view of these authors, insofar as the goals of the

---

<sup>25</sup> Further, devolution involves “the granting of decision-making powers to lower authorities and allowing them to take full responsibility without reference back to the authorizing government. This includes financial power as well as the authority to design and execute local development projects and programs. The essence of devolution is discretionary authority. To the extent that lower levels of government have discretionary authority, they can do essentially what they decide to do subject only to broad policy guidelines; their own financial, human, and material capacities; and the physical environment within which they must operate. *Devolution is the strongest form of decentralization*. It allows for the reduction of the levels of administration through which activities have to pass and it enhances citizenry productivity and participation in development activities (Hope and Chikulo 2000, 30-31, emphasis added).



current wave of decentralization reforms include the promotion of local democratic governments, the label ‘democratic’ is affixed to the term decentralization. The problem with this approach, as several authors have noted before, is that this concept conflates two different processes democracy and devolution, which although related, are nonetheless analytically and empirically separate (Oxhorn 2004, 6). In addition, it complicates the analysis by likening devolution or political decentralization to democratic decentralization (see Mawhood 1983b, 2-3).

Whereas, for instance, Dele Olowu and James Wunsch used the term democratic decentralization in a somewhat ‘neutral’ way to refer to a process where “significant elements of authority, responsibility for services, and fiscal and human resources were transferred to [elected] local governments” (2004b, 1), Ribot (2010), Manor (1999), Blair (2000) and Heller (2001) for their part explicitly link democracy and decentralization to form the democratic decentralization concept. Indeed, for an author such as Jesse Ribot, political and democratic decentralization are the same and downward accountability is the key in democratic decentralization. He even goes as far as to argue that “without discretionary powers, or without downward accountability, there is no democratic decentralization. Rather, there is deconcentration, autocracy, privatization, etc” (2008a, 20).

The conflation even goes further with Harry Blair (2000) who equated ‘democratic decentralization’ with democratic local governance. As he argues “the major promise of democratic decentralization, or democratic local governance (DLG) is that by building popular participation and accountability into local governance, government at the local level will become more responsive to citizen desires and more effective in service delivery” (Blair 2000, 21).

To be fair, the amalgamation of democracy and decentralization is not new a matter, for as Robert Cameron (2003, 109) reminded us in early public choice theory, there was “a

‘motherhood and apple pie’ version of decentralization that views it almost as a synonym for democratization”.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the amalgamation of democracy and decentralization into democratic decentralization blurs the line between the means and ends of decentralization. In effect, decentralization is a strategy conceived to achieve several aims which include for instance equity, democracy, and others. When democratic decentralization becomes the means and the end in itself, it further analytically complicates the issue.

The issue of democratic decentralization is complicated by the existence of “a tendency by some specialists to simplistically argue that democratic elections and responsible officials and councils are essential for effective decentralization” (Cohen and Peterson, 1996, 24). However, “just because a country is highly centralized does not mean that it is unable to effectively decentralize the provision of collective goods and services through the field administration type of deconcentration. In sum, democratization can facilitate administrative and/or political decentralization strategies, but its absence does not necessarily mean that such strategies cannot be efficient or effective” (Cohen and Peterson 1996, 25).

In truth, the qualifier democratic, authoritarian or other used by various scholars should be reserved to local governance which can be seen as the end state of the decentralization process. A fact that Olowu and Wunsch have noted when they asserted that “decentralization, even “democratic” decentralization, and local governance are not identical: initiating the first does not mean one has achieved the second” (2004b, 27).

In light of this critique, this study proposes to subsume democratic decentralization under political decentralization. Seen this way, political decentralization can take two subtypes or forms: authoritarian or democratic. Thus, authoritarian corresponds to the situation where local

---

<sup>26</sup> Cameron cites for instance Vincent Ostrom’s 1973 opus *the Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration*.

officials are either elected or appointed but not downwardly accountable, whereas the democratic decentralization subtype retains Ribot and his associates' original signification.

### **2.1.3 The meaning of decentralization in Cameroon**

According to the 2004 *Loi d'Orientation de la Décentralisation* establishing the general framework of territorial decentralization in the country, decentralization refers “to the transfer by the state, to the decentralized local authorities, of particular powers as well as appropriate resources (*compétences particulières et de moyens appropriés*)” (ROC 2004a, Art. 2,1). Furthermore, in Cameroon, decentralization is seen as “the fundamental axis for the promotion of *development, democracy and good governance* at the local level” (ROC 2004a, Art. 2,2 emphasis added).

In the country, a distinction is made between decentralization and deconcentration, in contrast, for instance, to Rondinelli's above definition, which are seen as two distinct yet connected processes. While decentralization is only reserved for devolution/political decentralization defined as the transfer of powers and responsibilities to local councils and regions, deconcentration refers as in the literature to the dispersion of the central state representatives to the local and regional level, symbolized in the figures of Governors (*Gouverneur*), Prefects (*Préfet*), and Sub-prefects (*Sous-préfet*) (see ROC 2008a).

### **2.1.4 Decentralization in this study**

Last but not least, the definition of decentralization adopted in this study, building on Rondinelli's 1983 and 2007 frameworks, refers to *formal* arrangements where the central

government cedes or transfers authority, responsibility as well resources, alone or in combination, to lower levels of administration or within a political system to organizations or actors outside of the bureaucratic structure such as in the case of local communities. Similarly, the definition put forward here does not include what is sometimes referred to as *decentralization by default* or when lower level authorities stepped in to fill the void left out by central authorities (see Manor 1999, 4).

A final point worth mentioning is that because of the Rondinelli's 1980s framework, there has been some tendency, as Philip Oxhorn (2004, 5) remarks, to see the three types of decentralization (deconcentration, delegation and devolution) as discrete steps rather than ideal-types "towards which policy-makers repeatedly aspire" (Mawhood 1983c, 250). The view of discrete steps is in contrast to Rondinelli himself who in a 1981 article remarked that "in reality, although there are differences among the various forms of decentralization, they are not mutually exclusive. All government structures consist of some combination of these forms of decentralized administration" (Rondinelli 1981, 139). Hence, the different forms of decentralization should not be seen as mutually exclusive; they are rather complementary.

In line with Oxhorn's conceptualization (2004), this dissertation views decentralization as a multidimensional process where the various forms could be conceptualized along a continuum stretching from a minimum of deconcentration, the 'least' extensive type to a maximum of devolution, the 'strongest' type (Hope and Chikulo 2000, 30-31).

## **2.2 THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RECORD**

As mentioned in the introduction, broadly speaking three schools of thought can be found in decentralization ‘studies’: the ‘traditional’ literature by public administration and political science scholars; the ‘democratic’ decentralization and accountability school; and finally the collective action, common property and new institutionalist theories. The rest of the chapter presents selected empirical evidence of the literature regarding the success and failure of decentralization of public services provision and delivery, with an emphasis on decentralized forest management or governance.

### **2.2.1 Decentralization of public services provision and delivery and natural resources management**

To begin with, Olowu and Smoke (1992) identify seven case studies of ‘successful’ local governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya and Benin). In their investigation, the authors find that success for local governments is determined by the following factors: location in an area with an adequate economic base; well-defined responsibilities in a satisfactory legal framework; capacity to mobilize sufficient resources; supportive central government activities; and appropriate management practices, including development of productive internal and external relations and satisfactory responsiveness to constituents. For the authors, no single factor alone accounts for successful local governments. Therefore, in order for local governments to be successful, all the factors mentioned above have to be present.

On the one hand, Olowu and Smoke findings are notable because they demonstrate that the task of decentralizing is a complex task. On the other hand, in spite of these findings, the

study falls short on one significant ground the definition of success. To illustrate, Olowu and Smoke mainly define success not in terms of achieving the goals of decentralization, rather in terms of local governments' fiscal performance and capacity to mobilize resources (Olowu and Smoke 1992, 4-5). Such a measure is not really targeted at the provision of public services, which remains the goals of decentralization, but at whether a local government can mobilize financial resources. Put another way, the capacity to mobilize resources does not automatically translate into improved services provision. Finally, because of the year when the article was first published, the study cannot account for the multiple developments that have taken place since in decentralization practice and theory.

Next, Olowu and Wunsch's (2004b) edited volume review the conditions under which decentralization reforms have led to progress in local governance. After a synopsis of the six case studies (South Africa and Botswana, Nigeria, Ghana, Chad, Uganda, and Kenya) by various authors, Olowu and Wunsch conclude that four factors are critical for the effectiveness of local governance: the existence of a supportive national context; effective systems of intergovernmental relations; strong local demand for public goods and the existence of social capital; and well-designed local governance institutions (Olowu and Wunsch 2004a, 255). While these factors are important, the issue in most cases is that it is difficult to find all these factors at once, especially given the fact that most decentralized experiments occur in settings where governance shortcomings are widespread. Thus, how does one achieve effectiveness of local governance is unclear in that scenario.

Crook and Manor (1998) in their comparative study of democracy and decentralization in South Asia and West Africa look at the impact of democratic participation on the performance of decentralized institutions. The goal of the authors is to ascertain, first, whether local participation

in the wake of ‘democratic’ decentralization reforms has increased and, second, its impact on the performance of elected local councils in the Indian state of Karnataka, Bangladesh, Ghana and Ivory Coast. The authors hypothesize that “the quality of accountability relationships would have a crucial impact on performance at two levels: first, relations between elected representatives and the public, and second, relations between local bureaucrats, other government agencies and executive officials on the one hand, and elected representatives on the other” (1998, 12).

From the four case studies, the authors argue that among the various factors increased participation; adequate resources for councils; the socio-political contexts of decentralization reforms, institutional and popular accountability mechanisms appear to be the ‘most critical determinant’ of improved local performance and thus accounts for the variation between the four cases (Crook and Manor 1998, 21). This study is significant because unlike other ‘accountability’ theorists who only mention the downwards or popular dimension of accountability, Crook and Manor also emphasizes the institutional dimension of the concept. However, as part of the ‘democratic decentralization’ and accountability school, the two authors share the same critique that shall be leveled below.

Still on the accountability issue, Agrawal and Ribot (1999) examine whether decentralization of natural resource management has occurred in four Asian and West African case studies (India, Nepal, Mali and Senegal). They argue that “the presumed benefits of decentralization become available to local populations only when empowered local actors are downwardly accountable” (Agrawal and Ribot 1999, 474). For both authors, representation and accountability are the key elements “if devolved powers are to serve available local needs efficiently and equitably” (Agrawal and Ribot 1999, 474). In their framework, Agrawal and Ribot focus on three variables (actors, powers and accountability) instead of the more traditional

definition of institutional reform in the political, fiscal, or administrative realm. In Agrawal and Ribot's conceptualization, increased change in the three variables toward more local autonomy is similar to 'more' decentralization.

Following their conceptualization, the two authors argue that decentralization has occurred in India and Mali, but not in Nepal and Senegal. Insofar as powers have been transferred to entities upwardly accountable to the central state, they judge that in Nepal and Senegal, instead of (democratic) decentralization, rather those are instances of deconcentration (Agrawal and Ribot 1999, 491-492). Finally, it has to be noted that the authors' framework is based on the analysis of legal, political and administrative documents of the goals of decentralization and that the analysis seeks to determine whether what is labeled as decentralization constitutes decentralization. Thus, the authors' focus is not on decentralization outcomes. Nonetheless, the study is relevant for determining the conditions for success.

Overall, the issue with the framework put forward by the authors, as they acknowledge themselves, is that it does not analyze whether decentralization, whatever the types, has achieved its stated aims in a given situation. The framework is only useful to the extent that it allows the analyst to ascertain whether decentralization has occurred or not. Once this has been ascertained, work still remains to be done on establishing whether the goals have been achieved or not. In spite of Agrawal and Ribot's contention that once powers have been transferred to entities that are downwardly accountable, decentralization policies have a chance of actually reaching their stated aims, the fact of the matter is that the process of achieving the goals is not automatic, the study would argue (see also Chapter 9.0 for a more elaborate point).

Oyono (2004a) analyzing the experience of Cameroon's model of forest management decentralization started in 1994 argues that the experiment has led to outcomes contrary to



theoretical predictions (see also Oyono 2005a). To be sure, he remarked that “the process of forest management decentralization is hijacked at the regional level by mayors, administrative authorities, timber companies, politicians and many other interest groups” (Oyono 2004a, 182). Moreover, through the case study of five community forests, one council forest as well as nine forestry fee (*RFA*) management committees (see section 4.2 on forest policies in Cameroon below), the author argues that Cameroon’s forest management decentralization has led to a conflict of authority between customary authorities and new local actors that have emerged in the wake of the 1994 forest management decentralization.

For the author, “the available evidence demonstrates a significant gap between the experience in Cameroon and arguments that decentralization should necessarily lead to efficiency, equity and ecological sustainability” (Oyono 2004a, 187). This is due, according to the author, to the fact that there is a tension between on the one hand the state, which does not want to relinquish its powers, and local actors who seek greater powers and argue for change. Finally, in order for decentralization to work, Oyono stresses that downward accountability, local democracy, the ‘mystique of responsibility’, as well as strong institutional arrangements at the local level and awareness of the common interest be cultivated.

For Oyono (2004a), like Agrawal and Ribot (1999) above, the issue is simply one of local democracy and accountability at the local level. Indeed, for the author, if these elements were present at the local level, Cameroon’s forest management decentralization would have more chance of achieving its stated goals of efficiency, equity and ecological sustainability. Although this may be true, the author seems to evade the fact that decentralization is, as various scholars have noted before, a political process; it is about power, and it is unlikely that even in the presence of local democracy and downward accountability, such matters would simply be

resolved. Other elements such as the capacity to manage forests, and an enabling institutional framework would still be needed. Hence, Oyono's study does not really account for the power struggles at the local level and only sees the local population or the 'community' as passive actors in the struggle over control of forest resources and revenues instead of seeing it as embedded in the process of negotiation and renegotiation of the forest management decentralization in the country. Indeed, as various examples of community forests in the country have shown, local villagers bear some of the blame for the failure of the experiment (see for instance Assembé-Mvondo 2006a).

The case of municipal forest management is analyzed by Kaimowitz *et al.* (1998) who study the impact of forestry as well as decentralization laws in Bolivia which afford municipal governments a stronger role in forestry. The study examined four areas where transfers have occurred: logging, protected areas, indigenous territories, and land-use planning. The authors' intent is to ascertain whether the transfer of powers to municipal governments has led to sustainable resource use, improvement in local governance and greater equity for local populations. The authors' conclusion is that the decentralization laws have created opportunities for various groups, among which small farmers and indigenous people, to benefit from forest resources as well as influence forest policies, but these groups have been unable to fully take advantage of the law. Despite the benefits, the authors report that local governments' capacity for forest governance still remains limited. Therefore, in their conclusion, Kaimowitz *et al.* point out that outside support and supervision are needed for local governments to take on their new tasks in forest management.

For the authors, the key point is that the theoretically predicted outcomes about decentralization are by no means automatic, and that outside intervention is necessary for local

governments to perform their duty. This is in contrast to studies which have emphasized only local-level governance factors. The merit of this study is to show that decentralization does not have to always mean the retreat of the central state; rather, it means that its role has to be redefined.

Like Kaimowitz *et al.* above, Larson (2002) reviews the role of twenty one (21) local governments in Nicaragua to determine what is their role in forest management, but also what is required to improve local governments' effectiveness in their new role of natural resource managers. The author found that Nicaraguan local governments are often reluctant to assume their role of natural resource managers, but that when they do it is for economic reasons not out of concerns for the long term health of forests. Larson's conclusion is that "municipal forest management varies greatly among the 21 cases reviewed here, which range from municipal governments virtually paralyzed by infighting or corruption to those that have demonstrated clear concern for forest management-with many stages in between. Even the best cases still have important obstacles to overcome" (2002, 28).

Finally, the author argues that three factors are needed for local governments to be effective resource managers: capacity; incentive; and long-term commitment. For her, civil society can play a role in enhancing those three factors (Larson 2002). Larson, as Kaimowitz *et al.* above, sees that the process of transferring powers to local governments does not automatically result in improvement of forests as well as benefits for local populations. As she notes, for local governments to be effective resource managers the three conditions need to be met. Conversely, given that she observes that economic motivation directs the involvement of local governments in forest management, how does one ensure that this focus is not detrimental to the larger goals of the forest management decentralization? Equally important, are for instance

the two objectives of obtaining the economic rent and conserving the forest antithetical given the author's conclusion. If not, how to 'incentivize' local governments so that not only do they extract the rent but also 'sustainably' manage the forests given their immediate imperatives? To these interrogations, the article remains silent.

Ribot, Agrawal and Larson (2006) seek in their comparative study of six countries (Senegal, Uganda, Nepal, Indonesia, Bolivia, and Nicaragua) to demonstrate that efforts at 'democratic' decentralization of environmental management, specifically in the forestry sector, fail because of *intentional* central governments interference. The six case studies are significant because as the authors mention they include the world's "most important or innovative efforts to decentralize" (2006, 1865).

To support their overall argument, the three authors argue that in the six case studies two main strategies are designed by central governments to thwart the emergence of successful decentralized governance at the local level. In effect, the strategies to limit the ability of local governments to make meaningful decisions consist in limiting the kinds of powers transferred as well as transferring powers to institutions or allies of central governments that are upwardly accountable and responsible to central concerns instead of those of the local populations (Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006, 1864-1865).

In this view, the will of central authorities to retain control through insufficient or inappropriate transfer of powers and selective implementation lead to the failure of decentralization policies in achieving their stated goals. To put it differently, the incompleteness of the reforms is to be blamed for their failure. Indeed, "effective decentralization requires the construction of accountable institutions at all levels of government and a secure domain of autonomous decision making at the local level" (Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006, 1864). Thus,

unless, democratic decentralization is fully implemented, decentralization policies shall not achieve their full potential.

In general, the authors are to be commended for bringing up an issue that has beleaguered past decentralization efforts, namely the schemes designed by central authorities to retain power that they are supposed to transfer in the first place. However, the main issue with the authors' conclusion is that though they recognize that political-economic calculations affect decentralization outcomes as could be seen by central actors' resistances, they equally seem not to draw the appropriate conclusion regarding the conflictual nature of decentralization. It appears as if the authors occult the fact, as others have remarked, that decentralization is a political project; it is about power and conflict is inherent in it. Additionally, the authors seem to take the role of local officials as a 'fixed' variable, that is downwardly accountable local actors exist 'out there' and that one needs only transfer powers and responsibilities to them and the situation shall get solved. However, it is more complicated than that. In reality, democratic politics can be contrary to the objectives of decentralization programs (see Chapter 9.0 discussion).

Lastly, as other scholars have argued, and as it shall become apparent by the end of this study, local elected officials have their own interests which do not necessarily coincide with those of the local populations or national decentralization policymakers (see below). Moreover, under different institutional configurations, it is possible that local upwardly accountable officials can behave differently. Thus, the focus should be broadened to include not only the [downwardly accountable] actors, but also the institutions within which actors are embedded.

A similar argument made by the three abovementioned authors is also made by Ribot (2009) in a study of a rural community forest in Senegal where since 1998 the forestry code has transferred powers and responsibilities to local councils over the management of local forests.

The study specifically examines the signing of the official order to open or not the rural community forest to charcoal production in 2006. Ribot finds that irrespective of the formal transfers from the central government to locally elected officials, the decision to open charcoal production, and to benefit from the revenues, still remains in the hands of the Forest Service. Using arguments of national good and local incompetence as well as the support of local deconcentrated officials such as the sub-prefect, and urban-based forest merchants, the Forest Service refuses to transfer that power to local elected officials.

About local elected officials, Ribot concludes:

They are elected but cannot serve. Local democracy has no substance. As long as the sectoral powers remain the discretionary domain of line ministries, there is little chance for local democratic transformation in rural Senegal. Colonial forestry services were used to dominate the commercial extraction of forest resources. These resources are still colonized by line ministries. Prying the fingers of line ministries off the lucrative resources they control is a major frontier of decolonization that has not yet been crossed. The new democratic decentralization laws get us to that frontier, but not across it (2009, 126).

To restate, the same critique addressed to Ribot, Agrawal and Larson above applies to this article as well. Suffice to say that Ribot here is a victim of the same error mentioned above, that is viewing local actors as passive individuals confronted by the mighty power of central actors, while in reality the picture is more complicated than that because by their intermingling the two sets of actors negotiate and renegotiate the whole process.

One issue that has arisen in the study of decentralized governance pertains to the role of cooperation in enhancing the prospects of success especially in the provision of public services in the forestry sector. Therefore, Andersson (2004) studies the role of repeated interactions in decentralized governance in the Bolivian Lowlands. The author proposes that scholars move the unit of analysis from the local government administration to the wider arena of the local

governance system in assessing the outcomes of decentralization. For Andersson, to the extent that local governments in developing countries do not possess the capacity alone to effectively govern, it is necessary to recognize the linkages between the local government and the other actors at the local level.

In his study, Andersson attempts to account for the ‘mixed’ results of Bolivia’s efforts at forest management decentralization. In his study of 32 Bolivian municipalities, the author found that repeated communication, that is face to face interactions, between central government representatives, municipal government officials and staff as well as NGOs and forest user groups and individuals is associated with better local governance outcomes. In this respect, two types of communication linkages are important for local governments vertical and horizontal (Andersson 2004, 239). Vertical occurs between actors at different levels such as forest users while horizontal happens with other municipalities, forestry actors, and NGOs (Andersson 2004, 241).

The author concludes that success depends on “the mandated actors at different levels of governance [building] institutions for communication and cooperation through which they can combine their resources and efforts. Hence, the challenge to organize the decentralized governance of forests in Bolivia is to achieve collective action among a diverse set of actors with varying interests and access to information, power, and resources” (Andersson 2004, 234).

The main finding of the study is interesting insofar as it addresses the need for cooperation in order to achieve the effectiveness of the local governance system. Nonetheless, the study falls short in one significant way, for it does not define the types of interactions which make a difference in municipal forest governance between success and failure. In reality, the study measures the presence and strength of local interactions as well as their overall frequency, not their content or the type of information that is being exchanged among all these actors.

Presumably, one would expect that the type of information exchanged would matter. In addition, which actor is to take the lead in these interactions if the officially ‘mandated’ actors decline to do so or are not interested? Is coercion an alternative, in particular from central state authorities whom decentralization efforts seek to restrain the role in natural resources management in the first place?

In the end, while the study does not consider all these issues, its advantage resides in pointing out that first cooperation between various actors is critical for the success of decentralized governance, and second in widening the arena of analysis from the local government administration to the local governance system.

Next, Kauneckis and Andersson (2009) examine the performance of 390 randomly sampled municipalities in four Latin American countries -Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Peru- in the local governance of natural resources. The authors hypothesize that both local and national institutional factors (the devolution of formal political responsibilities; national and local political incentives; competitive elections; and civil society) shall influence the provision and production of natural resources services locally, with local factors being the key determinant of those outcomes. The services include land use zoning programs, farming extension and training programs, reforestation, watershed management, technical assistance among others (Kauneckis and Andersson 2009, 33).

In opposition to their starting hypothesis where local factors were predominant, the two authors discover that both local and national institutional factors are important in determining the ‘incentive structure’ for local politicians. Indeed, while formal devolution of powers to local authorities had the largest impact on successful outcomes (Kauneckis and Andersson 2009, 39), on the other hand, local factors associated with the presence and organization of civil society



were found to have the greatest influence on the quality of service delivery in the natural resources sector. Certainly, “whereas national-level institutions provide a pivotal role in defining local political incentives, municipal politicians are most responsive to citizen demands when there is demand for services articulated through these civil society organization” (2009, 42).

Kauneckis and Andersson’s conclusion is summed up as follows: “it is the overall structure of incentives, rather than any particular institution that makes the difference” (2009, 42). Thus, they agree with other authors reviewed above who have argued that a supportive national context as well as local institutional factors are significant for effective local governments.

Last but not least, Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq (2006) in a comparative statistical analysis of 200 municipalities and their mayors in Bolivia and Guatemala examine the linkage between forest governance and municipal politics (for a similar argument, see also Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004). The authors’ hypothesis is that the success of decentralization efforts at the local level depends upon the (institutional) incentives of local politicians. In fact, the three authors argue that local mayors in both Bolivia and Guatemala would be interested in municipal forest governance if these efforts politically, that is electorally, and financially benefit them. The assumption being that since local mayors are rational actors, they would only invest their time, energy and resources to the extent that they personally benefit in some way from these efforts. As they point out:

We approach the problem of forest governance from the perspective of local politicians...we view local politicians as individuals who worry about staying in power. Staying in power, in turn, means that local politicians must make choices about how to employ their limited time and resources to serve political as well as programmatic goals. *Given this view, decentralized natural resources management may or may not change local politicians’ preferences in a way that protects forests. The important point is to view the interests of local politicians as*

*distinct from the interests and goals of the central government and its decentralization policy* (2006, 579, emphasis added).

The approach builds on the new institutionalism school of political economy and sees local politicians as self-interested, rational actors. The conclusion supports the authors' hypothesis that politics helps explain the success of forest management decentralization. Notwithstanding that fact, the approach does not account for other motivations that might inhabit other local mayors who are not 'rational' self-interested actors or who harbor a different type of rationality. As an illustration, how does one account for the fact, as Andersson (2002a) has for instance, that some mayors have been able to successfully fulfill their new roles while others have not? Put another way, what accounts for the discrepancy between those local elected officials who are successful and those who are not given the fact that all are elected officials, hence supposedly inhabited by the same political objectives?

Indeed, since all or most local mayors are elected officials one would expect them to behave in the same manner since their common goal, according to the authors, is to stay in power. This contradiction suggests that other factors might be involved. That is to say that the same factors that might make municipal forest governance successful can also be responsible for the failure of those municipal efforts as when local mayors are interested in municipal forest governance only for their personal own benefit, and not the goals of the decentralization reforms. In other words, the study is incomplete since it is only concerned with determining whether local politicians shall get involved in forest management, not whether that involvement shall be beneficial for both forests and local residents. Finally, what about the role of other local organizations such as civil society or central government local representatives, whose role other authors aforementioned have argued are critical for the success of decentralization efforts?

Despite these caveats, the advantage of the approach is to look at politics as a key explanatory variable for the outcomes of forest management decentralization efforts. As the authors conclude “local politicians play an increasingly critical role in environmental governance because they may *conform to*, *filter*, or *completely ignore* their new decentralized mandate” (2006, 590, emphasis added). That is a non-negligible contribution as the dissertation shall demonstrate later.

## 2.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature on decentralization of public services provision as well as natural resources management. The chapter started with a discussion about the conceptual difficulties attached to the concept of decentralization, presented the types as well as critiqued the notion of ‘democratic’ decentralization as synonymous to political decentralization. Then, the chapter moved to the literature review which highlighted the three classes of theory which seek to explain the success and failure of decentralized experiments, namely the ‘traditional’ decentralization school; the ‘democratic’ decentralization and accountability school; and finally, collective action, common property and new institutionalist theories. The next chapter describes the methods as well as data analysis procedures used for this study.

### **3.0 METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

After the review of the literature in Chapter 2.0, the following chapter describes the research methods used as well as the unfolding of the data analysis process. The chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section justifies the choice of the qualitative approach used for this study, operationalizes the independent and dependent variables as well as describes the unfolding of the field investigation. The second and final section concludes the chapter by providing a synopsis of the data analysis process.

#### **3.1 THE RESEARCH METHODS AND THE FIELD INVESTIGATION**

The following section presents the main methods used in the conduct of this study. The section begins with a brief overview of the case study approach, then proceeds with operationalizing the main variables before describing the main methods utilized in this study. The section concludes with a brief discussion on some of the methodological issues involved in the conduct of this scientific research.

### 3.1.1 The approach used: the case study and qualitative methods

Robert Yin defines a case study as “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (1994, 13, emphasis added). That was the approach chosen for this study. In effect, the case study and qualitative methods were selected for this study because they were better suited to answering the primary research question. Indeed, because of the sensitivity of the topic, the lack of knowledge and the lack of data as well as the current limited number of existing and operating council forests (five), it was difficult to conduct a statistical analysis. Thus, the only research methods appropriate for this study were qualitative methods. In addition, the case study was selected because they usually “are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed” (1994, 1).<sup>27</sup>

Overall, the approach chosen required fieldwork on the ground in Dimako and centered on a process which “entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, values and seeks to discover participants’ perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people’s words and observable behavior as the primary data” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 7-8).

---

<sup>27</sup> What is more, for Yin the use of one type of research in the social sciences, experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories and case studies, over another depends on three conditions the type of research question posed; the extent of control that the investigator has over actual events; and the degree of focus between contemporary or historical events (Yin 1994, 4). Thus, the case study is “preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history [which relies on primary and secondary documents, as well as cultural and physical artifacts], but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing. Again, although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a variety of evidence-documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin 1994, 8). Within the case study genre, he further adds that six methods constitute the sources of evidence for the case study, namely documents; archival records; interviews; direct observations; participation-observation; and physical artifacts (see Yin 1994, 78-101).

In line with the case study genre, three primary methods were used for this study: documents retrieval and archival research, in-depth semi-structured interviews and direct observation. The methods were applied in three main settings, Yaoundé, the capital city, Bertoua, the Eastern Region's Capital, and Dimako Council, including the FCD. The investigations occurred over a period of five months: two months in Yaoundé, and the rest in Bertoua-Dimako (see below).

### **3.1.2 Operationalizing the variables**

From the extant literature on municipal forest management in the world, as well as forest policy documents in Cameroon, two main goals of council forestry can be elicited (MINFOF and GTZ 2008). The first objective of council forestry is to help the conservation of forest resources, what is called in the first article of the 1994 *Forest Law* sustainable forest management (SFM) (see Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 91). The second objective is to derive resources to improve local livelihoods and help alleviate rural poverty, or in the Cameroonian case as it is referred to local development.

Thus, the two goals of forest management decentralization examined in this study are SFM and local development and those are the two goals that shall be used to ascertain the success of the forest management decentralization experiment in Dimako Council. That is the dependent variable success is defined as the achievement of the two official goals of the program. Finally, for its part the independent variable shall 'measure' the mayor's financial and political motives. A brief explanation of the indicators of the dependent and independent variables is provided below (for a more complete breakdown of the variables see Appendix B).

### **3.1.2.1 Sustainable forest management and the forest management plan**

Although no agreement exists as to the meaning of SFM, and even the confusion over such terms as SFM and sustainable management of forests, the operational definition of SFM used here views the concept along the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) definition (see Chapter 1.0). Further, SFM in opposition to logging “typically combines harvesting guidelines designed to increase the growth of marketable timber with efforts aimed at lowering the damage to commercial trees” (Rice et al. 2001, 6). Put another way, SFM seeks to prohibit logging which “involves the swift cutting of a limited number of highly valued species with little attention given to the condition of the residual stand and no investment in regeneration” (Rice et al. 2001, 11).<sup>28</sup> Hence, the goal of SFM is to ensure the availability of forests resources for future generations.

One of the primary tools to achieve SFM is through the design and implementation of a forest management plan. The management plan is “a document in which the potentialities of the resource are evaluated, the trade-offs among the ecological, economic, and social aspects of management are assessed, and balanced solutions proposed” (Cerutti, Nasi, and Tacconi, 2008). In Cameroon, on top of the legal guidelines for SFM, the main tool to implement SFM is the forest management plan (see Cerutti, Nasi, and Tacconi, 2008). Therefore, it is the document that constitutes the basis for evaluating whether SFM is happening in the FCD.

However, it has to be recognized, as Cerutti, Nasi, and Tacconi (2008) have argued, that SFM involves more than the implementation of an officially approved forest management plan

---

<sup>28</sup> Note that the study uses interchangeably such terms as timber harvesting and forest harvesting; and harvesting and logging.

(see also Higman et al. 2005, 5, for the major components of SFM).<sup>29</sup> But, since legally the management plan constitutes the primary tool for implementing SFM in the country, the study argues that evaluating the implementation of the plan, especially its major provisions, are significant indicators of SFM success.<sup>30</sup>

To assess the success of SFM in Dimako Council, three major provisions of the management plan shall be examined:

1. Following the logging rotation cycle (harvesting order) set out in the management plan as well as respecting the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) - the surface area or the volume to be harvested in a given year- boundaries when harvesting the forest
2. Abiding by the Minimum Harvesting Diameter (MHD) and the Minimum Management Diameter (MMD) in harvesting species to ensure the long term health of the forest
3. And finally, reforesting the forest

In theory, if all these three major provisions of the forest management plan are implemented, the likelihood that forest resources are preserved is enhanced, that is the pursuit of SFM is judged as successful. Finally, insofar as all the above standard provisions of the

---

<sup>29</sup> That is why for instance multiple criteria and indicators, which include social, economic, and ecological values, are being developed by several forest organizations in order to adequately measure SFM. According to Higman et al. (2005, 5) the major components of SFM include: a) a legal and policy framework; b) sustained and optimal production of forest products; c) protection of the environment; d) wellbeing of people; and e) plantations and regeneration of the forest. What is more, according to Julius Tieguhong (2009, 431) SFM in Cameroon involves “many facets: forest concessions, enforcement of legal frameworks, development of forest management plans, forest certification, reduced impact logging, selling of environmental services, reforestation of degraded lands, the use of forest residues, adaptive collaborative management, environmental impact assessments and the development of model forests”. Note that some of these facets are directly included into the forest management plan making it appropriate for the study of SFM in Dimako Council.

<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that in the country, the management plan is comprised of several parts dealing with forest harvesting, social demands, land tenure, Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), and wildlife protection (see Cerutti, Nasi, and Tacconi, 2008, 2), this study only deals with the timber or forest harvesting dimension. This is dictated not only by the fact that this is the primary area of intervention of the council, but also because of the inherent nature of council forestry some of the demands associated with private commercial firms have proven difficult to be applied upon local councils (see Chapter 5.0).



management plan, as Chapters 4.0 and 5.0 below shall detail, exist in the management plan of the FCD, this makes it appropriate to evaluate the implementation of the management plan along the lines of those selected indicators.

### **3.1.2.2 Measuring local development**

To begin with, what represents development has been a contentious issue in development theory since the beginning of the field (see for instance the edited volume of Desai and Potter 2008). However, for operational purposes and in line with the meaning adopted in Cameroon, local development here simply refers to ‘concrete’ achievements such as potable water provision; electricity; construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, construction works; sports equipment; construction, maintenance, and supply of schools as well as health centers; provision of medications; all other projects fulfilling community interest.

Given the above definition, it probably would be more appropriate to talk of ‘development projects’ instead of local development, but, in keeping with local customs, the term ‘local development’ will be utilized here. Thus, when the term local development here or development projects is used here, it is not to talk about the contentious meaning of development, but rather to refer to whether roads, health centers and other essential public services are being provided. The main reason for using a straightforward indicator of local development is due to the fact that as George Niksic, in his study of decentralization in Port Elizabeth in South Africa, has remarked:

debates about the meaning of development are not prominent, however, at the local level in Port Elizabeth. Instead, councilors, officials and even popular actors understand development in an unproblematic and “common-sensical” way. To them, development is about ameliorating the historically disadvantaged areas, constructing infrastructure, delivering essential services, improving the local economy, and creating jobs for the many unemployed people. *Development here is about nuts and bolts issues* (2003, 5 emphasis added).

Additionally, this measure has been used in the past by other scholars such as Crook and Manor who agree that “the ‘low technology, low resources’ context of rural government in poor countries demands instead relatively simple measures of achievement which, it may be argued, are adequate in situations where what is usually at stake is the difference between *no* provision and *some* provision of a school, clinic or feeder road” (1998, 8-9, emphasis original). In their study, the two authors use the concept of *output effectiveness* to refer to the provision of services in rural areas (Crook and Manor 1998, 18).

### **3.1.2.3 The independent variables**

As mentioned above, the two independent variables of this study measure both the mayor’s financial and political powers. The first independent variable labeled *personal enrichment* measures how the mayor allegedly enriched himself -or personally benefited- through the council forest while the second variable deals with the *pursuit of political power*, which is synonymous to achieving the *Big Man* status.

### **3.1.3 Documents/archival records**

The first method used to gather data and collect evidence about forest management decentralization in Dimako Council consisted of documentary information about the general framework of forest management decentralization in the country and government decentralization (laws, rules, regulations, and so on); about council forests (how to create a council forest for instance); and finally, about the Dimako Council case (timber harvesting figures, budgets, maps of the FCD, revenues, development projects’ list, forest management techniques and so on). The aim of that preliminary phase of data collection was also to

“corroborate and augment the evidence from other sources” (Yin 1994, 81), though documents and archival records, as other collected evidences, “should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place” (Yin 1994, 81). Indeed, these “documents must be viewed with the skepticism that historians apply as they search for “truth” in old texts” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 117).

Documents are important since they “provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources. Moreover, documents may be the most effective means of gathering data when events can no longer be observed or when informants have forgotten the details” (Bowen 2009, 30-31).

Finally, the documentary information and archival records were gathered from various sources including government ministries, private organizations, NGOs, research institutions, as well as international donors’ website present in the country. In total, more than three hundred (300) documents and archival records were collected during the five months stay in Cameroon. More than half of those documents were directly pertinent to the case study at hand.

#### **3.1.4 Direct observations**

Direct observations constituted the second method of data collection for this study. In general, observation “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study. The observational record is frequently referred to as *field notes*-detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 107, italics original). In comparison to documentary evidence and

archival records, periods of direct observation *primarily* occur in Dimako Council and in the FCD.

Though, the researcher was privy to some workshops about forest management decentralization and council forestry, where he observed participants interact, one of the main tasks set at the onset of the study and during the fieldwork was to observe operations in the FCD, and this was accomplished. Unfortunately, the researcher, though he had hoped to, was unable to observe Municipal Council meetings or sessions specifically dealing with forest issues, for no meeting took place while fieldwork was being conducted. However, this did not constitute an impediment to data collection.

### **3.1.5 Interviews**

The last and final data collection method involves conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews, also called focused interviews (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 5), of people involved in forest management decentralization in Dimako Council. This method constituted the most extensive part of fieldwork. In fact, before leaving for Cameroon, the researcher had drawn a detailed list of about fifty (50) people seen as likely interviewees for this study. It turned out in the field, as one would expect, that the final tally included more than the initial group of individuals. The goal was to interview three sets of actors, central, regional, and local in Yaoundé, Bertoua, and Dimako Council, involved in decentralized forest management and/or local government.

There was a rationale for selecting all three types of actors for interviewing. First, interviewing central actors was critical not only because forest management decentralization was initiated from the center, but also because legally those actors are involved in council forestry

through the issuance of timber harvesting permits as well as other activities such as the enforcement of forest law, rules and guidelines. Second, regional actors were interviewed first because of their proximity to the field, but also because of their role as central actors' field representatives. Finally, local actors because of the obvious fact that these were the primary targets of this study.

At the central and regional levels (Yaoundé and Bertoua), the main organizations to get interviewed were government ministries representatives, including the forest administration; local researchers; private organizations and NGOs. In Dimako Council, three sets of actors or organizations were interviewed: the council executive (the mayor and his deputies); Municipal Councilors; and CCG members (see Chapter 5.0 for more on the CCG). The main reason for selecting these three sets of local actors was straightforward. By law and council administrative edicts, these are the primary actors involved locally in decentralized forest management.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of the interviews was conducted once; only in five (5) cases were the interviewees questioned at least twice. Over all, as Table 3.1 below indicates, the researcher *formally* interviewed sixty one (61) people. The breakdown of the interviewees, as the table illustrates, is the following: twenty four (24) village or quarters chiefs; fourteen (14) municipal

---

<sup>31</sup> Regarding CCG members, it has to be mentioned that the researcher interviewed former and current CCG members, although former CCG members were not the primary targets of the study. Indeed, the researcher had assumed that CCG members elected in 1999 were still in place while another election had occurred in 2007. Instead of the initial seventeen (17) CCG members, the CCG organization had been expanded to twenty-two (22) members and only three from the 1999 elections were left. The others had been promoted or elected to other positions, such as chiefs or councilors, or decided not to run. Similarly, the researcher included village chiefs because initially, from secondary sources during the literature review, he had wrongly assumed that village chiefs were part of the CCG organization. However, after the first round of interview, the researcher realized the information to be inaccurate. After careful consideration and based on the informational value as well as the fact that in November 2009, the Mayor of Dimako officially decided during a meeting to involve village chiefs into the management of the FCD, the researcher decided to keep interviewing village chiefs. It turned out to be a 'good' idea because of the 'revolving door' phenomenon in Dimako Council whereas people move from one position to another inside the town main organizations. So in the end, to the extent that chiefs were part of the creation of the FCD in their former or current capacity, because of their 'high' informational value, and also because they represent the authority at the village or quarter level, the researcher interviewed them.

councilors (out of twenty-two currently living),<sup>32</sup> including the Mayor and two of his three deputies; fifteen (15) CCG members (out of twenty-two); Dimako Council Secretary-General as well as the Municipal Tax Collector (*Receveur Municipal*); and other interviewees from the forest and territorial administrations as well as other local actors for a total of eight (8) interviewees.

**Table 3.1. Formal semi-structured interviews conducted**

<i>Interviewees type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>
Village or quarter chiefs	24	Local
Municipal councilors	14	Local
CCG members	14	Local
Others	8	Central, regional, and local
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	

The formal semi-structured interviews referred to interview that were formally conducted after officially informing the interviewee that the researcher would be conducting an interview about the FCD. On top of the formal interviews, the researcher also conducted informal interviews as well as relied on ten (10) other informants through ‘snowball’ sampling, meaning using interviewees or informants to point out other knowledgeable people not included in the original interview design (see Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 18). Three of these ten informants turned out to be key informants, for they provided the local context and pointed the way forward to understanding the case study. Hence, in total, when the researcher includes informal and unscheduled interviews, as well as other conversations relating to Dimako Council, the

---

<sup>32</sup> The municipal council counts twenty five members; however, three councilors who passed away have yet to be replaced.

researcher interviewed more than eighty (80) people at the central, regional, and local levels of government.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.1.5.1 Locating the interviewees**

Whereas selection of formal interviewees occurred before and during fieldwork, the researcher still had to identify the exact location of the interviewees, especially in the Eastern Region, in Bertoua and Dimako Council. It was especially challenging in Dimako Council not only because of the state of the local roads, which made frequent traveling an issue, but also because of the fact that about a third of the villages are located outside the center of the town. The researcher had to travel to each village, more than twenty (20), to interview the chief, the councilor, and the CCG member. That task of interviewing in Dimako was facilitated by a reliance on the council staff to locate and inform the interviewees of the project as well as the request for their voluntary participation.

Four arguments militated for the approach through the council for the researcher: 1) respect for local customs and the fact that local authorities consider research as *official business* here, thus researchers have to go through all the authorities of the town to inform of their presence; 2) identification and official stamp of approval for villagers to greet and receive the researcher because they know that official approval has been obtained from local authorities; 3) access to local authorities' archives as well as interviews' request approval of municipal councilors for instance; 4) and finally physical safety issues.

---

<sup>33</sup> The 'sample' was mostly male-dominated, especially at the local level, only three women were interviewed for this study. This was mainly due to the 'overrepresentation' of men in the forest management organizations at the local level.

Needless to say that the reliance on council staff to locate and inform the interviewees raised an ethical dilemma as the choice for the researcher was between access through the council and trust by the local interviewees. Fortunately, except at the onset of the study, the reliance on the council staff to inform interviewees of the project did not impede data gathering or trust from the interviewees. That is to say that, during the entire research process, the researcher was in control of the process by using the skills of a *diplomat* to gain access and trust (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 183).

### **3.1.5.2 The structure of the interviews**

Before leaving for Cameroon, based on the initial research question (s) and the literature on decentralization and natural resources management, the researcher had devised a set of twenty (20) questions which after the first week of interviewing were condensed to less than ten (10) questions. This task was necessary not only to account for the interviewees' education level, but also to allow for more questions to be answered.

Six main questions were raised at the outset of most interviews:

1. What do you think of the council forest and the forest management decentralization idea?
2. What is the role of the Consultative Committee and the Monitoring Commission in the process?
3. What is the role of the Municipal Council or the Dimako Council in the management of the council forest?
4. Until now, what has the forest management decentralization in Dimako achieved?
5. Is the forest management decentralization working? If yes or no, why?
6. What is needed for the forest management decentralization to be effective?



The goal of these introductory questions was to guide the interview by setting the stage for the ensuing discussion. Moreover, the questions centered on understanding the concepts of council forest and forest management decentralization, and the promises as well as the perils surrounding them and how the process was unfolding on the ground. Depending on how the interview proceeded as well as the interviewee's willingness, additional questions were raised.

Most interviews on average lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes (1 hour and 15). The shortest lasted about twenty (20) minutes while the longest stretched for almost three (3) hours. The interview questions were semi-structured in the sense that the researcher left open the possibility for the interview to go the direction of the interviewees. This was a critical technique since it allowed the researcher to elicit the political dimension of forest management decentralization in Dimako Council, not only the governance side.

For consistency and comparative purposes, the same questions were asked to every interviewee. Only when the researcher interviewed people with specialized knowledge, such as forest administration officials and elites such as the Mayor, did the researcher adjust the questioning. Finally, because most of the interviews were not tape recorded at the request of the interviewees, the researcher tried to periodically review his notes as well as interview transcripts in order to ensure that the data obtained were relevant for the study and also to determine new emerging questions or follow-up interviews if needed.

### **3.1.6 Accuracy and reliability of the council figures**

A final point has to be made regarding the accuracy as well as reliability of the figures presented in this study. As shall be apparent in the results section, the accuracy of the Dimako Council figures regarding timber production, sales and revenues are contested by various central, regional

and local actors involved in council forestry. That is why, an effort has been made, when available, to include other figures from varied sources. Yet despite this attempt, most of the figures, especially financial ones, for this study come from official council documents such as the budget and the administrative account (*compte administratif*), mandatory documents that local councils have to annually submit to the central state (see Tandja 2008).

Does this mean that those figures have to be completely discounted? Not necessarily. Indeed, because of this point of contention, and as the evidence charted below shall establish, the study suggests looking at those figures primarily in two different ways. On the one hand, concerning the council financial statements (see chapter 7.0), the study argues the officially reported figures on timber revenues, though significant, be construed as understatement of the council forest actual revenues while expenditures be seen as overstatement of the council achievements. On the other hand, the council timber figures should be regarded as undervaluation of timber sales and production primarily because of the alleged prevalence of illegal logging –defined simply at this stage as acts contrary to the management plan provisions as well as the forest administration rules and guidelines- in the FCD as the evidence shall later show.

The assumption undergirding this position, as shall become apparent later, is motivated not only by the disagreement about the accuracy of the council figures, rather their undervaluation, but also by the evidences that shall be presented throughout this study which suggest a deliberate attempt from the part of the Mayor of Dimako to mislead outsiders about the whole council forest experiment in Dimako. The two assumptions of undervaluation and overestimation suggest that the situation might be even more troubling than the evidences presented here would indicate if the main hypothesis of the study holds.

## 3.2 ANALYZING THE DATA

Analyzing (qualitative) data is the “process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; it builds grounded theory. It is the search among data to identify content for ethnographies and participants’ truths” (Marshall and Rossman 1999, 150). The section which follows presents the data analysis steps conducted for this study.

### 3.2.1 The method used: grounded theory

Numerous qualitative studies and researchers over the years have relied on the grounded theory method developed by Strauss and Corbin three decades ago (Flick 2002, 177). Although the method has been refined over time, the key principle remains the same: the theory is developed from the data (Kvale 1996, 206-207). In practice, however, the process combines induction and deduction (see Rossman and Rallis 1998, 10). The grounded theory method “uses a data analysis procedure called *theoretical coding* to develop hypotheses based on what the research participants say. Grounded theory derives its name from the fact that theoretical coding allows you to ground your hypotheses in what your research participants say” (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 7 emphasis original).

Though the method followed in this dissertation relies on grounded theory, it follows more closely the approach outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein in *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (2003) regarding how to handle a ‘sea of information’ when

analyzing data. Though as the authors point out the process is hardly linear, in reality the approach main advantage, but also drawback, is that it fragments the process of data analysis into seven discrete steps that one must follow to arrive at the grounded theory (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 43). To palliate the approach's deficiency, the researcher supplemented the data analysis process with more 'traditional' grounded theory approaches such as the ones by Rubin and Rubin (1995, 226-256 for data analysis chapter) and Rossman and Rallis (1998, 164-189) to guarantee that coding was properly conducted.

Next, after the transcription phase, 'the raw text' which constituted the first step, the remaining steps of the data analysis included the following (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 43):

1. An explicit statement of the research concerns and theoretical framework (broader than the research questions)
2. Selecting the relevant text from the raw text (transcripts)
3. Recording Repeating Ideas (the ideas that keep being repeated in the relevant text)
4. Organizing Repeating Ideas into Themes
5. Theoretical constructs (more general concepts)
6. Creating the theoretical narrative

These *staircase* coding steps involve moving from a lower to a higher level of abstraction and could be used for generating as well as testing hypotheses although grounded theory primary aim is to generate hypotheses (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 3-9; and 13-21). The following seven steps involve first, *making the text manageable* (steps 1, 7, and 6); second, *hearing what was said* (steps 5 and 4); and third, *developing theory* (steps 3 and 2).

Finally, the order of analysis goes from the bottom to the top (bottom-up coding) (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 104), but before starting coding, the researcher has to openly

state his research concerns, in the case of this dissertation the main research question, so that he can direct the process and does not feel overwhelmed with the data at hand (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 44).

### **3.2.2 The coding process**

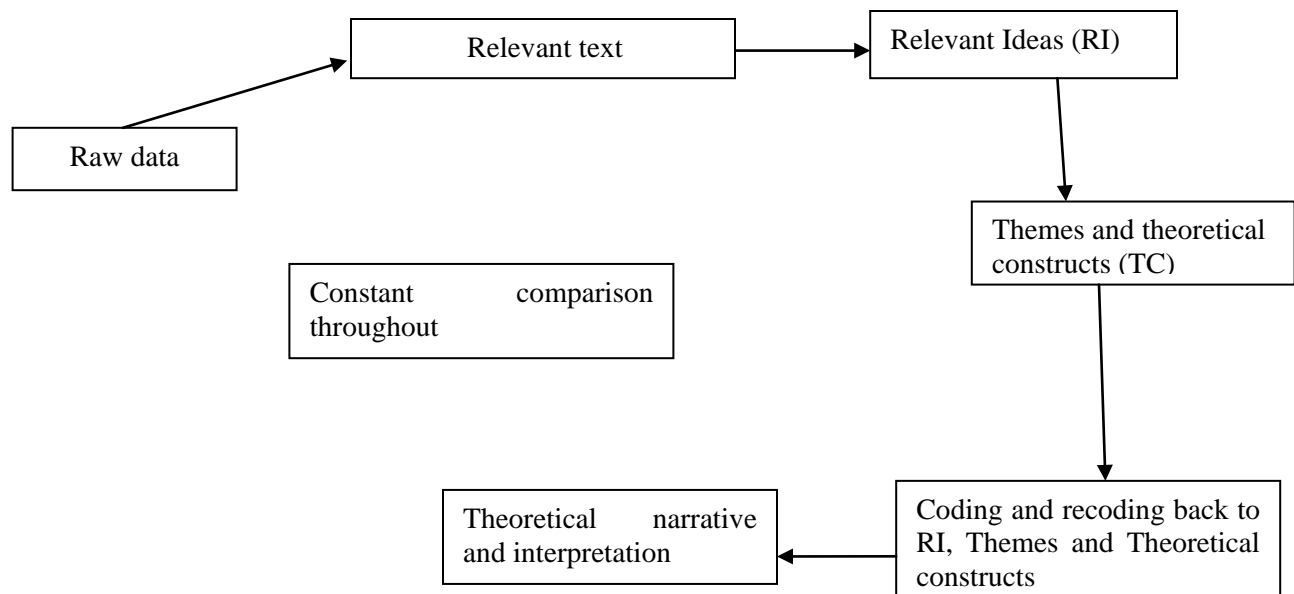
To code the data, the researcher started with interview transcripts, and then applied the codes discovered from those transcripts to the field notes as well as the documentary and archival evidences. The aim was to triangulate the data and ensure that the coding was consistent throughout all three sets of data as well as corroborate or confront the coding categories (see Bowen 2009, 28; 35; 37), in this case *Repeating Ideas* (RI), *Themes*, and *Theoretical Constructs* (TC). Over all, during the coding process, the researcher discovered about fifty (50) RI, which when recoded were reduced to twenty two (22). From these 22 RI, it was determined that five (5) key themes could be found in the data (see Appendix B). Finally, the researcher ended up with five theoretical constructs that were later merged during the writing stage into two key constructs: the *Big Man* and governance problems.

All these coding categories, especially the TC, were tentative until the writing phase when they were recoded, reorganized as well as renamed because the researcher realized that what he had conceptualized as separate categories before were in fact not. In practice, the process was simultaneous; that is to say that the researcher did not code the data separately or looked for a sole construct, rather he used the constant comparison method (see Flick 2002, 213) to include the data into a given category.

On the whole, the process was similar to theoretical coding of the grounded theory method, for it involves moving to a higher level of abstraction, from RI to Themes to TC as in

open, axial and selective coding (see Flick 2002, 176-190; see also Montgomery and Bailey 2007, 68-69). The researcher concluded data coding when the process had reached theoretical saturation, that is when the coding process provided no further knowledge (see Flick 2002, 183).

### 3.2.3 An iterative process



**Figure 3.1. Data analysis model**

Source: adapted from (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 35)

Contrary to the image of the discrete steps described in the preceding section, and as Figure 3.1 indicate, coding the data was an iterative process, moving back and forth from raw data to the theoretical constructs and constantly comparing the categories (RI, themes, TC). The aim was to guarantee that the coding was properly conducted and that the ideas and concepts developed fit into the categories they had been assigned to.

The coding and analysis model which the researcher followed is best illustrated by Figure 3.1 above which shows the adapted version of the Auerbach and Silverstein's model. The model

here reflects the process utilized for this dissertation; a process not involving discrete steps as the figure would suggest, but rather an iterative, non-definitive model, constantly moving back and forth between the data analysis and the writing processes.

Finally, the model used above is not sequential but rather circular with the *constant comparison* box in the middle to signify the iterative nature of the process throughout, as well as the fact that coding and categories generating was constantly compared to ensure the rigor of the process.

### **3.3 SUMMARY**

This chapter has described the research methods as well as the data analysis process followed in this study. The chapter began with a brief discussion about the rationale for the selection of a qualitative approach, operationalized the independent and dependent variables as well as presented the three primary methods used in the study documents and archival records; direct observations; and in-depth semi-structured interviewing. The chapter concluded with a description of the data analysis process which involved building a grounded theory from the data.

## **4.0 THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF FOREST MANAGEMENT DECENTRALIZATION IN CAMEROON**

“The French tend to take for granted the essential irresponsibility of local elected bodies, and accordingly to insist on administrative safeguards against it” Brian Chapman, *An Introduction to French Local Government* (quoted in Mawhood 1983a, 197).

This chapter previews the institutional framework -mainly organizational, legal, and regulatory- of forest management decentralization and SFM in Cameroon. The overall goal of this chapter is to provide the reader the tools to understand the main reforms being implemented in Cameroon’s forestry sector since the 1990s as well as the fundamentals about council forestry. The chapter is organized into four sections as follows. While the first section starts by providing a succinct historical perspective on Cameroon’s politics and economy, the second highlights the critical role played by the forestry sector in the national economy as well as describes the key reforms that have happened in the sector since 1994. Of particular importance in this section is the distinction between the various mechanisms of the 1994 *Forest Law* such as RFA, community and council forests. The last two sections of the chapter are devoted to explaining in greater detail the institutional and supporting framework of council forestry. Indeed, while section three focuses on the process involved in creating a council forest, section four provides a synopsis of a critical donor-supported program to develop council forestry in the country.



Overall, the last two sections of the chapter highlight the complexity of the process for local councils when attempting to accede to forest ownership as well as the potential rewards once the ownership transfer has materialized.

## **4.1 ABOUT CAMEROON**

Cameroon is located in the Gulf of Guinea and stretches from western to central Africa over an area covering 475,000 square kilometers of which forests occupy 19.6 million hectares of the country (Topa et al. 2009, 14).<sup>34</sup> The country is often called ‘Africa in miniature’ because it is believed to represent all of the continent’s geographical formations (Singer 2008, 9). Indeed, 48 percent of all mammals, 54 percent of birds; 30 to 75 percent of reptiles; 25 to 50 percent of butterflies residing on the African continent live in Cameroon (Tesi 2000, 148).<sup>35</sup> The last census figures estimate the population at approximately 19.5 million inhabitants with 52 percent living

---

<sup>34</sup> Geographically, the country can be broadly divided into two zones of flora and fauna (Singer 2008, 10). The northern part is of the ‘Sudano-Zambezian’ type with Sahelian, regularly subject to droughts, or savanna-like (tall grasses) climates (Singer 2008, 10). The southern part known as the ‘Congo-Guinean’ region “is naturally covered in thick forest and is home to a much more humid and less seasonal climate favorable to jungle vegetation and fauna” (Singer 2008, 10). What is more, the southern part can be further divided into two zones, the western fragmented but high species diversity and endemic-Guinean forest stretching to Sierra Leone and Guinea Conakry, and the eastern and southern-Congo Basin larger forests inhabited by large mammals such as elephants, gorillas and chimpanzees (Singer 2008, 10). For its part, Victor Le Vine (1971, 30-31) in his description of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, which remains applicable to the current Republic of Cameroon, divided the country into five geographic zones: 1) the western mountain regions; 2) the ‘very hot and humid’ coastal forest plain; 3) the inland forest plateau dominated by the tropical rain forest and less humid than the coastal region; 4) the Adamawa Plateau running east-west which is an extension of the mountain region; and finally 5) the northern savannah plain from the Adamawa Plateau region to Lake Chad covered with either scrub or grass.

<sup>35</sup> More specifically, the country is home to a total of 300 mammal species; about 8,000 to 10,000 plant species; 849 bird species; 1000 butterfly species (Tesi 2000, 148).

in urban areas (Nyuylyme 2010).<sup>36</sup> The section which follows provides a brief profile of the country, including its political and economic history to date.



**Map 4.1. Cameroon**

*Source:* United Nations

<sup>36</sup> Four cultural regions can be distinguished in Cameroon (see Singer 2008, 11). First, the Sudano-Saharan region of Muslim pastoralists; second, the West and Northwest grassfields where the Bamileké and Bamun sacred royalties at the head of strong hierarchical societies live; third, the Sawa region stretching from Edea through Bouéa and the Bakassi Peninsula with various groups living on the coast and having been in contact with Europeans. For these groups, the relationship with the sea is their defining trait; finally, the Fang-Beti zone covers the forest-rich East, Central and South Regions. The groups inhabiting these regions are primarily from the Bantu group and share the same linguistic features. Examples include the Fang, Beti, Bulu, Ntumu, Bakoum, Kako, Maka, and so on. In addition, two groups of pygmy the Baka and Bakola inhabit these regions.

#### 4.1.1 History and politics

Little written records exist about the country now called Cameroon until the arrival of the Europeans. Yet, as Willibroad Dze-Ngwa remarked “there was no country known as Cameroon before the arrival of the early Europeans. The territory was constituted of several well-organized autonomous chiefdoms, kingdoms and lamibes whose livelihood depended on their customs and traditions” (2009, 4). The name Cameroon only appeared with the arrival of Europeans in Africa. Indeed, in 1472 when the Portuguese reached the coast near the Wouri River estuary they gave the country the appellation *Rio dos Camarões* (river of shrimps) (Singer 2008, 20).<sup>37</sup> Later, Cameroon was variously referred to by the Portuguese’s *Rios dos Camarões*; the Spanish’s *Camerones*; the British’s *Cameroons*; the Germans’ *Kamerun*; and finally, the French’s *Cameroun* (Dze-Ngwa 2009, 4).

While the Germans, British and French were trading and battling for the territory, it was the Germans who on 14 July 1884 signed a treaty in Douala with King Bell which made Cameroon a German protectorate. The act was officially recognized at the 1884-1885 *Kongokonferenz* or Berlin Conference (Singer 2008, 21) which set the stage for the ‘scramble for Africa’. The period that followed 1884 and thereafter saw in turn the German, the British and the French rule over the territory until the country reached independence in the 1960s.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Dze-Ngwa reminds us that what the Europeans then called Cameroon only referred to the Wouri River estuary or the coastal region (2009, 4). Further, Le Vine (1971, 2) remarks about the Wouri River that “the Portuguese named the river *Rio dos Camaroes*, or River of Prawns, after catching and eating-and mistaking for prawns-a variety of crayfish found occasionally in the estuary. The name stuck and subsequently was generally applied to the entire coastal area between Mount Cameroon and Rio Muni (formerly Spanish Guinea)”.

<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that following Germany defeat in World War I, the French and the British took control of the country. While the French inherited the eastern part of the territory, the British Cameroons was made up of the Northern and the Southern Cameroons which altogether were later known as Anglophone Cameroon. However, when scholars currently talk of Anglophone Cameroon, they just refer to Southern Cameroons which voted for reunification with Francophone Cameroon whereas Northern Cameroon joined the Nigerian Federation.

Since independence, Cameroon has been ruled by two presidents Amadou Ahidjo (1960-1982), whose presidency has been called by some as ‘imperial’, under the one-party state and Paul Biya who has been running the country following Ahidjo’s resignation on 4 November 1982.<sup>39</sup> In 1990, following many protestations throughout the country, multiparty was reintroduced in the country -reintroduced because it had existed before- (see Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997). However, owing to various factors, among which the division of the opposition and the ruling elite’s reluctance to cede power, the elections that followed in 1992, 1997, and 2004 saw Biya retaining power amid widespread allegations of fraud and vote rigging (see Fonchingong 1998; Takougang 2003; Touo 2009). Overall, the portrait that was painted by Cameroonian observers at the end of the 1990s depicted a democratic transition of the early 1990s gone awry; a picture of a state and its elites in crisis, weakened by domestic as well as international assaults for change, but clinging onto power by all means (see Gros 1995). In the words of Mehler, the democratic transition in Cameroon did not happen (Mehler 1997).<sup>40</sup>

This description of the 1990s of Biya and his partisans clinging onto power and using all available means to do so still remains applicable today. In fact, eighteen years after the reintroduction of multipartism, in 2008, riots erupted, immediately repressed by security forces, over rising food prices as well as Biya modification of the two-term constitutional limit paving

---

Finally, strictly speaking, after having been a German colony until World War I, Cameroon was never a French or British colony, for the country was administered by both powers under mandate of the League of Nations (Singer 2008, 24) and then United Nations (UN) trusteeship after 1945 (Dze-Ngwa 2009, 4). That meant in theory that French and British Cameroons were to be governed differently than the two powers’ colonies. Nevertheless, the reality saw the territory governed by the British and the French as their colonies (Singer 2008, 24). Nonetheless, the distinction is still worth mentioning.

<sup>39</sup> The exact reasons of the 4 November 1982 resignation are unknown, but it has been speculated that Ahidjo was sick and did not want his ‘entourage’ to take charge. Later on, Ahidjo tried to return to power and the following years a battle between Biya and Ahidjo went on until April 1984 when a failed *coup d’Etat*, attributed to Ahidjo and his followers, secured Biya’s hold on power (for more see Singer 2008, 31).

<sup>40</sup> The French title of the article being “Cameroon: une transition qui n’a pas eu lieu”.

the way for him to run again in the upcoming October 2011 presidential election (see Onohiolo 2009a).

In recent years, the country has suffered from a reputation of being among the most corrupt places in the world according to Transparency International (see Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa 2009, 46). That is why, under domestic and international pressures, President Biya initiated the *Opération Epervier* purportedly designed to root out high level corruption in the country. Initially heralded, the operation has been lately criticized as an attempt to silence Biya's political opponents, especially on the eve of the 2011 presidential election (see Dalle Ngok 2010a, 2010b; Dougueli 2010a, 2010b; Jeune Afrique 2010; Soudan 2010).

Finally, the anti-corruption operation has been happening at the same time that the Biya government, following the adoption of the 2004 decentralization laws, has been implementing a national program -separate from the sectoral forest management decentralization- of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization. That program is designed to transfer more powers, resources and responsibilities to subnational governments, i.e. local councils and regions in the following areas: local economic development; environment and natural resources management; planning (*planification*), land use and urbanism (*aménagement du territoire, urbanisme*) as well as housing; health and social development; and finally education, sports and cultural development (see Cheka 2007; ROC 2004a).<sup>41</sup> Although many a local commentator at the time criticized the laws for not going far enough, it has been acknowledged by some observers that the scope of the powers and responsibilities transferred to subnational governments, especially

---

<sup>41</sup> Note that since January 2010 while Cameroon ten provinces have been renamed Regions, the elected regional officials supposedly in charge of the executive as well deliberative bodies of the newly 'created' regional governments have yet to be elected. So far, only centrally appointed Regional Governors who are supposedly in charge of administrative supervision of the elected regional governments have been put in place.

local councils has been widened (see for instance Azebaze 2004; Nach 2004; Ndoumbé Diwouta 2004; Soh 2004).

#### **4.1.2 Economy**

Cameroon economic history since the 1960s can be divided into three phases (see Mandeng Ambassa 2009). The first period which went from 1960 to 1988 was characterized by heavy involvement of the state through parastatals and the use of planning to direct economic activities (see also Konings 2004, 308). The second period from 1988 to 2006 was marked by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) following the 1986 economic crisis. Finally, the current period starts with the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt reduction initiative and reported attempts at jumpstarting the economy (Mandeng Ambassa 2009, 6).<sup>42</sup>

In reality, the most important year in Cameroon's recent economic history –and even overall recent history- remains 1986, for in the ensuing period the country embarked on a series of political, economic, and social changes (see Konings 1996). In effect, what Cameroonians call in French *la crise* saw, as in other African countries, the start of SAPs designed to alter the statist emphasis and purportedly return the country to growth through the expansion of private markets (Konings 2004, 310). That objective was to face the reluctance of the Biya government to implement the provisions of the SAPs to the point where the International Monetary Fund (IMF) “had signed and canceled three successive stand-by agreements because of the government's failure to achieve the negotiated targets” (Konings 2004, 313). In recent years, GDP growth has

---

<sup>42</sup> The HIPC Initiative, launched in 1996 by the IMF and World Bank, aims to ensure that countries with unsustainable debt burden receive relief after achieving two major steps the decision and the completion points. The funds saved are designed to be used for social spending.

been negative and the trade balance between imports and exports negative as well (Singer 2008, 12).

Finally, Cameroon economy today, as in the past, is concentrated around agricultural products. While agriculture and livestock represents 44 percent of the national economy, industry and services in turn account for 16 and 40 percent (Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa, 45). Nevertheless, oil remains the primary source of state exports (49.9 percent) with agricultural products, cocoa, cotton, and timber representing 6.5 percent (Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa 2009, 45).

## **4.2 THE FORESTRY SECTOR**

Although the contribution of the forestry sector to African economies is still modest compared to its potential -in 2000 for instance it accounted for 0.16 percent of the total African workforce, 1.5 percent of GDP, and 2.2 of merchandise exports (Whiteman and Lebedys 2006, 31)- the sector remains nonetheless important for these countries, including Cameroon. The following section describes the main reforms that have happened in the forestry sector since the passage of the 1994 *Forest Law*, the legal basis of decentralized forest management in the country. Of particular importance in this section is the distinction between the various mechanisms of the law such as the RFA, community and council forests.

#### 4.2.1 The Forestry sector in the national economy

Cameroon's tropical moist forests primarily lie in the South and East Regions, with the latter accounting for more than half of the country's forests spread over an area of more than 10 million hectares (see Morrison et al. 2009, 5). Small fragments of forests are also located in the Centre, Littoral, West, Southwest, and Northwest Regions, with the Adamaoua, North and Extreme-North holding dry forests used as fuel by the local populations (Singer 2008, 15). Of the Congo Basin region, Cameroon's forests occupy 40 percent of the territory or 19.6 million hectares providing "about 8 million rural and poor Cameroonians with important nutritional complements, traditional medicines, domestic energy, and construction material" (Topa et al. 2009, 15).

Of the 19.6 million hectares of Cameroon's forests, it is estimated that 7.7 million are currently designated for production with about 6.8 million hectares allocated for timber harvesting (Morrison et al. 2009, 5) –most in the form of *Unité Forestière d'Aménagement* (UFA) or Forest Management Units (FMUs) and Sales of Standing Volume (SSVs).<sup>43</sup> Finally, of the 5.6 million hectares awarded for timber production almost 70 percent of the concessions have approved forest management plans, the highest figure in Central Africa (Morrison et al. 2009, 5).

In the national economy, the forestry sector accounts for 20 percent of the total export revenues (the second largest category) (Tieguhong 2009, 412), less than 7 percent of GDP and about 45,000 direct and indirect jobs (Morrison et al. 2009, 5).<sup>44</sup> By accounting for around 25

---

<sup>43</sup> Out of the above 6.8 million hectares reserved for timber harvesting, 5.6 million hectares are classified as FMUs and 56,000 hectares as SSVs (Morrison et al. 2009, 5).

<sup>44</sup> The figures regarding employment in the forestry sector vary depending whether one includes formal or informal employment. For instance, the figures from the ministry of forests point out that in 2006, 163,000 people worked in the sector, of which 13,000 alone in the industrial sector (see Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa, 2009, 46). Chupezi for his part estimates that the sector has 33,000 direct jobs (2009, 412). Lastly, Karsenty (2007, 19) put the



percent of export revenues, timber has been since 1980 the second largest source of the country's foreign exchange after oil exports (Topa et al. 2009, 13).<sup>45</sup> Most of commercial timber production is concentrated in three Regions the Centre, South and East where, according to 2001 estimates, 17 percent or about a little more than 1 million rural inhabitants living in poverty in Cameroon reside (Morrison et al. 2009, 5). Finally, "Cameroon's forests have an estimated total timber stock of 310 million cubic meters, valued at about 2500 billion FCFA" (Tieguhong 2009, 412).

However, despite the variety of tree species being available for logging in Cameroon's forests, only a handful of those species are actually being logged. Below, Table 4.1 shows the ten most logged species by the formal sector in Cameroon. From the table, it is notable that while the ten species collectively account for 81 percent of total production, in practice two species, Ayous and Sapelli, dominate local timber production (51 percent), a sign of a selective harvest according to the authors of the 2006 audit of the forestry sector (Karsenty et al. 2006, 21).

**Table 4.1. The ten most logged species by Cameroon's formal forestry sector, 2006**

<i>Species</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Ayous/obéché	34.84
Sapelli	16.43
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>51.27</b>
Tali	6.96
Azobé/bongossi	5.11

---

total of formal employment at 13,000 people, but including the informal sector, such as furniture makers, the figure could top 150,000 workers.

<sup>45</sup> In the 1970s, timber production totaled less than 1 million cubic meters then rose to 2.5 million in 1993/94 and more than 3.3 million cubic meters in 1997/98 (Bigombé Logo, Guedje, and Joiris 2005, 169, note 1). In 2005, Cameroon's annual timber production totaled about 2 million cubic meters (Morrison et al. 2009, 5). Finally, timber production in the informal sector is estimated to reach about 1 million cubic meters (see Cerutti, Ingram and Sonwa 2009, 54).

Iroko	3.9
Okan/adoum	3.82
Fraké/limba	3.77
Movingui	2.22
Kossipo/kosipo	1.98
Padouk (Red)	1.97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>

*Source:* adapted from (Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa 2009, 53)

#### 4.2.2 Forest policies before 1994

The first legal acts passed regarding forests in Cameroon were done by the Germans in 1900. Indeed, Governor von Puttkamer signed two acts protecting forest resources as well legalizing timber trade (Singer 2008, 35). In 1922 and 1926 in French Cameroon, the French reinforced state control over forests while the British on their side of the territory “took over management of many of the forests, but the land remained in the hands of local populations” (Singer 2008, 35). In 1946, in French Cameroon, the Cameroon Forestry Service was created and the 3 May 1946 *Decree* stated that forests were “vacant land[s] with no master” and timber production was given preeminence (Singer 2008, 36). The *conflit de langage* between indigenous’ customary rights over forests and the state purported ownership of forests can be said to have originated around these times (see Oyono 2005b).

The next major change pre-1994 occurred in 1981 when a new forest law was adopted by Cameroon’s National Assembly and enacted the following year (see Topa et al. 2009, 21). The law “introduced the first production quotas for certain timber species while promoting logging of lesser-used species and raised the percentage of timber to be transformed before export from 20

to 60 %” (Singer 2008, 36). Notwithstanding these provisions in the 1981 Forest Law, conventional logging was privileged; debates about sustainable development and management, SFM, decentralization and local communities’ involvement in forests had not yet taken hold. Indeed, “between the colonial period and 1994, Cameroon’s legal tenure arrangements placed forests under exclusive State ownership and management” (Oyono et al. 2007, 2). The 1990s reforms, at least to its proponents, aimed to shift control and management away from the central state (see Ekoko 2000).

#### **4.2.3 Forest policy from 1994 and onwards**

Multiple reasons exist as to why Cameroon undertook to reform its forest law and focus on SFM and away from conventional logging. Nevertheless, observers agree that following the 1986 economic crisis that hit hard the country, the IMF and the World Bank saw the forestry sector as an engine of growth that could help the country earn hard currencies and help reimburse its debt (Topa et al. 2009, 23). In addition, in line with the international debate about sustainable development and environmental stewardship after the 1992 Rio *Earth Summit*, these IFIs and proponents of forest policy reform saw the economic crisis as an opportunity to reorganize Cameroon’s forestry sector and conform to the new international consensus about managing tropical forests (see Ekoko 2000).

##### **4.2.3.1 Objectives of the 1990s reforms and main innovations**

According to Topa et al. “the overarching objective of the [forest] reforms was to replace chaotic and opaque arrangements for accessing forest resources, which benefited the few, with a more organized, transparent, and sustainable system that would benefit greater numbers of

people and the environment” (2009, 27).<sup>46</sup> The 1994 *Forest, Wildlife and Fisheries*, the 1994 *Forest Law*, of 20 January was the first major act of the forest reforms sought by the IFIs in the country (see Ekoko 2000).

The draft of the 1994 *Forest Law* focuses on five key areas (Topa et al. 2009, 22):

1. The forest estate was divided into two estates the Permanent Forest Estate (PFE) or *Domaine Forestier Permanent* (DFP), and the Non-Permanent Forest Estate (NPFE) or *Domaine Forestier Non Permanent* (DFNP) (see Appendix D). The PFE, reserved for the state and local council forests, aimed to cover at least 30 percent of the country as well as represent the country’s ecological diversity (see ROC 1994, Art. 22). Finally, for its part the NPFE, also known as the agroforestry zone (Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa 2009, 49), was designated as the site of non-forests activities such as agriculture, community forests and so on (see ROC 1994, Art. 20).
2. A public auctioning system for long term forest harvesting rights based on technical and financial criteria was set up.
3. Forest-related government institutions were to be reorganized to focus on forest governance, regulation and control, away from productive activities which were transferred to community forests as well as production forest operations.
4. Forest Management Plans were made obligatory for private timber harvesting firms as well as local councils operating in the PFE. Both entities had to develop and implement these plans under the monitoring of the forest administration.

---

<sup>46</sup> Oyono et al. (2007, 3) note that the 1994 reforms had three main objectives: (i) to promote community participation in forest management; (ii) to contribute to poverty reduction; and (iii) to the sustainable management of forest resources.

5. Finally, community and council forests were established to enable local communities as well as councils to benefit from forest resources.

When the draft law arrived at the National Assembly, important modifications were made to these provisions.<sup>47</sup> Albeit lawmakers' objection were taken into consideration, the five above provisions, though altered in some way, constituted the basis of the 1994 *Forest Law* as well as the new guidelines for sustainable forest management in the country.

On the whole, for the purpose of this study, apart from the mandatory management plans, the 1994 reforms innovated in two ways from the previous 1981 *Forest Law*. First, it embodied the two principles of participatory forest management as well as conservation of forest resources. Second, and of more importance here, to achieve both objectives at the local level the law and the ensuing administrative regulations created several mechanisms for local councils and communities to benefit from the timber revenues and forest resources generally via schemes such as community and council forests, and the various revenues sharing taxes.<sup>48</sup> Among the major revenues sharing tax mechanisms instituted following the 1994 law directly relevant to local communities and local councils, whereas the *Redevance Forestière Annuelle* (RFA) or Annual Forestry Fee (AFF) was the most significant in terms of revenues (see also Karsenty et al. 2006,

---

<sup>47</sup> A prime example was the auction system which was opposed by lawmakers who argued that indigenous firms could not compete with foreign companies, thus the system was attenuated (Ekoko 2000, 145; Topa et al. 2009, 22-23).

<sup>48</sup> Except for the RFA, the Felling Tax (FT) or *Taxe d'abattage*; the Sawmill Entry Tax (SET) or *Taxe d'entrée a l'usine*; and the Log Export Tax (LET) or *Droits de Sortie sur les grumes* stood among the major taxes that were created by the law. In 2000/2001, an Export Surtax (*Surtaxe a l'exportation*) depending on the species exported was added on top of the LET (see Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil, 2009, 20). The Felling Tax (FT) is a volume-based tax that must be paid by all logging companies on the volume (cubic meters) per species declared to the administration after harvesting has taken place. The Sawmill Entry Tax (SET) is also a volume-based tax; it must be paid, on a per species basis, on logs entering the sawmill; and finally the Log Export Tax (LET) is collected on logs leaving the country (see Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009, 20). Finally, it should be noted that these taxes only concern the forest sector and on top of them, other taxes such as taxes on corporations, value added, etc... are added (see Bindzi and Beramgoto 2008, 14; Karsenty et al. 2006, 47-48).

54; Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009, 20), the most famous was the *Mille Francs* tax (see Mendouga Mebenga 2000b).<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.2.3.2 Community and council forests

Although Section 4.3 below deals in depth with the procedure of acquiring a council forest for local councils, the subject of this study, it is important at this stage to highlight the main differences between community and council forests. First of all, it is worth mentioning that while community forests, and to some extent council forests, were already known around the world, in Asia and Latin America notably, both types of forests were still a novelty in the region (Singer 2008, 56). To be fair, before 1994, Cameroon 1981 Forest Law and the 1983 implementing decree provided for the creation of local councils forests (*forêts des collectivités publiques*) (see ROC 1981a, 1981b, 1983a, 1983b). However, for various reasons, the 1981 Law and 1983 Decree provisions regarding local councils' forests were never implemented as seen by the fact that until the passage of the 1994 law, no council forests existed in the country.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> "The RFA is an area-based tax (*redevance de superficie*). According to the rules set by the 1994 forest law, FMUs and SSVs (two of the most important logging titles in regards to volume logged) must be allocated by the administration by means of an auction. The bidding price is made up of two parts: a minimum price set by the administration, plus the company's offer (...) The minimum bidding price in 2007 was at 2,500 FCFAA/ha for SSVs, and 1,000 FCFA/ha for FMUs. The total AFF [RFA] due annually is thus the concessionaire's bidding price times the entire surface (in ha) of the allocated FMUs (or SSV)" (Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009, 19). Four objectives undergirded the creation of the RFA: (1) make a consistent contribution to the state budget; (2) contribute to poverty alleviation; (3) enhance equity in the redistribution of forest-related benefits; and (4) contribute to the sustainable management of forests (Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009, 19). For its part, the *Mille Francs* tax was instituted by the ministry of forests in a 22 February 1996 circular letter on SSV. The letter stipulated that for every harvested cubic meter of timber, private firms were to pay 1000 CFAF to local communities for the provision of socioeconomic amenities (Oyono, Cerutti, and Steil 2009, 20). However, Luc Mendouga Mebenga (2000b) referred to that situation as 'the tragedy of the 1,000 CFAF' because in his view local communities preferred to receive this transient revenue instead of pursuing the long term avenue of obtaining a community forest where revenues would be more stable.

<sup>50</sup> For instance, unlike the 1994 Forest Law and the 1995 implementing decree, the 1981 provisions did not specify in detail the process of creating and acquiring a council forest for local councils. In addition, whereas in 1994 council forests were to be part of the local councils' private estates once gazetted and under their sole self-management, in the 1981 and 1983 provisions, the forest administration was in charge of almost everything, including harvesting, regeneration, and monitoring (see Decree N° 83-169 ROC 1983a; 1983b, Art. 16).

That having been said, apart from being under the jurisdiction of local villages and local councils, the first difference between community and council forests, as noted before, is that the while the first one is located inside the NPFE, the other one is part of the PFE where a management plan is mandatory in order to engage in forest/timber harvesting.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, precisely because community forests are located inside the NPFE, local communities *only* have to prepare a Simple Management Plan or *Plan Simple de Gestion* (PSG) and signed a contract with the forest administration which by law must provide them a gratuitous technical assistance at their request (see ROC 1994, Section II). Second, whereas a community forest surface area is limited to 5,000 hectares (see Ezzine de Blas et al. 2009, 447), in theory, local councils' forests surface area is not limited by law or administrative regulations, although in practice they range from 5,600 to about 42,000 hectares (see Appendix E).

Finally, and perhaps the most important distinction, while local communities are *only* delegated powers over community forests, for a period of up to twenty-five years, though renewable every five years (Poissonnet et al. 2006, 9), council forests, once transferred through the gazetting procedure, become part of local councils' private estate. In reality, of all the participatory scheme of the 1994 *Forest Law* (council and community forests, *RFA* and community-managed hunting zones), "the transfer of rights and powers is effective and permanent only in the case of council forests. *These powers- the powers to own a council forest, to exploit it and to manage the revenue-are discretionary and rely on the principle of subsidiarity*" (Oyono et al. 2007, 7, emphasis added).

---

<sup>51</sup> Technically, since villages are not recognized as legally recognized entities, for management purposes local communities have to come together as associations or any other associational form permitted by law (for more on those issues, see Egbe 2001).

### 4.3 COUNCIL FORESTS

This section describes the process of creating a local council forest in Cameroon. The section is organized as follows. Whereas the first subsection starts by defining what is considered a council forest in the sense of the 1994 law, the second outlines the legal steps required to create a council forest. Finally, the next three subsections provide an overview of the immediate steps required for local councils to begin forest harvesting once the legal step of gazetting the forest, which results in the transfer of powers, resources and responsibilities, has been completed. The section concludes by highlighting the difficulties faced, but also promises of revenues, by local councils when attempting to accede to forest ownership.

#### 4.3.1 What is a council forest?

*Article 30*, section 1 of the 1994 *Forest Law* defines a council forest as “any forest that has been subject to a gazetting act for the said council or that has been planted by that council” (ROC 1994).<sup>52</sup> Thus, from a reading of the law, two primary modes of creating council forests in the country can be distinguished. The first mode involves a legal process whereas the central state cedes part of its forest estate to a council through the gazetting process. By contrast, the other mode involves a local council planting trees on its own land and then asking the central state to recognize it as a council forest (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 20).<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Oyono (2004b, 98, italics original) defines a council forest as “a forest classified for use by a local government, a *commune*, or planted by that local government” (his own translation of the same article of the 1994 Forest Law).

<sup>53</sup> The procedure by plantation is slightly different from the one examined here (for more see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 20).



In both cases, once a council forest is officially created through the gazetting process, by law it is incorporated into the council private estate (*domaine privé de la commune*) and a land title (*titre foncier*) is delivered to the council to officially symbolize the transfer of ownership (ROC 1994, Art. 30 subsections 2 and 3).

#### 4.3.2 The gazetting process

Officially, the gazetting process is the act through which a council forest comes into existence and becomes the property of a local council. The forest law states that at the end of the process, a gazetting act or decree signed by the prime minister officially sanctions the creation of a council forest as well as defines the boundaries, the management objectives, and the user rights of the local populations (*populations autochtones*) (see ROC 1994, Art. 30, subsections 2 and 3).

Among the various acts issued by the forest administration, the Ministry of Environment and Forests' (MINEF) *Decision* 1354 remains the organizing document for gazetting all PFE forests (MINEF 1999).<sup>54</sup> The 1999 *Decision* outlines the six main steps for the gazetting process of these forests, with particular emphasis on the *imperative* and *close* involvement of local populations during the entire process (see Box 4.1 below).<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> To achieve that aim, the decision prescribes the creation in each village of a Forest-Farmer Committee or *Comité Paysan-Forêt* (CPF) to act as the official representative of the local population in any act involving the gazetting of PFE forests when a local representative organization of the people does not exist. In addition, the CPF is composed of eight villages' members elected for three years renewable. The members are the village chief, a representative of the village development committee, one representative for the internal and another for the external elites, two members representing women and one for the farmers (*planteurs*), and finally, one for young people (see MINEF 1999, 3-4).

<sup>55</sup> These steps only apply to council forests being created through the gazetting process. For those being created by plantations, the steps only include five and six on top of other requirements not discussed here (for more, see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 20-21). In truth, the process of gazetting a forest involves various central, regional as well as local actors. However, in the gazetting process, the ministry of forest's Forest Directorate and its local and regional offshoots in tandem with the said local council are responsible for handling it as well as preparing the gazetting draft decree (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 6).

#### Box 4.1. Gazetting process steps for the PFE forests

1. The first step involves the preparation of the preliminary information technical memorandum (*note technique préliminaire d'information*). Through this memorandum, the council officially announces its intention to submit a request for the creation of a council forest.
2. The second step involves a public notice (*avis au public*) to the council inhabitants stating that the council intends to acquire and gazette a portion of the neighboring forest. The goal of this 30 to 90 days period, depending on whether the planned council forest is within or without the official zoning plan, is to gather people's opinions as well as objections.
3. Thirdly and fourthly respectively, information campaigns for local deconcentrated authorities (such as prefects, and forest administration representatives) as well as local elites (*sensibilisation des autorités administratives et des elites locales*), and local populations (*sensibilisation des populations*) are held.
4. Fifth, a local gazetting commission (*travaux de la commission de classement*) chaired by the prefect meets to approve or not the council forest project at the local level. The commission is also competent to receive or dismiss the objections of the local villagers affected by the project as well as assess the value of monetary compensations related to expropriation (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 15).
5. Finally, the forest administration prepares the official documents to submit to the prime minister's office for the signature of the gazetting decree (*preparation des textes a soumettre au premier ministre pour signature de l'arrêté*).

Source: (MINEF 1999; MINFOF and GTZ 2008)

<sup>1</sup> Note that the commission is chaired by the local prefect or his/her representative and composed of local representatives of the forest, tourism, land (*domaines*), environment, livestock, agriculture, mining, *aménagement du territoire* ministries, the local *députés*, the mayor (s) or his/her representative, and finally the traditional local authorities. Finally, in spite of the fact that the commission will have to decide on their objections to the project, nowhere is mentioned at the all-important session of the local gazetting commission the presence of a representative of the local populations (for more, see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 15-16).

Finally, as some local observers have observed, in spite of the precaution taken to involve all affected parties, the process of gazetting is a complex, lengthy and costly endeavor, with total costs as high as 200 million CFAF (see Appendix E), which can take some time to bear fruit, especially when it involves poor local rural councils (see Delvienne et al. 2009).<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Appendix E at the end provides an example about the costs involved in gazetting a council forest. At this stage, suffice to say that in-between steps one (1) and six (6) in Box 4.1 above, local councils have to spend between 3 and 7 million CFAF, a significant amount for most rural councils which for the most part lack adequate revenues. The costs of creating a council forest are even more significant if a local council has to acquire the land title. Indeed, as the table in Appendix E.1 suggests for a council forest of the size of the FCD (16,240 hectares) the total costs could almost top 200 million CFAF.

### 4.3.3 The management inventory and the council forest management plan

By law, council forests have to be managed according to a management plan approved by the forest administration (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 25). In fact, the law states that “every activity inside a council forest must, in all cases, be performed according to its management plan” (ROC 1994, Art. 31, 2). In order to establish the management plan, two operations are required. The first one is a management inventory or “the general inventory of the forest area” (FAO 2003, 16) to determine the composition of the forest (available tree species, wildlife, NTFPs, etc...).<sup>57</sup> The second operation involves conducting a socioeconomic survey of the local population and its milieu to provide the information about local customs as well as utilization of the forest. Once both operations have been conducted, the information collected helps establish the management plan (see Appendix E) as well as assign the management objectives, mostly timber production in a ‘sustainable’ manner for council forests (SFM).<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> By law, there are two kinds of inventory that timber harvesters in the country need to conduct: the management and the harvest inventories. Generally, the inventory regards all trees species with diameters above twenty centimeters (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 24). The management inventory is done at a rate of 1 percent and is performed to obtain an overview of the potential of a given forest. This inventory forms the basis of the establishment of the management plan. In contrast, the harvest inventory (*inventaire d’exploitation*) is conducted at a rate of 100 percent and concerns the trees to be harvested during a given year (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 24). Overall, the cost of conducting the management inventory and producing the management plan is significant, ranging from 1,200 to 2,500 CFAF per hectare (CRADEL 2007, 105).

<sup>58</sup> Officially, the management plan is submitted by a local council to a sub-commission of the forest administration that analyzes the document, and then to a commission composed of various ministries which gives its recommendation. Finally, the minister in charge of forests gives the final approval for the management plan to enter into effect (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 25). Because the management plan is established for the long term, 30 years in Cameroon though revisable every five years, it needs to be translated into operational documents for the scheduled management objectives to be implemented. That is why, two other documents need to be produced to help implement the management plan (for more, see Appendix E). Whereas the first document is the medium-term management plan or the Five Years Plan (*Plan Quinquennal de Gestion*) as it is known in Cameroon, the second is the Annual Plan of Operation or Coupe (*Plan Annuel d’Opérations*), sometimes referred to as the Operational Plan. That document is important because it constitutes the roadmap for annual timber harvesting. In fact, it is the step “through which the management plan is programmed, implemented and monitored annually. This is the tool for the everyday management of harvesting, with all interventions recorded in the forest register” (FAO 2003, 14). Moreover about the Annual Operation Plan, it is “the last and most immediate level (1-2 years) of operational planning in the sustainable management of a forest area or concession. This is the phase that involves the planning, design and implementation of all RIL harvesting activities. However, this plan and its operations can only be

By law once the forest is gazetted and transferred to a council private estate, the council is responsible for the implementation of the management plan under the monitoring and control (*suivi et contrôle*) of the forest administration which “can *suspend* the implementation of acts contrary to the provisions of the management plan” (ROC 1994, Art. 32, 1, emphasis added). In addition, “in case of failure or negligence from the council, the administration in charge of forests can substitute itself to the council to perform, at the said council expenses, selected operations scheduled in the management plan” (ROC 1994, Art. 32, 2).<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.3.4 The Environmental Impact Survey

Cameroon’s 1996 Law regarding the Environment stipulates that all economic activities which have an impact on the environment are subject to an environmental audit (ROC 1996, Art. 17) to determine whether a project has a positive or negative impact on the environment (ROC 2005, Art. 2). In 2004, MINEF, created in 1992, was separated into two entities the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature (MINEP) (see Cerutti, Ingram, and Sonwa 2009, 50). A year after, the Prime minister and MINEP issued

---

successful if the sustainable management of the forest area has been rationally pre-determined by the concession holder or logging company, eschewing a predatory approach and opting for entrepreneurial behavior that is more respectful of the ecosystem and of the social and economic environment of the forest” (FAO 2003, 14).

<sup>59</sup> Further, the 1995 implementing decree added that “the implementation of a council forest management plan, officially approved by the minister in charge of forests, is the duty of the said council *which makes sure that it has the appropriate qualified personnel*” (ROC 1995, Art. 48, emphasis added). Finally, Article 80, 3 (emphasis added) of the same decree pointed out that “the administration in charge of forests can suspend at any time any activity contrary to the provisions of the management plan of the said council, *after an official warning went unheeded for 15 days from the date the warning was issued*”. Beyond the 1994 Forest Law and the 1995 implementing decree, other documents from the forest administration explicit the ministry’s role in forest law enforcement. For instance *Arrêté* 0222 gives the forest administration authority over such matters as: the verification of AAC boundaries as well as the council adherence to the harvesting of one AAC at the time; the respect of the MHD and MMD; the implementation of reforestation activities; the use of RIL techniques as well as the construction of infrastructures designed to mitigate environmental damages and finally, the protection of wildlife to name a few (for more see MINEF 2001, especially Art. 53).

both a Decree and an *Arrêté* prescribing the types of environmental survey needed by all economic actors in order to start their activities (see MINEP 2005; ROC 2005).<sup>60</sup> Two types of surveys are prescribed the Simple Environmental Impact (*Etude d'Impact Environmental Sommaire*) and the Detailed Environmental Impact (*Etude d'Impact Environmental Détaillée*) or (EIE). Only the first one applies to council forests, or community forests for that matter.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, following the gazetting process concluded by the signing of the official transfer of powers and ownership decree, the forest inventory and the establishment of the management plan as well as the completion of the EIE, a council forest is now set to be harvested.

#### **4.3.5 The start of timber harvesting and the modes of operation**

First of all, in spite of the fact that council forests can, in theory, be designated for other purposes such as recreation, ecotourism, hunting and other activities (see for instance Kamdem 2006, 14), the reality is that local councils which seek the creation of a council forest remain primarily motivated by the promise of timber revenues as the examples of the four pioneer council forests - Dimako, Gari Gombo, Moloundou and Yokadouma- show (see Om Bilong et al. 2009).<sup>62</sup> In order to annually harvest timber, all timber harvesters in the country have to obtain a permit from

---

<sup>60</sup> Article 21 of *Decree* 2005/0577 granted to already operating firms thirty six (36) months from the date of the signature of the decree, thus until February 2008, to comply with the requirements of the decree (see ROC 2005).

<sup>61</sup> After completion of the EIE, an Environmental Management Plan or *Plan de Gestion Environnemental* (PGE) is established. The plan outlines the steps that a council shall take to mitigate the damages to the environment during forest operations (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 29). Similar to the management plan monitoring provision, the administration in charge of the environment, or a private contractor under its request, is charged with ensuring the implementation of the PGE (ROC 2005, Art 18-20). To conduct a simple EIE, a council must pay respectively 2 million CFAF for the study terms of reference as well as 3 million CFAF for the application fees (CRADEL 2007, 105). Moreover, once the terms of references approved, a council has to spend between an additional 1,000 to 1,500 CFAF per hectare for the conduct of the actual EIE (CRADEL 2007, 105).

<sup>62</sup> Kamdem (2006, 14) observes that council forests can either focus on timber harvesting; fuelwood; or NTFPs.

the forest administration known as *Permis Annuel d'Opérations* or the Annual Permit of Operations (PAO).<sup>63</sup> After receiving the PAO, a local council is now set to officially log its forest and start benefiting from the forest resources and revenues.

Officially, four modes of operation exist. Whereas the first major mode called the self-management regime (*en régie*) involves a local council self-harvesting its council forest, the second through a Sales of Standing Volume (SSV) sees a local council ceding the rights of harvest to a third-party, usually a private commercial firm, against the payment of royalties.<sup>64</sup> Finally, the other two remaining options include the issuance of an harvesting permit (*permis d'exploitation*) to a private commercial firm for no more than 500 cubic meters as well as the granting of a private authorization to log the council forest (*autorisation personnelle de coupe*) for up to 30 cubic meters to a private commercial firm (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 31).<sup>65</sup>

Of all the council forests currently being harvested, Dimako's is the only one officially to be under the self-management regime, though the evidence presented below shall dispute that assertion. In the same way, disagreements exist concerning the case of Yokadouma, Gari-Gombo

---

<sup>63</sup> Essentially, this involves producing the Annual Plan of Operation or Coupe and submitting it along with other documents to the forest administration for official approval. Of utmost importance in prelude to actual forest harvesting two operations, the demarcation as well as the conduct of a harvest inventory of the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), that is the area to be annually logged, are required (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 30).<sup>63</sup> The harvest inventory usually conducted a year or two prior to the actual harvest, is especially critical, for it shall determine the official number of trees as well as the volume of timber to be harvested for a given year (see MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 24; and also FAO 2003, 25).

<sup>64</sup> The *self-management regime* means that the council itself is the one harvesting timber in the forest. Typically, this involves a council buying or renting equipment as well as employing its own staff, as it appears to be the case with Dimako Council. In this case, the council is both the harvester and the seller. Councils choose this mode because, in theory, it allows them to benefit from all the timber revenues without the costs attached to a middleman. By contrast, in the SSV mode, which involves a middleman, the council's role is to monitor the firm as to ensure that forest management activities proceed in accordance with the management plan provisions.

<sup>65</sup> As can be seen, of all the four modes of operations, only the first two involves the harvest of significant quantities of timber and are thus the preferred modes of operations of council forests. Equally important, a comparison of the tax burden between the two major modes of harvesting (see Appendix E) indicates that the self-management regime affords local councils less burden in terms of tax purposes, although in practice because of the underdevelopment of council forestry regulations (see section 6.3.3) as well as the *vide juridique* (legal vacuum) which characterized it, local councils have been exempted of the payment of these taxes as forest administration officials have acknowledged (Bindzi and Beramgato 2008, 15).

and Moloundou Council Forests as to under which modes of operations or even whether those forests are harvested according to the existing modes. As an illustration, it has been argued that the Moloundou Council Forest is being harvested outside the four above mentioned types (Bindzi and Beramgoto 2008, 13). That confusion about the harvesting regime, and more generally the confusion surrounding council forestry, as the section below shall illustrate, has meant that problems have surfaced in the overall management of council forests (see also the report by Om Bilong et al. 2009).

#### **4.3.6 A complex reality**

Delvienne *et al.* (2009, 5) observe that “a council gazetting process can require more than the length of an elective term to succeed, and that does not motivate elected officials to get involved. The gazetting process is difficult and takes time to get completed given the human resources that it requires, the will to get the process finished, and the participation costs that councils have to bear”. Numerous examples abound about the predicaments of local councils on the road to council forestry.

As it was shown throughout this chapter, the process of creating council forests in Cameroon is littered with obstacles from the moment local councils engage in the process (see Ntiga 2010). From the gazetting process, the management plan, the EIE, to the start of forest activities, local councils are not guaranteed that a council forest is going to get created. As an illustration, the East Region’s Salapoumbé Council started the gazetting process in April 2004 (Delvienne et al. 2009, 3), and 6 years after the council had yet to receive the gazetting decree signed by the prime minister (see Appendix E.6, the council being in the column “waiting gazetting decree and management plans in progress”). Additionally, once a council has

completed all the legal steps regarding the creation of the council forest, in order to start harvesting timber, it still has to go through other official and unofficial steps. These steps, it has been noted, put local councils at a disadvantage compared to private commercial firms for instance, most accustomed to navigating the forest administration's corridors (CRADEL 2007, 106).

The question can be raised as to the utility of the council forestry steps outline above, especially in light of the fact that, as mentioned above, some of these provisions are not completely enforced, if enforced at all. To take an illustration, while the law requires local councils to obtain a land title after the gazetting process, the actual practice has been that these councils have started their operations inside the forests before completing that step (CRADEL 2007, 104). In effect, because of the costs involved, for instance for a forest of 16,000 hectares it costs about 190 million CFAF (see Appendix E) as well as the forest administration disregard of that requirement before engaging in timber harvesting, the incentive to acquire the title is low for councils as judged by the fact that no local councils among the council forests currently operating has acquired the document (personal communication from a forest administration official). In the same way, notwithstanding council forestry environmental provisions, the reality is that of all the five council forests being harvested today, none has completed the entire process since in practice the EIE provision has also not been fully enforced. Indeed, Dimako Council's terms of reference for the survey were only approved by MINEP in October 2009 (MINEP 2009), although the forest has been harvested since March 2004.

However, with the gazetting process, the critical issue is whether all these steps are even warranted in the first place. To take the case of the land title mentioned above, during the days of *Forêts et Terroirs* (see section 5.7.2), Maurice Kamto (2000), a well-respected Cameroonian



legal scholar, suggested that the central state *symbolically* forfeits the costs of the land title for local councils. His argument was that the gazetting process in itself already constituted a sort of title because it sets aside a portion of the forest estate for a council, therefore making it unavailable for any other use. That position has prompted the Mayor of Dimako in the past, and now as president of ACFCAM, to ask for the suppression of the fees associated with the establishment of the title (Mongui Sossomba 2001b, 2009).

Nonetheless, in spite of all those obstacles on the way to forest ownership, because of the significant financial resources involved, and today the support of the PAF2C (see below), more and more local councils are willing to take their chance at acquiring a council forest. Indeed, the motivation is amplified by the fact that once gazetted, the forest is under the sole management of a local council and as the law states 100 percent of the forest products obtained through its harvesting, hence all revenues, belong to the council (see ROC 1994, Art. 32, 3). Once the provisions of the law were known, the issue was not whether local councils wanted to acquire a council forest; rather it was how. The answer came when in 2006 local mayors came together and decided that the process needed to advance more rapidly. Thus, was launched a program to advance council forestry in the country. The last section of this chapter describes that effort.

#### **4.4 THE PROGRAMME D'APPUI AUX FORETS COMMUNALES DU CAMEROUN**

In the first place, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, local observers have advanced various arguments to account for the lack of implementation of the council forestry provisions of the 1994 *Forest Law* in comparison to those of community forests and the *RFA* for instance (see Bigombé Logo 2006; FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 4;

Nguenang et al. 2007). Those reasons coupled with the lengthy process of creating a council forest as well as obtaining a harvesting permit meant that until 2007, thirteen years after the adoption of the 1994 law, only four council forests were officially created and operating.<sup>66</sup> It is only since 2007 that local councils have started, with donors' assistance, to take advantage of the forest law provisions directed at council forests.

The following section describes the situation of council forests since the start of the *Programme d'Appui aux Forêts Communales du Cameroun* or the Support Program for Council Forests of Cameroon -known locally as the PAF2C- the main organization, and institutional support, promoting council forestry in the country. The main contribution of this final section of the chapter is to show the growing role that ACFCAM and the PAF2C are playing in council forestry in the country, especially in light of the fact that the main actor at the center of this study, the Mayor of Dimako, is also at the helm of the association.

#### **4.4.1 The Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun**

Before the creation of the *Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun* or the Association of Forest Councils of Cameroon (ACFCAM), local councils of the forest regions had

---

<sup>66</sup> Before the PAF2C, Cameroon Southern Zoning Plan had set aside more than a dozen of forest sections in the PFE to be transferred to fifteen local councils in order to create council forests (MINFOR and GTZ 2008, 4). In spite of that, when the PAF2C was launched in 2007, only six forests had been officially created in Dimako, Gari-Gombo, Yokadouma, Moloundou, Djoum and Messondo (FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 6 and 9). It is worth mentioning that there is a minor conflict over the exact number of sections of the forest that were set aside. For instance, the above document talks about fifteen (15) while another one talks about fourteen (14) (see FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 6). In effect, that last document states that the Decree N° 95/678/PM regarding Southern Cameroon Zoning Plan set aside fourteen (14) council forests over a total area of 364,000 hectares or 4.5 percent of the PFE in the East, Centre and South Regions, then provinces, the council forests' areas involved vary from 14,000 to 45,000 hectares (see FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 6). In any case, the difference is minor as to constitute an issue; but for consistency purposes it had to be pointed out.

no association to lobby and represent their interests at the central state level.<sup>67</sup> The situation changed in 2003 when twenty-one Cameroonian mayors present at the *France-Cameroon Decentralized Cooperation Congress* came together to launch ACFCAM with the support of the National Federation of Forest Councils of France (FNCOFOR) (Nankam 2009b, 10). ACFCAM's immediate significance was demonstrated four years later, in 2007, when following negotiation with the French and German cooperations, the proposal for the creation of the PAF2C was officially approved (Nankam 2009b, 10).<sup>68</sup>

#### 4.4.2 The PAF2C

The PAF2C main objective is to “contribute to the sustainable management of the forest heritage of the country as well as to the improvement of the standard of living of rural people” (FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 3). The ultimate goal of the program is to create fifty (50) council forests over a surface area of 1.3 million hectares, reforest 3,000 hectares of forests as well as enrich 1,000 hectares of natural forests currently being harvested (Beligné 2009, 4).<sup>69</sup> The four year 17.2 million USD program covers the period 2008-2012 and is

---

<sup>67</sup> Although a local councils' association *Communes et Villes et Unies du Cameroun* (CVUC) or United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC) exists to represent the country's local councils, no association specifically targeted at local councils of the forest regions existed. UCCC is the result of the merger of two local councils' associations in 2003 the *Association des Communes et Villes du Cameroun* (ACVC) and the *Union des Villes et Communes du Cameroun* (UCVC).

<sup>68</sup> The First Council Forestry Conference (*assises*) was only held in May 2006 (Nguenang et al. 2007, 1). In spite of having been created in 2003, the association was only legally recognized by the central state in 2006 (Nankam 2009b, 10). At the same time that ACFCAM was launching its activities, in July 2006, with the support of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and GTZ, a project to promote SFM and forest certification in council forests was also being launched (see Nguenang et al. 2007, 1).

<sup>69</sup> The program is directed at ACFCAM members which as of November 2009 numbered eighty local councils (CTFC 2010b, 14). To qualify as a Forest Council and thus ACFCAM membership, a local council has to either already own a council forest, submitted, or intend to submit an official request to the forest administration, or planted its own forest. Finally, the PAF2C noted that among the country's 340 local councils, up to 160 are potentially eligible to accede to forest ownership over a total area of 3.9 million hectares (see FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 9).

principally financed by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) as well as the Germans' Technical cooperation (GTZ) and Development Agency (DED) (see ACFCAM and FFEM 2007, 71).<sup>70</sup>

The program area of intervention revolves around the six following themes (Beligné 2009, 4): institutional and technical assistance to forest councils as well as the forest administration for the creation of council forests; forest management, reforestation (*reboisement*), enrichment (*enrichissement*) and sustainable management of council forests; local promotion of council forests' products; development of local development strategies; protection or restoration of biodiversity as well as fight against global climate change; and finally, help for the consolidation of the CTFC (see below) as well as local councils' technical units in charge of council forestry.<sup>71</sup>

Lastly, Table 4.2 below shows council forestry figures since the start of the PAF2C. While the table reveals that the program has yet to achieve the 1.3 million hectares of council forests target, it also discloses that under the PAF2C, council forestry has been on the rise. In fact, the area where the program appears to have achieved significant results is on the number of council forests in process of being gazetted, which went from three before the PAF2C to twenty nine.

---

<sup>70</sup> 1 Euro for 1.43 USD. The amounts in CFAF and Euros are respectively 8.5 billion and 12.9 million. To this total amount, FFEM and the GTZ are said to respectively bring 1.3 and 3 million Euros on the table. Among the rest of the financial support, ACFCAM members are supposed to contribute 1.1 million Euros; the Pro-PSFE or FESP (Forest Sector Environment Program) and the National Program for Participatory Development (PNDP) respectively 2.9 million and 1.05 million Euros. Finally, thanks to the decentralized cooperation, French and German local governments are said to contribute 760,000 Euros to the program (FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM. 2007, 23). DED assists the program by providing two technical assistants (ACFCAM and FFEM 2007, 62). Finally, in January 2011, the German government merged GTZ, DED and Inwent into the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the new development agency.

<sup>71</sup> The PAF2C has four primary target areas: the East, the Centre, the West and the Great North. Depending on the area and the state of the forests, the specific goals range from the promotion and implementation of SFM (East Region), enrichment in degraded forests (Centre Region), to reforestation in humid and dry savannas (West and Great North Regions) (see Beligné 2009, 4).

**Table 4.2. PAF2C activities as of August 2010**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Pre-PAF2C</i>	<i>Under PAF2C</i>	<i>2011 target</i>	<i>% achieved</i>
Council forests (FCs) gazetted (1)	06	07	29	24
FCs being gazetted (2) (3)	03	22	29	76
FCs having an officially approved management plan (4)	04	05	19	26
Surface area of FCs under an officially approved management plan (in ha) (4)	109,887	125,557	490,727	26
FCs to be under an officially approved management plan (5) (6)	02	11	19	57
Surface area of FCs to be under an officially approved management plan, (in ha) (6) (7)	32,134	279,006	490,727	57
Reforested Area by CTFC and donors, in ha ( <i>reboisée</i> )	0	6,500	1,000	650

Source: Reproduced from (CTFC 2010b, 15)

ha: hectares

(1) Gazetting decree signed by the Prime Minister and approved by the Presidency

(2) Does not include line (1)

(3) Includes from the moment the technical file has been written and submitted to MINFOF

(4) Forest Management *Arrêté* signed

(5) Does not include line (3)

(6) Beginning with first technical step (inventory, cartography, socioeconomic study, EIE,...)

(7) Does not include line (4)

#### **4.4.3 The Technical Center on Council Forestry**

The Technical Center on Council Forestry or *Centre Technique de la Forêt Communale* (CTFC) was officially launched in July 2008 to support the PAF2C (Nankam 2009a, 4). The Center also known as the *Maison des Communes Forestières* is the implementing agency of the PAF2C program as well as act on behalf of ACFCAM members in all forest-related matters. Its main

role is to help local councils achieve the objectives of the PAF2C.<sup>72</sup> The CTFC various activities primarily revolves around the promotion of SFM (conducting forest inventories, ecological and fauna diagnostic; socioeconomic surveys; EIE) as well as the training of local councils and the technical units in charge of council forests, and timber processing among others (see FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM 2007, 16).

On the whole, despite its main focus on technical assistance for SFM, the center has also been involved in various tasks from support to health and HIV-AIDS, promoting local ‘good’ governance, to the creation of local councils’ development plan (PDC).<sup>73</sup> This is the case because many in the Center have argued that forest governance is related to local ‘good’ governance, and thus the agency needs to broaden its focus to be effective.

Last but not least, since the PAF2C and the creation of the CTFC, various agreements have been signed to help promote council forestry in the country (see Appendix E for a more detailed overview of the PAF2C impact on council forestry). As an illustration, to help accelerate the gazetting process as well as the approval of management plans by the forest administration, a council forestry focal point (*point focal foresterie communale*) was created in 2008 for the sole purpose of handling council forests requests where previously no office existed (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 4). In the same way, another significant agreement was later signed in 2010 between ACFCAM and the Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance or FEICOM as it is

---

<sup>72</sup> In order to accomplish those goals, the CTFC has four regional offices, Bertoua for the East, Yaoundé for the Centre-South, Foumban in the West, and finally Buéa in the South-West (FNCOFOR International and ACFCAM 2007, 18). Only, the Centre-South and East offices are fully functional (see ACFCAM and CTFC 2010, 8).

<sup>73</sup> Because of the financial resources involved in forestry, CTFC wide ranging attributions have not gone well with other actors involved. It was reported for instance that MINFOF officials have suspiciously looked at CTFC intent to centralize the establishment of the management plan, which is a very lucrative activity for contractor, as an attempt to dominate the process, and thus threaten MINFOF interests. An agreement between the ministry and ACFCAM to enhance cooperation was signed in 2010, but it remains to be seen whether that will sooth these emerging tensions. On the other hand, regardless of these tensions, there still remains a risk of CTFC overstretching because of its broader focus on local governance than ‘pure’ forest management.

locally known (see FEICOM and ACFCAM 2010). The agreement shall for instance allow FEICOM to provide grants to local councils to help offset the costs of the establishment of management plans.<sup>74</sup> The agreement, if it yields fruit, has the potential to substantially advance council forestry and transform the landscape in the country given FEICOM's enormous resources (for more on FEICOM role, see MINATD 2008, 140). FEICOM is also important for this study insofar as the Mayor of Dimako sits on its board and, as the study shall argue in Chapter 7.0, has utilized FEICOM local achievements to further his own political agenda.

## 4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter previewed the institutional framework -mainly organizational, legal, and regulatory- of forest management decentralization and SFM in Cameroon. The chapter began with a brief profile of Cameroon history, politics and economy. The chapter then situated the importance of the country's forestry sector in the national economy as well as provided the context of the 1990s reforms. Finally, the chapter described in detail the process of creating a council forest in Cameroon as well as the major actor, that is the PAF2C, involved in promoting council forestry. The following chapter now turns to the East Region as well as the Dimako Council and the FCD, the object of this study.

---

<sup>74</sup> The agency was established in 1977 and focuses around five primary activities: provide local councils with cash advances as well as solidarity contributions; finance local investment; centralize and redistribute Centimes Additionnels Communaux (CACs) or council additional taxes; cover the costs of council personnel training; and finally, acts as the financial intermediary for donors involved in local governance (see MINATD 2008, 140). FEICOM resources come primarily from portion of local councils' taxes that are then redistributed especially the CACs, or used to finance local councils' projects (see MINATD 2008, 140). In practice, for anyone working in local government financial assistance, FEICOM is *the* major actor which saw its status and role reinforced in 2009 with the addition to its portfolio of responsibilities over the distribution of *RFA* funds under the new equalization system mentioned above.

## 5.0 THE DIMAKO COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL FOREST



**Figure 5.1. A view of downtown Dimako, March 2010**

*Source:* author

The goal of this chapter is to describe Dimako Council political, economic and social organization as well as the Dimako Council Forest project. The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the Dimako Council local organization then through a presentation of both the API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* projects, the forerunners of the FCD, the chapter traces the origin of the creation of the FCD. In the same section, a subsection is devoted to



presenting the main characteristics of the two management plans of the FCD as well as the local organizations and the institutional arrangements that were purportedly put in place to help ensure the success of the forest management decentralization in Dimako. Overall, Chapter 5.0 is significant because it sets the stage for the next three chapters which constitute the main evidence of the thesis being advanced in this study.

## **5.1 PRIOR HISTORY BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE COUNCIL**

Next to nothing is known about the history of Dimako before the arrival of SFID in the then-villages that now constitute the entire local council. According to a council document, Bakoum and Pol people settled in the Dimako area before the First World War, fleeing from the North the invasion of the Peul conqueror Adama (CRDKO 2003b, 6). What is more, the same document notes that the area known today as Dimako Council was at the turn of the nineteenth century a settlement for rubber transporters on the way to the German Fort of Doumé (CRDKO 2003b, 7). It is only after the First World War that a group of families from the Ngolambélé chieftaincy decided to settle in the actual site of Dimako, which was then known as Kpwengué (CRDKO 2003b, 7).

The name ‘Dimako’ is said to have appeared around 1947 when thanks to the installation of the two Frenchmen Saubatte and Gerberon, SFID’s forerunner, workers from the neighboring Kadey division recruited by both Frenchmen named the town in remembrance of their native village (CRDKO 2003b, 7). Local accounts report that initially the Frenchmen had planned to establish their factory in the adjacent Doumé town, but local villagers refused. On the contrary, in Dimako, then administratively subordinated to Doumé, chief André Bangda, who reigned over

a thirty years period, agreed to let Saubatte and Gerberon installed their sawmill there, and thus became the facilitator of forest harvesting in the area (see CRDKO 2003b, 8).<sup>75</sup>

## 5.2 POPULATION

Dimako Council is primarily inhabited by native Bakoum and Pol people from the Bantu group, and Baka pygmies people (Mekok Balara 2001a, 12-13). Bakoum people represent the majority group in the council followed by the Pol and then the Baka (see CDKO 2006b, 14-15). In 1992, the council population was estimated at 14,176 inhabitants divided into 2905 households -with an average size of about 6 people- spread alongside the three main road axes Dimako-Bertoua, Dimako-Mbang and Dimako-Kagnol (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 5-6).<sup>76</sup> Beyond that period, population figures are conflicting and vary depending on the source.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Another council document relates the same story but notes that the event happened around 1800. Furthermore, the document also notes that chief Bangda facilitated the installation of the two Frenchmen in order to alleviate rising tensions between Bakoum, Pol, and Kaka people (see CDKO 2010c, 15). Later, to thank him, it is reported, the company built his Kpwengué's compound –visible in downtown Dimako- as well as provided him with several facilities. Kpwengué today is the official residence of the current superior chief (*chef supérieur*) as well as Dimako Council's second deputy mayor André Bangda junior, the great grandson of André Bangda. Incidentally, in town it is said that the Kpwengué quarter is among the quarters where some of the most vocal critics of the mayor live. More generally, with the advent of timber harvesting in Dimako, the town's path to the status of a local council can be dated around those times. Indeed, local narratives report that to operate at ease the timber company needed state security protection and a *Gendarmerie* post, a kind of military police, was created and in 1955 the town of Dimako given the status of *district*, at the time the lowest administrative level. Finally, Singer (2008, 90) provides another account of the period when he observed that SFID settle in Dimako primarily because of the town easy location, being on the main Yaoundé-Bertoua axis as well as the presence of primary forests at the time in the area.

<sup>76</sup> That figure was established by André Sieffert and Hua Xuong Pierre Truong (1992) who conducted a 'diagnostic' study in prelude to and for the API-Dimako. The 1987 national census put the population figure at 11,225 inhabitants with more than half (5,615) living in Dimako town. The ratio then was 6,994 men for 4,231 women (see Mekok Balara 2001, 12).

<sup>77</sup> Singer (2008, 90) for instance mentioned that at the height of the town prosperity, the total population numbered 20,000 people. Furthermore, he pointed out that when SFID factory closed 457 workers were employed (2008, 93). Finally, he added that "although no reliable census has been carried out, it is believed that Dimako lost between 2,000 and 3,000 people in a single year [following the plant closure]" (*idem*). Singer's figures are in contrast to those of the Dimako Council. For instance, a 2003 council document noted that based on projections from the 1987 national population census as well as a 1992 local socioeconomic census, about 32,200 people

Today, in the aftermath of SFID departure in 2002 (see below), council official documents report a global figure of 15,389 inhabitants (see CDKO 2003a).

### 5.3 VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

For local administrative purposes the council authorities have divided the area thirty two (32) villages and quarters along four sectors: the Savanna Sector (*Secteur Savane*); the Forest Sector (*Secteur Forêt*); the Pol Sector (*Secteur Pol*); and finally, Dimako town (see Appendix F).<sup>78</sup> Whereas the *Savanna* and *Forest* Sectors are home to Bakoum people, the *Pol* Sector includes primarily the Pol and two of four Baka pygmies' villages, Mayos and Nkolbikon.<sup>79</sup> *Dimako town* for its part includes the center of the town as well as villages bordering the council forest (see Appendix F).

---

inhabited the council (CRDKO 2003b, 3). Out of that figure, it was estimated that 12,000 Bakoum people; 8000 Pol people; 3,000 Baka pygmies resided throughout the council; and finally, 9,200 people from within and without the country (CAR, Niger, Nigeria) inhabited Dimako town itself (CRDKO 2003b). It should be noted that the issue of local councils' population figures is a sensitive one, for population estimates are used to determine for instance the CACs amount that each council is set to annually receive. Thus, some observers have noted the presence of small tensions between mayors on the one hand, whom central government officials argue tend to inflate their population estimates to receive more money, and mayors on the other hand, who believe that central government officials are underestimating their population figures, and therefore giving them less money. The researcher witnessed this exchange of views in November 2009 at a FEICOM workshop in Yaoundé between a central government official and a mayor of a rural council who called herself a 'bush' mayor or *maire de brousse*.

<sup>78</sup> That division has been a contentious issue locally insofar as some quarters have claimed the 'higher' status of villages instead of being a 'simple' quarter. In practice, the difference between villages and quarters is not so visible since both are headed by a third degree chief. However, for local politics, the status of villages is critical, for it provides 'full' access when benefits, such as timber revenues for instance, are distributed in town.

<sup>79</sup> The orthography of villages' name depends on the source used or even local customs. For instance, Kandara will be called Kandala; Koumadjap or Nkoumadjap, Djandja or Tchandja and so on. In practice, the difference is minimal since it usually consists of a letter or so. Still, the distinction is worth pointing out to the extent that the reader might come across another usage.



**Figure 5.2. Petit-Pol village, February 2010**

*Source:* author

Of all the council 32 villages and quarters, Dimako town represents the main center of the council. Each village or quarter is headed by a third degree chief (*chef de troisième degré*) who in turn is under the purview of the superior chief André Bangda Junior, whose family has been in power for more than three generations (CRDKO 2003b, 4).<sup>80</sup> As a rule, chiefs are selected by village elders (*notables*) among the lineage of past chiefs, with the final approval residing with

---

<sup>80</sup> In Cameroon, the government *Decree N° 77/245 of 15 July 1977* organized chiefs into three category or ‘degrees’ of local chieftaincy: first, second, and third degree. Usually village chiefs are third degree chiefs whereas the sub-division chieftaincy is usually represented by a second degree chief. First degree status is usually reserved for chiefs in divisional capital such as Abong Mbang. However, the decree creating these degrees of chieftaincy is being reconsidered in light of internal debates about the meaning of chieftaincy in the country as a Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINATD) official communicated.

the sub-prefect and the prefect (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 6). The *notables* assist the chiefs in regulating village life (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 6).<sup>81</sup>

Lastly, unlike in the Bamiléké western inlands, chiefs in the Eastern Region are not traditional chiefs (see Elong 2005, 60-61). In the southern part of Cameroon, chiefs are considered *auxiliaires d'administration* or central government representatives at the village level under the immediate supervision of these authorities (Mendouga Mebenga, 2000a, 6). In Dimako, chiefs answer to the sub-prefect also known as *chef de terre* in remembrance of the times sub-prefects concentrated all the local powers.

#### 5.4 ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

In 1955, the administrative *district* of Dimako was founded (CRADEL 2007, 7), while in 1982 and 1983 respectively the Dimako subdivision and the Dimako Rural Council (CRDKO) -since 2004 the Dimako Council (CDKO)- were established (CRDKO 2003b, 6).<sup>82</sup> In those days when local governments, especially rural ones, were still appendages of the central government and had not yet acquired the status of independent elected local councils, the district and the council in Dimako were respectively headed by what was then called sub-prefect-mayors (*sous-préfets-maires*) and then municipal administrator (*administrateur municipal*), both of whom were

---

<sup>81</sup> In practice, as witnessed by the tensions that have surfaced in some of the council villages, the selection procedure for chiefs is not always followed. Indeed, some losing candidates to the chieftaincy have accused the sub-prefect of taking sides and in some cases of even accepting bribes to get other candidates appointed, though these claims have yet to be substantiated.

<sup>82</sup> It has to be noted that following the 2004 political and administrative decentralization laws, the division between local urban and rural councils was abolished. Thus, officially the Dimako Rural Council (CRDKO) is simply referred to as the Dimako Council (CDKO). Have also been abolished, administrative districts which since 2010 have now become subdivisions.

centrally appointed civil servants (for an account of the period in the country, see Mawhood 1983a).<sup>83</sup>

Today, Dimako is both a sub-division and a (rural) local council -located in the Haut-Nyong division of the East Region- covering an area of 750 square kilometers (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 132).<sup>84</sup> Administratively, the council itself is under the supervision of the prefect living in Abong Mbang, the subdivisional capital.<sup>85</sup> In Dimako, the sub-prefect as well as various government offices, for instance agriculture and women's affairs, represents the central government in an environment characterized by a lack of the most basic amenities as well as infrastructure (see Chapter 7.0).<sup>86</sup>

Finally, the council is headed by a mayor assisted by three deputy mayors as well as a twenty-five member municipal council organized into three commissions Great Works (*Grands Travaux*); Social Affairs; and Finances.<sup>87</sup> By law, the council executive (*l'exécutif municipal*), which is composed of the mayor and his three deputies (*Adjoints*) -all elected councilors- is responsible for the day to day handling of council affairs. However, also by law, for its

---

<sup>83</sup> The function of administrator-mayor came to an end when the first nationwide municipal [local councils] elections were held in 1996 following the return to multipartism in the country.

<sup>84</sup> *Arrondissements* are central state administrative sub-divisions usually headed by a sub-prefect, whereas a local council is generally an autonomous local government headed by an elected mayor assisted by a municipal council. In the case of Dimako, both territorial boundaries are contiguous. That need not be the case. For instance in the adjacent Doumé's administrative sub-division, the *Arrondissement* is comprised of two separate local councils the Doumé and Doumaintang Councils.

<sup>85</sup> The Dimako Council is located 310 kilometers from the capital Yaoundé, 30 from Bertoua, the regional capital, and 75 from Abong Mbang.

<sup>86</sup> Indeed, except for the Dimako City Hall (DCH) or *Hôtel de Ville de Dimako*, the sub-prefecture and the *Gendarmerie* compounds, the council only houses a small hospital, a government technical school called the *Centre d'Enseignement Technique et Industriel du Cameroun* (CETIC), a vocational training school Rural Artisan Centers also known as *Section Artisanale et Rurale et Section Ménagère* (SAR/SM), Dimako High School (*Lycée de Dimako*), a medical center in Dimako town, an integrated health center (*centre de santé intégré*) in Petit-Pol village, and a dozen of primary schools (see CDKO 2010c, 18-19). However, most of this infrastructure is either barely underequipped or in need of repair.

<sup>87</sup> Councilors represent villages by sectors in the following way: four councilors for *Savanna* and *Forest*, and eight and nine respectively for *Pol* and *Dimako town* sectors. The actual breakdown is as follows: three councilors for Tombo quarter; two councilors each for Kpwengué, Source, Toungrelo, Ngolambélé, and Petit-Pol; and one councilor for each of the following villages Ayene, Bongossi, Baktala, Beul, Djandja, Grand Pol, Kouen, Longtimbi, Nkolméyanga, Siméyong, Tahatte, and Tonkoubé.

management, the executive is accountable to the deliberative body called the municipal council (see ROC 2008b).

## **5.5 LOCAL ECONOMY**

Two periods of the local economy can be distinguished: the period under SFID until 2002, and the post-SFID era. The following subsection briefly describes both periods.

### **5.5.1 Local economy under SFID**

SFID is a logging company belonging to the French Rougier Group which operates in the Congo Basin forests, notably in Congo-Brazzaville (Mokabi) and Gabon (Rougier Gabon) (Rougier n.d.). In Cameroon, the company is known as SFID and has been involved in timber harvesting for a number of years, especially in the Dimako area where for more than half a century it provided employment to local residents as well as dominated the area economy (see Singer 2008, 89-93). In effect, Sieffert and Truong report that in 1992, before the start of the API-Dimako project (see section 5.7 below), SFID employed around 700 people in then-East province with 330 working in Dimako and 350 in Mbang (1992, 29). Further, they noted that even though SFID employees came from other parts of the country, in Dimako a significant number of the employees were natives from the Bakoum group (Sieffert and Truong 1992, 29).<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> The Dimako figure was relatively higher than in Mbang where the authors note that 10 percent of the employees were locals. Further, Singer (2008, 90) talks about 400 or 500 (total) workers in Dimako alone.

Under SFID, although local residents were also involved in agriculture, Dimako economy was dominated by timber harvesting and related activities with the company building a sawmill and a plywood factory (Singer 2008, 90). In fact, during the heyday of SFID, Dimako residents remember that the town was prosperous; that residents had money to spend and spillover activities abounded, including the establishment of a transport company to evacuate SFID products (Singer 2008, 91). The exact reasons for SFID departure in 2002 are still subject to debate in town, with some villagers seeing that act as an unnecessary betrayal. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that SFID departed because of the fact that valuable timber was becoming scarce in the area (Singer 2008, 92). As a matter of fact, Sieffert and Truong reported that the move away from the Dimako area had even begun in the early 1970s (1992, 29).<sup>89</sup>

Eight years after the factory closure, Dimako residents are still upset about what they see as a betrayal of the French company. Everything here in town is due to SFID presence. Residents remember the positive as well as negative contributions of SFID. They note that for a first, the presence of the firm provided employment and built local infrastructure. But they also remember that because of the firm and easy job availability as well as the hiring priority afforded to family members, local villagers did not value education insofar as one only needed to complete primary

---

<sup>89</sup> In effect, in 1973 SFID had started to move away from the Dimako concession for Batouri in the Kadey division, and then around 1982 started timber harvesting in Mbang (Sieffert and Truong 1992, 29). Seen in this light, it is only normal that after more than half a century presence in Dimako, the firm closed its Dimako factory and moved all its operations to Mbang town in the Kadey division, about 120 km from Dimako, leaving most of its former employees unemployed. Another line of argument holds that SFID left because of the expiration of the tax exempt status in Dimako as well as the organization of a major strike by local trade unions in 2002 (see Singer 2008, 92-93). With law enforcement intervention, the strike turned violent and resulted in some of the factory equipment being damaged (Singer 2008, 92). Singer sees this as the most compelling argument for the departure of SFID, especially in light of the fact that since 1994 with the appearance of the first trade unions in Dimako, local workers could now bargain for better working conditions and wages (2008, 92). During the interview rounds, the researcher heard that line of argumentation being also advanced by some local villagers as the *immediate* cause of SFID departure, which after the deadly strike, SFID simply decided to pull out to avoid future strikes.



education to get hired by the company. As Chapter 7.0 shall describe the issue of education has become a thorny one in the council.

### 5.5.2 The local economy today

Now that SFID has departed, Dimako economy has primarily reverted to traditional agriculture and a ‘small informal timber and furniture sector’ (Singer 2008, 89). For those residents who have stayed, small scale agriculture has become the primary means to have access to cash and buy needed produce. Shifting cultivation or slash and burn agriculture is the one practiced in the area villages by the Bantu groups and to some extent the Baka people (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 7).<sup>90</sup> Beyond agriculture, local villagers live out of hunting, fishing, and collection of forest products inside the council forest, especially in the southeast corner where the resources are abundant (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 14-15).

Finally, in recent years, because of the creation of the council forest and the promise of job opportunities as well as improvement of living conditions, the issue of timber harvesting and

---

<sup>90</sup> *Droit de hache* is practiced in this region; it means that forest and land ownership is on the first come basis principle (see Sangkwa 2001); however, the land belongs to the community and not to individuals. Individuals only possess the right of usufruct (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 6-7). The actual Dimako economy revolves around the cultivation of agricultural products such as cocoa, coffee, *manioc* or cassava, and plantains all year round, while corn is cultivated once annually. Villagers sometimes mix both types of cultures, corn, peanuts, manioc, macabo (*Xanthosoma*), plantain among others in fields which are located on a distance of about 1.5 kilometer deep behind family houses (*Ibid.*, 8). The main food crops consist of manioc, maize, and peanuts whereas the secondary ones include yams, macabo, squashes and sweet potatoes (*Ibid.* 9). Plantains and bananas are cultivated along the Dimako-Kandala and Dimako-Grand Pol roads and constitute an important source of revenues for villagers (*Ibid.* 10). Finally, a small livestock composed of chickens, ducks, goats, lambs and pigs in non-enclosed area is being raised, primarily for domestic consumption, and has been a source of local conflicts insofar as local villagers have argued that these animals can cause damage to people’s field (see Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 16). On the whole, these produce are primarily cultivated for villagers’ domestic consumption, but commercial trade also occurs with travelers and the *bayam sellam* coming from Dimako town or Bertoua in search of agricultural produce (*Idem*). The *bayam sellam* (for buy and sell them) are retail merchants, usually women, who go from village to village to buy the local produces and then resale it at higher margins in cities or neighboring countries. Yet, villagers, mainly of the Pol Sector, have complained about the practices of these buyers in search of low prices, practices which have been accentuated by the state of the rural road leading to the area villages.

revenues has been thrown back to the forefront of the local economy. The issue of the council forest and the utilization of the forest revenues, as the following three chapters shall illustrate, has become *the* issue in town.

## **5.6 THE MAYOR OF DIMAKO**

According to available data, the current Mayor of Dimako, Janvier Mongui Sossomba, was appointed in 1987 under the one-party state as the council municipal administrator. After the first multiparty nationwide municipal elections in 1996, Mayor Mongui was elected for the first time and then reelected twice in 2002 and 2007 under the banner of the ruling party Cameroon's People Democratic Movement (CPDM) -or *Rassemblement du Peuple Camerounais* (RDPC) as it is better known by its French acronym. Nonetheless, in 2007, for the first time in the history of the council, primary elections for the mayoral position were organized inside the CPDM Dimako chapter -the implication of the primary episode will be clear in Chapter 8.0. Including his time as appointed 'mayor' and the current 2007 term -set to expire in 2012- the mayor has been in power for a quarter of a century.

Apart from holding political office, early in his career, Mayor Mongui had been an executive at the Cameroon Tobacco Company (*Société Camerounaise de Tabac*) (Mbodiam 2011b), and later the owner of a defunct logging company called the *Forestière Industrielle de Doumé Dimako* (FODDI). According to Singer (2008, 111), at one point the mayor was even the owner of two logging companies, one of which, probably FODDI, filed for bankruptcy following the post 1994 *Forest Law* tax increases which rocked small logging companies. Today, following not only the demise of his main company, FODDI, but also his numerous current (political)

responsibilities, there are some conflicting accounts about the extent of the mayor's private involvement in timber harvesting apart from the council forest. At the same time, the field evidence suggests that the mayor in recent years has been involved in logging under the cover of his wife's company *Etablissement Kakouandé et Fils* Sarl (K&F) –pronounced locally KF.<sup>91</sup>

Lastly, until March 2011, on top of his private economic activities, Mayor Mongui held several national and regional positions as follows by order of importance: since 2007 he is the 'face' of council forestry in Cameroon, being the president of ACFCAM - and as such also the president of the executive and steering committees of the donor-financed PAF2C (see section 4.4) -; since 2006 a FEICOM board member (*administrateur*), which as the study noted earlier is a major player in local government financial assistance in the country (section 4.4.3 above, especially note 68); a delegate of the central committee of the ruling party CPDM for the Haut-Nyong division *centre* section; he represents the local councils and cities association in the East as the President of the East Regional section of UCCC (CVUC/Est); a vice president of the international association of forest councils; a Rotary Club member as well as hold other positions in various civil society organizations (see Mbodiam 2011b).

---

<sup>91</sup> Unofficially, the FODDI company collapsed because of unpaid taxes and the mayor created a new one under his wife's name, the abovementioned *Kakouandé et Fils*.

## 5.7 THE DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST PROJECT



**Figure 5.3. The main entrance of the Dimako Council Forest, February 2010**

*Source:* author

Were it not for both the *Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako* (API-Dimako) and *Forêts et Terroirs* projects, Dimako Council would not perhaps have attracted scholarly attention, for the town is located away from the country's main political and economic decision-making centers, usually the center of attention of scholars. Though for more than half a century the town had hosted the first logging company in the East, it remained relatively unknown until the advent of the two French-funded projects. This section describes the process leading to the official creation of the first council forest in the entire Congo Basin, the Dimako Council Forest (FCD). The section is divided into four main subsections as follows. The first two subsections start with the description of both the API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* projects, the forerunners of the FCD.

By highlighting the predicaments of both projects, the first two subsections preview some of the issues that were to surface later in the Dimako experiment. For its part, the third subsection presents the characteristics and institutional framework governing the FCD as well as provides a brief comparison of the council revenues pre and post-FCD. Finally, the chapter concludes by showing that even before the council forest officially started its operations, the Mayor of Dimako had already planted the seeds for the failure of the experiment out of his personal thirst for power.

### **5.7.1 The *Aménagement Pilote Intégré* de Dimako project (1992-1996)**

Following the 1990 Libreville's 'Ministerial Conference for the Development and Sustainable Management of Central African forests' (*Mise en Valeur et Gestion Durable des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale*), the French government and central African leaders decided to attempt a new approach to the management of tropical forests away from conventional logging (Singer 2008, 94).<sup>92</sup> With the help of the French Ministry of Cooperation, in charge of official development assistance, the Republic of Cameroon (ROC) was selected as the host of a technical assistance pilot project dedicated to the implementation of the sustainable management of tropical forests (*aménagement durable des forêts tropicales*).

The result of the three years agreement, which started in September 1992 (Esteve et al. 1993, 8), came to be known as API-Dimako or Dimako Integrated Pilot Management project. The project area was around Dimako, hence the name API-Dimako, and Mbang subdivisions in

---

<sup>92</sup> Conventional logging simply defined here as the logging of trees without thinking about the long term preservation of the forest (for more on the definition, see Appendix A).

the East province, now the East Region, (see Esteve et al. 1993, 2). The total project area covered a surface area of around 800,000 hectares of forests (API-Dimako 1995a, 7).

#### 5.7.1.1 The forest research and rural development phase

To begin with, as Chapter 8.0 shall illustrate, the exact reasons for the choice of Dimako as the site of the French-funded project within the council, and even beyond, have been the subject of multiple interpretations since.<sup>93</sup> However, Singer (2008, 95) notes that Dimako was chosen for three main reasons. First, the relatively short distance from Yaoundé; second, the location of the area at the limit between savannah and forest; and finally, Dimako had been the site of industrial logging since 1947.<sup>94</sup>

The primary objective of API-Dimako –which was described as a research-development pilot project ‘*en grandeur nature*’, meaning a real world experiment- was to promote the “integrated management of natural forest with the participation of a commercial logger” (Esteve et al. 1993, 2). That component was called the *volet forestier*, for forestry, designed over the long run to preserve the ecosystem. The second related objective was to couple the forestry component with rural development *opérations* aimed at stabilizing agriculture and therefore maintain “*une ambiance forestière pérenne*” (Esteve et al. 1993, 2-3).<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Locally, two main reasons have been advanced for the choice of Dimako. The first one is that the French wanted to help their own company thus privileged SFID instead of any other company. The second one which has enormous implications for local politics is that the choice of Dimako was motivated by the fact that Cameroon’s First Lady is a town native. Thus, this was considered as a gift of the ‘daughter’ of the town to its inhabitants. This second line of argument as we shall see in the remainder of this study is especially relevant for the concern of this study.

<sup>94</sup> Since the project was French-funded and called for the participation of a logging firm, SFID in this case, it was natural that the French cooperation chose Dimako. Yet, as Singer (2008, 95) observes because of the participation of SFID, which many had denounced the logging practices, API-Dimako from the onset was under international criticism.

<sup>95</sup> For Singer (2008, 95) “the project had two principal components, hence its “integrated” aspect: first, a forestry component (*volet forestier*) in collaboration with SFID focused on studying the effects of various logging and planting practices on forest ecology. The aim was to identify the practices which would ensure the greatest

Simply put, the project goal was to help sustain local villagers' commitment to sustainable forest management, and therefore reduce shifting agriculture, even after the end of the project. Because the project had hypothesized that a management plan not including the local populations' interests was doomed to fail (see Clément and Dubus 1993, 5), it was imperative to involve them from the onset. Thus, in its original description, the project already embodied two nascent concepts of what was later to become sustainable forest management: the involvement of local villagers as well as commercial loggers in order to ensure the sustainable management of forests (see Appendix G). In spite of the recognition of the role of local populations, the project's main emphasis remained to find ways to conserve the forest ecosystem as to guarantee the long term provision of timber for commercial loggers (API-Dimako 1995a, 1-3; Esteve et al. 1993, 3).

On a more practical level, the project results were expected to be delivered by July 1995.<sup>96</sup> The project task was critical because its work was expected to form the basis for the later revision of the then-1981 forestry law (Esteve et al. 1993, 3). However, the abovementioned conflicting objectives of the project also meant that it was ill-equipped to cope with its main task.

#### **5.7.1.2 Confronting the practical reality**

In truth, from the start, the project was marred with controversy. To assess its progress, French consultants were sent in Cameroon less than a year into its schedule. In March-April 1993, the consultants reported that the project had trouble defining its role as well as delimiting

---

reconstitution of the timber stock whilst minimizing the impacts of logging on forest ecology, including biodiversity and hydrology. Secondly, the rural development component (*volet développement rural*) in collaboration with local populations aimed at promoting more intensive means of cultivating crops in a bid to prevent further deforestation or forest degradation through traditional slash-and-burn practices”.

<sup>96</sup> By the July deadline it was expected that forest management plans would be prepared and completed over a maximum surface area of 500,000 hectares -those management plans would later serve to conclude management contracts between the forest administration and commercial loggers-; and the project was also expected to formulate new guidelines for the sustainable management of forests (see Esteve et al. 1993, 3).

its area of operations, and, more importantly, it was judged as being overambitious (Clément and Dubus 1993, 2). Similarly, a few months later, another report noted that API-Dimako suffered from “a negative image in Cameroonian [public] opinion” primarily because of technical and communication missteps” (Esteve et al. 1993, 4). The report added that “by successive evolutions, the project went from an initial typical research-development component based on the *gestion de terroir* approach to a classical integrated rural development project” (Esteve et al. 1993, 5 emphasis added). In other words, instead of being seen as a provisional [forestry] research and technical assistance project, API-Dimako was mistakenly seen as another rural development scheme (see Clément and Dubus 1993, 2-3). The deviation from the original course began in mid-1992 and led to “unrealistic promises to local populations who now feel dissatisfied and duped” (Esteve et al. 1993, 5) -a situation which will repeat itself in the FCD era as Chapter 7.0 shall demonstrate.

The report team recommended that API-Dimako go back to its primary mission (forestry) as well as refocus on the immediate Dimako area, instead of the sprawling project zone, and downsize the rural development component, now renamed *volet Interaction populations-forêts* (Esteve et al. 1993, 5; see also p. 15; and 16-17).<sup>97</sup> The situation was critical because, as of September 1993, of the 500,000 hectares of forests to be inventoried, only 91,000 hectares or

---

<sup>97</sup> The project zone was comprised of 150 villages (Esteve et al. 1993, 16) with a total of about 60,000 people (Clement and Dubus 1993, 2), thus making rural development operations (roads, bridges, fertilizers, credit facilities, health, school and social infrastructure, and commercial assistance) difficult to achieve. Also at the end of the project, the populations were expected to have stabilized agriculture, diversify their produces as well as their source of revenues, establish commercial circuits or get integrated to already existing ones, ensure the functioning of autonomous producers groups and benefit from the rational exploitation of community forests as well as continue to benefit from their traditional usage rights in the forest permanent domain (Esteve et al. 1993, 15). How to achieve these secondary goals at the same time while pursuing forestry assistance to commercial loggers turned out to be impractical.



18.2 percent had been (Esteve et al. 1993, 23).<sup>98</sup> That called for a new ‘chapter’ if the project was to succeed in its original aim (for a self-reflective assessment on the project, see Durrieu De Madron et al. 1998).

### **5.7.1.3 A new beginning**

The second ‘chapter’ of the API-Dimako project (1994-1996) started with an exclusive focus on the forestry component while also having to take into account the newly passed 1994 law which splits the forest into two estates (see Esteve 2000, 61-62). Compared to the first ‘chapter’, the second was more successful. In fact, when API-Dimako was terminated in 1996, among the results achieved by the project were the drafting and submission of six (6) forest management plans covering 360,000 hectares (see Appendix G). Included in this, was the FCD first management plan which, nonetheless, because of MINEF lack of official approval never went into effect (see Collas de Chatelperron 2000, 3).<sup>99</sup>

At the end of API-Dimako, the FCD was still a distant dream. While the project had anticipated some of the 1994 reforms, it had been unsuccessful in reaching its targets and phased out in the midst of the implementation of the law. From 1996 to 1998, while the follow-up phase of the project was still being contemplated, amid French reluctance to fund it (Singer 2008, 96), the new forestry law was slowly being implemented putting in jeopardy the whole FCD project. Finally, in late 1998, the second phase of the French-funded project started under the designation

---

<sup>98</sup> To salvage the project, senior officials at the French Ministry of Cooperation asked CIRAD-Forêt, which previously had been a contractor to the project, to study the possibility of taking over (Esteve et al. 1993, 7). As a French state public corporation, CIRAD could be more easily made accountable technically as well as financially the report argued as a justification for this request to take over (Esteve et al. 1993, 7).

<sup>99</sup> The first Dimako Council Forest management plan was produced as his engineer’s thesis for the project API-Dimako by a then-student at the National Institute for Rural Development (INADER) Salomon Nti-Mefe (Mekok Balara 2001, 4). Incidentally, Nti-Mefe is now the mayor of the southern council of Djoum, and also Secretary-General of ACFCAM. Around January 2010, the Djoum Council officially received the authorization from the forest administration to start timber harvesting operations in the Djoum Council Forest.

*Forêts et Terroirs*, supposedly to reflect a new emphasis. The FCD project was again back on track.

### 5.7.2 The *Forêts et Terroirs* project (1998-2001)



**Figure 5.4.** The former compound of *Forêts et Terroirs* hidden behind the trees, February 2010

*Source:* author

The *Forêts et Terroirs* project took charge of matters where API-Dimako had left. The task of the three years 14 million French Franc-funded project was to educate and provide the forest administration, logging firms, and local populations with the tools of sustainable forest management (Forêts et Terroirs 2000b, 3).<sup>100</sup> Particularly, the project, which started in April

---

<sup>100</sup> 1 Euro for 6,56 French Franc or about 2.1 million Euros or 1.5 million USD today.

1998, had for mission to help the forest administration in the aftermath of the 1994 *Forest Law* implement the new provisions of the law, in particular SFM techniques, community and council forests, train and advise the forest administration (Collas de Chatelperron 2000, 1).

#### **5.7.2.1 The *gestion de terroir* approach**

From the onset, the project sought to be different and avoid the travails of its predecessor. The concept *Forêts et Terroirs* itself was chosen to signify “in two words the entirety (*globalité*) of the action- it is the whole territory (*ensemble*), forested and agricultural, that the new forest law invites to organize and manage- and the interdependence between these two terms, that complement each other and that no one should not try to oppose to each other” (Forêts et Terroirs 1997, 2).<sup>101</sup> The approach borrowed from the French *gestion de terroir* school which argues the interrelatedness of the social, agricultural and forest landscapes (for more on the *gestion des terroirs villageois* approach see Bassett, Blanc-Pamard, and Boutrais 2007; Batterbury 1998; Degnbol 1995; Engberg-Pedersen 1995; Painter, Sumberg, and Price 1994).<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, to avoid API-Dimako predicaments, from the start the French Ministry of Cooperation elected the more experienced CIRAD-Forêt -the forestry department of the International Cooperation Centre on Agrarian Research for Development (*Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement*)- as the project

---

<sup>101</sup> In line with that approach, for the project, “the technical [and] silvicultural aspect of [forest] management is not for instance more or less important than the sociological or economic, since they constitute a set of coherent activities that should speak to common goals of ecological, social, and economic sustainability” (Forêts et Terroirs 1997, 9).

<sup>102</sup> The French *Gestion des Terroirs Villageois* approach to local environmental management in vogue in Francophone Africa “is widely used by development projects working with settled agricultural communities. It involves the transfer of control over resource management and the land used by that community (its terroir or territory) to local people. This is usually achieved by vesting decision-making powers in a village group or committee. The majority of these village groups take on informal decision-making powers, although some do have legal status as registered co-operatives or membership organizations” (Batterbury 1998, 873).

manager (Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (FAC) 1997, 9). Moreover, although it operated in the same geographical area, in contrast to API-Dimako, the *Forêts et Terroirs* project circumscribed more tightly its area of intervention. Indeed, the project zone was subdivided into three zones of decreasing priority, with the Dimako area as of prime importance (Forêts et Terroirs 2000b, 3-5) (see Appendix G).<sup>103</sup>

In spite of these precautions taken, the project faced similar difficulties as its predecessor. To illustrate, in 2000, less than a year before it was officially phased out, FMUs set to be allocated by the forest administration during the life of the project had yet to be allocated (Bertault 2000, 5). For the project, in the absence of those allocations, it could not monitor and test the [new] indicators of the implementation of the management plan. All this led a consultancy report to warn about the unsatisfactory progress on the project's main objectives (Bertault 2000, 3). In response, CIRAD-Forêt pointed out that the unforeseen delays were due to the difficulty of the local institutional context, as well as the forest administration (MINEF) lack of implementation of the forest law (see Bertault 2000, 5-7), both issues that were to resurface later in the management of the FCD.

#### **5.7.2.2 The legacy of API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs***

At the end of the almost ten years (1992-2001) period in Dimako of both projects, the French cooperation had helped set the stage for the implementation of the 1994 *Forest Law* provisions about SFM, and more importantly for this study, launched the process leading to

---

<sup>103</sup> The rationale for selecting the Dimako zone as the primary terrain for action was straightforward. The Dimako area was chosen because it included the 1994 law's three major innovations (FMU, Council and possibly Community forests), and thus allowed the project to have a continuous area of intervention (Forêts et Terroirs 1997, 11).

gazetting and creation of the FCD.<sup>104</sup> On the whole, *Forêts et Terroirs*' two main goals -and to some extent API-Dimako too- had been achieved in some way with the provision of institutional support to the various actors implicated in the establishment of the management plan as well as the creation of guidelines for the gazetting process and for writing up management plans (about the two projects' achievements, see Collas de Chatelperron 2001a; Collas de Chatelperron 2001c).

*Forêts et Terroirs* hoped that, through its hard work, its motto “*des Forêts et des Terroirs pour les générations futures*”, that is forests and village lands for future generations, would indeed still be there years after the project ended. The first test of that philosophy was to come in the experience of one of its flagship achievements the *Forêt Communale de Dimako* (FCD).

### **5.7.3 The *Forêt Communale de Dimako***

The FCD is among the more than dozen council forests that were established by the Southern Cameroon's Zoning Plan (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 132).<sup>105</sup> The council forest is not a primary forest; rather, it is a semi-degraded dense humid forest (Assembé-Mvondo and Sangkwa 2009, 98) with an official surface area of 16,240 hectares. Prior to the forest inventory, the forest administration records revealed that SFID harvested the forest over a quarter century period under two licenses SFID 1352 in the west (1958-1974) and SFID 1445 in the east (1965-1983)

---

<sup>104</sup> To the credit of API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs*, multiple studies and pilot experiments were conducted about timber harvesting and RIL techniques, SFM, as well as the local milieu in the Dimako region (see Collas de Chatelperron 2001; and Durrieu de Madron et al. 1998).

<sup>105</sup> Initially, the surface area reserved for the FCD before the gazetting process started was 18,052 hectares (Mekok Balara, 2001, 4). After the gazetting process, the total forest surface area was limited to 16,240 hectares in order to stay within the council boundary limits on the east of the Kadey division, as well as account for illegal logging which happened over several hundred hectares (see Mekok and Borie 2000, 2; and Bertault 2000, 25).

(Mekok Balara 2001a, 18-19).<sup>106</sup> In license SFID 1352 alone, a volume of about 230,000 cubic meters of timber was estimated to have been harvested by the firm over the quarter century period (Ngniado 1999, 3).

When the 1995 forest inventory was completed, it revealed that more than sixty (60) different tree species can be found in the FCD (Mekok Balara and Borie 2000, 3). However, a more detailed analysis of the forest inventory, exhibited in Table 5.1 below, shows that including all diameters, six (6) species account for 52 percent of all tree species found in the FCD. Moreover, among these six tree species, Lotofa (*Sterculia rhinopetala*) and ayous (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*) represent more than half of that total.<sup>107</sup>

**Table 5.1. Tree species found in the Dimako Council Forest (all diameters)**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Scientific name</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Ayous	<i>Triplochiton scleroxylon</i>	12
Bété	<i>Mansonia altissima</i>	10
Fraké	<i>Terminalia superba</i>	10
Lotofa/Nkanang	<i>Sterculia rhinopetala</i>	15
Tali	<i>Erythrophleum ivorensis</i>	3
Sapelli	<i>Entandrophragma cylindricum</i>	2
Others	Various tree species	48
<b>TOTAL</b>		100

Source: (Mekok Balara 2001a, 26)

<sup>106</sup> While the western side was inactive for twenty five years, the eastern side had only been fallow at that time for two dozen years.

<sup>107</sup> The first forest inventory of the FCD was conducted by the National Office of Forest Development (ONADEF), the former state monopoly in charge of forest management inventory, under API-Dimako supervision in 1995 at a rate of 1 percent (Mekok Balara 2001, 22). In 2000, *Forêts et Terroirs* proceeded to update the 1995 results to account for the changes intervened in the area since (Mekok and Borie, 2000, 3).

A survey of human activities in the forest revealed that the FCD northern side<sup>108</sup> -close to the main entrance on the Dimako-Kandara-Mbang road (see Map 5.1)- remains the area that has been the most affected, while the southern part, close to the *Doumé River* and Pol Sector villages, is the area where timber and other forest resources abound (Mekok Balara 2001a, 17).<sup>109</sup> Finally, from the forest inventory and local consultations, two management plans were established, one by *Forêts et Terroirs* in 2001 and the other by the Dimako Council itself in 2006. Below, the main characteristics of both plans, which shall be analyzed in the following chapter, are briefly presented.

### 5.7.3.1 The 2001 management plan

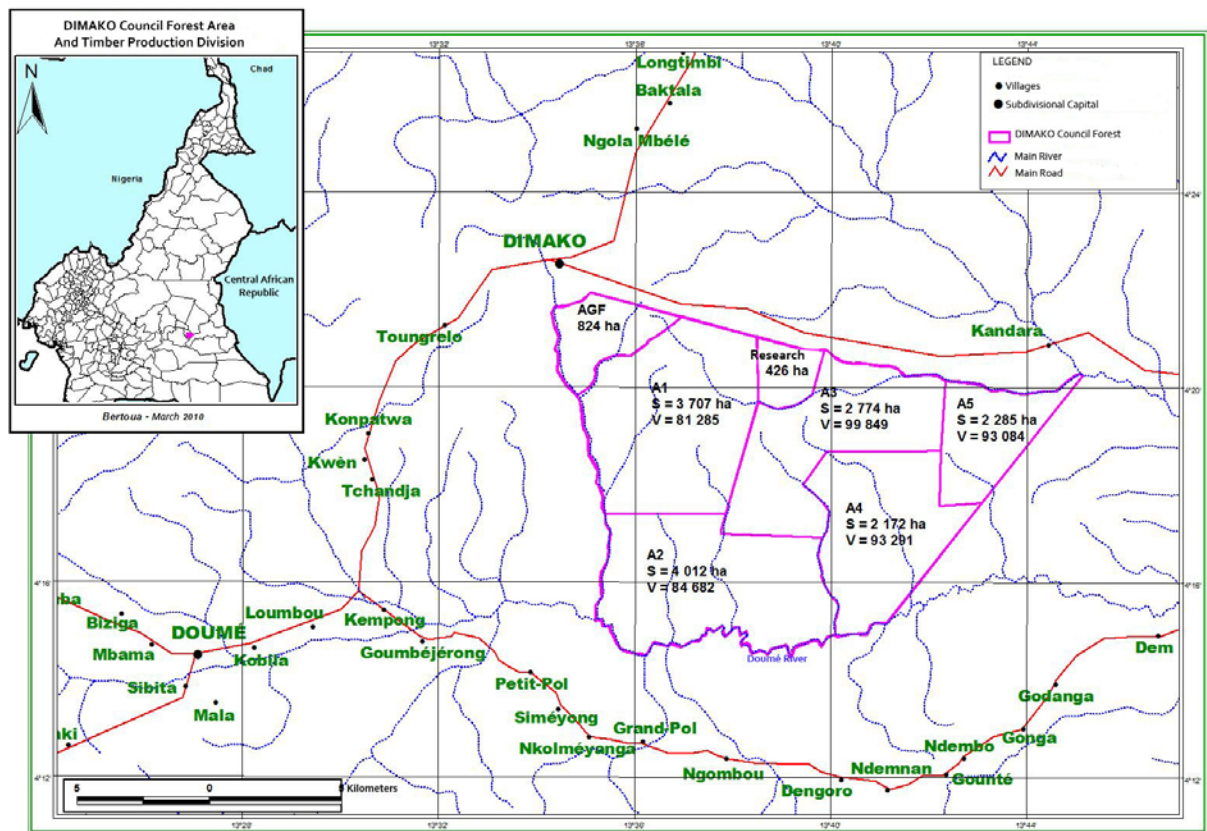
First of all, in total three management plans were established for the FCD. Of those three, two, the 2001 and 2006 versions, were officially approved by the forest administration and thus constituted the legal bases for the implementation of SFM in the FCD. The first plan to enter into effect was the 2001 version which was officially approved on 6 January 2003 by MINEF (Global Witness Cameroon 2004a, 1). It was under this plan that the council forest was legally harvested in 2004 and 2005. In the 2001 management plan, based on the management objectives of

---

<sup>108</sup> For its part, the fauna survey disclosed the presence of only 18 mammal species, such as gorilla and chimpanzee, and 196 bird species (*espèces aviaires*), 79 being endemic (Mekok Balara 2001a, 10). In general, villagers have noted the quasi-disappearance of animal species such as leopards (*Panthera pardus*); guerezas (*Colobus guereza*); African buffalos (*Syncerus caffer*); giant pangolins (*Manis gigantea*); gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*); common chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*); Bongo antelopes (*Tragelafus euryceros*); and elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) (Forêts et Terroirs 2000a, 4-5).

<sup>109</sup> This is due for instance, to the fact that when SFID opened harvesting roads, local residents took advantage and penetrated the northern zone to practice shifting agriculture as well as engage in other forest activities (Mekok Balara 2001a, 22). The process of human pressure on the forest appears cyclical in the area. Indeed, Mekok Balara (2001b, 89) also notes that agriculture pressures on the forest started in 1972 when SFID encountered some commercial difficulties and thus reduced the number of workdays to three days/week, giving the opportunity to Dimako residents to attend to their fields. Then, the pressure peaked in the 1990s with SFID increasing its activities as well as the creation of the Dimako High School and a local timber transport company. The pressure was reduced at the end of the 1990s because of numerous reasons such as forest fires, lack of roads to evacuate produces and so on.

development and conservation (Mekok Balara 2001a, 10), as Map 5.1 below illustrates, the FCD was segmented into three main areas (*séries*). The first area was reserved for timber harvesting (14,950 hectares) while the second was designated for botanical and ecological research purposes (426 hectares) (see also Assembé-Mvondo and Oyono 2004, 79).<sup>110</sup>



**Map 5.1. Area divisions of the FCD according to 2001 Management Plan (hectares)**

*Source:* Adolphe Ondoua and reproduced from (Mekok Balara 2001a, appendix, Map 14)

The last area of the council forest was set for agroforestry (824 hectares) and the objective here was to regenerate the forest cover lost to local villagers' old fallows as well as to

<sup>110</sup> That was the case because within the FCD CIRAD and the Institute for Agricultural Research and Development (IRAD) were already conducting and expected to pursue their study on Sapelli's characteristics (Mekok Balara 2001b, 88).



prevent the disappearance of certain tree species following harvesting operations (Mekok Balara 2001b, 88). The agroforestry area was necessary since it was estimated that 73 percent of that portion of the forest had been affected by shifting agriculture (see Forêts et Terroirs 2000a, 2).<sup>111</sup>

As the above map points out, besides the above three areas division, the timber harvesting area, which occupies the largest surface area, was subdivided into five Annual Coupes (*Assiette de Coupe Annuelle*) or (AC).<sup>112</sup> These ACs -labeled A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 on the map- holding on average more than 90,000 cubic meters were to be harvested for a five year period and then left to rest until the next rotation -defined in Cameroon as the space between two consecutive harvests at the same place (MINEF 2001, Article 6, section g)<sup>113</sup>- which was set at twenty five (25) years, the least according to forest rules and regulations at the time (see Mekok Balara 2001a, 32; 37).<sup>114</sup>

On top of the technical and economic reasons which motivated the design of the 2001 management plan,<sup>115</sup> politically, there was a specific reason for the choice of the five years AC

---

<sup>111</sup> The agroforestry area was further subdivided into four sectors: one reserved for plantation; one for support to natural regeneration; one for gathering the seedlings to be used for planting; and the last one to maintain a forest barrier around the agroforestry area (Mekok Balara 2001b, 89). Overall, with poaching, the other issue that this management plan had to grapple with concerned the threat represented by shifting agriculture (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 19).

<sup>112</sup> Technically, these were not AC since they were designed to be harvested for a five year period. Nevertheless, for consistency purposes, the term AC is utilized here.

<sup>113</sup> Karsenty et al. (2006, 132) note that in Cameroon the rotation and the felling cycle are used to refer to the same thing, though it need not be the case. In fact, while the rotation is simply defined as the time taken to harvest the forest from the first AAC and come back to the beginning, the felling cycle for its part refer to the interval between the first and second felling in the same plot (*parcelle*). Today, per administrative rule, the rotation is officially set at thirty years (see MINEF 2001, Art. 6, g).

<sup>114</sup> The overall commercial volume was 452,191 cubic meters for 32 harvestable tree species. This volume represented the estimated volume after applying market preferences. Furthermore, if using only the following six species, Ayous, Bossé-Clair (*Guarea cedrata*), Bossé-Foncé (*Guarea thompsonii*), Dibétou/Bibolo (*Lovoa trichilioides*), Iroko (*Milicia excelsa*), Sapelli, and Tali, the commercial volume would be limited to 196,646 cubic meters (Mekok Balara 2001, 38).

<sup>115</sup> Three technical and economic reasons formed the basis of the choice for the 25 years rotation period (Mekok Balara 2001a, 32-33). First, *Forêts et Terroirs* argued that based on the fact that the east side of the FCD had 'sufficiently' regenerated itself, 25 years appear sufficient for the council forest to naturally replenish itself. Second, to the extent that the FCD surface area reserved for timber production was small (14,950 hectares), the project team hypothesized that ACs from that rotation, on average about 3,000 hectares, would be about profitable

which was based on ‘democratic politics’.<sup>116</sup> In fact, as the Mayor of Dimako pointed out, in 2000 an AC equaled about 2,500 hectares. This meant that since the FCD timber area was subdivided into five ACs, in five years the council forest would have been totally harvested and the council would have to wait for the 25 years rotation to end in order to harvest the forest again. That formula did not suit the council, the mayor argued, therefore timber harvesting in the council forest would be aligned to coincide with the five years municipal councilors’ term (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 132-133). In that scheme, each elected municipal council, the mayor as well as the other twenty four municipal councilors, would be afforded the chance to harvest timber inside only one AC (Mekok Balara 2001a, 56; and Mongui 2001a, 133).

The argument was that at the end of the five year-municipal council term, Dimako residents could assess their elected officials based on their actual achievements, and then decide at the polls whether the team in office gets reelected or not (personal communication from a former project team member). That philosophy was the thrust of the first management plan; nonetheless when came the time to implement it, it immediately ran into conflict with the forest administration’s own guidelines. For instance, whereas the 2001 management plan had been officially approved as submitted, the forest administration insisted that instead of the five years AC, the forest be harvested on a yearly basis. In practice, that policy signifies no five years authorization; only one year at the time (see Global Witness Cameroon 2004b, 3). In the end, three years after taking effect the 2001 management was replaced.

---

for private commercial firms to venture into the council forest. The third and final technical-economic reason was that since the council forest was not subject to a 15 years-definitive agreement (*convention definitive*) as FMUs, setting the rotation period according to that of FMUs’ was unwarranted (Mekok Balara 2001a, 33).<sup>115</sup> Thus, for the project team, 25 years seemed the perfect choice technically and economically.

<sup>116</sup> It has to be noted that all the provisions of the 2001 management plan were approved by Dimako Council local authorities, whether reluctantly or not that is another matter.

### 5.7.3.2 The revised management plan (2006)

Around the years 2005-2006, the forest administration -now referred to as MINFOF- under new guidelines issued beforehand compelled the Dimako Council to revise the 2001 management plan to conform to the new legal framework (see CDKO 2006a). For the FCD, the year 2006 also fell on the five years obligatory period to revise forest management plans in the country.<sup>117</sup> As a result, in March 2006, Mayor Mongui submitted a new plan, which, although it sought to fulfill the guidelines of *Arrêté* 0222 – the main regulatory document for establishing and monitoring the management plans-, fell short as the mayor himself acknowledged in the letter accompanying the plan (CDKO 2006a).<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, the plan was approved on 22 March 2006 (MINFOF 2006).<sup>119</sup>

Among the central modifications, the 2006 management plan renamed and reorganized the three 2001 areas into timber production (15,286 hectares), protection (405 hectares), and agroforestry (587 hectares).<sup>120</sup> The rotation period by law being set at thirty (30) years (MINEF 2001, Article 6, section g), the management plan divided the FCD into six *Unités Forestières d'Exploitation* or Forest Exploitation Unit (FEU) and then into AACs (CDKO 2006b, 40). Similar to an AC a FEU is then subdivided into five smaller AACs which means that a FEU

---

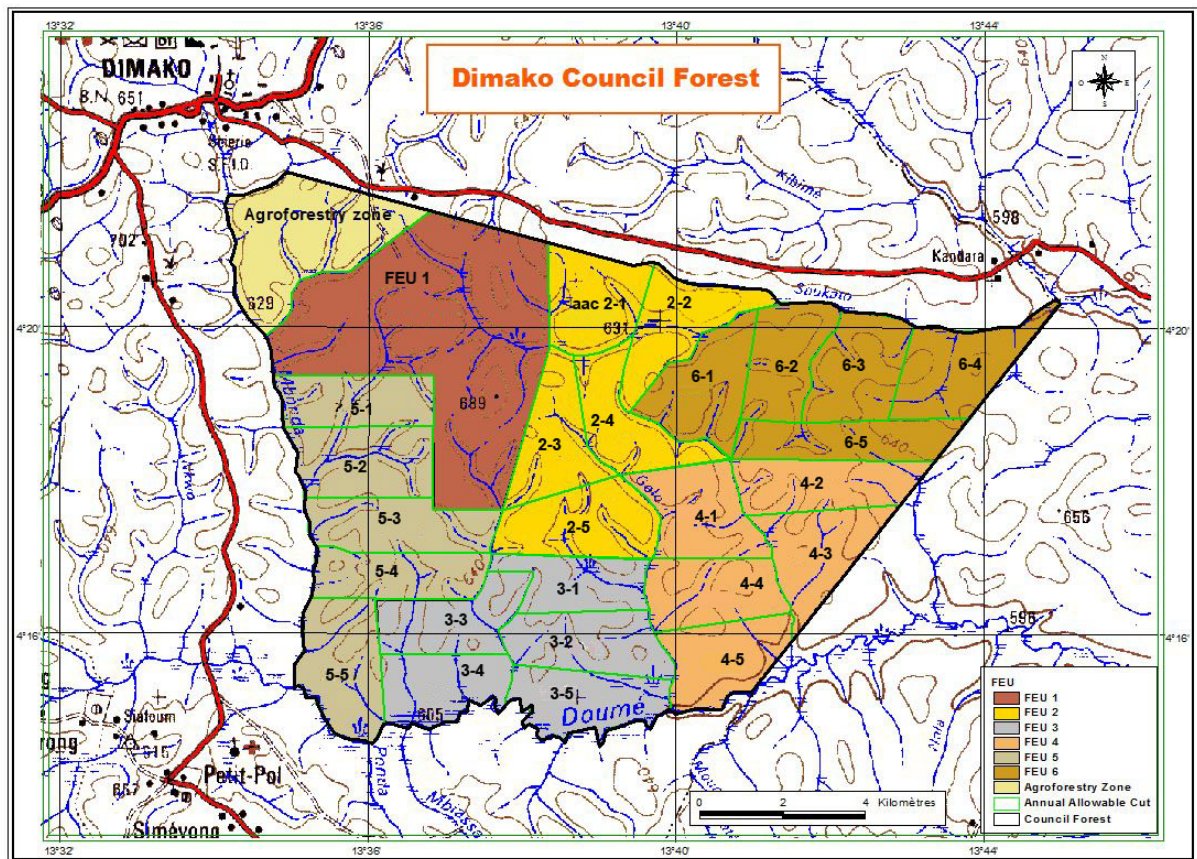
<sup>117</sup> In effect, forest rules and regulations stipulate that in spite of the management plan being approved for thirty years, it is nonetheless amendable every five years. 2006 in that view coincided to the year for which changes were needed since the management plan was submitted in 2001 -though only officially approved in 2003, two years later.

<sup>118</sup> *Arrêté* 0222, which was issued by MINEF on 25 May 2001, outlines in detail the procedures for establishing, approving, monitoring, and controlling management plans in the PFE's forests (see MINEF, 2001).

<sup>119</sup> For instance, a new forest inventory, though required, was not completed. After the approval of the management plan, the council still had to provide the forest administration with FEU 2 management plan and produce the environmental impact study (see MINFOF 2006a).

<sup>120</sup> The 2006 division totals 16,278 hectares instead of the official surface area of 16,240 hectares meaning either two things. First, it could be either a computing error or a discrepancy due to the software used and the fact that the official boundary are certified by the national cartography institute which, the researcher has heard, still uses 'physical' maps to draw boundary. Second, this could simply means that the FCD has overstepped its boundary, which local villagers argue it has by encroaching into their fields. In any case, the difference, 38 hectares, is meaningless for the argument of this study.

cannot be officially harvested at once. The implication of the change was that over was the five year AC; instead of harvesting about 3,000 hectares on average, now the council was afforded an annual average of 598 hectares to harvest or about five times smaller than in the previous plan.



**Map 5.2. Dimako Council Forest FEU and AAC divisions according to the 2006 management plan**

*Source: Adolphe Ondoua, CTFC Bertoua, adapted from (CDKO 2006b, 44)*

Map 5.2 above illustrates the actual FEU and AAC configuration of the FCD following the 2006 revision. From the map, two features are immediately noticeable. Firstly, except for the agroforestry area, designated agroforestry zone on the map, the current division does not include the protection area (refer to Map 5.1 for comparison). In point of fact, where previously was located the botanical and research area, replaced in 2006 on paper by the protection area, sits part of FEU 1 and 2 (AAC 2-1). This raises two immediate points. Either the 2006 management plan

simply repeated the 2001 area division without consideration for the actual division, or the area division was never delimited on the ground, thus the map could not reproduce what did not exist. In any case, as Chapter 6.0 shall illustrate, irrespective of this division the field evidence indicates that forest harvesting in the council forest is being conducted throughout the entire forest.

Finally, in this revised version, the mayor affirmed that in spite of the lack of a new inventory as well as adherence to the forest administration guidelines, the council would focus on regeneration and reforestation (*reboisement*) in the agroforestry area and in the FEUs (CDKO 2006a). That focus on regeneration and reforestation was surprising inasmuch as in the 2006 revised management plan, the agroforestry and protection areas respectively decreased by 237 and 61 hectares, while the area dedicated to timber harvesting expanded by 336 hectares as mentioned above. Rather than a focus on regeneration and reforestation, these newer provisions suggested that timber harvesting was still the main emphasis as the area dedicated to it had been enlarged. In spite of these changes, the 2006 version was almost similar to the 2001 management plan. A key difference, nonetheless, existed from before. While not explicitly mentioned in the 2006 revised edition, instead of one monitoring commission, the CCG, there were now two. In the intervening period, a new commission had been created. Both are described below.

### **5.7.3.3 The forest monitoring commissions**

To begin with, it has to be stated that despite local villagers eventually accepting the creation of the council forest, in the beginning some villagers were skeptical of the initiative. To illustrate, the southern located Pol Sector villages, which historically have claimed ownership of the forest lands, objected to the project, in particular because it included all the council villages

(Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 3).<sup>121</sup> The Pol argue that since other villages had already benefited from the SSV 1,000 CFAF Tax per cubic meter (see section 4.2.3.1 above, particularly note 49), and now their turn had come, it would be unfair to gazette the forest for the entire council or include the other villages into the council forest scheme, for that meant that “they would eat [receive money] twice” (Sangkwa 2001, 128). For the Pol, the issue was one of equity, and since the area reserved for the council forest was in their view a potential site for a SSV, thus they were set to receive the 1,000 CFAF tax, they would be the losers from the whole council forest project.

At a more important level, for the purpose of this study, the second set of criticisms raised by local villagers during the *Forêts et Terroirs*’ village surveys was directed at the Mayor of Dimako. In truth, local villagers’ opposition or skepticism to the project was also motivated by what they saw as the risk of capture of the FCD by the mayor as well as the perceived lack of independence of the municipal council vis-à-vis the mayor. Because of his dual status as a private logger and mayor as well as what they saw as his (mis)handling of local affairs, the villagers argued that the mayor represented a threat for the council forest project, for a risk existed that he, the *logger*, might capture the council forest for his own benefit. A *Forêts et Terroirs* report summarized the villagers’ fears in the following terms:

[For local villagers] the municipal council is not credible in their eyes because the municipal councilors have become yes-men (*béni oui oui*) when they meet during the municipal council [sessions]. [Local villagers have also expressed a critical judgment about] the person of the mayor for his dual hats as *logger-mayor*. *They are more concerned about the logger than the mayor side and are afraid that the*

---

<sup>121</sup> The Baka pygmies also were lukewarm to the idea because they believed since they had been traditionally excluded by the Bantu from any council benefit, the same would happen with the council forest (Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 3). On the whole, local villagers’ claims were also motivated by the fact that the council forest constituted part of their livelihood zone (fields, gathering forest products, hunting and fishing). For the specific land claims of the two villages of Koumadjap and Nguinda, see (Assembé and Oyono 2004).

*logger's interests will take over those of the mayor on the FCD issue* (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 17, emphasis added).

Finally, another report commented that the villagers also questioned the mayor's eagerness for the establishment of the council forest; they saw it as a sign that it was for *his own interests* that the mayor was a supporter of the initiative (Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 2, emphasis added). Because of all these concerns about equity, and most importantly, the fear of capture by the *logger-mayor* as well as the obedience of the municipal council to him, to assuage local villagers' concerns the first monitoring commission was established.

#### *The Consultative Management Committee (CCG)*

In the first place, albeit the Dimako Council and the *Forêts et Terroirs* project created the *Comité Consultatif de Gestion de la Forêt Communale de Dimako* or the Consultative Management Committee (CCG), in practice the structure differs a bit from the requirements later set out in the 1999 MINFOF *Decision* 1354 regarding the gazetting process in the PFE (MINEF 1999). On the other hand, the creation of the CCG on 22 June 1999 by *Deliberation* 4 of the municipal council met the official requirement of involving local populations, since in its midst the organization included local villagers' elected representatives (see CRDKO 1999a). In line with their reservations about the independence of the municipal council, local villagers preferred not to involve councilors in the FCD daily management, and argued instead that an elected independent body was needed. As a *Forêts et Terroirs* report observed then, local villagers "believe that this way each village will see its interests protected and that the management of the council forest will be well monitored" (Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 4). However, the CCG that was established on top of the seventeen (17) elected members also comprised other members -

either appointed or members of the council staff- with the mayor or his representative presiding over the commission (CRDKO 1999a, Art. 2), already putting in doubts its independence.<sup>122</sup>

Five months after the creation of the CCG, on 12 October 1999, Mayor Mongui followed the creation of the CCG with the issuance of the *Municipal Arrêté* 11 outlining the organization's role. *Article* 1 of that *Arrêté* defining the role and duties of the CCG stated that the organization was mainly responsible for the following three matters:

- a) To *participate* in all activities leading to the final gazetting of that said forest for the council.
- b) To *recommend* to the municipal council *any suitable ideas leading to the sound, profitable, transparent and sustainable management* of that said forest.
- c) To *recommend* to the municipal council a *sound plan* for the *utilization of the forest revenues* by adequately *choosing projects to be realized village by village* in line with the five-year campaign plan set out by the municipal council and according to the law in force (CRDKO 1999b, emphasis added).

With the first objective accomplished in 2001 with the reception of the gazetting decree, the two remaining roles of the CCG were not only to *recommend* the municipal council ways to 'soundly, profitably, transparently, and sustainably' manage the council forest, but also propose local development projects to be realized in each of the council villages. Apart from the adoption of the forest boundaries by local villagers as well as the revision of the management plan -where

---

<sup>122</sup> Except for the president, the CCG members included the following: the *Forêts et Terroirs* representative or the head of the forest administration local UTO-Doumé as *advisers* (both organizations have since been phased out); Dimako Council Secretary General as the CCG *Secretary General*; the Presidents of the three commissions of the municipal council Great works; Social Affairs; and Finances as *Members*; another *member* was the Bakoum-Pol superior chief André Bangda Junior, currently the second deputy mayor; two other *members* included the *Chef de poste forestier* or Forestry Post Chief (the equivalent of a forest ranger) locally known as *CP*; and the Ministry of Agriculture local representative, the Agriculture and Rural Development Subdivisional Delegate (*Délégué d'Arrondissement d'Agriculture et Développement Rural*). The Subdivisional Delegate of the Ministry of Agriculture although mentioned in the *Forêts et Terroirs* document, was not explicitly mentioned in the *Deliberation* 4 creating the CCG. In practice, despite the CCG organization being officially composed of all these people, locally only elected villagers are known by the appellation of CCG members. Furthermore, these elected CCG members simply refer to themselves as CCGs. The fact that only elected CCGs are called CCG members has led to some confusion for outside observers insofar that they were looking for a CPF as the law stipulates and could not find any, but only CCG members representing the CCG organization. In this study, when the appellation of CCG members is utilized, it is *only* reserved for villages elected representatives.



the CCG members had been involved and consulted- they had also concurrently with local councilors under *Forêts et Terroirs* trained in the basics and techniques of SFM as well as the monitoring of timber harvesting in the FCD (see Borie 2001; Efandène 2000). With that last step, the stage was set for both the CCG and the municipal council to experiment with the management of natural resources in Cameroun with the municipal council, including the mayor, holding the decision-making powers for projects submitted by the CCG.

To help the CCG fulfill its mission, a forest register (*sommier*) of the forest to be used as a management tool was produced (see Ngniado n.d.). The forest register was conceived as the archival holder of all forest operations, whether timber harvesting or not, as well as a monitoring and control mechanism. It was designed to be consulted by local villagers upon request as well as allow CCG members to monitor and control the private commercial firm which would harvest the FCD. However, during a training session, local villagers expressed doubt as to whether the *sommier* would be available for all to consult, for they feared that the *logger-mayor* would try to control everything and preclude the other councilors as well as CCG members from accessing the document (see Efandène 2000, 7).

Notwithstanding the doubts raised before and during the project, the hope of local villagers as well as the *Forêts et Terroirs* team was that the organization would serve as an accountability mechanism in the management of the council forest as well as utilization of its revenues (see Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 18).<sup>123</sup> Indeed, as far as forest management was

---

<sup>123</sup> Since the establishment of the CCG, two elections have been held. The first 17 village CCG members were elected in 1999 under *Forêts et Terroirs*, but their term was officially slated to have commenced on 3 February 2000. Overall, the first CCG members served for eight years, that is from 1999 until 2007 - apparently got their mandate extended by the mayor to coincide with the 2007 nationwide municipal elections- when new elections were held and fourteen 'pioneer' members were replaced. The first CCG was composed of the representatives of the following villages: Longtimbi, Baktala, Toungrelo, Kouen, Djandja, Mayos, Petit-Pol, Simeyong, Nkolmeyanga, Grand Pol, Nguinda, Kandala, Ngolambélé and four representatives for Dimako town. Following the council villages reorganization, the organization was expanded to twenty two (22) elected members who are scheduled to

concerned, they were comforted in that belief when Mayor Mongui declared in 2000 during a communication to a *Forêts et Terroirs*' workshop that the CCG "main role was to monitor the strict adherence (*strict respect*) to the management plan [provisions]" (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 134).

### *The Monitoring Commission (CSE)*

Among the local organizations created during the FCD project, nowhere in the Dimako Council or *Forêts et Terroirs* written records is mentioned the name or the role of the *Commission de Suivi de l'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale* or the Monitoring Commission (CSE). Indeed, the monitoring commission was apparently never envisaged as part of the overall framework of forest management in Dimako Council. That was the case because -although a point of contention as the next chapter shall demonstrate- the role of monitoring the council forest was already reserved to the abovementioned CCG. A former member of *Forêts and Terroirs* for instance observed that when the mayor raised the issue of establishing a monitoring commission, the idea was objected to because the prime reason for creating the CCG was exactly to monitor the FCD. Additionally, the fear was that by adding another institutional layer, this would blur responsibilities between these separate organizations and complicate the task of monitoring the FCD.

Despite that warning -or because of it as the next chapter shall argue- on 27 April 2004, a month after the official start of forest harvesting in the council forest, the municipal council

---

serve until 2012. The 'status' of villages being officially bestowed on by the central state, in 1999 only 17 villages had been officially recognized. Hence, for instance, the Ngombol and Akano villages which now have the full status of villages depended before on the Grand Pol chieftaincy. Because of those changes, five villages were allowed to vote their own CCG members. These villages are Petit-Ngolambélé, Tahatte, Tonkoumbé, Bongossi and Nkolbikon were allowed to vote their own CCG members.

approved the creation of the CSE to monitor the activities of the FCD. The following day, in *Memorandum* Number 02, Mayor Mongui outlined the CSE structure as well as responsibilities (see CRDKO 2004a). To justify the creation of the CSE and assuage his critics, the mayor argued that the organization was warranted because “we then realized that we needed an information gathering organization since being the [council] chief executive, the logging manager only answers to me. So by municipal decision, we created a light organization the Monitoring Commission” (Mayor Mongui, 9 March 2010).

Officially, the commission’s responsibilities include the following:

Gather every day from the FCD logging manager [*chef de chantier*] all the figures pertaining to the harvest inventory; felling; and skidding operations. Daily, the logging manager will provide gross volumes of timber on landings according to species; the sold quantities containing identification of the buyer, as written in the transportation letters [*lettres de voiture*]. [Nonetheless], CSE members do not have authority to a) monitor scaling operations; b) appraising the bids [*l’expertise des lots*]; c) in summary, their role is essentially to collect information from the logging manager and not to substitute him (CRDKO 2004a).<sup>124</sup>

The CSE as outlined by the 2004 *Memorandum* is composed of seven members: three municipal councilors; and three CCG members all under the supervision of the mayor or his representative (CRDKO 2004a). Membership in the commission is set at three months by municipal council term (five years) and is nonrenewable “in order to allow the involvement of more people, crucial element for the transparency [*sic*] which must exist in the exploitation of this forest” (CRDKO 2004a).<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> As another critical responsibility, the memo also afforded CSE members the right of say regarding the type of transaction for the sale of forest products, either no bid contract (*vente de gré à gré*), or auctions (*vente aux enchères*), as well as the choice of clients, and finally the enforcement of user rights in the FCD (CRDKO 2004a).

<sup>125</sup> What is more, like the CCG, the CSE can be dissolved by the municipal council at any time (CRDKO 2004).

In order to monitor forest activities, CSE members were organized into a three person-team composed of one deputy mayor, a councilor, and a CCG member. That system which involved one or two three members team alternating inspections inside the forest came to be known in town as the CSE *rotation* (see CRDKO 2004a).<sup>126</sup> By including CCG members in the CSE, although the organization was not formally dissolved, this effectively meant that the CCG role, especially regarding the monitoring of the FCD, was subsumed into that of the CSE, which the study shall argue in Chapter 6.0 was the main objective all along. Lastly, save the CCG and the CSE, three other Dimako Council local organizations are officially ‘implicated’ into the management of the council forest: the council executive (the mayor and his deputies); the municipal council; and the *Cellule de la Foresterie Communale* or the Technical Unit (CFC) officially established in 2008.

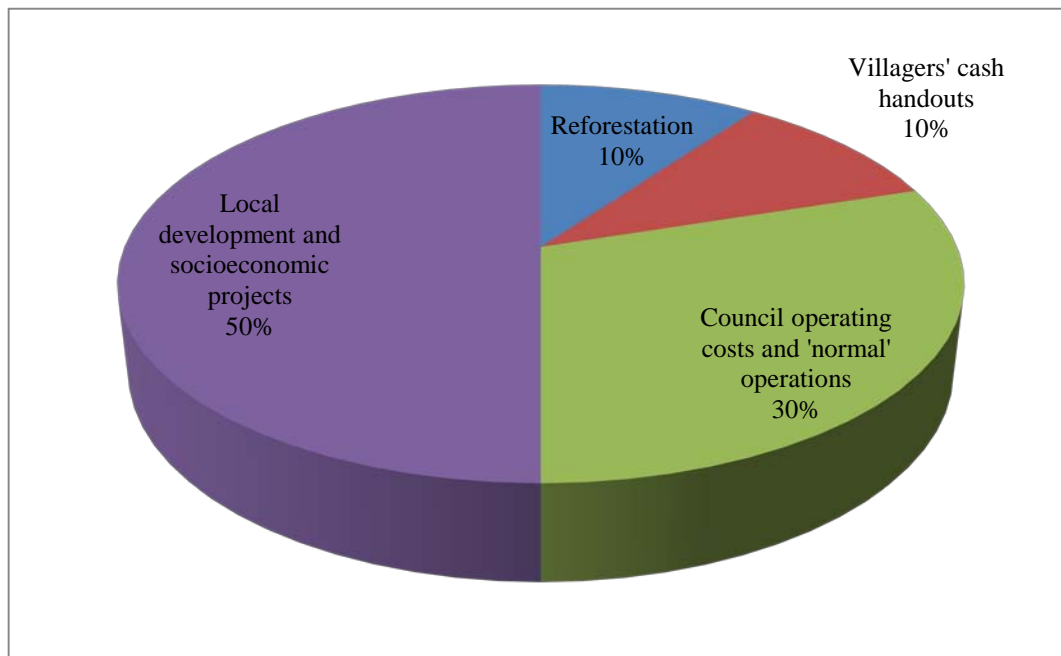
#### **5.7.3.4 The revenue sharing formula**

The forest management plan adopted and the CCG in place, in prelude to the start of harvesting operations, the next issue that the council and local villagers had to solve was how to redistribute the council forest revenues. That issue was resolved on 6 August 2003, a year before the official start of activities, when the Dimako Council Municipal Council adopted *Deliberation* 7 or what is locally known as the revenue sharing formula (*clef de répartition des revenus de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*) (CRDKO 2003a). That *Deliberation*, as Figure 5.5 below illustrates, organized the distribution mechanism of the FCD revenues among four major components. While 50 percent of the forest revenues were reserved for *local development and*

---

<sup>126</sup> From the interviews on the ground, it appears that the CSE started its activities earlier in an informal capacity before the mayor decided to establish an ‘official’ schedule for 2008 and 2009. Compared to the CCG, almost no detailed written records exist about the CSE role, schedule or *rotation*.

*socioeconomic projects*, 30 percent was set aside for the *council operating costs* as well as for its ‘normal’ operations.



**Figure 5.5. The 2003 revenue sharing formula for the FCD revenues**

Source: (CRDKO 2003a)

Finally, of the remaining 20 percent, 10 percent each were devoted to *reforesting the forest* and to *direct in-cash handouts* to local villagers (CRDKO 2003a). The local villagers’ 10 percent came to be known in town as the ‘10 percent to ‘eat’.<sup>127</sup> The 2003 revenues sharing formula is significant not only because it is the lens through which the timber revenues are

---

<sup>127</sup> The 10 percent in-cash handouts are exclusively reserved for Dimako Council natives, since they are the ‘owners’ of the forest. As the study shall illustrate, tensions have arisen more generally about the 10 percent issue, most notably about its distribution and also because of what some non natives or natives not residing in villages chosen for distribution perceive as blatant discrimination. Finally, because of some confusion among some Cameroonian observers, it is important to note that the Dimako 10 percent scheme is different from the *RFA* 10 percent, though it probably borrowed from that. In Dimako, one is talking about amount ranging between 5-20 million theoretically while in the case of the *RFA* the money involved is a lot of more significant and can go as high as 70 million CFAF.

supposedly allocated in the council, but also because part of the argument of the study is built around it.

### 5.7.3.5 The sudden increase of revenues

The adoption of the revenues sharing formula in order to better direct the use of the money was critical because as Table 5.2 below shows the council total revenues under the FCD have increased exponentially. In effect, the table discloses that over the 2004-2010 period, the council total revenues have hovered above 100 million CFAF each year, with a peak in 2005 of about 350 million CFAF, of which timber revenues represented more than 95 percent.

**Table 5.2. Total council (TC) and FCD revenues, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)\***

<i>Year</i>	<i>TC Revenues</i>	<i>FCD revenues</i>	<i>% FCD R/TCR</i>
2004	250,580,593	179,603,808	71.7
2005	360,839,373	345,598,854	95.8
2006	135,248,155	84,912,000	62.8
2007	204,435,868	171,726,821	84
2008	184,505,888	158,353,594	85.8
2009	385,788,092	113,480,586 <sup>1</sup>	29.4
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	1,521,397,969	1,053,675,663	69.3
2010	313,631,287	227,500,000	72.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,835,029,256	1,281,175,663	69.8

*Source:* (CDKO 2004b, 2005b, 2006c, 2007c, 2008c; 2009a, 4; 2009b, 2010d)

\*2009 total council revenues are projected figures from the council provisional budget. 2010 figures of both total council revenues as well as FCD revenues are projections from the council provisional budget.

<sup>1</sup> The figures of 113,480,586 CFAF in timber revenues was reported by the council for the period of January-July 2009. However, the figures used in the council provisional budget for FCD revenues totaled 87 million CFAF. For consistency purposes, the January-July 2009 figure is used in this table.

Overall, the table demonstrates that in the six years period of 2004-2009, the council has earned in total revenues approximately 1.06 billion CFAF (2.1 million USD), an average of about 176 million CFAF (352,000 USD) a year, with the FCD alone accounting for more than two thirds of total revenues. If the 2010 projections held, the council would have earned 228 million CFAF (456,000 USD) in additional timber revenues that year. This is in contrast to the previous six years period (1998-2003) where combined revenues, which had been declining, reached a little more than 160 million CFAF (322,000 USD) -around 30 million CFAF annually (60,000 USD) (see Appendix H). This means that under the FCD from 2004 to 2009 Dimako Council total revenues have approximately increased tenfold from the 1998-2003 years.

#### **5.7.4 A promising experience or an ominous presage of things to come?**

When the *Forêts et Terroirs* project ended in the summer of 2001, the FCD was a reality. On 13 June 2001, the prime minister's office issued *Decree 386* which, by gazetting the area now encompassing the FCD, officially transferred that portion of forest to the Dimako Council. That 16,240 hectares area of forest was no longer without a 'legal' proprietor; the area, now the FCD, was definitively part of the council private estate and was specifically designated for timber production (ROC 2001, Art. 2, 1). Moreover, the decree reaffirmed two principles of the 1994 *Forest Law*. First, all timber harvesting operations within the forest had to be conducted according to the officially approved management plan (ROC 2001, Art. 2, 2). Second, and equally important for this study, "*forest products of all type* obtained through the exploitation of the Dimako Council Forest *exclusively* belong to the said council" (ROC 2001, Art. 2,3 emphasis added).

This was a sign that undoubtedly the council forestry experiment was in progress in Dimako, and as a *Forêts et Terroirs* report had optimistically remarked earlier, “the interest shown by the Dimako Council for the [sustainable] management of this forest as well as its relatively small area represent tools for success” (Forêts et Terroirs 1997, 12). For previously cautious local villagers, their main hope now, as another *Forêts et Terroirs* document observed, was that the forest revenues *be equitably and fully used* in their interest as well as *invested for the benefit of all villages* and particularly those closest to the forest (Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 18, emphasis added).

#### **5.7.4.1 The self-harvesting mode**

The request that the timber revenues be *equitably* and *fully* used as well as *invested* for local development was significant because the expectation was that the royalties paid by the logging company would be substantial, and indeed as the preceding table has illustrated they turned out to be. For that reason, the final major decision that the Dimako Council had to take regarded the selection of the subcontracting timber harvesting firm which would better suit the council interests. Though the law permitted different modes of operating the FCD (see section 4.3.5), the consensus during the local consultations of *Forêts et Terroirs* was that the council would not involve itself in forest harvesting. Indeed, the expectation was that “the council chooses a logger through the request for tender process (*procédure d’appel d’offre[s]*) and contracts with it an exploitation agreement (*convention d’exploitation*) for 15 years” (Efandène 2000, 5).

In that original scheme -as with the other existing council forests- once the forest subcontracted, the role of the council executive-led mayor would be limited to supervising the subcontracting firm, while the municipal council would continue to play its deliberative role and



the CCG was set as *the* monitor of the implementation of the management plan provisions (see Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 133-134). However, in opposition to the local consensus of the *Forêts et Terroirs*' days, the municipal council led by Mayor Mongui refused to subcontract the FCD, electing instead to self-harvest the forest. Officially, the self-management regime means that all forest harvesting operations are conducted internally, and the council *only* elects to outside contractors when it is unable to conduct the task itself, even for complex tasks. It also means that the mayor, as the council chief executive, is the one responsible for the daily management of the FCD.<sup>128</sup>

For Mayor Mongui, the decision to self-harvest the forest was taken because the council wanted “to benefit from the gross margin”, that is benefit from most of the timber revenues. Moreover, Dimako Council First Deputy Mayor André Zéla Noumendjala added that the choice of self-management was based on the fact that “this avoid[ed] wasting timber that classical logging companies are known for. They only have financial profit as the leitmotiv and disregard other important objectives such as conservation and the rational management of forests” (23 February 2010).

Thus, from the mayor and his first deputy, two main reasons were at the heart of the council decision to self-harvest the FCD. Whereas, for Mayor Mongui, as a logger involved in forest harvesting before the FCD, the issue was simply a business one, *i.e.*, benefit from the gross

---

<sup>128</sup> The task of assisting the mayor rests with the Technical Unit (CFC) which is tasked with fulfilling and requesting all administrative documents to the forest administration as well as forest harvesting operations. These operations are conducted by a team of local villagers hired by the council through a six months rotative system under the management of the CFC head who only answers to the mayor. Only two people the CFC head and the logging manager work full-time while the rest of the workers are concerned with the rotative system. The rotative system is also locally known as the ‘rotation’ and is officially in effect for six months. In theory, it works as follows. All local villagers of the council with qualifications in timber harvesting submit their resume to the council authorities and a commission chaired by the first deputy mayor selects the workers for six months and the process starts anew at the end of the period. During the so-called selection process, an effort is made to include all villages so as to be representative. Nonetheless, in practice the system never worked and is broken for the simple reason that the mayor has reportedly captured the forest and thus employs people according to his own will.

margin, and this would be achieved by the removal of the middle man that a private commercial firm represented. By contrast, for his deputy Mayor Zéla, a former CCG member, it was out of regard for the rational or sustainable management of the forest that the council elected to self-harvest the FCD. What is more, Mayor Zéla did not believe that a private commercial firm could at the same time seek profit and care for the preservation of the forest over the long term. In other words, for him, profit seeking was incompatible with sustainable management; only, the council could balance the two objectives of harvesting the forest for ‘profit making’ and ‘sustainably’ manage it.

That was the case because not only was the council the elected local government and the representative of local villagers, thus presumably having local interests at heart, but also because the council, in contrast to the ‘short’ term profit-motivated view of private commercial firms, harbored a long term view.

#### **5.7.4.2 The *logger-mayor* and the capture of the council forest**

Though it was perfectly legal, that the Dimako Council opted to self-harvest the forest was perilous for three interrelated reasons. First, as mentioned above the decision stood in contrast to what was agreed to locally during the village consultations as a prelude to the official creation of the FCD. Second, the council as an entity had never been engaged in forest harvesting, hence had no experience nor equipment or machines for that type of activity. Third, the decision was further startling in two respects. In the first place, in town Mayor Mongui was known to be involved in forest harvesting through his now-defunct private commercial firm FODDI. In fact, the preceding lines noted that local villagers were at first skeptical of the entire project insofar as they feared that the council forest might be a ploy designed to benefit the mayor’s company. Second, the mayor’s local reputation as far as forest harvesting was

concerned was that of a logger concerned more with short-term profit than the long term preservation of the forest. As CCG member 11 recalled about the mayor's forest activities around the council:

One year the mayor came around here to log the forest. He did not arrange the road; logging trucks came by quickly until the mayor withdrew his forest equipment. He logged the forest, and then left, abandoning a lot of timber saying that the timber was sick, that it had defects. He said that timber had diarrhea because water was flowing inside. He said that the timber was bad; it had this disease and so and so and thus abandoned the timber inside the forest. It was in 1998 even before the FCD was created; [it was at the time] with his logging company FODDI (7 September 2010).

In truth, the municipal council decision to self-harvest the forest was risky given the risk of the conflict of interest with the mayor being a logger at the same time; a risk, as this chapter described, which prompted the creation of the CCG because of local villagers' disdain for the councilors' subservience -the *béni oui* or yes-man councilors- vis-à-vis the mayor. On the other hand, because of the *béni oui oui*, it was almost certain that everything Mayor Mongui would propose to his fellow councilors would be accepted given his domination of the municipal council. As a *Forêts et Terroirs*' report already quoted above warned "the populations believe that the management of the council affairs is not good. They say that for the moment everything seems to be done by the mayor of Dimako who impose his ideas on the municipal council which accepts everything that he proposes without constructive criticism. They are very preoccupied by this situation and are afraid that the *management of the council forest becomes the personal business of the mayor*" (Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 3-4, emphasis added).

Because of these fears about the *logger-mayor* Mongui, *Forêts et Terroirs* and local villagers had argued that the mayor had to be primarily involved in this project in his capacity of a council elected official. By acting as a council elected official, it was believed the mayor would

be compelled to ensure the defense of all the council villages' interests, not his company or self-interest. As a project team member commented, "The Mayor of the Dimako Rural Council must be *frank* (*doit jouer franc jeu*) and should only involve himself in this endeavor as *mayor* and not *logger*. Any other act taken be it near or within the council forest shall *doom* the project of the council forest" (Mendouga Mebenga 1999, 5, emphasis added).

All along villagers had been skeptical of Mayor Mongui's intentions towards the FCD; they had sensed that he harbored a desire to capture the council forest for his own benefit. Apparently, they were on point, for in the end the decision to self-harvest the forest was in reality a ruse by the mayor that allowed him to capture the council forest. One local actor to immediately notice the situation was the staff of the Technical Operational Unit or *Unité Technique Opérationnelle de Dimako-Doumé* (UTO-Dimako-Doumé). The UTO, populated by former staff members of *Forêts et Terroirs* -some of whom were also forest administration officials- had been established following the termination of the project.<sup>129</sup>

Among its main duty, the UTO had for mission to help the Dimako Council transition into its new role of local natural resources manager. Nonetheless, some in the UTO staff were not content with the direction of the FCD, for they had seen how the experiment had slowly veered from its original goal and immediately the confrontation with the mayor ensued.

Benjamin Singer (2008, 98) remarked for instance that:

The UTO...turned out to have little effect in the field. The mayor of Dimako, on top of his own two logging companies that operated nearby, took over the management of the newly created council forest. Criticisms of the forest's management by UTO staff set their relationship off on a bad footing. According to UTO staff, the mayor saw nothing more in the UTO than the eyes and ears of the Provincial Delegation of the Ministry of Environment and Forests with whom he also had a conflictual relationship.

---

<sup>129</sup> The *Forêts et Terroirs* project also transferred all of the project assets (data, documents, equipment, vehicles and so on) to the UTO (for more see also Singer 2008, 98).

With the UTO now out of the way, a task which was officially completed with its dismantling in 2005 by the forest administration, the road was wide open for the Mayor of Dimako to fulfill his ambition of becoming a *Big Man*. Through the capture of the council forest, he could acquire the resources needed to become a viable local, regional and later national political actor. As it shall become plain by the end of the study, though local villagers and the project team had missed the ‘real’ motive of Mayor Mongui, that is the mayor sought to increase his political power and use the council forest as a springboard to higher political offices not only financially benefit from the timber revenues, the next chapters shall show how prescient some of the local villagers’ as well as *Forêts et Terroirs*’ warnings turned out to be.

## 5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter was organized around one main theme: the presentation of the Dimako Council as well as the Dimako Council Forest project. The chapter commenced by describing Dimako Council political, economic and social organization. The chapter then proceeded with the history of both French-funded projects API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs*, the forerunners of the council forest. Of particular importance here, the study traced the genesis of some of the predicaments that the council forest experiment has faced since the beginning. In the same section, a subsection was devoted to presenting in detail the two management plans of the FCD as well as the local organizations and the institutional arrangements that were purportedly put in place to assist the council in its new role of natural resource manager. Finally, the chapter concluded by arguing that immediately before the start of forest harvesting in the FCD, the Mayor of Dimako had captured the forest, hence already planted the seeds for the experiment to

go awry primarily out of his desire to be the only one to benefit from the council forest and use it as a springboard for higher political offices.

## **RESULTS: DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE MAKING OF A ‘BIG MAN’ IN THE DIMAKO COUNCIL**

The following three chapters present the results of the field study regarding forest management decentralization in the Dimako Council. First, Chapter 6.0 demonstrates how the *logger-mayor* has managed the council forest, and how allegedly he has disregarded the management plan provisions during forest harvesting. Second, Chapter 7.0 describes how the timber resources have been allegedly used to enrich the mayor, rather than for local development or the improvement of local villagers’ conditions. Finally, Chapter 8.0, the chapter before the conclusion, demonstrates how, thanks to the forest resources, a relatively unknown local politician, the Mayor of Dimako, went from being the mayor of an impoverished rural council, to becoming a major national actor. In so doing, these three chapters shall illustrate the damage, through the forest management decentralization, that the decentralization theory has actually brought about on the ground.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IS DEAD!**

“The management plan is the basic tool for good forest management. Unfortunately, on the ground people establish the document for the [forestry] administration since it is a requirement. They take an officially licensed contractor, establish it and put it aside after. They do it for the administration, that is why you need people on the ground [to ensure implementation]” (A forest administration official, 13 June 2010).

“Currently the council forest does not exist anymore. They [the workers] come into people’s fields to cut timber (...) the council forest is finished; really the council forest was planned for twenty five years, but in six years, it’s all over and all that is in people’s fields it’s over too (...) a forest scheduled to last for twenty five years, but in six years, it’s over!” (Chief 28, 17 September 2010)

“Dimako’s forest is about to finish. You have some mayors [talking about the Mayor of Dimako] who think that they have to plunder the forest before they retire” (A Cameroonian forester, 29 May 2010).

When the Dimako Council experience as the first Cameroonian [elected] local government to own and manage a council forest officially debuted in March 2004, the council had lost many of its former residents and the council’s fiscal resources were dwindling thanks to the 2002 departure of SFID. With the new experiment underway, at stake for the council was an opportunity to show the first council forest in the Congo Basin region managed according to new ‘sustainable’ practices emphasizing respect for the forest social, ecological and economic functions. This chapter describes the consequences of the mayor’s capture of the FCD, in particular regarding the implementation of the two forest management plans’ main provisions;



the roles of both the local monitoring commissions as well as of the forest administration tasked with law enforcement in the country's forests.

## **6.1 IF YOU CAN DO AWAY, DO AWAY WITH IT OR THE DISREGARDING OF THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In Cameroon, as mentioned earlier, since the 1994 *Forest Law*, every forest title holder in the PFE is required to implement a management plan as part of the country's commitment to SFM. Indeed, in the country, the management plan remains the primary tool to implement SFM. Over the six years since timber harvesting operations began in the FCD, the forest has been harvested under two management plans. From 2004 to 2005, the FCD was harvested under the 2001 management plan; it was not until 2007 that the revised 2006 management plan went into effect. This section presents the evidences regarding the implementation of the two management plans. Overall, the evidence presented in the section reveals that, following his capture of the FCD, Mayor Mongui appears to have completely ignored the main provisions of the two management plans as well as 'unsustainably' harvested the forest.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> It is important to note that while in practice the mayor has captured the council forest, as the study shall argue, it remains that the legal entity responsible for managing the FCD is the Dimako Council. That is why sometimes in this study, the word council is utilized instead of the mayor when specifically referring to matters of legal incidence.

### 6.1.1 The minimum diameters

To begin with, one reason why the management plan is critical for SFM is that it sets both the Minimum Harvesting Diameter (MHD) and the Minimum Management Diameter (MMD).<sup>131</sup> The goal of the minimum diameter is to ensure that harvestable trees are still available at the end of the first rotation, that is that all forest trees do not get harvested at once (see Cerutti, Nasi and Tacconi 2008). Put another way, both diameters establish the minimum upon which trees can be felled (see Singer 2008, 107, note 61). Whereas the MHD is legally or administratively set by the forest administration, MMDs “are specific to a concession or council forest as they need to take into account the rate of reconstitution of every logged species (...) [MMDs] are thus based on predictions of the future trends of existing timber stocks and are supposed to be one of the key elements of sustainable logging” (Singer 2008, 107 note 61).

In the 2001 FCD management plan, the goal was to reconstitute 100 percent of the stocks after the first rotation (Mekok Balara 2001a, 34). That is why for instance fifteen species MHDs were raised insofar as the estimates showed that their stock recovery rates would be less than 100 percent at the end of the first rotation (Mekok Balara 2001a, 34-35). Among these fifteen species, two species *ayous* and *Lotofa*, representing 27 percent of all diameters trees found in the forest, and also the two most felled trees (see below), saw their diameter respectively raised from 80 to 100 centimeters and 60 to 70 centimeters (see Table 6.1 below). In simpler terms, the elevation of these fifteen species’ diameters meant that fewer trees of those species were to be felled when the first management plan was in effect. But in reality the elevation of the fifteen species diameter, in particular for *ayous*, did not affect harvesting practices in the FCD.

---

<sup>131</sup> In Cameroon, they also are respectively known as the *Diamètre Minimum d’Exploitabilité* (DME) and the *Diamètre Minimum d’Aménagement* (DMA).

In spite of the obligation to abide by the MHDs and MMDs provisions of the management plan, from the beginning of timber harvesting operations in the FCD, the mayor and his team were felling trees which had not yet reached maturity. This suggests that they were engaged in illegal activities, for illegal logging is defined “as the felling and extraction of logs from forests that is not in conformity with an approved forest management plan or an official license issued by forest authority in accordance with operations authorized by prevailing forestry laws” (Mir and Fraser 2003 quoted in Alemagi and Kozak 2010, 554).

That alleged practice of illegally logging the forest -in this case below the management diameter- was noticed in a 2004 report by Global Witness Cameroon, then the independent monitor of Cameroon’s forests (2000-2005). To illustrate, after visiting the FCD the team observed that “an inspection of log ponds revealed that DRC [Dimako Rural Council] did not comply with stipulations on the minimum exploitable diameter of *Ayous* (100 cm) set by the management plan. In one of the log ponds, the mission team found about half a dozen *ayous* logs with a diameter less than the 100 cm” (Global Witness Cameroon 2004b, 2, italics original).<sup>132</sup> The fact that *ayous* was harvested below the legal and management diameters was confirmed by the testimonies of those who were present at the start of the FCD, like CCG member 1 who remarked that the “the big problem with illegal logging happening in the FCD is that timber is felled under diameter; it is not a normal diameter” (5 September 2010).

The Global Witness episode happened on 18 May 2004, three months after the official start of timber harvesting in the FCD, and could be imputed to the fact that the council forest had

---

<sup>132</sup> In another document summarizing its mission in Cameroon, Global Witness observed that following the independent forest monitoring project in the country, the nature of forest violations had shifted. In fact, the 2005 report noted that while on the one hand out of boundary logging had decreased, on the other hand “logging undersized stems [under diameter] and logging over the allowed volume within boundaries remain[ed] substantial” (Global Witness 2005, 3).

just commenced its activities. Nonetheless, more recent data abounds about the lack of respect of the MHD and MMD in the FCD. As an illustration, a forest administration official recalled a recent episode where trees were being felled outside of the management plans diameters. He commented that “you go to inspect the forest and you see a log with buttresses and they tell you that it is the second of two, but you clearly see that this is under diameter. When you ask where is the first of one they tell you that they abandoned it in the forest” (19 December 2010).

Apart from the technical jargon used here *first of one and second of two*, which means that when the log is too large it is sectioned into two logs and the first one is referred to as the first of two while the second as the second of two, this official is alluding to the same issue encountered by Global Witness Cameroon a few years ago, that is the harvesting of trees below the legal and management diameters. As a matter of fact, if the log was a second of two, it should not have had the buttresses; only the first one would have them since it is the one closer to the ground where the diameter is measured from.

The situation about harvesting trees without regard for their diameters appeared especially widespread during the years 2004-2005 when the five years AC was in effect. During that time, a local observer recalled that “in those years...they [the workers] *crushed* the forest like private commercial firms do” (24 February 2010, emphasis added). In those years, local villagers recalled that the areas covered by FCD workers were immense as to wonder whether the forest logging rotation cycle would last twenty five years as prescribed in the 2001 management plan.

From the 2004 Global Witness Cameroon inspection in the FCD and the year 2009, five years have passed, but the conclusion remains seemingly the same: the FCD is being harvested outside of the management plan provisions, in this case those regarding species’ MHD and

MMD. Indeed, for one forest worker, though he blames the situation on the poor working conditions within the forest, He conceded that “we do not have the tools to ensure that the diameter is alright. When you ask the fallers how they do, they tell you that they know by experience. If they cut under diameter or not, you do not even know” (4 February 2010). However, as with all explanations provided in Dimako, this only explains part of the story; rather, the process of felling trees under the management plan MHD and MMD provisions appears to be part of a pattern of deliberately disregarding the management plan provisions, a pattern which continued with the change of the MHD and MMD as the study shall demonstrate below.

#### 6.1.1.1 The after-the-fact change of diameters

As already mentioned in Chapter 5.0, in 2006 the forest administration ordered the revision of the 2001 management plan. That revision of the management plan was critical because it also permitted Mayor Mongui and the council to make some changes to its main provisions. Among the most significant changes from the 2001 provisions, tree species MMDs (see Table 6.1 below) as well as the stock recovery rate were decreased. *Ayous*, the most harvested species in the FCD, saw its diameter fall from 100 in 2001 to 90 centimeters in 2006 (shown in bold in the table).

**Table 6.1. Species diameter in the FCD management plans**

<i>Species</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2006</i>
<i>Ayous</i>	100	<b>90</b>
<i>Fraké</i>	80	<b>70</b>
<i>Iroko</i>	110	<b>100</b>
<i>Tali</i>	90	<b>80</b>

<i>Lotofa</i>	70	70
<i>Sapelli</i>	110	110

Source: (CDKO 2006b, 38; Mekok Balara 2001a, 34)

Usually, to change the provisions of the plan, such as the one regarding the diameters, a new inventory is necessary since unlike MHDs which are administratively set, MMDs are supposedly based on such factors as the forest structure, diameter distribution, increment and mortality of main species, and the rotation regime (FAO 2003, 121). However, since the council, according to Mayor Mongui, was unable to access API-Dimako complete data as well as did not conduct a new inventory before the establishment of the 2006 management plan (see CDKO 2006a), it is unclear on which basis the 2006 changes which led to new *ayous* and other species diameters, rested upon.<sup>133</sup> In the absence of those data, the 2001 MMDs should have been maintained as a precautionary measure, especially given the fact that for foresters the MHD and MMD are known as the last defenses against unsustainable logging.

The change of diameters had two immediate impacts. The first one was that the new diameters allowed more trees to be felled under the 2006 management plan provisions. Second, and related to the first one, was that since more harvesting could be done on *ayous* and other species, the council could ask the forest administration for what is locally known as a *Repasse*, or the authorization to go collect the species above the new diameter. That possibility of obtaining

---

<sup>133</sup> The main reason advanced as to the MMDs change was that “because of the dilapidated state of the equipment left by the *Forêt et Terroirs* Project and of the type of data analysis, it has been difficult to directly analyze data with the TIAMA software [the forest administration official software for producing management plans]. Data were transferred using the original ACCESS software. However, some minor inconsistencies still remain” (CDKO 2006b, 37). In other words, data analysis procedures were to be ‘blamed’ for the discrepancy between the 2001 and 2006 management plans MMDs. Finally, remember that in contrast to the 2001 management plan, this plan was officially produced by an outside contractor at the request of the council authorities.

from the forest administration a new authorization to harvest the residual volume was emphasized in the 2006 management plan as follows:

FEU number one was logged at once according to the specifications of the first management plan. During the year 2006, Dimako Rural Council is entitled to request the authorization to go back [to FEU 1] in order to log the species which harvesting diameters have been reduced, in particular *Ayous* which is the main species being logged. *Ayous* diameter change from 100 to 90 cm enables the council to log a residual stock estimated at a gross volume of 13,005 m<sup>3</sup> for 1,626 harvestable trees (CDKO 2006b, 40).

Yet, the assumption of a residual volume following the decrease of MMDs in the 2006 management plan could only hold to the extent that the previous 2001 provisions were already being implemented, which they were not as the evidence presented above demonstrated. As this forest administration official commented:

Dimako harvested the forest in the dark. In the first management plan *ayous* diameter was 100 centimeters; in 2006 it was brought down to 80 centimeters. So [it was] suggested that the mayor asked MINFOF to go back and fell the ones that were above 80 centimeters, but everything was already gone so he [the mayor] could not ask for official permission since he was not already respecting the diameter (20 March 2010).

In other words, the assumption that the council could go harvest the residual volume was misleading because, to start with, the council was not respecting the diameters. Put another way, Dimako Council authorities headed by the mayor had already logged *ayous* trees below the legal limit set out in the 2001 management plan even before they officially decided to decrease it in the 2006 revised version from 100 to 90 centimeters. The decision to decrease it appeared as an after-the-fact move to conform to a situation which was already occurring. At the same time, the decision from the forest administration to approve the new diameters meant that legally the council was allowed to harvest more trees than previously permitted in spite of the fact that it was not already adhering to the previous diameters' provisions.

For SFM respecting the minimum diameter is very important because it is the key to ensuring that some species do not disappear and that forests are still going to exist for the next generations. Indeed, the minimum diameter “is mainly chosen to ensure that there will still be a significant number of harvestable individuals left for the next rotation period” (Cerutti, Nasi and Tacconi 2008). Thus, if the council harvests timber without regards for the MHDs and MMDs, this is endangering the long term survival of a particular species, such as *ayous*, especially given the fact that the council is harvesting the forest outside of any planning as shall be shown below.

Further, inasmuch as the council forest is, as was mentioned above, not a primary forest, but a forest which was harvested twice by SFID until the 1980s, this disregard of the MHDs and MMDs is of great consequence to the forest. That is the case because as a Global Witness brief observes “in practice, many forest concessions in the tropics are commercially logged out well before the end of the first rotation” (Global Witness 2009, 4). The same case seems to be happening in Dimako Council where in the search for timber revenues forest harvesting is characterized by timber mining and ‘skimming’, that is the selective harvesting of commercial high value species, principally *ayous* and *lotofa* (for more on timber mining, see Global Witness 2009, 4; Sieffert and Truong 1992, 128).

#### **6.1.1.2 Logging by orders or ‘skimming’ the forest in search of *ayous***

First, to account for the ‘skimming’ practices inside the FCD, one major reason has been put forward by council authorities. In effect, local authorities have argued that the buyer of FCD timber ALPI Cameroon, also known locally as Alpicam, is responsible for this situation insofar



as it is electing only to purchase *ayous* and *lotofa*.<sup>134</sup> Further, since the council is said to have signed an exclusive contract with Alpica, this means that the council has to fulfill its obligations by providing the buyer with the species it needs. As the CFC head Alain Ebalé declared “we have one main timber buyer and we move according to the rhythm of its orders. If it *exclusively* needs *ayous*, we fell it; so we log on orders. If we do not have an order for *sapelli*, we do not fell it” (22 January 2010, emphasis added).

Granted that the buyer is directing the selection of species, it is also fair to say that the ‘logging by order’ strategy only explains part of the story. That is the case because in the six years since the council has been engaged in timber harvesting despite unofficially complaining on the terms of the agreement, the fact remains that the council has not denounced it nor has proposed another commercial strategy. In the same way, while the reason for the focus on the two species is subject to debate, the fact remains that ‘skimming’ is operating in the forest.

To illustrate the point about ‘skimming’ or the hyperselective harvest and the search for *ayous* and *lotofa*, Table 6.2 below provides the figures regarding the proportion of the two most felled species in the FCD.

**Table 6.2. Percentage of the two most felled species in the FCD, 2004-2009\***

<i>Species</i>	<i>2004<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2005<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2007<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>2008<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2004-2009</i>
Ayous	66.7	53.8	81.7	40.7	80.7	63.3
Lotofa	18.7	17.1	11.8	45.8	14.3	17.76
<b>TOTAL</b>	85.4	71	93.5	86.5	95	86.3

*Source:* (CDKO 2008a; 2008e, 3; 2010a, 2; 2010c, 66; n.d.a; Mongui Sossomba n.d.)

\*officially, no harvesting occurred in 2006

<sup>1</sup> Incomplete figures

<sup>2</sup> Does not include the extended period figures (1 January-14 February 2008)

<sup>134</sup> Alpica is a subsidiary of the Italian group ALPI with its main factory being located in the Eastern Region town of Mindourou. It is also the subcontractor of the Moloundou Council Forest (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 6).

<sup>3</sup>These figures are based on timber sold not felled

First, though the figures are incomplete and should be taken cautiously because as mentioned in Chapter 3.0 some local observers have argued that they have been understated to detract from the fact that in the FCD illegal logging is allegedly rampant, Table 6.2 indicates that the two species *ayous* and *lotofa* dominate timber production in the FCD. In fact, in the 2004-2009 period both species, as the table shows, accounted for between 71 and 95 percent of total production, with on average approximately 87 percent over the period. More importantly, the table points toward *ayous* being the main felled species (63 percent over the six years period) in the FCD. In that sense, the FCD figures are also consistent with those of the 2006 audit of the forestry sector where it was pointed that *ayous* and *Sapelli* remained the two most felled species in Cameroon accounting for 55 percent of the total production in 2004, with *ayous* at 38 percent alone (Karsenty et al. 2006, 21-22).

At the same time, this sign of selective harvesting is damaging for the forest. In effect, Alain Karsenty observed about logging in ‘high forests’ of the Congo Basin that it “is very selective, with on average, one to two trees felled by hectare (but many more destroyed to get access to and extract them from the plots). Such ‘creaming’ of forest stands is not a direct factor of deforestation, but it can lead to biological erosion as it generally targets a handful of species” (2010, 124). Based on the above figures, the same conclusion of a hyperselective harvest seems to apply to Dimako as well, and, more importantly, it is not in line with the official commitment for SFM that the mayor expressed in the past (see Mongui Sossomba 2001a).

### 6.1.1.3 The stock recovery rate

Of equal importance and related to the MHDs and MMDs, the second and final change from the 2001 management plan regarded the stock recovery rate (*taux de reconstitution*) of the tree species. That stock is defined as “the ratio of the potentially exploitable wood stock at the end of a felling cycle to the potentially exploitable wood stock at the beginning of this cycle, just before logging” (Picard et al. 2009, 2138).<sup>135</sup> In 2001, the forest administration administratively set that rate at a minimum of 50 percent of the initial stock (Cerutti, Nasi, and Tacconi 2008) - half of the 2001 management plan. Thus, during the 2006 revision, the council followed suit and diminished the stock recovery rate from 100 to 50 percent.

To clarify, as already mentioned, the first management plan objective was to reconstitute 100 percent of the timber stocks used during the first twenty five years rotation (Mekok Balara 2001a, 34). That objective undergirded the decision to raise the fifteen species diameters in 2001 as well as prohibit the harvesting of certain species such as Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*) and Red Doussié (*Afzelia bipindensis*) because of their low density as well as risk of complete extinction (Mekok Balara 2001a, 33-35). It was expected that at the end of the first twenty five years rotation, the total yield (*possibilité totale*) would have increased by 30 percent (Mekok Balara 2001a, 56). Conversely, by decreasing the stock recovery rate from 100 to 50 percent, this meant that the forest yield too at the end of the thirty years rotation of the 2006 management plan would get affected.

To illustrate, Table 6.3 below compare the 2001 and 2006 management plans stock recovery rates for the FCD primary felled species.

---

<sup>135</sup> The potentially exploitable wood stock “is defined as the number of stems with a diameter greater than a threshold called the ‘minimum diameter for exploitation’ (MDE) [MHD]” (Picard et al. 2009, 2138-2139).

**Table 6.3. Stock recovery rates for the FCD main felled species**

<i>Species</i>	<i>2001 MMD</i> <i>(cm)</i>	<i>Rate (100%)</i>	<i>2006 MMD</i> <i>(cm)</i>	<i>Rate (50%)</i>
<i>Ayous</i>	100	104	90	80
<i>Fraké</i>	80	100	70	81
<i>Lotofa</i>	70	106	70	67
<i>Sapelli</i>	110	117	110	111
<i>Tali</i>	90	125	80	98

Source: (CDKO 2006b, 38; Mekok Balara 2001a, 34)

cm: centimeters

?: percent

Overall, the table shows that based on the 2006 recovery rates, *ayous*, *Fraké*, *Sapelli*, and *Tali* stocks shall get reconstituted each by more than 80 percent compared to the more than 100 percent before in the 2001 management plan. The main discrepancy in Table 6.3 regards the *Lotofa* where at the same diameter, the reconstitution rates are different 106 and 67 percent respectively.<sup>136</sup>

More importantly, given the fact that the FCD is being harvested outside of the MHD and MMD as well as ‘skimmed’, it is doubtful that the above recovery rates shall be maintained. As one official commented about the FCD stock recovery rates “if you do 50 percent every time, it becomes 25 percent, and then 12.5 percent instead of the 50 percent from the beginning” (20 March 2010). By that he meant that at the onset the stock recovery rate was 50 percent and if trees are being cut under diameters, the likelihood that the recovery rate would increase is lessened. In other words, doubts exist that at the end of the first rotation, *ayous* trees shall be

---

<sup>136</sup> This could be attributed to an error or more likely stands as a confirmation of the argument made above that the change of diameters did not rest on sound data.

reconstituted by 80 percent as the above table suggests. After all, the main rationale for augmenting the diameters in the 2001 management plan was to protect the long term recovery of a number of species as well as prevent their extinction in case of overharvesting (Mekok Balara 2001a, 33-34).

Therefore, unless the 1995 inventory, and later the 2000 update, overestimated the entire stock before or the council, read the mayor, conducted a new inventory, which it did not by its own admission, again these changes are of great consequence for the long term health of the council forest. This is even more troubling if one is to believe Singer's account (2008, 108) that a new inventory was conducted in the FCD after API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs*, and that the inventory revealed that certain species stocks, most notably *ayous*, had been overestimated.<sup>137</sup> Hence, instead of lowering *ayous* MMD, it should have been elevated to account for those updated data if they exist.

In the end, the conclusion that can be drawn from the harvest of the council forest trees under diameter as well as the decrease of the stock recovery rate from 100 to 50 percent is that the principle of precaution that guided the 2001 management was all but abandoned in favor of more harvesting in the FCD in spite of the fact that the data on which these changes rested were apparently questionable (for more on the 'problematic' quality of some officially approved management plans in Cameroon, see Vandenhoute and Doucet 2006).<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, the

---

<sup>137</sup> Singer (2008, 108) reports that this information was given to him during an interview. However, this researcher did not come across evidence which would confirm or deny that information, though he believes that it is probable that API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* might have overestimated the potential of the FCD simply by the fact that the inventory was conducted with a sampling rate of 1 percent, which is normal for that type of inventory. Thus, with such a low rate, anything is possible. Finally, the fact that the FCD is not a primary forest, the study would argue, militates for a more cautious approach to timber harvesting in that forest.

<sup>138</sup> In their comparative study of twenty officially approved management plans in Cameroon, the two authors observed that: "the approval of the management plans seems, based on our results, to have been done at the very least in a *lax manner*. The study shows, in fact, that *the quality of some management plans stands well below the acceptable minimum, some basic parameters having not been respected*. In this context, it is clear that some

lowering of the recovery rate also meant that Dimako Council's burden on reconstituting FCD timber stocks, as the owner of the forest, was lessened as could be seen from the table before. The process also allowed the council to reenter already harvested areas as we shall see below, and this did not bode well for the council forest to the extent that it was shown previously that trees were harvested below the officially approved MHDs and MMDs.

### 6.1.2 The logging rotation cycle

Among the objectives established by the management plan, the logging rotation/harvesting cycle (*le passage en coupe*), which is defined as “the sequence of harvesting in space and time for both management units and annual coupes” (FAO 2003, 17), constitutes a key element for SFM. This cycle is significant because it indicates the order of harvesting the FEUs as well as AACs that a given forest is set to follow over the rotation period. The analysis which follows is based on the 2006 revised version of the management plan.

To begin with, Table 6.4 below indicates the logging rotation cycle by FEUs that the FCD was scheduled to follow until the year 2027. The table reveals that FEU 2 was supposed to be harvested until 2012 when FEU 3 would start and last until 2017. Finally, from 2017 on, FEUs 4, 5, and 6 would complete the first rotation before harvesting resumes in FEU 1.

**Table 6.4. Logging rotation cycle, 2006 management plan**

<i>Items</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2027</i>	<i>Observations</i>
FEU	2	3	4	5	6	FEU 1 was logged under the AC system (2004-2005)

management plans would have required, before approval, modifications which could have led the beneficiary to carry out again on the ground studies (2006, 41, emphasis added)”.

Surface area (hectares)	2,504	2,442	2,474	2,511	2,503	12,434 hectares
-------------------------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-----------------

*Source:* (adapted from CDKO 2006b, 40)

To further illustrate the point about the logging rotation cycle, Table 6.5 below contrasts the logging rotation cycle set in the 2006 management plan with the actual cycle being pursued in the FCD. In contrast to the first table, this table shows the logging rotation cycle in AACs, not FEUs that the council was theoretically set to have followed since 2007.

**Table 6.5. Comparison of the 2006 management plan logging rotation and actual cycles in the FCD\***

<i>Items</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
2006	2-1	2-2	2-3	2-4	4
AAC surface area (hectares)	501	501	499	504	2,005
Actual	1 <sup>1</sup> ; 2-1	2-1; 2-3	2-4	3-1	9 <sup>2</sup>
AAC surface area (hectares)	3,261	1,000	504	490	5,255

*Source:* (CDKO 2010b, 2; CRDKO 2006, 18; MINFOF 2007, 2008, 2009a)

\* The year 2006 is not included here because officially there is no record of timber harvesting operations. The reason given was that because of the revision of the 2001 management plan as well as the delay engendered by the process, the authorization to proceed that year was given late, precluding actual operations.

<sup>1</sup> FEU 1 was harvested at once in 2004 and 2005 before the 2006 management plan 30 AACs division. Since FEU 1 was never subdivided, in 2007 the harvest authorization was given for the entire FEU.

<sup>2</sup> Four AACs plus FEU 1 subdivided into five AACs

The comparative analysis of the above table reveals two issues: first, the discrepancy between the management plan logging rotation cycle and the actual practice being followed in the FCD, and second, the harvesting of two AACs at the same time. To illustrate about the first issue, the table shows that while in 2008 the council was set to harvest AAC 2-2, it harvested AAC 2-3; in 2009, where AAC 2-3 was slated to be harvested, instead the council went to 2-4.

Finally, in 2010 where AAC 2-5 was scheduled, the council harvested 3-1. However, from Table 6.4 before, the council was not supposed to have harvested FEU 3 until 2012; rather as Table 6.5 suggests by 2010, the council had already exhausted FEU 2 and moved on to FEU 3, two years ahead of schedule.

The overall conclusion from the two previous tables is that the management plan logging rotation cycle has been discounted and the FCD is being harvested according to an unofficial schedule. That assessment appears to be confirmed by the 2009 MINFOF-GTZ-CTFC first report on the implementation of the management plans in the four council forests of Dimako, Gari-Gombo, Moloundou, and Yokadouma (Om Bilong et al. 2009). Speaking about the FCD, the report observed that:

The CFC, led by a technician superior of Water and Forests [the diploma title] and the logging team have a limited expertise as far as the management of a logging site [*chantier forestier*] is concerned. In effect, *timber harvesting in the forest does not obey any planning* and the extraction of some species happens five months after being felled. *Harvesting simply entails entering the forest every time there is an order [commande] and takes what the customer needs* (Om Bilong et al. 2009, 11, emphasis added).

For Dimako observers, though they were aware of the situation, great was the bewilderment when they learned that the council was about to initiate timber harvesting in FEU 3 in 2010. One forester upon learning that story exclaimed “[the FCD] is already at 3-1 in 6 years of harvesting when they are supposed to be at 2 something! It’s like the forest has been harvested for 11 years now” (20 July 2010).

The second issue is the practice of harvesting two AACs at the same time within the forest. As an illustration, whereas in 2007 the council was set to harvest AAC 2-1 alone, it also harvested FEU 1. The same situation happened in 2008 where the council harvested AAC 2-1 again and 2-3 instead of 2-2. On the whole during the period 2007-2010, the council officially



harvested a total of nine AACs, that is four AACs plus one FEU representing more than a third (5,255 hectares) of the official surface area dedicated to timber production (15,286 hectares) instead of the 2,000 hectares officially scheduled for harvest. That was the case because FEU 1 (2,760 hectares) was never subdivided into five AACs during the 2006 revision<sup>139</sup>; hence, the council was authorized to harvest the entire area in spite of the fact that it was officially closed to forest harvesting as the CFC head affirmed as well as the abovementioned fact that during the years 2004-2005, FEU 1 was ‘crushed like private commercial firms do’.

#### **6.1.2.1 *The récolement***

Viewed broadly, while it should have been illegal for the council to harvest two AACs at the same time, it is not in itself a violation of the law in Cameroon to harvest one AAC two years in a row, as in 2007 and 2008 in Table 6.5. In fact, in forestry, an FEU or AAC can be opened to harvesting generally for a maximum of two years before its closure until the next rotation (see FAO 2003, 17). Consequently, in Cameroon that process is known in French as *récolement*.<sup>140</sup> The *récolement* scheme is important for this study because the Mayor of Dimako since 2007, officially under the pretense of fulfilling the customer’s orders, has taken advantage of the process to repeatedly reenter already harvested areas within the FCD as illustrated in the table below.

---

<sup>139</sup> The 2006 management plan noted that “the subdivision of FEU 1 into annual allowable cut [AAC] will be completed during the next revision [of the management plan] when the inventories will be redone” (CDKO 2006b, 40).

<sup>140</sup> According to a forest administration official, that process allows timber harvesters who have not been able to collect all the species authorized in the PAO to request a new authorization to revisit and harvest the remaining timber volume. That process exists, it is said, to provide some flexibility to timber harvesting firms which have to provide species based on market demands that might not be available in a given year. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this scheme only works to the extent that timber harvesters once granted the first authorization limit harvesting to the tree species mentioned in the initial PAO. Finally, the steps to obtain a *récolement* certificate (*certificat de récolement*) to renew an AAC are spelled out in MINEF *Arrêté* 222 in its Art. 41, 1 (for more see MINEF 2001).

**Table 6.6. Comparison of PAO and FCD felled volumes, 2007-2009**

<i>Items</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Harvested AACs	1 <sup>1</sup> ; 2-1	2-1; 2-3	2-4	9 <sup>2</sup>
PAO volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	23,554	20,037.6	15,797	59,388.6
FCD officially declared volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	6,184 <sup>3</sup>	6,704 <sup>4</sup>	8,844	21,732
Remaining volume	17,370	13,333.6	6,953	37,656.6
<b>PERCENTAGE FELLED TREES-PAO</b>	26.2	33.4	56	36.6

Source: (CDKO 2008a; 2008d, 3; 2010a, 2; CRDKO 2008; MINFOF 2007, 2008, 2009a)

<sup>1</sup> FEU 1 was harvested at once in 2005 and 2005 before the 2006 management plan 30 AACs division

<sup>2</sup> Four AACs plus FEU 1 subdivided into five AACs

<sup>3</sup> Does not include the 1,746 m<sup>3</sup> figures for the special authorization from 1 January to 14 February 2008

<sup>4</sup> Does not include the 1,154 m<sup>3</sup> *Lotofo* figures for the special authorization from January to February 2009  
m<sup>3</sup>: cubic meters

Table 6.6 indicates that, save 2009 where the council harvested 56 percent of the legally authorized volume, in 2007 and 2008, *only* 26 and 33 percent of the legally authorized volume were harvested within the FCD. Overall, officially during the three years period, the council harvested about 37 percent of the FCD legally allowed volume of trees. Because of the *récolement* request, the council was allowed to harvest both FEU 1 and AAC 2-1 in 2007, whereas in 2008 it harvested both AACs 2-1 -harvested the year prior- and the newly opened 2-3.<sup>141</sup> In theory, because of the 2009 remaining volume of more than 6,900 cubic meters, the council is entitled in the future to request a *récolement*.

---

<sup>141</sup> Technically, to harvest FEU 1 again, following the 2006 revision of the management plan which decreased some tree species diameters, the council requested the *repasse* or reentry to harvest the trees above the new diameter (see the section on the minimum diameters). At the same time, the distinction between terms such as *récolement*, *repasse* (reentry) or others used by the forest administration is difficult to grasp not only because in practice they mean the same thing, that is extending the harvest in already harvested areas, but also because these constitute ways to circumvent the 1994 *Forest Law* as some scholars have remarked (see Cerutti, Nasi and Tacconi

In general, the above figures seem to suggest that the council is entitled to request a *récolement* every year to the extent that it does not reach the legal volume allowed by the forest administration. As a matter of fact, Mayor Mongui has remarked elsewhere that in the FCD while “the annual cutting capacity for a 500 hectares *assiette* [AAC] on average oscillates between 10 and 12,000 cubic meters in commercial trees (*essences commercialisables*)...[only] 50 percent of that capacity is actually harvested given the needs of the market” (Nankam 2010, 10). At the same time, this picture is misleading because, as many observers have noted, the practice of understating the actual harvest figures (see section 3.1.6 and subsection 6.1.1.2), as well as skimming the forest for *ayous* and *lotofa* and disregarding the MHD and MMD have meant that the figures utilized by the mayor to request the *récolement* are unreliable to begin with.

Hence, the picture from Table 6.6 is deceiving not only because it apparently underestimates the actual volume of timber harvested in the council forest, but also because it does not take into account the fact that timber harvesting in the FCD proceeds without any planning, that is throughout the entire forest in contrast to the management plan AAC division. In fact, as local testimonies have confirmed, the process of *récolement* within the FCD is used for two main purposes. First, it is used to avoid the interruption of forest harvesting consecutive to the end of the Annual Operating Permit (PAO). As this former CCG member commented “they [FCD workers] fall timber and abandon it in the forest and go ask for an authorization and then go fetch the timber. When the year is over and the permit is near finished, they go over the limit” (26 February 2010). Usually, the rationale behind that maneuver is twofold: first, continue selling already harvested timber while applying for the new PAO -which usually arrives late

---

2008). Various people utilized these terms to refer to the same or different processes. An example is the use of the *repasse* in Dimako to refer to the *récolement*. That is why one has to be careful when utilizing them.

because of a cumbersome and lengthy process-, and second, finish felling operations inside the same AAC.<sup>142</sup>

The second issue, and perhaps more important, is that the *récolement* is allegedly used to harvest timber outside of the legally authorized area. In effect, when the *récolement* certificate is granted, instead of limiting itself to the area assigned, the council uses the authorization to enter new areas and fell new trees. That is why for instance every year the council needs to harvest more than one AAC; it is compelled to proceed that way inasmuch as the scheduled AAC has already been harvested in advance. This signifies that in reality, the council is not allowed to obtain a *récolement* certificate inasmuch as it is based on false pretext, the data suggests.

In the same way, in recent years, the council has also received the authorization from the forest administration to extend the PAO for a two months period well into the new year after its official ending.<sup>143</sup> That extension was for instance granted to the council in 2008 (1 January-14 February) for the year 2007, and in 2010 for the year 2009 (1 January-28 February 2010) (see CDKO 2010c, 66; MINFOF 2009b). Officially, the council has requested it for two main reasons: the late issuing of the PAO by the forest administration as well as the repeated mechanical failures of the bulldozer, the main machine used for forest harvesting (see below),

---

<sup>142</sup> One episode illustrates the situation described above. Once, during a visit in the FCD as the annual extended period permit was set to expire at the end of February 2010, a forest worker asked another worker whether it was possible to fall some timber and put it aside until the new PAO arrived. When asked about the rationale behind that proposal it was mentioned that it was done in order to ‘save’ time, since PAOs usually do not reach the council before March or April. In spite of the fact that the proposal was illegal, the practice appeared widespread not just exceptionally dictated by the actual circumstances.

<sup>143</sup> The extended period is another process through which, at the end of the year, the Dimako Council can ask for the extension of the PAO.

which have delayed work.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the request for extension is to allow the council to finish harvesting the legally authorized area for a given year, and therefore fulfill its customers' orders.

Yet, this request for extension is unwarranted because it appears to be based on a ploy that the council needs more time to harvest the species authorized in the PAO. Further, because of the lack of planning noted before in the harvesting of the FCD (see also below), it is difficult to ascertain with certitude the volume of remaining timber to be felled, if there is any. The two months extension appears the more surprising because as a forest administration official commented "to harvest a 600 hectares' annual allowable cut [AAC], it normally takes two months. You cut ten trees a day, and if you have one stem per hectare, you should complete the harvest in two months. However, the mayor harvests the forest for twelve months and even goes as far as to request a two-months extension" (8 June 2010). As with the *récolement*, the authorization has been allegedly utilized to harvest new areas and new trees beyond the legally authorized AAC boundaries as well as stock them while waiting or looking for customers, further contradicting the story that the council only logs by orders.

#### **6.1.2.2 Logging outside of boundaries**

To be sure, the situation about logging outside of boundaries, that is beyond the legally authorized area, seems not solely limited to the utilization of the *récolement* or the two months extension; in the search for *ayous* and *lotofa*, field evidence suggests that that is the normal operating way inside the FCD. For instance, a local villager observes the following about forest harvesting within the FCD:

---

<sup>144</sup> As a matter of fact, some in the council have argued that work has been at a standstill and the council has not collected revenues during these periods of waiting for the new year PAO. Thus, it needed more time to finish harvesting the AACs as well as honor the so-called customer's orders.

Nobody among us has a map. The logging manager has a map, but to show us the map it is very difficult. But me, one time I asked him to show me the map and he showed me the map because I knew where we were working, and it was not in the AAC. He told me I show you because it is you. My conscience was telling me that the area where we were working was outside the limits. We were harvesting while we moved. We make the landing, the machine advances, we extract and we continue (...) since we were already outside of the [legal] boundaries, we had to work like that. *That is the way we usually proceed when we are outside of the boundaries. We cut trees, then create a landing and the truck comes and pick up the timber and we continue. When it is over, the bulldozer closes the AAC* (12 June 2010, emphasis added).

To clarify what this local villager is alluding to, take the examples of AAC 2-2 and 2-5 (see Map 5.2 above) which are not recorded into the FCD archives as far as timber harvesting is concerned. This is surprising because if one is to refer to the 2006 management plan, both AACs should have been harvested in 2008 for 2-2, and 2011 for 2-5. But Table 6.5 before indicated that in 2008 AACs 2-1 and 2-3 were harvested where 2-2 was scheduled.<sup>145</sup> Further, since the council requested the authorization to harvest 3-1 in 2010, it is doubtful that it shall return to AAC 2-5. For that reason, what happened to both AACs 2-2 and 2-5?

In the first place, ascertaining what has occurred to both AACs is not a simple matter. Though the CFC head Alain Ebalé conceded that he could not provide an adequate answer about the case of AAC 2-5, he did not deny nor confirm that the AAC had been harvested or not. For AAC 2-2, he argued that the council had requested and obtained in 2008 the forest administration authorization to harvest AAC 2-3 not 2-2, which it did as the previous table showed, following the disappointing harvest inventory results. As he declared:

A river crosses AAC 2-2 and there is a big swamp which made it impossible for us to log it. Moreover, MINFOF agents came into the forest to verify that and with this big swamp there was almost nothing to log. Every area close to the Mbang Road [the main axis to enter the FCD] has been illegally logged before the

---

<sup>145</sup> 2008 not 2007 because since the management plan was approved late in 2006 officially the council had to wait until the next year (2007) to resume harvesting in AAC 2-1.

creation of the FCD so logging was impossible in AAC 2-2. *No logging occurred in AAC 2-2* (22 January 2010, emphasis added).

That story appears in contrast first to the evidence reported so far and second it begs the broader question of the reason for integrating that area within the timber production area during the establishment of the management plan in the first place. In theory, these swamps should have been included in the protection area if no valuable timber was found during the inventory.<sup>146</sup> Yet, the CFC head above story makes sense insofar as it was mentioned before that, and Map 5.2 already indicated this, irrespective of the actual management plan division of the forest, forest harvesting within the FCD occurs throughout the entire forest. This simply appears to be the *modus operandi* in the FCD.

Further, about the AAC 2-2 story, the author of the FCD first management plan, who - although he could not specifically comment on the CFC head story- mentioned that in the 2001 management plan, all unproductive areas, that is lacking valuable timber, were consigned into the agroforestry and research areas. Hence, the production area only contained valuable timber. In that answer, he implicitly contradicted the story of the CFC head. What has occurred most likely according to local observers is that the ‘missing’ AACs (2-2 and 2-5) have already been harvested in advance, and the CFC head just produced an after the fact explanation to soothe outsiders.<sup>147</sup> For one local actor, to the extent that the mayor and his team are allegedly engaged in various illegal acts such as not respecting AAC boundaries as well as harvesting the forest

---

<sup>146</sup> A report by the same CFC seems to contradict the above story when it mentioned that about 32, 246 cubic meters of standing timber were available in AAC 2-2 for harvesting (see CRDKO 2008b, 4).

<sup>147</sup> For instance, the FCD logging manager was overheard at the Dimako Bus Station talking about the fact that their ‘survey’ had shown that close to the *Doumé River* the area was very rich in timber. On the one hand, that assessment is consistent with the conclusion of the 2001 management plan which noted that forest resources seemed abundant in the southern part of the forest -close to the *Doumé River*- which access had remained difficult because of the lack of roads (see Mekok Balara 2001, 17-18). On the other hand, that should not have happened to the extent that, as Map 5.2 illustrated before, the council is not theoretically supposed to harvest the AACs close to the *Doumé River* until around the years 2013-2014 following the logging rotation cycle.

without any planning, the subdivision of the forest itself in FEUs and AACs is meaningless. He expressed his disapproval the following way:

Everybody is really disappointed with the mayor's governance of the council forest. Nobody in Dimako can testify on his behalf even inside his municipal council. However, when they will find out what is going on in Dimako, it is going to be late *because he does not respect anything, anything, anything!* AACs are being logged in advance despite the existence of the management plan. FEU 1 is being logged in all illegality; AAC 2-4 and 2-5 at the same time. 2-5 harvest inventory results are almost nonexistent; there is nothing. How can MINFOF agree to something like that? They [Dimako] switch in the same unit [FEU], logically AACs should be contiguous. How can you leave a unit and go into another one? When will you come back [to the ones you left behind]? *This is a forest that you look and you say this is not worth it* (25 May 2010, emphasis added).

### **6.1.2.3 Forest management on the cheap**

Overall, the alleged situation about illegal logging in Dimako seems aggravated by two issues: the equipment used, or the lack thereof, as well as the lack of qualifications of forest workers. Firstly, as many observers have noted, within the FCD forest harvesting does not obey any techniques of Reduced Impact Logging (RIL), techniques which are designed for operational efficiency as well as mitigate ecological damages (see Karsenty 2010, 123).

Within the FCD all forest harvesting operations, except for felling and loading timber onto trucks, are accomplished with only one machine the bulldozer, which, as foresters argue, is ill-suited for most harvesting operations, save roads opening, the creation of landings, and so on. About the organization of forest harvesting in the FCD, a forester complained that:

The forest supervisor works only with one chainsaw and one machine for an important place like that. That means that that guy [the mayor] is not ready to buy a machine. Since work is badly organized, you will find out that the bulldozer opens the road and does whatever they want. You will also find out that the bulldozer does even skidding instead of the wheel skidder [CAT 528 tractor]. In the national forest harvesting guidelines, the bulldozer and the crawler tractor cause more damages to the forest compared to the wheel skidder which does not leave marks on the forest. Sometimes, the bulldozer can come to help create the skidding trail, but other than that it is not needed for extraction (25 June 2010).



The situation, as the next chapter shall argue, is not about the lack of resources to buy new equipment and machines, train current employees or recruit new personnel; it is simply that the Mayor of Dimako has refused to utilize the timber revenues to improve upon forest management. As CCG member 7 observed, “ever since the first report we asked that he [the mayor] equips forest workers, that each worker should have its own hat, boots as well as a raincoat. We even recommended that if he could not spend all this money at once, he could slowly withdraw it from the workers’ wages over the longer term but this did not go anywhere” (12 September 2010). In truth, FCD workers lack everything from compass, limes to machetes. This in practice means that forest management in the FCD is being conducted in rudimentary and ineffective way. This led one local employee to ask how it could be possible for a council which does not even possess rudimentary forest machines and equipment to engage in sustainable forestry.<sup>148</sup>

The second issue which aggravates the alleged illegal logging in vogue in the FCD is the lack of qualifications and training of the FCD workers for the conduct of forest harvesting, or for that matter engage in SFM. As a reminder, the way forest harvesting operates in the council is the following. The CFC, the forest technical unit, which directly answers to the mayor, is responsible for ensuring the respect of the management plan provisions; it is also charged with conducting forest harvesting operations, that is felling, extracting, and conversion (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 11). These operations are conducted by a team of local villagers hired by the council through a rotative system. Finally, during forest harvesting, workers are under the field

---

<sup>148</sup> A report observed for instance that FCD workers are recruited without a contract agreement as well as work without forest harvesting protective equipment (see also Om Bilong et al. 2009, 22).

supervision of a logging manager, which incidentally used to work for the mayor's private company.<sup>149</sup>

This would not pose a problem except for the fact that qualifications are lacking inside the FCD, as well as the CFC head and the logging manager according to the available evidence appear not competent to conduct forest harvesting. About the lack of appropriate qualifications, a forest observer commented that:

Dimako forest's logging manager is more a faller than a logging manager. He does not know how to be a logging manager. If I had to decide, I would suspend Dimako harvesting in the FCD. They do not have the equipment; people go to work with flip flop, they do not even have the boots, not even the necessary equipment. They do not respect the forest harvesting guidelines; they do not know how to fell a tree because when you fell a tree, the tree cannot fall into the swamp (...) the logging manager does not know how to read a map, but you should have at least inside the worksite somebody who can do that! (28 June 2010).

For the aforementioned observer, this is a clear sign that forest harvesting in Dimako is an "amateur's job". It is a forest which after more than six years of timber harvesting following the numerous (unreported) violations of the management plan provisions, this had led to a state of affairs whereas more than 30 percent -a third- of timber felled in the FCD is being abandoned and wasted.

---

<sup>149</sup> From local testimonies, since 2004, the FCD seemed to have employed three logging managers, including the current one. Among the first two, Gbapol Engelbert, who appeared to have served from 2004 to 2005, passed away in a 2007 car accident, an event as Chapter 8.0 shall show was of wider local implications.

#### 6.1.2.4 A lot of abandoned timber



**Figure 6.1. Abandoned timber in the FCD, February 2010**

*Source:* author

One issue that has beset the FCD from the onset has been the issue of abandoned timber. As with ‘skimming’, the same reasons have been advanced to account for the high volume of abandoned timber within the FCD. Indeed, local authorities have asserted that the client Alpicam because of its election of the most pristine species bears the blame, and that no indiscriminate harvesting practices inside the FCD, as shown above, are responsible for this state of affairs. However, there is reason to doubt the council argument precisely because the preceding evidence appears to support the contention that in his search for harvesting only the most commercially valued species *ayous* and *lotofa*, Mayor Mongui and his team seems to have been allegedly

engaged in various deliberate activities designed to bypass the restrictions imposed by the management plan.

To illustrate the situation in Dimako about abandoned timber, Table 6.7 below exhibits the volume as well as the percentage of abandoned timber in the FCD since the start of forest harvesting in the FCD in 2004.

**Table 6.7. Officially reported volumes and percentage of abandoned timber in the FCD, 2004-2009\***

<i>Items</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2007</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>2003</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>2009</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Felled (m <sup>3</sup> )	33,685.7 <sup>1</sup>		6,183.5	6,704	8,843.5	55,416.7
Sold (m <sup>3</sup> )	21,761		3,994.5	4,233.4	5,844.9	35,833.8
Abandoned (m <sup>3</sup> )	11,924.7		2,189	2,470.6	2,998.6	19,582.9
Percentage of abandoned timber (%)	35.4		35.4	36.9	33.9	35.4

*Source:* (CDKO 2006b, 40; 2008a; 2008d, 3; 2010a, 2; n.d)

\* Taking into account the years for which complete data is available for the FCD (2008 and 2009) as well as interviews data, it was estimated that about 36 percent of timber was abandoned in the FCD and that rate was used for the years for which data were incomplete or unavailable. Thus, the rates of 35.4 for both 2004-2005 and 2007 were based on the average of the years 2008-2009.

<sup>1</sup> That global figure was reported for both periods in the 2006 management plan (p.40).

<sup>2</sup> Official figures for the extended period (1 January to 14 February 2008) reported an extracted volume of 1,745.7 cubic meters and a sold volume of 1,042.9 cubic meters, thus a volume of abandoned timber of 702.823 cubic meters. However, these figures are not included here.

<sup>3</sup> Does not include the extended period figures of 1,153.8 cubic meters of lotofa  
m<sup>3</sup>: cubic meter

A first glance at the table indicates that about 36 percent of timber felled in the FCD is abandoned. Except for the years 2004, 2005 and part of 2007 where the figures have been reconstructed because of faulty record keeping, though still based on extent evidence, the rest of the figures are self-reported by the council. In 2008 and 2009 respectively about 34 and 37 percent of trees felled in the FCD were abandoned in the forest. 2009 saw out of a global volume of more than 8,800 cubic meters of trees felled, about a third, 3,000 cubic meters, abandoned.

The main reason as mentioned before is that the client bears the blame because of its election of the most pristine species.

Like in all commercial ventures, a possibility exists that some products are going to be discarded because of inherent deficiencies or damages during the production process. In that sense, abandoned timber is nothing new in timber harvesting. In fact, during the API-Dimako project, one of its commissioned studies estimated that in the Dimako area the rate of abandoned timber after harvesting was between 19 and 25 percent, thus on average 22 percent (Jardin 1995, 1-2).<sup>150</sup> Further, the study added that timber abandoned in the Dimako area in 1995 was due to three primary causes: human factors during harvest; external natural factors; and internal natural factors. For the study although 88 percent of the causes of abandon were due to natural factors – inherent to the trees-, the rate of timber abandoned for the remaining 12 percent could be diminished by the amelioration of harvesting techniques (Jardin 1995, 3-4). Because the above estimate dated from the days of conventional logging where talks of SFM were still emerging, in theory, under SFM this rate would be expected to decline because of the newer practices emphasizing sustainable harvesting.

That is why, the figures from Table 6.7 are somewhat higher than one would expect if the council was adhering to the management plan provisions as well as applying RIL techniques during harvesting. In addition, the actual figures might be higher than the abandoned timber estimated volume of 19,582 cubic meters over the 2004-2009 period and the 35.4 percent average figure. To clarify, the council reported on top of the normal operating year that during the extended period from 1 January to 14 February 2008, it felled 1,746 cubic meters and sold

---

<sup>150</sup> The study objective was to investigate the causes of timber abandon by SFID in the Dimako area in 1995. The study also concluded that 70 percent of the volume of abandoned timber could be used for local processing (Jardin 1995, 12).

1,043 cubic meters, thus leaving a remaining timber volume of about 703 cubic meters or 40 percent of abandoned timber in the two months period. This meant that four trees out of ten felled during January and February 2008 were lost and abandoned in the forest.

Around the years 2004-2005, it is said that the council, after ‘crushing’ the forest, lost between 300 and 600 felled *ayous* because of the fact that though the trees had been felled the customer was only selecting the ones without defects, and the council could not find another avenue to sell those trees. In its search for revenues and its apparent disregard for the management plan provisions (the harvesting of trees below the legal and the management diameters, as well as the disregard of the logging rotation cycle and forest boundaries), the result appears to be that a higher volume of timber than normally anticipated is being abandoned in the forest.<sup>151</sup>

In effect, in contrast to the council assertions that the buyer bears the responsibility for this situation, the evidences presented so far point otherwise. To be sure, if Alpicam was totally driving the process, the council should have been able, since it has been in business allegedly with the firm for six years, to ‘customize’ its felling operations to the needs of the customer so as to reduce the volume of abandoned timber. In other words, if it is known that the client only selects the most pristine trees, why continue to fell trees that are not going to get sold, in particular when the defects appear obvious at first glance? As the preceding lines have argued, the answer to the question of abandoned timber is to be found in the lack of qualifications of the FCD workers as well as the harvesting practices and the alleged illegal logging happening within the FCD which leads to a situation whereas more trees than needed are being felled. On the whole, the issue of abandoned timber suggests a pattern of dismissing the management plan

---

<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the harvest inventory was meant to provide the info regarding the volume, quality, location as well as a detailed topography of the area to be harvested (for more, see FAO 2003, 20).

provisions and harvesting the forest according to one objective only get the most valuable timber.

### 6.1.3 Reforesting the forest

In both the 2001 and 2006 management plans, reforestation appears as a major objective for the FCD and is targeted at reclaiming the forest cover lost to shifting agriculture (see CDKO 2006b, 50; Mekok Balara 2001b). In spite of this official commitment to reforestation, from 2004 to 2006 no plantation had been commenced; it was not until 2007 that the council set up a nursery to provide the FCD with the seeds and plants needed for the silvicultural activities.<sup>152</sup> Since then, local authorities have portrayed the creation of the nursery and the plantations as two of their most significant undertakings differentiating them from conventional loggers as well as expressing their commitment to SFM. Below, the subsection reviews the council reforestation efforts by focusing on the nursery as well as the main plantation called *en layons*.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Silviculture is defined as “the art and science of growing trees. It involves manipulating natural biological processes of the forest in order to achieve specific end results. It includes all operations that are done between one harvest and the next, such as planting, thinning, pruning, weeding or poison girdling” (Higman et al. 2005, 170).

<sup>153</sup> In the current reforestation efforts, there are in fact two main plantations: *en layons* and *en bandes alternées*. Because at the time of data collection, the second one had just commenced it is not included in the analysis. In general, local authorities have also pointed out that the plantations are being created in order to diversify the council source of revenues. That is why, the council has for instance set up a commercial venture in the form of a mixed plantation of *Moabi* and palm trees to produce palm oil which in the future could be sold and bring additional revenues to the council. The mixed plantation (*Moabi* and palm trees) is not included here because compared to the other two plantations, it is purportedly designed as an economic venture not reforest the council forest. Nonetheless, the same critiques leveled here against the two other plantations could also apply to the mixed plantation.

### 6.1.3.1 The Council Nursery



**Figure 6.2. Various tree species in the FCD nursery, January 2010**

*Source: author*

As mentioned at the onset of this section, it was not until 2007 that the council officially started its reforestation efforts. To account for the lack of implementation of the reforestation provisions of the 2001 management plan, the mayor argued that though the council had begun to mobilize the resources for that aim, the transition at the National Forest Development Support Agency (ANAFOR) -which is tasked with Cameroon's national program of plantations and provision of technical assistance in the area- was to be blamed for (CRDKO 2005a, 1).<sup>154</sup> Nonetheless, a few years after, in 2007, the council and ANAFOR having signed a technical assistance agreement, the Council Nursery was set up officially to provide the seedlings to be

---

<sup>154</sup> ONADEF, the former state monopoly in charge of forest inventory, was officially reorganized into ANAFOR in 2002. However, it took some time for the reorganization to take effect.



used in reforesting the FCD (see Menye 2007, 5).<sup>155</sup> The ANAFOR agreement called for the production in 2007 of at least 40,000 plants at the establishment of the FCD nursery as well as the reforestation of 50 hectares of the FCD (Menye 2007, 6, 11).

From official discussions as well as subsequent interviews with local villagers, the Council Nursery is organized the following way. First, there is the central nursery located near the former *Forêts et Terroirs* compound in Dimako town (see the figure above). Second, in selected villages, notably Kouen and Djandja (see Appendix F), small villages' nurseries have also been created. The official goal of the villages' nurseries is to supply the central nursery as well as involve local villagers into the enterprise, and this is accomplished by remunerating them 150 CFAF for each plant (Menye 2007, 6). Below are the official nursery figures for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009.

**Table 6.8. FCD Nursery plants 2007-2009**

<i>Tree species</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Ayous	22	44	36
Aningré B (white)	44	1,355	220
Aningré R	0	25	0
Bubinga	14	14	0
Bété	0	157	0
Doussié Pachyloba	2,153	2,000	200
Dibétou/Bibolo	143	1,220	350
Ébène	160	493	30

---

<sup>155</sup> The agreement from January to December 2008 included the creation of 70 hectares of forest plantations in the FCD; the training of the local population as well as of the council staff in charge of reforestation; and finally, the assistance to the creation of the council forest technical unit. The cost of the agreement was around 17 million CFAF, excluding the costs of training the local population as well the council personnel in charge of reforestation and the creation of the council forest unit (see ANAFOR 2007).

Iroko	0	06	0
Lotofa	21	14	0
Moabi	1,479	518	0
Sapelli	637	841	195
Sipo	43	26	0
Kossipo	0	0	40
Padouk-R	0	0	180
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,681	6,713	1,242

Source: (CDKO 2008d, 5; 2010a; Menye 2007, 9)

First Table 6.8 shows that in 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively the Council Nursery held a total of 4,681, 6,713, and 1,242 plants. Overall, fourteen species were being nurtured in the nursery, and among those plants, three species *Doussié* (*Azelia pachyloba*), *Dibétou* (*Lovoa trichilioides*), and *Moabi* predominate while *ayous* with *Fraké* -which according to the 2006 management plan were positioned as the primary species for reforestation (see CDKO 2006b, 50)- totaled *only* 44 plants.

The conclusion from the table is that on the whole since 2007 when the technical assistance agreement was signed with ANAFOR, the Council Nursery has been unable to achieve its objective of producing 40,000 plants. In effect, if cumulative, when added the figures for the three years totaled 12,636 plants. Of those figures, the 2009 figures appear the lowest, a situation the council blamed on the unusually long dry season that year (CDKO 2010a, 4). During interviews local authorities have argued that notwithstanding the issue surrounding the ANAFOR agreement, they are still proceeding with the nursery efforts. They have pointed out for instance to the villages' nurseries to show that things are moving as scheduled.



**Figure 6.3. Abandoned plants in the nursery, January 2010**

Source: author

On the other hand, the reality on the ground is different. Certainly, local villagers interviewed have remarked that because of the council inability, or unwillingness, to reward them for the villages' nurseries, they have stopped working. In other words, with the failure of the council to honor its side of the agreement –the 150 CFAF for each plant- local villagers have all but abandoned villages' nurseries, further contradicting the council's assertions that villages' nurseries are still operating as well as local villagers involved in reforestation activities. That conclusion about the ineffectiveness of the villages' nurseries was already noted in 2007 by a report in the following terms:

The young plants are raised in several villages which present different microclimates from that of the council nursery. The villages being located away from the site [the council nursery], transportation is provided by the [council] truck where the young plants suffer shocks when they are loaded and unloaded, in

addition those young plants are sometimes carried out during sunlight [*rayonnement solaire*]. This sometimes explains the loss of some young plants received in the nursery (Menye 2007, 11).

The same conclusion of ineffectiveness can be drawn from the central nursery which is under the management of the CFC. As Figure 6.3 above -obtained during a field visit of the nursery- revealed the Council Nursery has followed the same path as those in local villages. In truth, the issues affecting that nursery were already evident since 2007, for the same report quoted above then noted that the nursery head was not qualified to monitor the plants (Menye 2007, 6). Since then, the nursery head has faced several health problems with the result that no one is in charge of the monitoring of the nursery. In effect, the plants sit under the sun with no protection (see Figure 6.3) and no one from the council taking care of them notwithstanding the council's claim found in the 2009 CFC annual report (CDKO 2010a, 3).<sup>156</sup>

To explain the failure to reach the 40,000 plants target as well as the situation of the nursery, the Mayor of Dimako has again argued that the lack of cooperation from ANAFOR was the main culprit (CDKO 2008e). At the same time, though problems existed on ANAFOR's end, as the agency former director conceded, in a letter exchange with the mayor he also argued that the council, read the mayor, had not complied with its end of the deal especially concerning the disbursement of its financial obligations for the provision of technical assistance (see ANAFOR 2007; ANAFOR 2008). This, according to then-ANAFOR head, was at the root of the delay in the implementation of the agreement. A 2007 report already quoted above seemed to confirm the

---

<sup>156</sup> In 2009, a local villager sent by the mayor on behalf of the council to the ENEF (National School of Water and Forests) came back and was supposedly tasked with monitoring the nursery. Nonetheless, though he was involved in FCD issues, at the time of the study he was not officially tasked with duties pertaining solely to the nursery. It still remains uncertain whether in the absence of outside technical assistance as well as financial support from the mayor that that technician, even if given control over the FCD nursery, shall succeed.

agency claims when it stated that the failure of the council to fulfill its financial obligations “seems to discourage ANAFOR monitoring of the silvicultural activities” (Menye 2007, 11)

In the same way, the report added that “the part-time personnel employed by the council shows some willingness to work for the good of the entire Dimako community, but this willingness is sometimes dampened by the lack of working tools (machete, boots, sharpening file), the delay in payment of daily allowances, as well as the failure from the council to support the [personnel] transportation costs to the site” (Menye 2007, 11). This seemed to suggest that the blame for the failure to reach the targets was on the council and the mayor not ANAFOR’s side.

As a last point, notwithstanding the explanation for the shortcomings or where the blames lies, the reality is that the council and villages nurseries, which supposedly provide the plants for reforesting the FCD, have not reached their target as well as are currently abandoned and left unsupervised. The picture of more dried and dying plants, as Figure 6.3 attests, is more prevalent in Dimako nurseries than what the local authorities allege, and this is of immediate consequence for the plantation.

#### **6.1.3.2 The plantation *en layons***

To begin with, in both the 2001 and 2006 management plans, the plantations were to be established in the agroforestry area, the site of villagers’ fields, located at the entrance of the forest (see Map 5.1 and Map 5.2). In reforesting the agroforestry area, the focus was not only on preserving those species presenting problems of regeneration such as *ayous* and *fraké* or underrepresented for instance *Doussié rouge*, *Moabi*, and *Azobé*, but also on preventing the extinction of indigenous species in case of (over) harvesting (Mekok Balara 2001b, 88).

In the 2001 management plan, the reforestation target was set at fifty (50) hectares per AC for a total of three hundred hectares (300) over the first 25 years rotation as Table 6.9 exhibits. In the 2006 management plan, the goal was to reforest 500 hectares of the agroforestry area, hence a total of 100 hectares every five year.<sup>157</sup>

**Table 6.9. Five years reforestation targets for the FCD in the two management plans (in hectares)**

<i>Items</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2006</i>
Target	50	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	300	500

*Source:* (CDKO 2006b, 49; Mekok Balara 2001a, 42; 2001b, 90)

At the end of 2009, the FCD had been operating for five years, save 2006, thus at the end of the period 2004-2009, 50 hectares within the council forest should, at least, have been replanted. In fact, as with the nursery plants, reforestation efforts *only* debuted in 2007, three years after the start of timber harvesting operations. This means that during the period of validity of the 2001 management plan, no trees were planted in the FCD. Since the 2007 reforestation efforts started, instead of the agroforestry area, the efforts have concentrated on FEU 1 and the creation of the plantation *en layons*.

The *plantation en layons* was started following the technical assistance agreement with ANAFOR. Pursuant to the agreement ANAFOR was responsible for monitoring both the nursery and the *plantation en layons* (Menye 2007, 5). To provide the reader an idea about the FCD

---

<sup>157</sup> In a 2006 letter accompanying the revised version of the management plan, the mayor pointed out that the reforestation would also be emphasized in the FEUs not solely in the agroforestry area (see CDKO 2006a).

*plantation en layons*, Table 6.10 below exhibits the tree species as well as the surface area planted for the period 2007-2009.

**Table 6.10. *Plantation en layons*, 2007-2009**

<i>Year</i>	<i>2007</i>		<i>2008</i>		<i>2009</i>	
<i>Tree species</i>	<i>Trees planted</i>	<i>Surface Area (in ha)</i>	<i>Trees planted</i>	<i>Surface Area (in ha)</i>	<i>Trees planted</i>	<i>Surface Area (in ha)</i>
Ayous	76	15	900	03	300	03
Dibétou	1,155		765	10	1,000	10
Doussié <i>bidipensis</i>	0		495	07	650	6.5
Moabi	80		270	08	800	8
Sapelli	109		540	5.5	650	6.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,485 <sup>1</sup>		3,060	33.5	3,400	34 <sup>2</sup>

Source: adapted from (CDKO 2008d, 4; 2010a, 4; Menye 2007, 10-11)

<sup>1</sup> includes 65 mixed Moabi, Dibétou, and Sapelli trees

<sup>2</sup> during 2009, according to the CFC 2009 report, only maintenance activities were performed in the plantation (see CDKO 2010a, 4)

ha: hectares

Overall, the table indicates that in 2007 1,485 trees were planted over 15 hectares. Since then, the plantation occupies a total surface area of 34 hectares with the latest figures indicating a total of 3,400 trees planted representing five main species *ayous*, *dibétou*, *Doussié*, *Moabi*, and *Sapelli*. However, the figures show some inconsistencies to the degree that for instance in 2007 1,155 *dibétou* had been planted compared to 765 in 2008 and 1,000 in 2009. The same thing happened with *ayous* with 900 trees planted in 2008 compared to 2009 where the figures show 300 *ayous*, 600 less. Judging by the council records, it is difficult to ascertain the reason of the discrepancies in trees planted between those years, or even whether the figures are cumulative or

not. On the other hand, the table shows that since the council started reforesting the FCD, a total of 34 hectares of FEU 1 had been covered.

Hence, by looking at the table, it appears that in three years, the council has reforested 34 hectares in FEU 1, about a third of its five year target of 100 hectares. To achieve its five year target, the council would have to plant another 66 hectares over the next two years. The conclusion that can be drawn is that in spite of the late start of reforestation efforts, the council seems to have implemented the provisions of the management plan relating to establishing plantations in the FCD. However, this is a misleading conclusion inasmuch as interviews with forest workers have indicated that the council has overstated the surface area planted in FEU 1. In effect, the interviews data have given a different picture with estimate of the reforested surface area of less than 30 hectares. This in fact would signify that the CFC official figures are either incorrect or simply inflated, in accordance with the pattern noted above regarding the council forest overall figures (see also Chapter 7.0).

A final issue with the *plantation en layons*, similar to the one with the nursery above, is that because of the failure of the agreement with ANAFOR, the result is that the *plantation en layons*, which was supposedly set up with ANAFOR assistance and which should have been under its monitoring, is left to itself. Thus, putting in doubt the survival of the trees already planted. As the CFC head conceded “in 2008, when the first plants were put underground, they [ANAFOR staff] were not coming anymore. We did not get any more assistance” (22 January 2010).

### **6.1.3.3 The reforestation efforts in jeopardy?**

Judging by the creation of the *plantation en layons*, it appears that the Dimako Council has followed through its official commitment to engage in reforestation. Even in the face of the



inconsistencies noted above, it appears that the council efforts, though they remain short of their target, have at least started. However, some local observers have cautioned against early optimism because of several conception issues with the plantation. This is critical an issue particularly because the 2009 GTZ-MINFOF-CTFC report mentioned above, though it has pointed to some of the council activities as being contrary to the management plan provisions as highlighted here, has praised the council's plantations -but not their conception- noting that at least the council is proceeding with its commitment to reforest the forest (Om Bilong et al. 2009, 12).

For those observers who have cautioned about Dimako's plantations, they have noted that those are unlikely to succeed because of their poor conception. These observers have also remarked that in contrast to the management plan provisions which target was to reconstitute forest cover in one of the FCD areas, the agroforestry area, which had been the site of villagers' fields, the current reforestation efforts proceed in FEU 1, where the forest cover is still supposedly intact, leading one to question the rationale as well as wisdom of this strategy.<sup>158</sup> As one outside observer remarked about the *plantation en layons* "all trees which can grow are impeded. Where forest cover exists, there is no need for reforestation. This is an erroneous idea of reforestation (*reboisement*). This is more like enrichment" (29 June 2010).

The preceding conclusion has led other observers to comment that the Dimako's plantation should be seen more as experiment rather than a *pure* plantation insofar as the growth and survival rate of the trees is not guaranteed. As one observer pointed out "5,000 trees equals five hectares, it is derisory! How many trees survive after? This is more like a trial not the implementation of the management plan...five hectares planted over a 16,000 hectares forest that

---

<sup>158</sup> One irony is that the mixed plantation not covered here is now called the 'agroforestry zone'.

is nothing!!!!” (9 March 2010). The success is not guaranteed especially because as noted before first ANAFOR assistance is not involved, and second, the council does not have the manpower and knowledge to take over nor has the mayor been willing to commit the resources needed to make the enterprise successful as shall be shown below.

Related to the above point, the other issue regards the species being planted in the FCD, which are at odds with the management plan provisions. As mentioned above, the idea behind the reforestation efforts was to target the species presenting problems of regeneration or underrepresentation as well as preventing the extinction of indigenous species in case of (over) harvesting. Pursuant to those objectives, five species were selected *ayous*, *fraké*, *Moabi*, *Assaméla* and *Sipo* (see CDKO 2006b, 50; Mekok Balara 2001b, 91). Nonetheless, an examination of Table 6.10 above shows that of these five targeted species, only *ayous* and *Moabi* are being planted in the FCD. Furthermore, the table also indicates that except for *Moabi* which occupies 8 hectares, *ayous* trees occupy only three hectares while the majority of the surface area purportedly planted is occupied by species not mentioned in the management plan. As with the rationale for locating the plantations in FEU 1, the same question can be raised for the election of those species over those of the management plan. As one local observer commented:

People have chosen formulas which they prefer and then realize that it is not appropriate with the forest milieu as well as ecology. Because already when people prefer to reforest with species such as *Moabi* which growth is very slow, *I believe the whole experiment is going astray*. I believe that given Dimako position, we have to set clear objectives. When we are planting *Moabi*, what is the objective? Is it because we are trying to recreate the forest cover or for economic reasons. Because given the current trend of the timber market, all the forests of Bertoua are turned toward providing northern Cameroon, meaning Chad, Libya and so on. If these people were focused on this objective, they should plant species with rapid growth such as *ayous*, *Fraké*, in short rapid growth species (4 June 2010, emphasis added).

Based on the above, the conclusion is that as with the previous management plan provisions, such as the harvest inventory or the MHDs and MMDs, one can conclude that the council is proceeding according to its own will and outside of an adequate planification, not on the basis of the officially approved document.

The final element which puts into doubts the council or the mayor's commitment to reforestation pertains to the financial resources devoted to the enterprise. As shall become apparent in the next chapter, since 2004 despite the council receiving significant timber revenues, the amount dedicated to reforestation has been meaningless as well as inconsistent regardless of the fact that the 2003 revenue sharing formula set aside 10 percent of the council forest revenues specifically for reforestation (see subsection 5.7.3.4). In 2004 for instance, no funds were allocated or set aside for that purpose (see CRDKO 2005b, 3). Furthermore, a recent examination of the council financial records points that less than the 10 percent scheduled for reforestation is allocated for that purpose, putting in doubt the commitment to creating the plantations. Take, for instance, the figures for the year 2009 in Table 6.11 below where instead of the more than 4 million CFAF scheduled to be spent for purchasing plants, reforestation as well as workers' wages, a little more than 50 percent of the amount was actually disbursed.

**Table 6.11. Reforestation costs, January-July 2009 (CFAF million)**

<i>Items</i>	<i>10% amount as specified by 2003 council decision</i>	<i>Amount officially declared as spent</i>
Plants purchase, reforestation and staff costs	4,148,719	2,120,000

*Source:* adapted (CDKO 2009a, 5)

In reality, because of the unavailability as well as inconsistency of the figures for the years prior to 2009, it has proven difficult to compare the council financial commitment for the plantations. However, interview data have confirmed the 2009 trend whereas the council commitments for reforestation are short of the actual 10 percent supposedly set aside. This seems to suggest that in Dimako reforestation is of a lesser priority. As one forest worker concluded “the council was not interested before in reforestation. If one compares the number of hectares cut with those that have been planted, it is not even close. I wonder what would remain for the future generations” (29 January 2010).

## **6.2 THE POWERLESS FOREST MONITORING COMMISSIONS**

So far the chapter has described the situation about forest harvesting and reforestation efforts in the FCD, a situation which, the evidence suggests, is characterized by a lack of adherence to the forest administration rules and regulations. Indeed, the evidence from the preceding section suggested that Mayor Mongui and his team appear to have disregarded the officially approved management plans. All this happened in spite of the fact that local organizations were set up during the process of creating the FCD to ensure compliance with forest laws, rules and regulations. Of particular interest to this study are the two organizations, the CCG and later the CSE, which were established, especially for the CCG, in response to local criticism about the risk of capture of the council forest by the logger-mayor. The following section focuses on the CCG and the CSE as the local monitors of the implementation of the management plan; on how it has been possible for the mayor to seemingly disregard the management plans in spite of the

presence of these local organizations, supposedly tasked as the ‘guardians’ of the forest for future generations.

### **6.2.1 The CCG or the phony village organization**

According to the 1999’s *Arrêté* 11, already mentioned in Chapter 5.0, save the gazetting process already completed, CCG members are responsible for recommending to the municipal council how to *soundly, profitably, transparently* and *sustainably* manage the council forest, and how to utilize timber revenues in the pursuit of villages development projects (CRDKO 1999b, Art. 1, emphasis added). While the second role shall be briefly addressed in the following chapter, as far as forest management is concerned, it appears that despite this officially stated role, the CCG in reality has no say on forest matters inside the FCD. That is the case because CCG members have argued that they have been embroiled in a feud with the mayor over the extent of the role of the organization. Put another way, according to CCG members, Mayor Mongui has opposed any attempt by CCG members to assume an assertive role within the FCD or over issues regarding the council forest altogether. In effect, former CCG member 2 lamented:

We were supposed to monitor the forest in all aspects. But inside the forest our role was in reality limited. In handling fuel, renting equipment we were at odds with the mayor. Even with managing workers we had issues since most of the workers were from his family. Inside the forest he created an illegal logging scheme that unfortunately CCG members could not monitor (12 March 2010).

For local villagers that situation is in contrast to what was agreed upon prior to the creation of the council forest. In fact, CCG members argue that the CCG organization as envisioned during the days of *Forêts et Terroirs* was meant to be an independent organization

representing all villagers and involved in forest management through the monitoring of the implementation of the management plan. As former CCG member 1 declared:

Well, the conclusion that we as pioneers draw is that between what was planned and what happened in practice, the mayor muzzled this committee ...[Furthermore], the mayor did not give us the possibility to apply the training we had received. *When the elections came, 90 percent of the CCG as well as Councilors left so the people who are there do not know anything* [the new CCG and Councilors]. Only one person runs the council forest, it is the Mayor of Dimako (26 February 2010, emphasis added).

For CCG members, who remember are each elected representative of local villagers, the mayor's circumventing of the CCG, which resulted in the irrelevance of the organization, started well before the council forest began its activities. For them, the mayor's objective from the onset was to remove the organization from the daily management as well as monitoring of the management plan provisions, leaving him alone in charge of the FCD. Indeed, for one eyewitness, the mayor even went further during the election of the first CCG to ensure that the organization which was to be created did not threaten his interests. To illustrate, a telling episode happened at the end of the 1990s during the election for the presidency of the CCG. Vying for the CCG presidency were two local villagers, an educated 'elite' and an 'illiterate' villager. One *Forêts et Terroirs'* witness recalls the event as follows:

At the start of the project, the goal was to enable the state to have the tools for sustainable forest management. So I admit we did not assess the risk [that the experiment went awry], but we put into place safeguards with the creation of the CCG. However, where things started to fall apart is when the mayor started to influence the CCG elections to have people devoted to him. There was an election at City Hall for the CCG president pitting a civil servant against a villager. We saw the mayor's hand behind that. Someone who does not know to read or write [got elected]. We realized that the mayor had done his job at midnight [during the night]. You know, here in Cameroon, people are poor (15 June 2010).

“People are poor” means that in the hours preceding the actual election, the mayor had reportedly ‘offered’ money to some villagers to get his preferred candidate -the ‘illiterate’ villager- elected. That pattern of giving money to deflect local challenges, as Chapter 8.0 shall describe, appears to be a hallmark of Mayor Mongui in his apparent quest for *Bigmanship* status.

For the moment suffice to say that in the CCG election episode, the mayor’s fear was that he would face a potential competitor in the person of the CCG president, an individual he could not control, so he threw his support behind the villager whom he considered more amenable. Moreover, to prevent such a scenario from happening in the future, later on, the mayor apparently went to the prefect and imposed his vision of a limited CCG role with him as the president, a vision embodied in *Arrêté* 11 (see Chapter 5.0). As a former member of *Forêts and Terroirs* remarked:

At the beginning, the role of the municipal council was purely deliberative and the goal was one CCG member by village. We also did not want them [CCG members] to be municipal councilors at the same time. We wanted a really *independent organization*, but the mayor went behind our back to see the prefect and got the municipal order [rather the Deliberation Number 4 creating the CCG] signed. In the new CCG, he was president with the secretary general as secretary, *but that was not the initial design* (1 June 2010, italics added).<sup>159</sup>

Today, the situation in Dimako is that the CCG is an organization that has no purpose in the management or monitoring of the management plan of the FCD. It is, as Councilor 4 argues, a ‘phony’ organization; an organization without power in reality. That same conclusion was reached by the 2009 MINFOF-GTZ-CTFC report quoted above which noted that the organization was unfit to monitor forest activities (Om Bilong et al. 2009, 12). The report

---

<sup>159</sup> Before the current framework of political decentralization in Cameroon, according to the 1974 law on councils and the subsequent decrees, rules and regulations every act by local councils had to be approved *a priori* by prefects before entering in force. Following the 2004 decentralization laws, that requirement has been loosened with the introduction of two types of approval *a priori* and *a posteriori* (for more see (Soh 2004, 11).

observed for instance that the forest register, which was supposedly designed as the holder of all forest harvesting data as well as assist the CCG in its monitoring mission, does not exist (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 12). This last conclusion was expected, for Chapter 5.0 pointed out that local villagers had conveyed their doubts as to whether the forest register would be available for all to consult if Mayor Mongui was in total control of the council forest.

The conclusion that CCG members draw is that the mayor is using the organization, in the words of former CCG member 1, as a screen “to mask a transparency that does not exist [because] people believe if there is a [municipal] councilor as well as a CCG member, things will go well” (26 February 2010). What is more, for CCG members, all these local organizations created by the municipal council and the mayor are there for outside consumption as well as to conceal the fact that local villagers’ representatives do not have a say in the management of the forest. As current CCG member 1 asks “when we talk about a CCG member, how can he consult about forest management when he is not involved [in the first place]?” (5 September 2010). The reality is that while the CCG is fighting with the mayor over its role, the fact of the matter is that it cannot monitor the forest, which appears to be ultimately the sought-after objective.

#### **6.2.1.1 The main objective all along**

In some way the conclusion that the CCG would be powerless to enforce the provisions of the management plan was expected. That was the case because, despite Mayor Mongui’s above 2000 pronouncement about the role of the CCG, a closer analysis of the CCG founding documents revealed that the organization that was created in practice by Mayor Mongui and the municipal council was a subordinate one. Indeed, while for local villagers, and for that matter the *Forêts et Terroirs* team, the CCG role was to independently monitor the council forest in ‘all aspects’, in the words of one CCG member, the Mayor of Dimako had envisioned another role



for the organization. That is why the organization that was established on 22 June 1999 was assimilated to a municipal council commission which could also be disbanded upon request by the said municipal council (see CRDKO 1999a, Art. 2). Equally important, according to *Arrêté* 11, the CCG decisions were not binding; they were only *propositions* to the municipal council which could adopt, amend, or reject them (CRDKO 1999b, Art. 5).<sup>160</sup> That is to say its role as outlined by administrative fiat was purely advisory, not compulsory.

The conclusion about the ineffectiveness of the CCG was already pointed out in 2001 by Samuel Assembé-Mvondo who remarked that:

The Committee, as its name indicates, is only a consultative organ, that is to say, it can only make proposals.... Given its lack of power, one must have reservations about its potential and ability to invoke dynamic change in sustainable forestry management. The fact that the proposals are obligatory is no obstacle to the organ invested with decisional powers (the Municipal Council), which can dismiss what has been recommended (quoted in Oyono 2004c, 22).

Since Assembé-Mvondo's visit, which predates the start of forest harvesting and the concomitant rise of timber revenues, it seems the situation has worsened in Dimako with Mayor Mongui going at length to prevent the organization from exercising even its *Arrêté* 11 limited role. In truth, the tensions between the mayor and the CCG have escalated to the point where around January 2009 Mayor Mongui reportedly threatened to dissolve the organization over a

---

<sup>160</sup> Further, the *Arrêté* reaffirmed the proposition that the CCG was subordinated to the municipal council as it was likened to a municipal council commission such as the Great Works or Social Affairs for instance (see CRDKO 1999b, Art. 2). On the one hand, the CCG term was set at five years and aligned with the municipal council term, and CCG members were allowed to run for other terms without apparent limit (CRDKO 1999b, Art. 4). On the other hand, *Arrêté* 11 also gave powers to the municipal council, read the mayor, to expel and replace a CCG member after two unheeded warnings for acts impeding "the necessary cohesion" needed for the functioning of the committee as well as its relationship with the municipal council (CRDKO 1999b, Art 6). The said member was said to be replaced within thirty days by a new village elected member.

few CCG members' complaints that illegal logging was allegedly happening inside the forest, and what the mayor saw as an attempt to trouble peace and order in town.<sup>161</sup>

For CCG members, attempts like those are designed to discourage them from monitoring forest operations and denounce the mayor, in particular given the history surrounding the relationship between the mayor and the CCG over the latter's independence. Apparently, the CCG has displeased the mayor to the point where he has privately declared that was he to redo the council forest project, the organization would have never been established. Mayor Mongui's assessment was based on the fact that contrary to what he had expected, CCG members by their constant recrimination about the council forest and even their threat of resignations over their lack of involvement have posed a conundrum as well as brought undue attention to the FCD.

#### **6.2.1.2 The meetings issue**

In fairness, the tensions between Mayor Mongui and the CCG involve more than forest management; the roots of those tensions can be traced back to the issue of the management and utilization/sharing of timber revenues. In reality, as the next chapter will illustrate in detail, the conflict between the mayor and the CCG over the monitoring of the FCD revolves around the battle for the control of the timber revenues, a battle which has pitted the mayor on the one side against local villagers on the other side. For the time being, to demonstrate the impact of the

---

<sup>161</sup> It seems that while the mayor was travelling abroad, a team of local workers, not affiliated with the FCD, was found illegally logging timber in the forest. That team for instance felled some species which harvesting within the FCD is forbidden. When one CCG member requested them to stop, the team allegedly replied that they were working on behalf of the mayor. Because that CCG member considered the act in contravention with the council official policy, he ordered them to leave as well as inform other local villagers so as to collectively devise a course of action. When the mayor, still abroad, was informed of the situation, he called Dimako sub-prefect who summoned the CCG members and physically threatened them as well as promised imprisonment if any more action was taken over this matter. It is at his return to Dimako that Mayor Mongui threatened to dissolve the CCG because in his words the CCG members were inciting a strike in the FCD as well as arousing local villagers against him and his leadership.

Mayor's alleged capture of the timber revenues on forest management, the example of the issue of the CCG meetings shall suffice. According to Article 3 of *Arrêté 11*, once a year but two months before the municipal council's vote on the budget, the CCG meets at the request of the mayor or two thirds (2/3) of its members.

Notwithstanding the existence of that provision, the mayor has rarely convened the CCG or allowed the organization to meet in his absence. Put differently, the reality is that the CCG rarely meets. For CCG members, these meetings are critical not only because it provides them the opportunity to voice their discontent about the direction of the FCD, but also because it allows them to receive session allowances. As CCG member 30 pointed out:

We spent two years without being called by the mayor so we wrote a protest letter and sent it to him. Either he dissolves the CCG or he pays our arrears and then we decided to send a copy to the governor [of the Eastern Region, then a province, in Bertoua] and the prefect [living in Abong Mbang] but I do not know who tipped him so he summoned a meeting and said that he was going to pay us so we calmed down. Later on, he reneged and stated that he never agreed to pay us. We spent two years without being called for a meeting. *It was like we did not exist, so we were mad* (16 September 2010, emphasis added).

To illustrate the growing tensions between CCG members and the mayor over the meetings issue, and more generally over their exclusion from the FCD management, Box 6.1 below shows copies of official letters sent to Mayor Mongui over a seven months period by CCG members during the year 2009. The first letter was written and submitted in May 2009 while the second was in November 2009 after the municipal council voted on the 2010 provisional budget. Overall, both letters substantiate CCG members' claims that the mayor has ignored them by not abiding to the provisions of *Arrêté 11*, notably the organization of meetings. The letters also indicate that CCG members expect to be paid for their past rounds of service in the forest or they would take remedial action in protest. Finally, the mayor acknowledged both letters, and

especially in the second letter, he wrote on the margin that he would ‘satisfy’ CCG members’ claims before 15 December 2009, although he ultimately did not fulfill his promise. As a former CCG member concluded “he does not like to implement stuffs that he himself created”.

**Box 6.1. CCG members’ Requests to the Mayor of Dimako, 2009**

**10 May 2009**

Sir,

We, CCG members of the Dimako Council Forest, are writing officially to express our discontent to the situation of the last three [municipal] council sessions, 2007-2008-2009. Indeed, we are asking you for our overdue compensations related to those council sessions. If not, we will abort the upcoming 18 May 2009 meeting (....)

We, CCG members, are very unhappy about the amount of 15,000 CFAF (fifteen thousand) given to every one for the monitoring of our council forest. That is why we are asking you to seriously consider this request upon reception.

Signed by the Vice-President and the Secretary General of the CCG

**30 November 2009**

Sir,

We, CCG members of the Dimako Council Forest, are writing this request to wish you well and Happy New Year 2009. We also wish to tell you that you have not abided to Article N° 3 of the Municipal Order N° 11/99/AM/CR/DKO.

Dear Sir, given the content of the said Article N° 3 the Municipal Council today voted on the budget, so what are we CCG members of Dimako Rural Council expecting from you. The Municipal Councilors will be receiving their share [session allowances] at the end of the council thus we would like to receive what Article 2 says.

Signed by the Secretary

*PS:* handwritten note on the side by Mayor Mongui stating that the CCG would meet before 15 December 2009 and that the members’ requests would get satisfied.

*Source:* reproduced from (CCG 2009a, 2009b)

### **6.2.1.3 The confusion over its role?**

Faced with the CCG contention that he has prevented the organization from monitoring the implementation of the FCD management plan, the mayor has countered that CCG members are not ‘mere’ spectators in the management of the forest, but full participants despite their complaints. For the mayor, the issue stems from CCG members misconstruing their role. As a

2005 municipal council session transcript observes, “the mayor notes, unfortunately to deplore, that the committee’s assignments have not been achieved because of lack of understanding, absenteeism, ignorance of their role by some members” (CRDKO 2005b, 3). Furthermore, for Mayor Mongui, the CCG members’ ‘real’ issue is not so much with the monitoring of the FCD, but rather it is that they sought to control the FCD, that is to be the *Comité de Gestion* (CG) or *the Management Committee*, not the consultative committee.<sup>162</sup>

On the other hand, for Mayor Mongui the CCG cannot be a CG or management committee because the mayor as the head of the local council is administratively, financially, and legally responsible within the council jurisdictional area. As he put it “CCG not CG, it is a council revenue [the council forest] that is handled by the mayor according to the rigorous principles of public management (...) people have not thought through all this; people in Yaoundé have tried to impose this [CCG managing the forest and the funds] but the council executive is the engine [governing the FCD]” (9 March 2010).<sup>163</sup>

Legally, the mayor seemed to have a point since the council executive over which he presides is responsible for handling all local affairs within its purview. That principle was reaffirmed recently following the 2004 decentralization laws as well as recent laws pertaining to the local governments’ institutional and legal framework in the country (see ROC 2004a, 2004b,

---

<sup>162</sup> During interviews, CCG members have argued that to the extent that the FCD is the property of local villagers, they are the ones -through elected CCG members- who should be in charge of its management instead of the council executive-led mayor. That position of CCG members rest on the fact that during the local consultations pre-FCD, the mayor was never envisioned as the sole actor in the management, thus monitoring, of the FCD. As CCG member 7 commented “We are only CCG by name [meaning no real role] because when we go into the forest, we are only there to observe how work is proceeding. When we talk of CCG member, we should say CG or management committee. We are villagers, we accepted when we were told of the idea of having a council forest; we thought it was a good idea. But we are only CCG by name. The mayor is the one managing the council forest with the Secretary General and I can even say the councilors. But the population should have been the one managing it since it already belongs to us” (1 September 2010).

<sup>163</sup> Mayor Mongui appeared annoyed when raising that issue of CCG against CG, and actually raised the issue without being directly asked the question.

2009a, 2009b). That having been said, in this case, given the fact the council forest project was supposedly a collaborative effort between the council and the local villagers, which can be seen through the creation of the CCG, if the CCG cannot monitor the implementation of the management plan or the council adherence to forest rules and regulations, what is its purpose?

For the mayor, the CCG role is to represent the population through its suggestions. As he argued “the municipal council is the deliberative body; *the CCG is there to propose*; the monitoring commission is a control body; [and] the council executive led by the mayor is there to impulse and coordinate [everything]” (Mayor Mongui, 9 March 2010, emphasis added). That ‘new’ position regarding the CCG was in contrast to the mayor’s 2000 official position before the creation of the FCD. In fact, again in 2000, the mayor had emphasized that the council forest could not be managed like the other council properties. That is why for him it was imperative to involve local villagers through the CCG in order to ‘build a project of more general interest’ (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 133-134). Therefore, the mayor’s current position could be seen as a surprise.

Yet, that official stance was new because, after circumscribing the role of the CCG during its creation, in the meantime the mayor had successfully thwarted the emergence of an independent and assertive CCG. Indeed, the same year that timber harvesting started in the FCD in 2004, Mayor Mongui had established another moribund organization, the Monitoring Commission, thus effectively putting no institution in charge of monitoring the implementation of the management plan provisions.

## **6.2.2 The Monitoring Commission at the rescue?**

Chapter 5.0 above pointed out that despite the risks associated with creating another local layer for monitoring the FCD, the mayor went ahead and established the CSE. In contrast to his 2000 statement quoted at the onset of the section where he emphasized the CCG role as the monitor of the forest management plan in the FCD, Mayor Mongui today argues that the CCG was never meant to be the local monitor of the management plan. That role rested with the CSE which purportedly accomplishes the task through the rotation system previously described. At issue with the mayor's version of the events is that the extant evidence does not support his assertion.

Further, an examination of the CSE points out that the organization is dominated by the mayor's deputies as well as incumbent upon the mayor to establish its schedule, a schedule that he has reluctantly established according to field evidence. In effect, regardless of the CSE wide responsibilities as outlined by the mayor (see 5.7.3.3), the fact of the matter is that the current forest monitoring system is dysfunctional as the participants and the mayor himself have admitted. In other words, the CSE as proven as moribund as the CCG for almost the same reason: the mayor's unwillingness to provide the space for the organization to exercise its role.

### **6.2.2.1 The dysfunctional CSE rotation**

According to all the participants, the CSE rotation scheme is not functioning and they argue, as with the CCG, that the ineffectiveness of the monitoring system is due to the mayor's opposition to an expansive role of the CSE as provided by *Memo Number 11* signed by himself. A former CCG member conveyed his opinion this way:

Me in my head this could not work, I could not see myself there. We were treated as guinea pigs, we were not doing anything so we did not want to run for office anymore, it was not worth it, maybe the newer member [could change the

situation]. But they claimed that we were beaten during the elections. We cannot collide every time with the mayor, our older brother. And the current Councilors and CCG members, they are sent into the forest but me I went into the forest for 30 days and I could not tell anything. *You just go there and sit; it is just for show nothing else. Some people just go there to get the per diem.* Nobody can give the state of the forest, of things happening there although we were trained for that (26 February 2010, emphasis added).

The situation about the rotation is exacerbated by two issues: the lack of training among the new breed of councilors and CCG members post-2007 and the inconsistency of the rotation schedule. First, in contrast to the first CCG and councilors who benefited from *Forêts et Terroirs*' experience, the current CCG members and councilors, as they have themselves conceded, are not proficient with forest harvesting issues; thus even if allowed by the mayor, they could not monitor the implementation of the management plan. Second, the inconsistency of the rotation schedule means that not only does the schedule depend on the mayor, hence he is the only one to have a clear picture of the forest, but equally important this means that no monitoring operations can operate first outside of the mayor's consent. As Chief 30 argued "CCG members do not even go into the forest regularly. One goes while another does not and vice versa. So I believe they are all underinformed. If they all were going at the same time, maybe they could monitor the forest, but currently this is not the case" (16 September 2010).<sup>164</sup> Dimako Councilor 8 for instance admitted that despite being assigned to monitor forest activities, he never went.

Furthermore, councilors have argued that insofar as the CCG was created to monitor the council forest, councilors should not be involved in the daily scheme devised by the mayor. For

---

<sup>164</sup> A further issue with the inconsistency of the rotation schedule, which bothered CCG members as well as councilors, pertains to the fact that because the schedule keeps being changed from a month into the forest to two weeks at a time without prior consultation. It is an important matter for councilors and CCG members alike since changing the rotation has implications for the monthly allowance that CSE members are set to receive as shall be shown below.



councilors, this is a waste of time because it involves no ‘real’ duties. As CCG member 11 remarked about the councilors’ position on the rotation:

We were supposed to work together with councilors, but since they see themselves as big men [important people], they have said that the mayor cannot ridicule them like that, so they are not going into the forest. They just wait for reports and they have said that this year they are not going anymore inside the forest. They said that the mayor has already created the CCG, and those are the people who should go into the forest not the big men they are (7 September 2010).

That frustration over the inconsistency of the rotation scheme and schedule is further compounded by the lack of cooperation from the logging manager and the CFC head who only answer to the mayor. In some cases, both individuals have refused to provide the information necessary to monitor the FCD, in particular to CCG members, though *Memo 11* affords the CSE members the right of information over all operations happening inside the FCD. In fact, CCG member 2 rhetorically asks “to whom are you going to ask for the forest log [*carnet de chantier*] and who is going to give that information to you?” (5 September 2010). Only Mayor Mongui is privy to all the information needed to monitor the FCD. As Global Witness Cameroon noted about its 2004 FCD inspection “the team had to visit Dimako twice because the Mayor, *who personally keeps the DCF [Dimako Council Forest] logging operations documents*, was absent” (Global Witness Cameroon 2004b, 2, emphasis added).

For Mayor Mongui, though he has acknowledged the breakdown of the monitoring system, as with the CCG, he has also argued that the breakdown is not his fault; rather, the blame rests upon the people in charge of monitoring the FCD who, according to him, have not taken the task seriously, especially in their reporting of the ‘alleged’ abuses inside the FCD. Deflecting the accusations that he had impeded the work of the CCG first and then of the CSE, he noted the following:

So until now, can I say that I am satisfied with their work [of Councilors and CCG members *i.e.*, the CSE]? No, I have to admit that I am still not satisfied. We have realized that the *intellectual capacity* of these elected members is the biggest obstacle for achieving our objectives. Let's take the example of the Monitoring Commission, reports are written although they are supposed to send me a report as well as to the other participants [they haven't] that is why we recently have agreed on a new arrangement (Mayor Mongui, 9 March 2010, emphasis added).

Put another way, for Mayor Mongui the issue with the failure of the monitoring system is due to the illiteracy of the councilors as well as CCG members who together comprise the CSE. If the monitoring system is not working in the FCD, it is because CSE members have failed in their reporting duties. That is why he has put forward a new arrangement designed to strengthen the monitoring system and make it work.<sup>165</sup>

Yet the mayor's assessment of the situation appears to be at odds with that of the CSE members, for the so-called new arrangement Mayor Mongui has advanced does not address the issue about forest monitoring and the alleged multiple violations inside the FCD; it simply deals with the reporting issue which, though related to monitoring, is a separate issue. To be sure, the issue raised by CSE members is about the mayor's attempts to prevent them from conducting their work, not upon writing monitoring reports. Similarly, upon which data shall rest the reports when, in the first place, CSE members are not allowed to exert the role afforded by the municipal council. Finally, what has happened to the mayor's reference to the intellectual capacity of CSE members? Will that have improved in the meantime?

---

<sup>165</sup> According to the mayor, the new governing arrangement will consist in the following. First, at the end of each month the CSE and the CFC head each write 'contradictory' reports. Second, the municipal tax collector writes the financial report and from that a final report is written and sent to CCG members and everyone in the council for large diffusion. The meetings are set to be presided over by the First Deputy Mayor. As can be seen, it is unclear how this 'new' arrangement answers the question about forest monitoring.

#### **6.2.2.2 The compensation issue**

A major issue why the rotation system has broken off regards the compensation afforded to CSE members. In effect, the compensation scheme has become a local point of contention. As with the CCG meetings and allowances, the same issues that have been noted before have also arisen here. According to the various documents creating the CCG and later the CSE, serving in both organizations is not remunerated; however, in order to conduct their official monitoring missions, members of both bodies have been afforded allowances to encourage local participation. That is necessary in particular because one has to remember that, for the most part, CCG members and councilors are local villagers currently living off agriculture. Consequently, for them abandoning their daily activities to monitor the council forest has to be balanced by the expectation that they shall get compensated in some way.

Whereas councilors receive a monthly allowance of 30,000 CFAF, CCG members receive half of that sum for a month of service in the forest (see Appendix G). In the same way, all the CSE operating costs are supposed to be supported by the council budget. It is projected that during their tour of the forest, CCG members and councilors shall collect information about timber harvesting operations as well as write daily and monthly reports. The compensation is supposedly based on that trade-off. However, following the mayor's reluctance to support the costs of the organization monitoring the FCD as well as appropriately compensate councilors and CCG members, it is another reason why the monitoring system has failed.

This is of importance for the implementation of the management plan provisions, for in the absence of those compensations, in reality some CSE members have simply abandoned their duties while others have actually threatened to resign in protest. This CCG member for instance mentioned that “we were compensated at the end of the year, around 23 December 2009 15,000

[CFAF], but it was not supposed to be 15,000. The mayor himself told us it was going to be between 30 to 35,000 CFAF. Among us, there are some who want to resign because it is not working. *We want the mayor to take us seriously; he should not act like we do not exist*” (CCG member 10, 7 September 2010, italics added).

Apart from the inconsistency between the official figures and those provided by this member (see Appendix G) -an issue which comes up frequently in Dimako-, what this CCG member is referring to is the fact that CCG members while they are compensated sometimes, they believe the compensation to be inadequate for the task at hand. Finally, the situation is also aggravated by the fact that in spite of the significance of timber revenues received since the start of forest harvesting in the FCD, the council has accumulated arrears over the CSE compensation.

If the aim was to push away local villagers from close involvement in the FCD matters, Mayor Mongui’s objective has been partially achieved. In fact, CCG members and Councilors have become despondent over the monitoring of the forest, and for that matter the entire FCD issue. As one member concluded “I cannot by myself bear this burden; everyone [meaning local villagers] is behind you while they do not know that you are having obstacles thrown before you” (CCG member 2, 5 September 2010).

### **6.2.3 The only one standing**

Viewed broadly, one cannot deny the fact that all this ‘confusion’ over the role of the CCG or the incapacity of the CSE to perform its duties have resulted in a situation where the mayor has been given free rein to manage the council forest as he sees fit. As the preceding section has shown, the alleged violations of the management plan provisions inside the FCD were not due to a lack of reporting from the CSE members; rather, they appear to be part of a deliberate strategy of

harvesting the forest outside of the management plan. For that strategy to be effective, the local organization, the CCG, created to ensure the respect of the provisions of the management plan as described above, needed to be rendered ineffective. This was achieved on paper through *Arrêté* 11, but also on the ground through the various obstacles thrown at it as well as the diluting of its functions with that of the CSE dominated by the mayor's deputies.

Though Mayor Mongui was aware of the risk of creating another institutional layer of monitoring on top of the CCG, he nevertheless went ahead. The purpose seems obvious: prevent the CCG from exerting its role as envisioned during the creation of the FCD. Indeed, that conclusion was shared by one forest administration official who declared that “in any case, let me tell you that all these local organizations that they have put in place *do not have any real responsibilities*, they are *fictitious* entities. All this is a fictitious arrangement. *Nobody really plays his true role. He [the mayor] is both the president and the manager; he is the one pulling all the strings*” (4 April 2010, emphasis added). Seen this way, the mayor's assessment of an ineffective CSE makes sense because he never intended the organization as a monitoring device; only as an instrument designed to further render the CCG irrelevant and apparently allow him to harvest the council forest out of sight and constraints.

### **6.3 THE ABSENCE AND SILENCE OF THE FOREST ADMINISTRATION**

The first section of the chapter has shown that far from adhering to the principles of SFM, timber harvesting in the FCD seems to be conducted in disregard of the provisions of the management plan. In addition, the chapter has also established that the local organizations created to monitor the implementation of the management plan have largely proven ineffective because of

deliberate tactics by the mayor to sideline them amid his attempts to capture the council forest. Absent in this overall picture is the forest administration which by law is responsible for the legal enforcement of forest rules and regulations throughout the country. That absence is remarkable inasmuch as the preceding sections have also revealed -as illustrated by the various quotes of some of the ministry officials above- that the forest administration has been cognizant of the violations in the FCD but did not act to condemn or prevent additional violations from occurring. The following section attempts to provide some explanations regarding the absence and silence of the forest administration.

### **6.3.1 The general lack of enforcement of forest laws**

To begin with, the role of the forest administration as far as forest law enforcement is concerned has come under intense criticism from several observers of Cameroon's forests for what they regard as a lax attitude towards law enforcement. As an illustration, Cerutti, Nasi and Tacconi (2008) have remarked that 'legal weaknesses and feeble controls' by the ministry of forests have resulted in a situation where forest harvesting in Cameroon is operating as if no management plans were in effect (see also Alemagi and Kozak 2010, especially 557-559 on the institutional weaknesses of the Cameroon state which facilitate illegal logging). In 2006, according to the three authors, the figures stood at 68 percent of the timber production being conducted like no sustainable management rules existed (see Cerutti, Nasi and Tacconi 2008).

That overall situation of an ineffective framework of forest law enforcement in the country, which has resulted in no or selective enforcement of the forest law, is one of the major reasons why since the early 2000s there exists an independent monitor of the country's forests. To be sure, since 2000 an independent forest monitor has been present alongside the forest

administration division in charge of law enforcement in order to improve the forest sector governance through primarily the enforcement of existing forest laws as well as prosecution of offenders (see Global Witness 2005; REM 2009; Young 2007).<sup>166</sup> At the same time, in spite of notable improvements -as the various reports of the successive independent forest monitors have acknowledged- forest law enforcement in Cameroon still remains a challenge. Indeed, Resource Extraction Monitoring (REM) -which acted as the independent monitor of Cameroon's forests from 2005 to 2009- at the end of its four year mission concluded that:

The BNC [the *Brigade Nationale de Contrôle*, the forest administration agency in charge of forest law enforcement throughout Cameroon] is not an effective forest law enforcement agency because: there are no clear procedures in place, no internal assessment process and no proper filing system. The lack of coordination with decentralized forestry departments/other governmental structures/civil society, a lack of objectivity, coupled with political collusion and interventions on illegalities undermines law enforcement (REM 2009, 4).

That challenge of enforcing forest laws throughout the country is exacerbated by several other factors such as the lack of prosecution of forest offenders as well as the lack of deterrence of the sanctions *régime*, and the absence of resources that has plagued the ministry. First, in spite of the provisions of the 1994 *Forest Law* -especially those relating to sanctions and prosecutions of offenders- the low level of penalties has been unable to act as a deterrent against forest violations (see Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 96-97).<sup>167</sup> While in the end there has been an increase from the forest administration, thanks, in large measure, to the independent monitoring system,

---

<sup>166</sup> Global Witness defines independent forest monitoring (IFM) as “the use of an independent third party that, by agreement with state authorities, provides an assessment of legal compliance, and observation of and guidance on official forest law enforcement systems” (quoted in Young 2007, 565). For David Young (2007, 565) “the defining characteristic of IFM is the unique position of the monitor as official yet independent”.

<sup>167</sup> For instance, “in 2002, approximately thirty companies were punished for infringements of the regulations perpetrated during logging operations; however, only four of these companies paid fines. In 2003, out of forty-eight offending companies, only seven paid fines. During the 2004 financial year, sanctions were imposed on fifty-five companies, none of which actually resolved their cases with the forest administration, though seven of them requested transactions with the administration” (Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 96).

in reporting the violations, the fact remains that “sanctions and compensation payments are often not fully applied, and fines are rarely paid” (REM 2009, 4).<sup>168</sup>

Second, in general, it has been recognized that the forest administration lacks the adequate resources to be effective as well as the political will to enforce the law. As Assembé-Mvondo (2009, 93) observed “ultimately, the ministry does not have the material means to conduct the follow-up and control missions assigned to it. There is not enough equipment, such as vehicles, to cover the country’s forests. Furthermore, there is a lack of modern technology, such as global-positioning-satellite data and computers, and a problem with the availability of fuel”. Hence, the task of enforcing forest rules and regulations on the ground has proven difficult in reality in spite of the existence of a National Strategy of Forest Law Enforcement (see MINFOF 2005), designed to govern the ministry efforts in its pursuit of SFM. The lack of resources of the ministry has led one forest observer to declare that “the forest administration’s efforts are largely below the requirements of the forest law”.

Seen this way, the absence of the forest administration in monitoring and enforcing the provisions of the management plan in the FCD does appear logical even though as early as 2004 violations occurring inside the FCD had been reported. In truth, this chapter pointed out that in May 2004 Global Witness Cameroon reported the violations of the 2001 management plan that were occurring within the FCD. That report officially validated by the ministry, then-MINEF, observed that “even though DRC [Dimako Rural Council] is just beginning its forest activities, it has already been found guilty of several offences. While these offences must be sanctioned,

---

<sup>168</sup> In that state of affairs, Assembé-Mvondo (2009, 97) notes that the main loser is always the state. To illustrate, REM “reported that of fines totaling 1,460,882 Euros in February 2006, the administration agreed to receive a payment of 97,709.9 Euros, 6.7 percent of the total of the fines imposed. In other words, representatives of the forest administration reduce fines by accepting deals that cause the state to lose up to 93.3 percent of the sum fined” (Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 97).



measures should be taken to ensure that the council is more compliant with forest laws henceforth” (Global Witness Cameroon 2004b, 3).

Whereas these 2004 violations were not at the level of a suspension, they were nonetheless in contradiction with forest rules and regulations as well as the FCD 2001 management plan provisions, for instance as relating to the minimum diameters. Therefore, they should have warranted from the forest administration a closer look at the practices within the FCD. On the contrary, these warnings did not affect the forest administration stance because six years after the start of forest harvesting in the FCD and the alleged additional violations documented here -some confirmed by the 2009 MINFOF-GTZ-CTFC report referred above, the council forest is still operating leading one to question whether the lax attitude alone toward law enforcement can explain the situation in Dimako.

### **6.3.2 Complicity and corruption**

Though it has been mentioned above that Cameroon’s forest observers have noted the general tendency of the forest administration to be negligent in enforcing the laws, it also has to be noted that the same observers have pointed to the complicity of some forest administration officials in the perpetuation of illegality in the sector. Indeed, elsewhere it has been documented that the forest administration itself has encouraged illegality in the sector as some officials have themselves been involved or colluded with private sector firms engaged in illegal logging (see for instance Global Witness 2005).<sup>169</sup> That complicity and corruption of the forest administration

---

<sup>169</sup> While this study was being researched, throughout the Dimako Council area a senior forest administration official residing in Bertoua was allegedly engaging in illegal logging instead of enforcing forest laws. Indeed, one evening this led to a heated conversation that the researcher witnessed between some Dimako villagers who opposed him and the younger brother of that official who had come to pick up planks sawn in the area reserved

seems to have been encouraged by the general situation of low salaries prevalent inside the ministry, or for that matter Cameroon's public services. As an example, a senior forest engineer before the 1987 economic crisis was paid about 1145 USD compared to today's 429 USD a month (see Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 93). For one author, this situation has enabled a range of behaviors such as "corruption, embezzlement of public funds, abuse of public property, and a wide range of compromise between civil servants and commercial operators" (Assembé-Mvondo 2009, 93).

The same situation noted elsewhere regarding the complicit attitude of the forest administration appears to be at work in Dimako Council. Indeed, a Dimako resident remarked "all these violations would not have been possible without the complicity of the forest administration. There are accomplices in this thing, and if we were to dig deeper we would realize that something is not going right!" (4 March 2010). A forest administration official, disputing the thought of complicity leveled against the administration, argued that, though the violations exist in the FCD, they have not reached to the point where the forest administration has to step in. As he stated "there are problems, but not problems that reach the level of suspension. *Sometimes also, the [forest] administration looks the other way around; sometimes, we close our eyes, it is very delicate; sometimes we strike [fine them] so that they do not exaggerate*" (15 July 2010, emphasis added).

---

for a future village community forest. That official the researcher heard was later 'under investigation' from the ministry, though local villagers believe the investigation would lead nowhere and the official would later come back for more timber. Similarly, the researcher also heard stories about the same forest administration official coming to ask permission from local Dimako chiefs to harvest timber in the surrounding community forests or areas set to be reserved for future ones. While some chiefs opposed, others did not object, thus provoking local conflicts between these chiefs as well as neighboring villages. Finally, [it is said that] the same forest administration official who allegedly illegally harvested timber in the Dimako surrounding forests went as far as to illegally harvest timber inside the FCD. (Un)surprisingly, Mayor Mongui seemed to not have lodged an official complaint.

The point about the violations being minor in consequence raises an immediate question as to what constitutes a major or minor violation of the forest rules and regulations, *i.e.*, at which point the forest administration needs to intervene. This is a critical issue because, as the evidence presented in the first section of the chapter has demonstrated, the management plan provisions of the FCD have been discounted during forest harvesting operations. Furthermore, though the alleged violations might not have reached the level of suspension, it remains that they are at odds with the law, for the 1994 *Forest Law* and the implementing decree explicitly provide the forest administration the authority to intervene when ‘acts contrary’ to the provisions of the management plan are being performed. In fact, two powers are given, the power of suspension and of substitution, powers that the forest administration seems not to have utilized in Dimako Council so far.

That argument about the complicity of the forest administration with Mayor Mongui was reaffirmed by other Dimako residents who cannot fathom how the FCD is still operating despite the multiple alleged violations in the past. It is especially puzzling to them, as the various quotes at the onset of the chapter have illustrated, since the forest administration has been aware for a while of the situation in Dimako, a fact that some officials have themselves admitted during interviews. Further, local villagers recalled that, on several occasions, they have seen the forest administration inspection teams visit the forest, but nothing has actually happened. So they have argued that these officials have been closing their eyes, and are colluding with Dimako local officials. This position was best illustrated by a local chief who commented that:

The [central state] auditors who come, what do you think they are after? The moment you give them money, the auditors, the red brigades [apparently, this is a term reserved for the forest administration central inspection teams] come, we do not see anything, nothing changes. As soon as they leave, it is over; the next day, we see [FCD] workers going back inside the forest and they ship out logs...we heard that the red brigade was here and that they stop all operations in the FCD

because what the government [meaning MINFOF] told him [the mayor] to cut, several times he did what he wanted. Thus, forest operations were stopped but we are surprised to see the workers still going into the forest to work. *We can say that it is the envelope [money, bribes] who is at play here* (Chief 28, 17 September 2010, emphasis added).

About the chief's assertions as well as this specific episode, a forest administration official who was questioned declared that first the ministry did not recognize the term *red brigade* and that second, he could not find an inspection report (*procès verbal*) about Dimako Council violations, hence officially could not comment. Moreover, another official added, rather ironically, that sometimes inspection reports disappear in the ministry in Yaoundé so one could not ascertain with certainty whether Dimako Council had been subjected to any official fines or not for not implementing the FCD management plans.<sup>170</sup> As he commented:

There are things that we know but do not tell; bureaucracy is about paper trail, about written documents. If there is none, no paper trail, how am I going to say that there is a problem? From 2004 to 2009, you do not find any official fines for Dimako. So you understand, I cannot say anything without evidences. Which proofs do I have to base my claims upon? Inspection reports are known to disappear in Yaoundé so you do not have any evidence. *If you insist* [about knowing where the reports have gone] *someone tells you to keep quiet and mind your business* (19 May 2010, emphasis added).

For local observers, this is a sign of a complicit attitude from some forest administration officials; a complicit attitude that some officials have not denied, preferring instead to counter the criticism in other ways. In fact, an official bluntly stated that “forest law enforcement does not pay in Cameroon so you leave them [illegal loggers] alone. At the beginning, I had the motivation to work but now I am getting older so I am not going to try to fake it” (23 May 2010).

---

<sup>170</sup> Incidentally, in Dimako the workers stated that the mayor came roaring one day into the forest furious because he had received a 28 million CFAF fine in early February from the forest administration for some violations in the FCD. No one interviewed among the forest administration officials could substantiate or deny the claim and in Dimako, since these types of documentary evidence are typically unavailable, it is not known whether the fine in question exists or not.

In other words, that official is going to try to survive through all available means including turning his head in the face of violations.<sup>171</sup> From this, the following conclusion is that the ministry has not been strictly enforcing the laws as well as is enabling Mayor Mongui to disregard the management plan provisions and harvest the FCD according to his own objectives.

### **6.3.3 The ambiguity surrounding council forestry rules and regulations**

On top of the reasons advanced above to explain the absence and silence of the forest administration in enforcing the provisions of the management plan in the FCD, some local observers have argued that, in the specific case of council forests, the issue is complicated by the ambiguity surrounding council forestry rules and regulations following the low attention that council forests in general have received from policymakers as well as scholars since 1994 compared to community forests and FMUs. Because of the legal loopholes and ambiguity in council forestry rules and regulations, the argument goes, local councils, in this case the Mayor of Dimako through the council, have been able to take advantage and disregard the management plan provisions without interference from the forest administration too busy policing community forests as well as FMUs.

In effect, for some council forests observers, notwithstanding the predicaments of the forest administration highlighted above, one major issue which complicates the monitoring and

---

<sup>171</sup> The complicity probably reaches the higher levels of the ministry and starts with the approval of the management plan. A case in point, the first section of the chapter has demonstrated that the 2006 FCD management plan provisions were changed notwithstanding the dangers that they might represent for SFM as well as the fact that the data upon which those changes rested were of dubious quality. In fact, the FCD 2006 management plan was officially approved in spite of the mayor's accompanying letter stating that the management plan draft did not *fully* adhere to the forest rules and regulations, especially *Arrêté* 0222 main provisions (see CDKO 2006a). The approbation was granted with the mention that the management plan was "judged to be in line [*sic*] with current regulations [*normes en vigueur*]" (MINFOF 2006).

enforcement of the management plan provisions in council forests is the underdevelopment of rules and regulations designed to govern forest harvesting in that type of forests. The point about the underdevelopment of council forests' rules and regulations was highlighted in the already-cited 2004 Global Witness Cameroon report as follows:

Timber extraction in a council forest is not well regulated, given that there are very few provisions in the forest law and the Decree of Application of Forest Management. For instance, the special considerations of a council and the need not [to] view councils as private sector economic operators were not taken into account when devising a tax system for the exploitation of council forests under local government control. *They were also not taken into account when specifying the litigation procedures to be applied should a council not respect forestry law in its exploitation practices.* Because there are few regulations governing council forests, the forest administration tends to place council forest management in the same category as Forest Management Units [FMUs], resulting in problematic council forest management (2004b, 3, emphasis added).

That is not to say that the forest administration has not been deficient in its mission; it is just to point out that the legal ambiguity surrounding council forests have made it difficult to enforce forest rules and regulations in some council forests. That ambiguity, for instance, has allowed local councils, as mentioned in Chapter 5.0, to harvest council forests without a land title, though required by law to complete the gazetting process, as well as not pay taxes as in the case of the FCD.<sup>172</sup>

More recently, the issue over how to enforce forest rules and regulations in the FCD, thus council forests, surfaced again inside the FCD during a 2008 REM mission. Compared to the 2004 Global Witness Cameroon mission, this time Mayor Mongui, based on his understanding of the law, skillfully utilized the provisions of the law to prevent the independent forest monitor

---

<sup>172</sup> To take an example about the administrative steps needed pre-forest harvesting itself, in a 2004 report, Global Witness Cameroon noted that that the “DRC [Dimako Rural Council] has not drawn up a Five Year Plan; the Annual Operation Plan is still being prepared yet activities have already been initiated” (Global Witness Cameroon 2004b, 1, italics original). This was in contradiction with the forest administration regulations which stipulates that all these administrative steps have to be completed before actual harvesting.

from inspecting the FCD on the ground that the council forest enjoyed a special status. As the authors of the report declared:

Before arriving on the field, the mayor of Dimako informed the inspectors [*contrôleurs*] about the legal status of the council. According to the mayor, a council forest is part of the council private estate and consequently, this forest is not subject to the same type of inspection as the forests of the Cameroonian state. According to the mayor, one cannot issue official statements regarding the violations [*procès-verbaux d'infraction*] for a violation committed [*fait commis*] inside a council forest, because as he said, it is a 'private' forest'. Those who share this point of view note that the ministry of forests must limit itself to monitoring the implementation of the council forests' management plans, as stipulated by the guidelines of the article 80 (3) of the decree N° 95-531 of 23 August 1995 (REM 2008, 12).<sup>173</sup>

Confronted with that refusal, the independent observer's inspection team noted that in lieu of the legal guidelines, they did not believe that council forests held a particular status preventing official inspections. The team, nonetheless, added that the question of council forests had to be legally clarified and that one of the major issues that had to be solved centered around, as the report put it, "the person or the institution who should answer in case of violations [as well as] the types of applicable penalties" (REM 2008, 13).<sup>174</sup> In other words, what is the proper sequence of actions or procedures needed in case a council forest is found to be violating the provisions of the management plan such as it appears to be the case in the FCD?

---

<sup>173</sup> To recall about the 1995 implementing decree article 80, 3 see note 59 above.

<sup>174</sup> In the same way, REM (2009, 17, emphasis added) concluding report noted that "Law enforcement within council forests raises important questions. A close reading of the system of sanctions anticipated in the forest law reveals that council forests do not form a part of State forests and so a number of the sanctions stipulated by the law are not applicable. Other provisions of the forest law specify, with the exclusion of council forests, the areas in which some infractions may be suppressed. Some forest officers think that, as council forests are privately owned by the council-level authorities, they should not be subject to traditional enforcement on the part of the forest administration, whose role should be limited to simple technical follow-up. *This controversy significantly affects the method and quality of law enforcement within council forests*, as REM highlighted in a mission report. *Given the growing place of council forests and the relevance of the issue of law enforcement within these areas, the Ministry of Forests needs to urgently clarify these ambiguities*".

Finally, whereas it is accurate that specific regulations about council forests are lacking - and no doubt that complicates the task of law enforcement- the ambiguity issue shall not simply get resolved by specifying the law enforcement procedures to be applied in council forests. To be sure, as the 2006 audit of the forestry sector reported, the existence of specific regulations for community forests did not prevent illegal activities from occurring there (see Karsenty et al. 2006, 91-95). Hence, simply solving the council forestry ambiguity issue -though it might help clarify forest law enforcement inside council forests- shall not be sufficient by itself to bring change in the absence of actual enforcement on the ground which appears to be lacking. This seems to suggest another avenue to comprehend the absence of the forest administration in the FCD. In effect, Chapter 8.0 shall argue that a large part of the answer to the forest administration behavior in Dimako, or for that matter council forests, revolves around politics; it revolves around the fact that, on top of its own shortcomings, for fear of antagonizing local mayors and their patrons, the forest administration has largely stayed on the sidelines in spite of its legal mandate.

## **6.4 SUMMARY**

This chapter has described the process of forest management in the Dimako Council, specifically inside the council forest. Through an examination of the two management plans of the FCD, the chapter has presented the evidence suggesting that following his capture of the council forest through the self-management mode of operation, the Mayor of Dimako appears to have deliberately disregarded the mandatory legal documents and proceeded in a way that is damaging for the forest. Similarly, the chapter has also revealed that this alleged situation of illegality in



the FCD was rendered possible because the two local organizations created to involve local villagers in monitoring forest activities have been stifled by the mayor through the utilization of various techniques. Last but not least, the chapter has argued that, though the alleged violations of forest rules and regulations in the FCD were known to the forest administration, the administration has ignored them for various reasons. The next chapter turns to the other side of the forest management decentralization in Dimako, that is local development.

## 7.0 FORET NA MONGUI OR THE MAYOR'S FOREST

“The idea of council forestry is a good idea; maybe the issue is with governance. Just look at Dimako, the council forest provides more than 80 percent of the council revenues. In Moloundou where they benefit from the RFA, it provides about a quarter [of the revenues]. The real issue with council forests is about governance...currently, it is the mayor's reserved domain” (A forest administration official, 1 March 2010).

“[Mayor] Mongui! There is nobody who can tell you something good about him; *he does not do anything for the town, he keeps everything for himself*” (Chief 28, 17 September 2010, emphasis added).

“According to what he [the mayor] says, timber does not sell very well. But we are the ones going into the forest, and we see that timber is selling well. Yes, we do not believe that revenues are falling because we see that timber is being sold. When we tell him that we see that timber is being sold, he tells us that he spent on this and that, but we know it is not true. He says that timber does not sell very well, that he is spending money elsewhere; however, we only can believe that he is spending money *when we see what he is doing in our village* [We only can believe him if we see concrete achievements]” (CCG member 17, 12 September 2010, emphasis added).

Dimako is a town where, for more than fifty years, the French timber harvesting firm SFID made timber trade part of the local way of life until its 2002 departure. Buoyed by that history and the sense of entitlement and know-it-all on forest-related matters, Dimako residents are very outspoken, especially when they believe their ‘rights’ have been violated. In the case of the council forest, this outspokenness manifested itself by referring to the FCD as the *Foret Na*

*Mongui*, which translated means “Mongui’s Forest”. Local residents use the mayor’s last name coupled with the forest to express the idea that the mayor has not only captured the forest, but also its revenues. As Chief 28 commented “Dimako’s forest, it is not for the benefit of the people; Dimako’s forest is Mongui’s personal forest because he does with the council forest what he wants” (17 September 2010). The following chapter presents the evidence regarding the other side of council forestry, namely local development.

## **7.1 ACCOUNTING FOR (NO) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**



**Figure 7.1. The unfinished B-Market in downtown Dimako, February 2010**

*Source: author*

This section describes what has occurred in Dimako Council as far as local development is concerned in the aftermath of the creation of the FCD, and the more than 1 billion CFAF received in timber revenues since 2004. In line with the introduction of the chapter, the section emphasizes Mayor Mongui's alleged capture of timber revenues and the overall absence of any significant development projects. In effect, the section argues that the so-called misappropriation of the funds dedicated for local development appears to have been achieved through various techniques, mainly overestimations of the council achievements as well as costs (overbilling) and fabrications of non-existing projects.

### **7.1.1 Where are the development projects?**

When *Forêts et Terroirs* convened its flagship conference in July 2000 to showcase its achievements before its official closure, Mayor Mongui was among the first speakers to officially greet all the participants (see the official collection of papers from that conference in Collas de Chatelperron 2001c). In effect, Mayor Mongui as the chief executive of the Dimako Council since 1987 had been the host of both API-Dimako and its successor *Forêts et Terroirs*. Thus, it was appropriate that the mayor be among the most prominent speakers at the event.

During that conference, in his synopsis of the Dimako Council Forest gazetting experience to all the distinguished guests, Mayor Mongui noted that for local villagers, the project appeared as a boon (*manne inespérée*) given SFID tax exempt status since 1994 which for the council had meant that it could not provide its constituents the required basic services or fulfill local villagers' requests for additional amenities (Mongui Sossomba 2001, 132). That is why, for the mayor, the council forest project was significant because the forthcoming timber revenues would provide the council the necessary financial resources to complete and initiate

new local development projects (Mongui Sossomba 2001, 132). As he himself argued in 2000, “it is highly recommended that *at least eighty [80] percent* of the revenues from this forest be reserved for investment [that is local development]” (Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 133, emphasis added). In that 2000 statement, Mayor Mongui was following the wishes of the local population who saw the project through the lens of local development and the amelioration of their living conditions as Chapter 5.0 illustrated.

On the other hand, it appears from the extant evidence that the mayor never envisioned- or at least changed his mind- about setting aside ‘at least 80 percent’ of the forest revenues for local investment and for the benefit of local villagers. In retrospect, Mayor Mongui’s address seemed targeted at the conference guests; at these ‘outsiders’ assembled by the French Cooperation, represented by *Forêts et Terroirs*, in a Yaoundé hotel far away from the rural area currently encompassing the Dimako Council. This fact became evident three years after the conference and two years after the departure of *Forêts et Terroirs* when a 2003 council brochure specifically targeted at potential investors in the council forest project in the United States, Europe, and North Africa to name a few -as the document itself stated- pointed out that 70 percent of the forest revenues, down 10 percent, would be reserved for local development while 30 percent would be for the council operating costs as well as its ‘traditional’ missions (CRDKO 2003b, 10).

More importantly, the final step towards the emasculation of the revenues dedicated to local development occurred, as Chapter 5.0 already mentioned, on 6 August 2003 when the mayor-dominated municipal council adopted the revenue sharing formula. Indeed, instead of the 80 or 70 percent target, *only* 50 percent of the forest funds were provided for local development in the final formula (see section 5.7.3.4). This situation was disconcerting for local villagers as

well as the *béni oui oui* councilors (see 5.7.3.3), who nonetheless remained silent for fear of reprisal, insofar as it went against the local agreement.

Also changed was the initial arrangement governing the selection of the development projects to be undertaken with the forest revenues. In fact, as briefly mentioned before, in the initial arrangement as part of their mandate to represent local villagers in all FCD matters, CCG members were tasked with submitting proposals for local development projects to the municipal council which in turn would annually prioritize projects on the basis of needs as well as available revenues. In practice, with the marginalization of the CCG which has occurred in FCD matters, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, the process has broken and unfolds differently.<sup>175</sup>

#### **7.1.1.1 The reality on the ground**

In order to provide the reader a general idea of the direction of funds dedicated to local development since 2004, Table 7.1 below exhibits the official council ‘development’ expenditures for the 2004-2010 period. Because the council financial records are sometimes inconsistent, incomplete or disorganized, it has proven a difficult task to obtain a comprehensive picture. Nonetheless, these reconstructed figures from extant council records are critical, for they provide a comparison point to be used against the evidence on the ground.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>175</sup> That arrangement from the *Forêts et Terroirs*’ era only regarded revenues derived from the harvesting of the council forest. However, to the extent that the council forest has become the primary source of revenues for the council, the selection of projects by CCG members has implication for the entire council. The current process is a combination of local villagers, chiefs, councilors, and CCG members all meeting together in their village and submitting through their councilors projects to the entire municipal council for further action. By law, the mayor-led council executive is tasked with implementing the municipal council decisions, though in truth the mayor is the only one to select the course of action.

<sup>176</sup> The way the figures were obtained involved the following steps. First, council provisional budgets were examined and every expenditure was checked against first the local ‘definition’ of development projects as well as the definition of local development adopted in this study (‘concrete’ achievements such as potable water provision; electricity; construction and maintenance of roads, etc...) and then included in the list. Second, these provisional expenditures were checked against the council administrative accounts which supposedly reflect the actual ‘official’ spending that has occurred. Third, the council figures were compared as well as reconciled with observational and

**Table 7.1. Dimako Council development projects expenditures, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)\***

<i>Years</i>	<i>Education<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Housing</i>	<i>Subsidies<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Misc<sup>6</sup></i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
2004	28,877,130	2,502,507 <sup>2</sup>	100,000	NA	15,854,945	47,334,582
2005	7,393,000	71,298,915 <sup>7</sup>	3,031,200	2,992,550 <sup>9</sup>	27,493,900	112,199,565
2006	5,162,700 <sup>4</sup>	18,213,398 <sup>10</sup>	1,356,000	NA	1,958,000	26,690,098
2007	3,264,700 <sup>5</sup>	4,659, 962 <sup>11</sup>	1,847,000	1,708,577 <sup>8</sup>	540,000	12,020,239
2008	4,254,100	NA	30,000	2,908,064 <sup>8</sup>	1,723,000	8,915,164
2009	2,164,000 <sup>12</sup>	NA	1,632,000 <sup>14</sup>	2,493,412 <sup>8</sup>	10,897,493 <sup>13</sup>	17,186,905 <sup>15</sup>
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	51,115,630	96,674,782	7,996,200	10,102,603	58,467,338	224,356,553
2010	6,000,000	NA	NA	NA	NA	6,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	57,115,630	96,674,782	7,996,200	10,102,603	58,467,338	<b>230,356,553</b>
<b>FCD GROSS REVENUES</b>	1,053,675,663 <sup>16</sup>					

Source: (CDKO 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007b, 2007c, 2008b, 2008c; 2009a, 4; 2010d)

\* The 2009 figures represent council expenditures from January to July, while 2010 are projected expenditures from the council provisional budgets

NA: no figures available

<sup>1</sup> includes students' scholarship, school registration fees, exam registration fees, books, etc for Dimako High School; Primary and secondary schools; colleges and universities; SAR/SM; CETIC all mentioned in the council provisional budget

<sup>2</sup> includes for 2004 an unspecified amount for traditional chiefs and councilors in the budget

<sup>3</sup> includes subsidies to sports associations plus GICs loans in 2005 for 1,031,000 CFAF

<sup>4</sup> originally budgeted 6,900,000 for 23 college students at an individual rate of 300,000 in the council budget plus 3,487,000 for exam fees for Dimako High School, SAR/SM for a total of 10,387,000 CFAF

<sup>5</sup> originally budgeted 400,000 for 20 college students as well as official state exam fees for secondary education and other charges in the council budget

<sup>6</sup> includes IVAC salaries, reserves for youth employment program, students and interns allowances for some years as well as contributions to social bodies for 2005, 2007, and 2008 plus gifts and relief assistance for 2004, 2007, and 2008. 2005 also includes 24,823,900 for the purchase of the mayor's official car under the same heading as in previous years where it was used for classroom construction.

<sup>7</sup> support for rural housing improvement as well as other miscellaneous costs

<sup>8</sup> construction and finishing touches of the B-Market

interview data. In the end, in spite of these precautions, because the council financial records are disorganized, the study argues a deliberate practice by the mayor to conceal his shortcomings, it proved difficult to provide a comprehensive account of local development expenditures. On the other hand, as shall become apparent by the end of this chapter, the picture of local development achievements was difficult to obtain simply because in actuality, there are almost no achievements in town to be observed.

<sup>9</sup> includes finishing touches for DCH, classrooms construction plus provision of chairs and tables, but initially budgeted at 25 millions

<sup>10</sup> purchase of cement block molds and provision of construction wood and planks

<sup>11</sup> Provision of cement block molds in each village as well as the opening of a community radio. In the council provisional budget the estimate was 31,353,668 million CFAF.

<sup>12</sup> 10 millions in the 2009 council provisional budget

<sup>13</sup> contribution to social bodies (to local health and medical facilities); assistance to sick people; 3 million for a pickup truck purchase; more than 4 million for gardens and open spaces (lawn and landscape) and palm grove care; and 2,390,000 for IVAC salaries

<sup>14</sup> for summer internships

<sup>15</sup> slight mistake in the original document which reports 17,156,905 CFAF

<sup>16</sup> Includes the 2009 figures from January to July of 113,480,586 CFAF, but does not include the 2010 projected FCD revenues of 227.5 million CFAF

An examination of Table 7.1 above indicates that from 2004 to July 2009, the period for which ‘complete’ data is available, the council spent about 225 million CFAF on local development projects out of the 1.05 billion CFAF of gross revenues received since 2004. Of those expenditures, housing and education appear to have benefited the most, respectively almost 97 and 58 million CFAF. Conversely, Table 7.1 demonstrates that of development expenditures, no funds were allocated to roads, electricity, water boreholes, or health initiatives. Finally, the table points out that if the council kept its 2010 commitment, total expenditures in favor of local development projects should amount to about 231 million CFAF over the period 2004-2010.

Judging by these figures, it appears that about 21 percent of the FCD timber gross revenues, it is important at this stage to note the ‘gross’ aspect, have directly benefited Dimako residents in the form of educational and housing improvement as well as subsidies. Yet, upon closer inspection, the figures advanced in the council financial records are contradicted by the interview as well as observational evidences. Indeed, those figures appear to be all overestimations of the council achievements and their costs (overbilling), as well as fabrications designed to conceal the fact that the money has been allegedly misappropriated. At this point, it is important to distinguish those three strategies. The first one, overestimation of the council achievements, just consists in extrapolating the actual number of projects that have been



implemented. Related to the first strategy, is the practice of overbilling once the number of projects has been overestimated and also of simply billing the council for inexistent projects. The third and final strategy simply entails fabricating projects, that is creating fictitious projects. In practice, because all these three strategies are intertwined, it is difficult to exactly pinpoint them with certitude.

In truth, that alleged pattern of overestimations, fabrications and embezzlement of forest revenues in Cameroon following the 1990s reforms appears not new; in effect, it was already noted in the case of the RFA. As an illustration, Karsenty et al. remarked that “globally, the utilization of these funds [RFA] by local councils does not adhere to the ethics that one expects from the management of public funds. Between *overestimation*, *embezzlement*, *fictitious projects* and other bad management practices, the expected impacts on local development are most of the time watered down” (2006, 102, emphasis added).<sup>177</sup>

That having been said, when visiting the Dimako Council, the first issue that stands out is the discrepancy between what the mayor touts as the FCD achievements and local villagers’ assessment of the situation. A former councilor summed up the mayor’s achievements under the FCD the following way, “you see those street lights and the unfinished [B] market, those are the works of the council. That’s it under Mongui!” (17 September 2010). Though the councilor assessment seems a little bit harsh, the observation on the ground in Dimako seems to support his overall view, for in the aftermath of the creation of the FCD and the accumulation of more than 1

---

<sup>177</sup> The authors continued that “the capture of RFA revenues by mayors as well as council executives is palpable in several local councils. The execution of the projects financed by the RFA funds, is captured by a few local councils authorities (in one local council visited, 80% of the projects to be carried out were awarded to the mayor, the local tax inspector and the accountant (*comptable matières*) via companies under their names or borrowed names. *Overbilling and fictitious projects here are common practice*” (Karsenty et al. 2006, 102, emphasis added)

billion CFAF of timber revenues since 2004, Mayor Mongui has nothing to show for it as far as local development is concerned.

This situation has confounded many a local villager like this chief who argued that “Dimako should be on top of Eastern councils because we own a council forest, but really we do not get it... Mindourou has a council forest; if you go there you will see that the mayor has transformed the settlement into a town because of their council forest, why not here? We want everything to change here. This is shameful. We want him [the mayor] to invest here; we want things to be different” (Chief 22, 19 September 2010). Apart from the confusion between the RFA and council forests -for Mindourou as of 2010 did not yet own a council forest but only collects the RFA- Dimako villagers do not understand how six years after the council started selling timber, Mayor Mongui has not been able to fulfill the promises he made as well as implement the municipal council decisions regarding, for instance, housing improvement, rural roads paving or maintenance and so on.

To illustrate the situation in Dimako, Box 7.1 below provides a list of the council actual ‘development’ projects from other sources than the council, notably CCG members and councilors. In the first place, from perusing the box, it is notable that what is included as part of local development includes almost *everything* from education to clothing, thus making the distinction between local development expenditures and others difficult to fathom, a point that shall be further elaborated below. Second, though the list is incomplete and no overall price estimate is available, the evidence suggests at this stage a gap between the price tag of 225 million CFAF and the number of achievements that villagers remember and which are actually visible throughout the council.

**Box 7.1. Dimako Council villagers' list of 'actual' development projects, 2004-2010\***

1. Financial assistance for driver's licenses to young local villagers<sup>1</sup>
2. Provision of birth certificates to 150 local children
3. Provision to village chiefs of official dress uniforms
4. Construction works for the B-Market<sup>2</sup>
5. Financial contest for the most beautiful village (1,030,000 CFAF total prize)
6. 5 million CFAF grant for local agricultural associations (GICs)<sup>3</sup>
7. Scholarships and school supplies for local Bakoum and Pol students; classroom construction for CETIC
8. Construction of a classroom at Dimako High School
9. Establishment of the palm grove
10. IVAC salaries

*Source:* (Interview and observational data, 2010; Bimbar 2004, 37; CDKO 2010c, 68-69; and Singer 2008, 103)

\* Note that not all these 'achievements' appear in the council financial statements nor the figures involved here are the same as in those documents when they exist.

<sup>1</sup> Singer mentioned that fifteen people received these grants while Bimbar talked of 90 people; however, villagers could not confirm those figures, only that the council has given money for that specific purpose.

<sup>2</sup> Unfinished

<sup>3</sup> Singer advances the figures of 7 million CFAF handed out as loans to 15 GICs across the council.

In effect, what the box reveals is that in the six years since the creation of the council forest, the council has not completed any significant development projects. Additionally, in contrast to the council official figures, the evidence on the ground exposed a number of unfulfilled projects as well as various techniques to overestimate expenses and overbill the council for inexistent or incomplete projects. To be sure, despite the council official figures of more than 225 million CFAF expended for local development projects, the reality in Dimako is that, save for the B-Market<sup>178</sup> (Figure 7.1 above), some educational assistance, and a few other things, the money has been allegedly squandered and misappropriated. Chief 14 summarized the matter in those terms:

---

<sup>178</sup> The B-Market (*Marché B*) was built to replace the now aged A-Market (*Marché A*) and to improve the conditions and safety of Dimako small businessmen and women as well as shoppers.

For us, the council forest is a store opened to sell our timber, a store given by the state to sell our goods. The state has given us this gift, and we were the first one to get it. This store is managed by the mayor. In the beginning, we believed that once the store was opened, great works could be done, roads for instance. What we get at the end of the year [the 10 percent] is not enough given what the forest brings in. Today's mayors run councils like fields that they have inherited from their grandparents. Councils that have not received these gifts [forests] are even better run than Dimako, and chiefs and councilors are treated well. We do not even know that we have a council forest. Timber is money; one cannot tell us that the council forest is not rich, it is beyond comprehension! You put a store manager inside a store. The next day, money is missing. You got to change the manager (14 September 2010).

In fairness, the only period where consensus exists concerning some of the council achievements, though the figures appear to have been overestimated as the data so far suggests, regards the early years of the FCD, that is 2004-2005. In actual point of fact, Dimako residents reported that during that period the council was buzzing with activities with the mayor distributing large amounts of in-cash handouts, school furniture supplies to Dimako school students as well as other gifts.<sup>179</sup> But even during those years where agreement exists that the mayor and the council were engaged in 'local development', the consensus revolves around one main issue, education (see below). Indeed, local villagers remember that the council's focus was on education rather than water boreholes, electricity, infrastructure, housing, roads provision for instance, a pattern already noted in Table 7.1 above.

Beyond 2004-2005, on top of the overall lack of development projects, the consensus about the council expenditures for the so-called development projects evaporates. Beginning in 2006, Dimako residents reported two things. First, the few 'projects' which were started around 2004-2005 were discontinued. Second, residents also reported a decline in the number of new

---

<sup>179</sup> Incidentally, in that case, though the figures diverge, the villagers' recollections seem to be consistent with the council financial documents, for Table 7.1 for example shows council expenditures peaking during those two years.

projects being taken up by the council. In effect, though caution is still warranted, Table 7.1 shows that over the years the official amount of money devoted to development projects went down from about 160 million in 2004-2005 to 70 million CFAF in the 2006-2010 period, thus further lending credence to local villagers' claims about the decline of development projects in the entire Dimako Council.

#### **7.1.1.2 A story of incomplete, overestimations and fictitious projects**

In Dimako, examples of incomplete and abandoned projects include for instance the B-Market (above); a community center in Petit-Pol village (Figure 7.2 below); Dimako Bus and Trucks Station; the municipal stadium and the official reviewing stand (*tribune officielle*) scheduled to be renovated; bridge repairing in the Pol Sector; as well as several other projects in the council villages (see also CDKO 2010c, 33). As of April 2010, those projects were still waiting to be completed in spite of the fact that in some cases, most notably the B-Market, the money had been reportedly appropriated.<sup>180</sup>

Similarly, other projects approved by the municipal council scheduled to happen never occurred. That is the case for instance of rural roads in the Pol Sector; water and electricity provision; and rural housing to name a few. Councilor 6 for instance commented that “the council executive submits a provisional budget to the municipal council. When the year is over, nothing has been done. For instance, a classroom construction in a given village was agreed upon but in the end, nothing. (...) We are talking about projects that are voted on in the budget and which are supposed to be executed but which in the end are not” (1 September 2010). What this

---

<sup>180</sup> This alleged pattern shares some similitude with previous patterns noted before. As an illustration, Karsenty et al. again observed that “the most common cases of embezzlement [of RFA funds] relate to works already started, [yet] incomplete, but fully paid and officially received like there was nothing wrong. The solidarity network which enables these types of embezzlement is made up of mayors, municipal tax collectors, and some local businessmen, who most often are also members of the council executive” (2006, 103).

councilor is referring to is the fact that despite the agreement of the municipal council, when comes the time to implement the decisions regarding development projects, the mayor ignored them though the money was supposed to have been already appropriated.



**Figure 7.2. The unfinished community center (*foyer*) in Petit-Pol village, February 2010**

*Source:* author

Two examples from Table 7.1 above shall illustrate this situation. First, in 2005, the municipal council voted for the council to spend 25 million CFAF on finishing work for the DCH compound, classrooms construction as well as the provision of chairs and tables for those new classrooms. Second, in 2007, this time the municipal council reserved about 32 million CFAF for the provision of cement block molds to local villages as well as the establishment of a community radio. In both cases, instead of the officially adopted amounts, about 3 million and less than 5 million CFAF were respectively officially declared as spent in 2005 and 2007 (for a

more comprehensive look at these figures, see CDKO 2005a, 2005b, 2007b, 2007c). This meant in actuality that, in those years, the priority projects decided by the municipal council were never implemented.

On the other hand, Dimako Council is replete with stories such as these ones; stories where instead of the money being used for local development, and rather than improve local villagers' living conditions the money has been allegedly diverted by the mayor. As Councilor 4 commented, "despite the council forest, people are still sleeping on mats. The mayor had said that he would buy the bricks for construction, but nothing happened. We have some councilors who have been in place for more than fifteen years with the mayor, but he is [the only one] becoming richer. If he was like us, OK; but he is becoming richer while the council forest produces" (3 September 2010).

To illustrate further the lack of development achievements in the council following the creation of the FCD, Box 7.2 below reproduced an anonymous protest letter sent in January 2009, five years after forest harvesting started in the FCD, by Dimako residents of the greater Tombo quarter to Mayor Mongui. The context of the letter is one where local villagers are frustrated over the direction of the FCD as well as Mayor Mongui's alleged capture of the council forest revenues. In that letter emanating from Tombo villagers -whom the mayor theoretically represents as councilor from that specific part of the council- three issues are at the heart of the discontent. First, the lack of provision of galvanized-tin roofs; second, the lack of access to wood from the council forest in general, and particularly for burial purposes; and third, the decline of the 10 percent funds reserved for local villagers (see section 7.2.2 below). On the whole, the protesters asked of the mayor what has become of his promises of using the forest revenues for the benefit of local populations as well as invest the money for local development.

**Box 7.2. Anonymous request by Dimako populations (3 January 2009)**

The populations of Tombo I, Tombo II, Dieu-Connaît and Kampala write this request to remind you of the promises [of development projects] and the ten percent of the council forest. Sir, regarding the promises to the populations

- 1) The distribution of galvanized-tin roof to the inhabitants, *this was never achieved*.
- 2) Dimako's sons and daughters are dying and buried *without caskets and no help even though we have wood in our forest and [the council] possesses a woodwork*.
- 3) We are noticing regrettably that the 10 percent revenues coming from the Council Forest *keeps declining* [since] at the beginning we received 900,000 CFAF, after 450,000 CFAF and now 300,000 CFAF.

What is going on sir? <sup>1</sup>

Signed by the *Populations*

*Source: reproduced from (Requête des Populations de Tombo I, Tombo II, Dieu-Connaît et Kampala (3 Janvier) 2009, emphasis added)*

<sup>1</sup>enlarged in the original document

More importantly, for the argument reviewed here, the portrait painted by Tombo villagers diverges considerably from the one put forward by the council above records. On the housing issue for instance, Table 7.1 showed that about 97 million CFAF since 2004, with more than 71 million alone in 2005, were devoted to local housing. This is surprising because from the conversations with Dimako villagers, it appears that the issue of rural housing improvement is among the most sensitive issues raised in town.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, the council figures in Table 7.1 beg the question to whom the money was directed when in fact, as Box 7.2 above clearly illustrates, local villagers are dissatisfied with Mayor Mongui's performance, particularly on that issue. As Menye (2007, 12, emphasis added) observed for instance in 2007 about the local

---

<sup>181</sup> It appears so because following the increase of the cost of galvanized-tin roofs, villagers primarily use *Raphia* leaves to make up the roofs of their houses and these have to be frequently replaced because of the rainy season damages (see Mendouga Mebenga 2000a, 13).



population and the issue of wood generally, “it shows some real need in wood supply: *need of wood for housing*, coffins, furniture, and even for fuelwood. The populations are sometimes forced to purchase wood in Bertoua where the costs are significant”. Seen this way, who are the beneficiaries of the almost 97 million CFAF that the council allegedly spent for local housing since 2004?

As argued above, this discrepancy between the official council figures and the observational and interview records seems to suggest that the council figures, including costs and number of achievements, have been overestimated and in some cases fabricated as with the issue of rural housing improvement. That is why, the Tombo episode is critical because it appears to symbolize what has taken place in Dimako in the aftermath of the creation of the FCD, namely the overall lack of development projects as well as the alleged fabrications of local achievements to after-the-fact validate the arguable utilization of timber revenues, in this case local development-reserved funds.

The reported overestimation and fabrication of the council figures also appear to be made possible by what respondents describe as Mayor Mongui’s strategy of labeling anything as local development expenditures. In contrast to the 2003 revenue sharing formula which clearly apportioned the FCD revenues among four sectors, the mayor’s alleged strategy has resulted in a situation where local development projects are amalgamated with other council expenditures and contribute to their overestimation. According to Dimako observers, that pattern of overestimation as well as fabrications, which shall further be documented in section 7.2 below, is designed to conceal the fact that the FCD revenues are not utilized for local development, but rather to personally benefit and enrich the mayor.

What this alleged practice also means, as the evidence presented so far seems to suggest, is that the council's official, that is actual, local development expenditures are well below the actual ones. As an illustration, Table 7.2 below reveals Dimako Council expenditures for the January-July 2009 period. During that period, the FCD net revenues after operating costs totaled about 42 million CFAF (not included in the table) which were to be divided per the 2003 revenue sharing formula (see CDKO 2009a, 4).

**Table 7.2. Development projects expenditures, January-July 2009 (CFAF million)**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Officially declared amount spent</i>	<i>Projected 50% per 2003 revenues sharing formula</i>
Gardens, open spaces (lawn and landscape care)	3,343,000	20,743,597
Palm grove care	1,069,000	
B Market construction	2,493,412	
Pickup truck purchase	3,000,000	
Summer internship	1,632,000	
IVAC salaries	2,390,000	
Students scholarship	2,164,000	
Assistance to sick people	285,000	
Contribution to social centers (community health centers)	810,493	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,156,905<sup>1</sup></b>	

*Source:* (CDKO 2009a, 4)

<sup>1</sup> From adding the various figures from the table, the total should be 17,186,905 CFAF. For consistency purpose, the original council figure is kept.

From the table, the first point is that about 21 million CFAF were to be reserved as part of the 50 percent for local development. However, the table shows that the official amount spent

is more than 3 million CFAF short of what was officially required. In fact, the council official local development expenditures stood at a little more than 17 million CFAF or 41 percent of the FCD net revenues for the January-July 2009 period.<sup>182</sup> The second point is that out of the 17 million CFAF officially disbursed during the January-July 2009 period, no funds were allocated to infrastructure, roads, or water boreholes for instance. The bulk of the money went to *education* (IVAC -part-time teachers- salaries, summer internship, and students' scholarship), the *B Market* construction<sup>183</sup>, and items such as *Garden and open spaces (lawn and landscape care)*, *Palm grove care*, and a *pickup truck purchase*.<sup>184</sup>

The third and final point, and perhaps the most important for the purpose of the argument made here, is that what is labeled as expenditures for local development –the last three items mentioned above- does not appear to have an immediate connection to local development to say the least. At the same time, by including those items into local development expenditures, this contributes to the overestimation of costs that was noted before in Table 7.1, for those items totaled about 9.9 million CFAF or 58 percent of the overall local development expenditures in the said period.

The point about the distinction between what is included or not in local development expenditures is critical insofar as the lens through which FCD timber revenues is distributed remains the municipal council-adopted 2003 revenue sharing formula, though it has been bypassed as the evidence so far suggests. In addition, it is important to recognize the 2003

---

<sup>182</sup> As a comparative example, the council official operating expenditures for the same period stood at about 15.5 million CFAF or 37 percent of the FCD revenues after the forest operating costs were removed instead of the 30 percent per the 2003 revenue sharing formula (see CDKO 2009, 5).

<sup>183</sup> Incidentally, the B-Market construction is being authorized annually since 2007 though it was supposed to be completed a long time ago (for more about that, see Table 7.1 notes).

<sup>184</sup> From the conversation with council authorities, it appears that the *palm grove* care is included in local development expenditures because supposedly it is an economic venture designed to bring more revenues and resources and potentially employs local villagers in the future. However, based on the criticisms leveled above it should not be included here (see also the notes on the section on reforestation in Chapter 6.0).

revenue sharing formula not only because it apportions the forest revenues according to four sectors, but also because when for instance other unrelated costs are added onto local development expenditures, this essentially means that less money is available for local development. Hence, following the 2003 revenue sharing formula, the costs attributed to local development per Table 7.2 were to be borne primarily by the 30 percent reserved for the council operating costs. Similarly, notwithstanding their value, how is the provision of birth certificates, drivers' licenses, and a contest for the most beautiful village of the council (see Box 7.1) directly related to local development? Can these costs not be incurred by the council operating budget or any other item than the 50 percent timber revenues dedicated to local development?

It is those types of spending and priorities that Dimako residents have criticized as not being in line with their aspirations. On the other hand, as section 7.2 shall argue, Mayor Mongui's alleged strategy of labeling anything as local development expenditures which leads to an overestimation of the council achievements as well as overbilling seems to be part of a pattern through which the council forest revenues are reportedly squandered. Then, it appears that the utilization of the money is accounted after-the-fact with the overestimated and fabricated figures that have been reported here. This, at least, is the view of local villagers, which the example below shall illustrate.

In 2009, at a meeting of council staff and CCG members, the so-called practice of overestimating council costs was apparently denounced by some in the audience. The meeting - slated to be the first of many- was convened by the mayor in response to local villagers' growing criticism of his handling of the FCD revenues. During the first meeting held at Dimako City Hall (DCH) on 25 September 2009, a CCG member present recalled the astonishment of local villagers' representatives following Dimako Council municipal tax collector report about local

development expenditures. He recalled that “in their report, (...) they spoke of 18 million. It was when the RM [municipal tax collector] was reading the figures in the middle of the meeting that we asked him to whom they gave the money. And he answered that all the small expenses added to that figure. We said Oh! And we were surprised (CCG member 7, 1 September 2010).

That CCG member recollection of the meeting is supported by the figures of almost 18 million CFAF that the council officially disbursed in favor of ‘development projects’ for the January-July 2009 period as Table 7.2 above illustrated. Clearly, those expenditures, as argued before, do not represent local development; they simply are an amalgamation of various purported expenditures apparently designed to validate the questionable utilization of FCD revenues after the fact by the Mayor of Dimako.

### **7.1.2 Education as the answer?**

For local authorities, the local villagers’ picture of the situation in Dimako is inaccurate. Faced with the evidence on the ground that in six years the council has not achieved any significant development projects, local authorities have argued that this situation is due to the fact that since 2004 the council efforts have been focused on education. In truth, Mayor Mongui for instance has remarked that since the beginning “the priority for the council socio-economic projects [local development], is afforded to education” (9 March 2010), a statement is reiterated more recently to outside visitors (see Elvido 2011a). In the same way, Dimako first deputy mayor declared that it was because of the current emphasis on education that Dimako residents were not feeling the impact of projects done so far, not that the council had not achieved anything.

Why the council elected to focus on education when the villages lack the basic amenities has been a matter of debate locally. Indeed, local villagers have argued that the focus be

broadened and concentrated to areas of prime importance such as roads, water boreholes and health centers, especially in remote sections of the council instead of education only. On the other hand, for Mayor Mongui, “the choice of [the] education [sector] as the primary beneficiary of this forest revenues was not fortuitous; it was an answer to the wishes [*sic*] expressed by all the inhabitants of our council during the socioeconomic census conducted in each household in 2001” (CRDKO 2004b).<sup>185</sup>

Thus, from the mayor’s point of view, his focus on education as the main spending emphasis was in response to the desire expressed by local villagers. One has to remember that, as Chapter 5.0 briefly alluded to, following the 2002 departure of SFID, local employment has become scarce. Moreover, the situation is exaggerated by the fact that, because of the previous availability of local jobs -therefore no need for more education-, most residents in town do not possess an adequate education to recycle themselves.<sup>186</sup> Hence, presumably, the current emphasis on education is necessary because, as several residents have incidentally argued, Dimako cannot survive in the future if there is no emphasis on education today.

However, even among those who agreed with the mayor’s educational emphasis, disagreement persists as to the authenticity of the figures advanced by the mayor not only because it is difficult to verify them in the first place, but also because they believe the figures have been overestimated as well as fabricated in order to justify their questionable utilization. One government official, for instance, exclaims that “I do not see anything in terms of concrete achievements. They [the mayor and his staff] only say that they have given to university

---

<sup>185</sup> In the same way, one year later a municipal council session transcript observed that “the mayor said that he put the emphasis on educating the young people because it has to be said that the subdivision *is lacking the elites in quantity as well as quality*” (CRDKO 2005, 9, emphasis added).

<sup>186</sup> Singer notes that SFID “would often would often recruit teenagers during summer holidays for temporary jobs and encourage them to stay on even after term started. As a result, the town suffered from an important dropout rate from local schools and to this day education standards in Dimako are well below those of neighboring towns, despite having had earlier access to education thanks to schools built by SFID” (2008, 91).

students, to high school students X amount of money. How much have they given to each student and to how many we do not know? They only give grand figures, how are we to know if it is true. I am telling you this is *robbery* which is developing here in Dimako” (4 March 2010, emphasis added).

That ‘robbery’, as this official referred to the situation about the utilization of local development funds in Dimako seems to be supported by the inconsistency of the education figures at hand. For example, Table 7.1 reported that in 2004-2005, about 36 million CFAF were spent on education while Bimbar provided a figure of almost 43 million CFAF -7 million more- for support to primary, secondary and higher education (colleges and universities) (Bimbar 2006, 27).<sup>187</sup> How many students and how much each has received is a matter of contention, especially given the fact that some local students have declared that the sums they purportedly received were overestimated or in some cases the payments never occurred.

In general, the impreciseness over the figures for education has meant that in the absence of complete details, ascertaining the direction of the money is a complex task. In this regard, Oyono *et al.* -about the 42 million CFAF earmarked in 2004 for local development- observed that “village-level socioeconomic priorities [local development projects] seem rather vague, with elements such as scholarships, book purchase, financial support for students, and hiring of temporary teachers in primary schools, which are not easy to assess” (2007, 10). That task of evaluating the direction of the money appears to have been intentionally rendered difficult simply because for villagers the so-called education assistance is designed to conceal the fact that the revenues reserved for local development are being reportedly misused as well as siphoned off by Mayor Mongui.

---

<sup>187</sup> Poum Bimbar, a former municipal councilor, is now the current municipal tax collector. The figures come from his municipal tax collector thesis.

What is more, in town it is widely known that the council has accumulated arrears toward the local schools in spite of the fact that the council resources under the FCD have been substantial. As one villager commented “the council owes money to Dimako High School, they promise but do not fulfill even though money is available” (5 September 2010). As with the other expenditures in Table 7.1, most local observers as well as Dimako residents interviewed see the use of revenues for education as simply wasteful spending by the mayor. A Dimako resident simply declared about education: “it is a few university students, not even 10 people, but he is telling everyone that he is helping a lot of students” (2 July 2010).

Another issue which has arisen about education is the criteria for selecting the recipients of the council aid.<sup>188</sup> According to local villagers, over the years the criteria have become more selective and discretionary. As a former CCG member commented “currently, they give to whom they choose, not as they used to give to all villages”. This view seemed to be supported by a 2005 municipal council transcript in which members of the Social Affairs Commission of the municipal council recommended that the financial assistance be given to all local students without any discrimination (CRDKO 2005b, 11). To that request, the mayor answered that it was simply an issue of some students being forgotten or not registering on time; but he emphasized that the financial assistance to high school students was only reserved to children whose parents could not afford to support them (CRDKO 2005b, 13). How was the mayor to determine the eligibility given the fact that almost all local villagers are currently without employment, thus paradoxically eligible to receive that aid?

---

<sup>188</sup> Singer (2008, 104) observed for instance that the education aid is primarily reserved for the two main local groups the Bakoum and the Pol. This in practice means that the Baka pygmies are simply excluded from the council forest benefits.



In recent years, the issue of the selectivity of the education aid has led to some open confrontation between the mayor and some local villagers to the point that the mayor had to publicly justify himself. Indeed, when confronted by local villagers about the criteria for selection, the mayor argued that he had to stop subsidizing some students because they were using the money for other purposes but school. Conversely, after those discussions, he agreed to renew the support on the condition that the parents contribute half of the sum. It seems that promise was never fulfilled, for local villagers indicated that in 2010 the support was still selective, whereas educational assistance continued to be listed for almost 10 million CFAF from 2007 to 2009. The question one might ask is where did the money go and, if any, how many students benefited from it?

For local observers familiar with the Dimako situation, the mayor's figures as well as overall spending priorities are overestimated and completely out of sync with local priorities. For instance, the mayor has given 300,000 CFAF in cash to each councilor during the period 2004-2005, as well as promised to build houses for village chiefs, councilors as well as CCG members, and distributed most of the 50 percent on in-cash handouts in the name of education and local development. This has been happening at the same time that villages lack basic amenities such as health centers, water boreholes, electricity or adequate schools. One chief, visibly irritated, pointed out the following:

It has already been 8 years [in fact 6 years] since the forest started and you should have seen some nice things here, because the council revenues were supposed to equip villages. Go see the Superior Chief [who incidentally is the second deputy mayor] he does not have an official car. Where does the money go? He [the mayor] buys a 50 million Prado [the name of the Toyota SUV]; he forgets the others, he forgets that he has deputies while we should all be benefiting from this forest (Chief 16, 13 September 2010).

The conclusion from Dimako observers is that the mayor's spending are designed to prop him up, instead of helping the population with much needed local infrastructure for instance. This sentiment was echoed by a former forest administration official who asked, for instance, whether the mayor had made judicious use of council resources by purchasing an official car. As he put it "is this in line with local development?" The question is critical, for as Chief 16 above mentioned, the council forest project was, in theory, designed to help local villagers, not the mayor.

Finally, to conclude on how the mayor spending priorities are in opposition with those of the local villages, Table 7.3 below presents the results of a survey of local development priorities conducted in 2000 by *Forêts et Terroirs*. Though the survey was taken one year prior to the one referred to by the mayor as the justification for supporting education, the table indicates that in 2000 in Akano, Ngombol, Nkolmeyanga, Simeyong, and Nkolbikon villages, school construction, construction of health centers, the provision of electricity and water boreholes were among the key priorities.<sup>189</sup>

**Table 7.3. Local development priorities in five selected villages of Dimako Council, 2000**

<i>Priorities</i>	<i>Villages</i>
School construction	Akano, Ngombol, Nkolmeyanga, Simeyong
Health center/clinic ( <i>dispensaire</i> )	Akano, Ngombol, Nkolbikon, Nkolmeyanga, Simeyong
Housing improvement	Akano

---

<sup>189</sup> It is worth mentioning that the survey was conducted specifically for the redaction of the management plan of FMU 10-046 which borders some Dimako villages. Nonetheless, it is fair to assume that this information could be applicable for the case of Dimako Council since these five villages are part of the council. Second, it has to be noted that the five selected villages are all located in the remote Pol Sector. Finally, though the council officially comprised of 17 villages at the time of the *Forêts et Terroirs* survey, the five above villages give an indication of the local priorities, which presumably should be similar across the council, save a few things.

Electricity	Ngombol, Nkolbikon, Nkolmeyanga, Simeyong
Water boreholes	Ngombol, Nkolmeyanga, Simeyong
Road maintenance to facilitate commerce	Akano
Community center for young people	Akano

*Source:* (Mpayiguia and Ondoua 2000a, 10; 2000b, 10; 2000c, 10; 2000d, 13; 2000e, 11)

Viewed broadly, the table illustrates the discrepancy between the mayor's focus on education and the priorities of the local population. Indeed, that discrepancy was confirmed by a 2003 council promotional document which noted that local villagers ranked education along with health, housing improvement, assistance to agricultural production, village water and rural electrification, and improvement of basic infrastructure primarily as the areas in need of most intervention (see CRDKO 2003b, 10).

In fairness, a case can be made for investing in education and the long term future of Dimako children especially in light of the Dimako history under SFID where education was neglected. On the contrary, that is not what appears to be happening in Dimako; rather, in Dimako, the situation about local development projects seems to be characterized by overestimations, fabrications as well as dubious financial expenditures whose objective seems to make it hard to ascertain the actual utilization of the funds as well as justify the use of revenues after their alleged misappropriation occurred. Seen this way, similar to the other expenses dedicated to the overall local development efforts, the spending on education suggests the same abovementioned pattern of overestimation as well as fabrication at work.

### 7.1.3 The deliberate local confusion?

A final issue, referred to here as the ownership issue, which has arisen regarding local development achievements pertains to the deliberate confusion entertained by Mayor Mongui between the council actual achievements and what other organizations have accomplished in Dimako with or without the help of the council. To clarify, in Dimako, as in other local councils in the country, besides the council, at least three other organizations intervene in local development, namely government ministerial bodies, and local as well as international NGOs (see Njoh 2011, 103).<sup>190</sup> Two examples of such organizations, which have financed several projects throughout the council, are the central state-led FEICOM and *Plan Cameroun*, the local branch of the international NGO *Plan International*. Despite knowing that, Mayor Mongui has allegedly taken ownership of various achievements from both organizations -and for that matter others too as the evidence suggests- by claiming that they are of his own making following the creation of the FCD and the increase in timber revenues.

Specifically, on the case of FEICOM, it is known in town that the DCH compound (Figure 7.3 below) was built in 2001 prior to the start of the FCD thanks to a FEICOM grant. As a former councilor argued “you know the council forest that you just mentioned, it has been six years. The City Hall compound was not built by the council forest [funds]; it was FEICOM with the help of all the councilors and it was not easy [to get the grant]” (17 September 2010). In spite

---

<sup>190</sup> This situation of local and international NGOs directly intervening in local development is set to change. In fact, before the 2004 decentralization laws outside organizations, notably NGOs, could directly provide services to local communities and villages thus bypassing local councils which resented it. On the other hand, since 2004 local councils have been legally recognized as *the* main actor of local development, thus compelling outside organizations such as *PLAN Cameroon* for instance to switch from a community-centered to a council-centered approach. Some local villagers have been uncomfortable with this shift in emphasis, for as one local actor noted based on the FCD situation, how are local villagers going to monitor the mayor when they are already locked in a struggle with him over the most important resource of the council.

of that fact, this has not deterred Mayor Mongui from listing and advertising the DCH compound among the FCD achievements. As an illustration, in a brochure prepared for the March 2010 National Forum on Forests, the cover of the mayor's exposé about the council forest achievements was illustrated by a picture of the DCH compound.<sup>191</sup>



**Figure 7.3. Dimako City Hall (DCH) front porch, January 2010**

*Source: author*

To outside visitors, the DCH compound is the work of the FCD and this stands as a concrete achievement of the mayor of Dimako. The only problem is that the compound was erected, though it still stands incomplete, before the FCD era.<sup>192</sup> Even council documents from

---

<sup>191</sup> In the end, because the mayor was absent from the country, he did not participate to that conference held in late March 2010.

<sup>192</sup> The DCH compound lacks everything. The whole compound is not only unfinished with faulty wires hanging, but also most of the offices lack furniture. In the same way, the office doors have no handles or

the period before confirm the claim that FEICOM is at the origin of the DCH compound, hence the council forest revenues could not have contributed to its erection.<sup>193</sup>

Another example involves water boreholes in some of the council villages. According to local villagers, these water boreholes -which incidentally were repaired in 2010 by FEICOM- were either built depending on the villages by the NGO *PLAN* or the central state through what is locally known as Public Investment Budget funds (BIP). As one local villager pointed out “before he [the mayor] said that he was the one who built these [water boreholes], but later some central state auditors came and stated that it was built by the state, not him” (15 September 2010).

In this alleged scheme of deliberately confusing the council forest revenues achievements with those of other organizations, Mayor Mongui appears not alone. Indeed, the same situation was also noted for the local council of Ndélélé -still in the East Region- where the local population, in an open letter sent to President Paul Biya, accused Mayor Jean Mboundjo of allegedly misappropriating the council revenues. More specifically, they accused him of having deliberately misused about 1.5 billion CFAF of RFA revenues (3 million USD) from 2000 to 2008 and then misled the population about the RFA achievements through the same process

---

identification tags making it difficult to distinguish the office holders. It is a compound which is in need of dire repair though it was only built in 2001.

<sup>193</sup> Bimbar (2006, 18) confirms that the compound was built by a FEICOM grant obtained in 1998. Furthermore, to be fair, it has to be mentioned that FEICOM, as the main central state agency involved in financial assistance to local governments, has been involved in local development in Dimako with such activities as classroom and latrines construction, most recently in the Kandara village on the Mbang Road. While in theory according to FEICOM statutes, depending on the type of investment, local councils are set to share the burden of the costs, it remains that their participation is insignificant compared to that of FEICOM. That having been said, this issue about cost-sharing is not the same as the one raised here, the alleged deliberate confusion about the ownership of local achievements, an issue which seems designed to stir confusion in the minds of local and outside observers.

reportedly used in Dimako of designating other organizations achievements -such as the BIP incidentally- as the fruit of the forest revenues (see Onohiolo 2009b).<sup>194</sup>

At issue in Dimako Council is not whether these achievements, whether the DCH compound or water boreholes, stand to benefit or not the council and its inhabitants; rather, at stake with the alleged misrepresentation over the ownership of local development projects is a more profound question about the utilization of timber revenues as well as ascertaining the impact of forest management decentralization in the council. What is more, if Mayor Mongui can allegedly portray outside organizations' achievements as of his own making, and this is not recognized, it becomes difficult to disentangle the impact of forest management decentralization from other factors. This is critical to recognize because, as the evidence presented in this section so far suggests, this alleged practice of misleading outsiders by overestimating the council achievements appears not incidental.

The alleged strategy of overestimating the council achievements appears to be part of a strategy designed to misappropriate the FCD revenues as well as personally benefit from them and then utilize them for a larger purpose. As it shall be evident by the end of this dissertation, based on the field evidence, the study argues that for the mayor the rationale is straightforward. First, capture the forest revenues for himself instead of spending it on local development projects, the local villagers' 10 percent, or the council operating costs and reforesting the FCD for that matter -the four sectors of the 2003 revenues sharing formula-; and second, utilize those resources for electoral and self-aggrandizement purposes, that is to become a *Big Man*.

---

<sup>194</sup> Cerutti et al. (2010, 137) caution against completely laying down the blame on mayors. In effect, they observe that "Mayors are often blamed when mismanagement occurs or the expected impacts on rural poverty do not eventuate. Indeed, they are assigned by the current legal framework the most prominent role in the management of the AF [RFA revenues] and should be held accountable for their decisions, but a deeper analysis of the redistributive and sanctioning mechanisms shows that they are often [not all the time] only political scapegoats."

## **7.2 COMPLETING THE FOREST TAKEOVER**

The first section of this chapter has described what has happened to the second goal of forest management decentralization in Dimako Council. In fact, the evidence presented above indicates that instead of the council forest revenues being used for local development, the Mayor of Dimako has allegedly misappropriated the money through the use of various techniques (overestimations, overbilling, and fabrications) designed to conceal that state of affairs. The following section, building on the previous one, demonstrates how, through the use of mostly the same techniques alluded to above, the mayor reportedly appropriated for himself the rest of the revenues designed to cover the council operating costs as well as the villagers' 10 percent to 'eat'. Through these final acts, Mayor Mongui allegedly completed his entire takeover of the council forest revenues on his way to national glory.

### **7.2.1 The imbroglio over the rental agreement and the operating costs**

As Chapter 4.0 and 5.0 already indicated, among the five council forests operating in Cameroon during the year 2010, the FCD was the only one officially harvested *en régie*. As the study also described before the mayor and his first deputy had argued that the decision had been taken to allow the council to benefit from 'the gross margin' as well as rationally and sustainably manage the forest (see section 5.7.4.1). For a council entering the timber harvesting business for the first time, one of the main issues it had to resolve was to acquire or lease the machines it needed to commence operations. To the extent that the council did not possess the machines or could not yet afford it, the council had to acquire it from somewhere, or someone in this case as it seems. According to Mayor Mongui, after a 'competitive' bid involving several private commercial



firms, Alpicam was selected as the provider of the council machinery (see CRDKO 2005b, 3). Thus, officially today, the council rents two machines from Alpicam, the Bulldozer also known as ‘The Bull’ (Figure 7.4 below) and the 966 Front End Loader, commonly called *la chargeuse* (Figure 7.5 below).<sup>195</sup>



**Figure 7.4. The old ‘Bull’, February 2010**

*Source:* author

The main issues which have arisen, and stirred much local controversy, regarding the so-called rental agreement revolve around the exact terms of the agreement -or whether the Alpicam deal even exists- as well as the ownership of the machines. In effect, except for the mayor, no

---

<sup>195</sup> However, local authorities have pointed out that because Alpicam is also the main purchaser of FCD timber, the cost of renting the machines is directly deducted from the timber sales. This in practice signifies that, on top of the rental agreement, an informal agreement reportedly exists between the two partners whereas officially the Dimako Council is only paid for the timber after the rental charges are deducted. Conversely, in some cases, if the FCD timber sales revenues are insufficient to cover the cost of rental, in theory, the council would have to pay Alpicam.

one among CCG members as well as councilors seems aware of the terms of this contract supposedly signed in the early years of the FCD. The suspicion about the ownership of the machines -and thus of the whole rental agreement- has been heightened not only because of the status of Mayor Mongui as the private owner of a logging company, but also because, as Chapters 5.0 and 6.0 indicated earlier, behind the official heading of the Dimako Council it is believed that the mayor is the one privately harvesting the FCD.

Who is really leasing the machines to the council, and if indeed it is Alpica, what are the terms of the contract and how much Alpica actually pays for FCD timber have been the subject of intense speculations in town?

#### **7.2.1.1 A costly agreement**

Simply put, the overarching reason why the rental agreement issue has taken center stage in local politics is primarily because of the prohibitive cost of renting the machines. Officially for every day usage the council pays 200,000 CFAF for the ‘Bull’ as well as 1,500 CFAF for every cubic meter of wood loaded onto a truck with Alpica’s 966 (see CRDKO 2005b, 3).<sup>196</sup> To illustrate the situation for the council finances, below Table 7.4 presents the overall expenditures related to renting the timber harvesting machines -including the maintenance costs- since the start of the FCD in 2004.

---

<sup>196</sup> In the past, the council also used to officially pay 150,000 CFAF for the 528 Skidder (see CRDKO 2005b, 3). Today, inside the forest, only the bulldozer and the Front end Loader are visible. No one could clarify the situation of the 528 skidder. Likewise, the council extant records do not mention it after 2005. For that reason, it is difficult to ascertain whether the machine is no longer at the disposal of the council or for that matter whether the council is still being billed for its usage.

**Table 7.4. FCD machines, fuel and lubricants expenditures, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)\***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Machines Rental</b>	<b>Fuel and lubricants</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>FCD revenues</b>
2004	88,777,004	28,750,649	117,527,653	179,603,808
2005	80,988,287	59,746,637	140,734,924	345,598,854
2006 <sup>1</sup>	180,000	19,271,776	19,451,776	84,912,000
2007	39,750,854	48,372,767	88,123,621	171,726,821
2008	41,492,741	32,878,397	74,371,138	158,353,594
2009	23,406,691	23,882,254	47,288,945	113,480,586
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	274,595,577	212,902,480	487,498,057	1,053,675,663
2010	39,000,000	39,000,000 <sup>1</sup>	78,000,000	227,500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	313,595,577	251,902,480	565,498,057	1,281,175,663

*Source:* (CDKO 2004b, 2005b, 2006c, 2007c, 2008c; 2009a, 4; 2010d)

\*2009 figures are from January to July, while 2010 are projected costs as well as revenues from the council provisional budget

<sup>1</sup> Officially, no forest harvesting occurred that year

An examination of the table reveals that from March 2004 to July 2009, Dimako Council spent about 488 million CFAF on the machines and their maintenance -with approximately half of that amount alone to honor the rental agreement. Moreover, it was expected to spend another 78 million CFAF for the year 2010 bringing the total up to 566 million CFAF. Finally, the overall expenditures related to the rental agreement and the machines constituted almost half (47 percent) of the 1.05 billion CFAF of the council timber revenues in the March 2004-July 2009 period. The question is to whom the council pays out this amount? Is it to its customer Alpicam as Mayor Mongui argues, or to the mayor himself as local villagers believe?

For local observers and Dimako residents, no doubt is permitted that under the official disguise of the Dimako Council renting the machines from Alpicam, Mayor Mongui is the person leasing his machines to the council as well as the only one to personally take advantage

and benefit from the arrangement. In so doing, he prevents local villagers as well as outsiders from looking at what is happening behind the façade. Indeed, a former forest administration official commented that “all FODDI’s machines [the mayor’s now defunct logging company], that is what the FCD is using, but the mayor is telling people that the machines are from Alpica. The ‘Bull’ belongs to him; the only thing that he is renting from Alpica is the Front end Loader, but he is telling people that everything belongs to Alpica in order to fool them” (7 May 2010).



**Figure 7.5. The Front end loader also known as 'The 966', February 2010**

*Source: author*

In truth, there appears to be some substance to the assertion that the mayor is at least leasing one of his machines to the council, and thus benefiting from the so-called rental agreement. Singer for instance notes that “following failed negotiations with SFID which

showed little interest in the allegedly mediocre quality of the council forest's products, Alpica, an Italian company operating close to Dimako, accepted to lease some of its equipment to the local council for two years. *During the next two years, equipment was leased by the mayor's own company*" (2008, 100, emphasis added). Equally important, from his investigations Singer observed that "the equipment was leased for *free* in exchange for the exclusive contract with Alpica" (2008, 106, emphasis added). Hence, according to Singer, Alpica gratuitously loaned the council its machines for the first two years (2004-2005), and then the mayor's company took over, a fact that the mayor has denied insisting that Alpica has been all along renting the forest harvesting machines. Singer's point about the gratuity of the machines is important because, if true, it would substantiate the argument that even when Alpica was in effect leasing its machines, the mayor was still the primary beneficiary of the arrangement.

That having been said, the evidence in the field suggests that the so-called rental agreement is another mechanism through which the mayor is personally benefiting from -and possibly misappropriating- the forest revenues, in this case almost half (488 million) of the 1.05 billion CFAF of FCD total timber revenues. By acting concurrently as the council chief executive, thus the author of the agreement, as well as the private person renting his machines to the council, Mayor Mongui appears well positioned to set the rental price for the equipment. Indeed, he appears to be the *only* one who knows how much the council spends on renting the machines and, consequently, can easily overestimate at any time the 'real' rental cost. As one Dimako observer declared Mayor Mongui "is at the same time seller and buyer for the FCD. He authors contracts and harvests the forest on behalf of the council, but he is really the one harvesting the forest. *He pays the bill and emits them at the same time*. It is a clear conflict of interest" (29 April 2010, emphasis added).

To complicate matters, the ‘Bull’, the main machine used for forest harvesting (see Chapter 6.0), has been beset by repeated mechanical failures which have reportedly delayed forest harvesting (see CDKO 2010a, 1). More to the point, the decrepitude of the ‘Bull’, as Figure 7.4 above illustrates, signifies that financially the council is losing money, but not necessarily the mayor, to the extent that, as local testimonies have suggested, when the machine is inactive the council is still purportedly bound by the agreement. The question Dimako residents ask is why cannot the mayor buy or rent to buy the machines that the FCD needs instead of spending a lot of money, about 47 percent of the FCD gross revenues, on aged machines alone which barely work? Similarly, residents ask can Mayor Mongui at least tell Alpica to replace ‘the Bull’ -the primary machine and the costlier one- with another one if the company is really the owner of the ‘Bull’.

In response to the various local criticisms about the rental agreement and the machines, the mayor has argued that the council cannot afford to buy or rent to buy new machines because of their prohibitive costs. However, some villagers have objected to the mayor’s argument about the prohibitiveness of the machines arguing that over the long term the council shall benefit from that investment. A former CCG member protested that the mayor “should have bought the equipment a long time ago, but this arrangement suits him well. He bought himself a Bulldozer [for his defunct FODDI], so how is it possible that the council cannot afford one on its own? [with all the forest revenues]” (26 June 2010). A 2008 CTFC-commissioned report concurred with villagers when it observed that given the costs of the machines and the ‘pathetic’ -its words- situation in which the council found itself into, “we believe that instead of leasing the machines, the council should rather rent to buy or even buy the machines and those could be used for the council maintenance works” (CTFC 2008, 27).

For the abovementioned former CCG member as well as other observers, the mayor seems not interested in buying new machines for the FCD because he is the sole beneficiary of the so-called rental agreement. Therefore, they believe all the mayor's excuses are provided to conceal the fact that he is, through the rental agreement, personally benefiting from the forest revenues by imputing high expenses while forest workers and council employees are poorly paid, if paid at all as it shall be shown below. In the end, in spite of the mayor's denials, the fact remains that overall the rental agreement is costing almost half of the council total timber revenues while the villages lack basic amenities, and development projects are postponed under the pretense of the focus on education as described above.

#### **7.2.1.2 The alleged siphoning off of the forest revenues through the FCD operating costs**

Apparently the situation about the rental agreement, hence the claims about the mayor's alleged capture of the timber revenues, also extends to the council forest operating costs. As an illustration, below Table 7.5 shows the FCD overall operating costs -separate from the council own operating expenses- since March 2004. Except for 2006 where according to council authorities, timber harvesting did not occur and 2010 where those represent projected costs, the table discloses that three items *fuel and lubricants*, *machines rental* and *staff and personnel costs* constitute the major expenditures of the FCD. Indeed, all three account for over 531 million CFAF or 89 percent of the FCD operating costs and 57 percent of the 1.05 billion CFAF received in total timber revenues over the same period. Moreover, the council was expected to spend an additional 106 million CFAF in 2010 for the FCD operating costs alone, adding the total sum to more than 700 million CFAF or 55 percent of total timber revenues for the period 2004-2010. Finally, the table reveals that, save 2006, from March 2004 to July 2009, the FCD operating costs oscillated between 72 million in 2009 to more than 150 million CFAF in 2005.

**Table 7.5. FCD operating costs, 2004-2010 (CFAF million)\***

<i>Items</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Fuel and lubricants	28,750,649	59,746,637	19,271,776	48,372,767	32,878,397 <sup>1</sup>	23,882,254 <sup>7</sup>	212,902,480	39,000,000 <sup>1</sup>	251,902,480
Machines rental	88,777,004	80,988,287	180,000	39,750,854	41,492,741	23,406,691	274,595,577	39,000,000	313,595,577
Staff and personnel costs	14,587,896 <sup>2</sup>	-	2,012,667 <sup>3</sup>	1,450,028 <sup>3</sup>	18,790,696 <sup>4</sup>	6,700,000 <sup>5</sup>	43,541,287	16,140,000 <sup>6</sup>	59,681,287
Miscellaneous (purchase of light equipment and repair)	8,466,399	13,900,870	5,872,644	14,325,517	7,570,073	17,779,597 <sup>8</sup>	67,915,100	12,254,017	80,169,117
<b>TOTAL</b>	140,581,948	154,635,794	27,337,087	103,899,166	100,731,907	71,768,542	598,954,444	106,394,017	705,348,461
<b>FCD REVENUES</b>	179,603,808	345,598,854	84,912,000	171,726,821	158,353,594	113,480,586	1,053,675,663	227,500,000	1,281,175,663

Source: (CDKO 2004b, 2005b, 2006c, 2007c, 2008c; 2009a, 4; 2010d)

\* 2009 figures are from January-July while 2010 are projected costs from the council provisional budget

-No individual figure available

<sup>1</sup> Includes also for council vehicles

<sup>2</sup> Includes 270,000 CFAF for CCG members' allowances

<sup>3</sup> CSE members' allowances; no individual figures available for staff costs

<sup>4</sup> Includes 2,170,000 CFAF for CCG members' allowances and an unspecified amount for IVAC, SAR/SM, CETIC teachers

<sup>5</sup> Includes 700,000 for CCG members' allowances

<sup>6</sup> Includes 2,640,000 for CCG members' allowances in the 2009 provisional budget

<sup>7</sup> Includes also for council vehicles in the 2009 provisional budget

<sup>8</sup> Includes 5,200,000 CFAF for debt reimbursement; 6,099,997 CFAF for repair equipment; 4,271,000 CFAF for timber harvesting administrative documents; and 2,208,600 CFAF for light equipment purchase



Viewed broadly, Table 7.5 confirms that which was already apparent from Table 7.4 above, that is renting the machines as well as maintaining them account for the bulk of the council forest expenditures. More importantly, the table indicates that the cost of operating the FCD is fairly significant, with officially more than half of the council forest total revenues alone affected to recurring expenditures. This conclusion is surprising in light of the fact that Mayor Mongui argued that the prime reason for the council decision to self-harvest the FCD was in his words to ‘benefit from the gross margin’ (see Chapter 5.0). The question then becomes how can the council benefit from the gross margin when it spends more than half of its total revenues -57 percent- on the council forest operating costs alone? In theory, for the council to benefit from the gross margin, the FCD operating costs would have needed to decrease over the years.

Equally important is the fact that to the mayor this should have appeared obvious. In effect, as a professional logger himself, and now at the head of a council forest, theoretically Mayor Mongui was well positioned to understand the timber trade business. Therefore, how could he as the council chief executive allow such a scenario to happen?

For local observers, the conclusion seems obvious. The Mayor of Dimako is reportedly again misappropriating the council forest revenues by imputing high operating costs to the council for the FCD operations. As one local resident lamented “If he tells me that the FCD is not profitable, it is not the truth. We know forestry, operating costs and so on, we do not deserve this treatment, money is there” (26 February 2010). As with the so-called expenditures for local development noted previously, the evidence suggests that the same two patterns of overestimating the costs as well as fabricating expenditures are repeated with FCD operating costs, though at a wider scale.

Take the example of *staff and personnel costs*. The FCD according to field accounts as well as council documents employs less than twenty full-time and part-time people, with only the CFC head and the logging manager being the sole full-time employees. An examination of Table 7.5 above discloses that *staff and personnel expenditures* oscillated between 2 and 18 million CFAF totaling 44 million CFAF in the 2004-2009 period. On the other hand, these figures differ from the evidence obtained in the field. In fact, in Dimako, it is an open secret that forest workers have complained over the years about low as well as recurring unpaid wages to no avail. This has led to a situation whereas, as Councilor 17 argued, villagers refuse to work for the council or the council forest, preferring instead to attend their fields. As he put it “people think that they are losing their time over there”.

Although people get eventually paid after a while, as some interviewees have acknowledged, the accumulation of arrears raises the following question: how can a council which made more than 1 billion CFAF in six years in timber revenues not afford to pay its employees, especially when it employs about twenty people, most of them working part-time?<sup>197</sup>

In truth, the larger issue raised by the above 44 million CFAF figure is simply about ascertaining the beneficiaries of the money, *i.e.*, the direction of the funds. Put differently, to whom was this amount paid when in actuality forest workers have gone for months -and as the accumulation of arrears story suggests- and years without being paid. Likewise, to which forest workers were destined the bonuses that the mayor referred to in 2005 (see CRDKO 2005b, 3) when forest workers themselves have denied receiving any such compensation? As this Dimako

---

<sup>197</sup> The council financial records seem to substantiate the villagers’ story when for instance the 2007 council provisional budget indicated a figure of almost 19 million CFAF (18, 809,691) overdue to the council employees as well as forest workers (see CDKO 2008b). Whether, the actual amount has been overestimated or not is not the issue at hand here since it probably has been; rather, the issue is that it confirms the villagers’ story that the council owes them money when in fact it should not based on the revenues it received from the FCD harvesting.

long-time observer remarked about this situation “this is terrible; you [the mayor] cannot treat people like that. The workers are miserable; the mayor keeps everything for himself. The people who work with the mayor, the contractors [they do not get paid]...the mayor does not care he will in any case find a way to harvest the forest. He completely acts like the council belongs to him” (25 April 2010).

Another illustration of the alleged practice of overestimating and fabricating expenditures is illustrated by the figures for the year 2006 in Table 7.5 above. According to the council authorities, officially that year no timber harvesting occurred because of the revision of the management plan and the inability of the council to obtain the PAO (see also Singer 2008, 104). Yet, the table points out that in 2006 the council received almost 85 million CFAF in timber revenues from the FCD, as well as spent about 28 million CFAF for operating the forest. The question is how could it be possible for the council to have spent more than 19 million CFAF on *fuel and lubricants* for the machines, 2 million CFAF on *staff and personnel*, as well as the other expenditures for that year when officially no forest harvesting operations occurred?<sup>198</sup>

The reality is that similar to the practice of labeling anything as local development expenditures (see section 7.1.1.2), the so-called FCD operating costs are unrelated to the cost of operating the council forest, hence appears to serve the purpose of hiding the alleged misappropriation of the timber revenues. One example, the *fuel and lubricants* section of Table 7.5, shall illustrate this state of affairs.

---

<sup>198</sup> Based on the pattern described in Chapter 5.0 two explanations for the revenues received, not the spending, can be suggested. First, the revenues were received after the 2005 official fiscal year ended, thus they were simply reported in 2006. The second, and most likely hypothesis based on the harvesting practices inside the FCD described in Chapter 6.0, suggests that the timber was already felled and waiting for customers which came around 2006 or even before. This story seems consistent with the ‘crushing’ of the forest described by one local observer in the previous chapter. Yet, in both cases, the 28 million CFAF figures seem too high to account for the ‘almost’ no forest harvesting.

To begin with, in spite of the fact that the FCD operating costs are solely designed to support the cost of operating the council forest, the *fuel and lubricants* section for instance also includes the cost of fuel and lubricants for the council vehicles, namely the pick-up, the truck, as well as the mayor's official vehicle as in the years 2008 and 2009. Similar to the previous issue about local development expenditures, this bundling of unrelated expenditures has two immediate effects. First, it augments the FCD operating costs to the significant levels mentioned above. And second, it raises the question as to what constitute the FCD operating costs given the fact that following the 2003 revenues sharing formula, 30 percent of the FCD revenues are allocated for the council operating costs, thus presumably also for the maintenance of the council vehicles?

In line with the so-called rental agreement, the conclusion from Dimako observers is that first the mayor rents his 'Bull' to the council, and then the 'Bull' commands higher operating costs, apparently overestimated and fabricated as well as unjustified, in the end swallowing more than half of the council total timber revenues.<sup>199</sup>

### **7.2.1.3 The council operating costs**

In general, the issues surrounding the imbroglio over the rental agreement as well as the ownership of the timber harvesting equipment, and the FCD operating costs reflect the larger

---

<sup>199</sup> It has also been suggested that another reason why the FCD operating costs are high pertains to the fact that, following the Mayor of Dimako's capture of the council forest, it has been difficult to distinguish the expenses of the mayor own private activities from those of the council forest. Simply put, it seems that the mayor has covered his private company expenses with the FCD revenues. As an illustration, local testimonies have indicated that Mayor Mongui used council properties such as the council white pickup truck, fuel and lubricants, as well as FCD workers, though employed and paid by the council, to conduct his private forest harvesting activities near the Bertoua area, where the forest administration granted him a SSV. Seen this way, it is understandable that the FCD operating costs reach these significant levels since they do not reflect the 'true' cost of operating the council forest; rather, they represent a combination of various items directly related to and benefiting the mayor himself as well as his private endeavors.

governance problems that local villagers have argued are at the heart of the matter in Dimako Council. As one villager declared about the town's predicaments, "it is simply about bad governance. That's it!!!". Moreover, these alleged 'bad' governance practices - of overestimating as well as fabricating and adding unrelated expenditures to the FCD which leads to excessive FCD operating costs- have profound consequences for the distribution of timber revenues in the council per the 2003 revenue sharing formula.

To clarify, as it became apparent from the above discussion, higher operating costs mean less revenues for other sectors (local development, and reforestation primarily). For that reason, local villagers have argued that it has become imperative to revisit the issue of the FCD operating costs. In town, the discontent has reached alarming levels. As CCG member 7 explained:

We should be told how the council forest logging operations are going on. We should be told how much we spend on fuel each month; we should be able to know monthly expenses as well as revenues. But we do not know how much we spend and bring in each month. All this should be known monthly so that after we can divide according to the revenue sharing formula, population, the council, etc. *But we do not even get to that level of details about the council forest and this is the reason of the discontent here (...)* How much do we spend for fuel? How much do we have at the end of the day? This is a business activity. You need to know how to divide the revenues, that's the way it is (1 September 2010, emphasis added).

The discontent is especially pronounced in light of the fact that the FCD operating costs do not include the council own operating costs. This in practice means that on top of the FCD significant operating costs, 30 percent of the remaining timber revenues as mandated by the 2003 revenue sharing formula, are set aside for the council own operating costs.<sup>200</sup> For the mayor and

---

<sup>200</sup> At some level, this distinction between the FCD and the council operating costs no longer matters insofar as after the forest expenses are deducted, a large portion of the forest revenues is already 'missing'. The alleged siphoning off of the council own operating costs revenues just 'complete' the process.

council authorities, the issue of the FCD operating costs has proven a thorny predicament; nonetheless, they have argued that the council does not have the choice but to pay first those expenses, since it would be unreasonable to apportion the forest revenues before subtracting the forest harvesting operating costs. In this, local villagers have seen nothing less than another ruse by Mayor Mongui to continue benefiting alone from the FCD revenues to the extent that they already believe that these ‘high’ operating costs are unwarranted, and the evidence appears to support their contention.<sup>201</sup>

Specifically on the council own operating costs, the evidence also suggest that the mayor is using the same techniques that he utilized before to allegedly misappropriate the 30 percent dedicated to the council own operating costs. To provide an example of this state of affairs, Table 7.6 below shows the Dimako Council operating costs for the January-July 2009 period.

**Table 7.6. Dimako Council operating costs, January-July 2009 (CFAF million)**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Official declared spending</i>	<i>30% amount as specified by 2003 revenues formula</i>
Dimako City Hall	2,259,490	
Postage stamps and telecommunication costs	875,000	
Permanent staff costs	7,851,492	
CNPS contributions/social security	992,834	

<sup>201</sup> That issue of the FCD operating costs has been complicated by the ambiguity related to the terms of the 2003 revenues sharing formula. In effect, the 2003 municipal council *Deliberation* Number 7 only states that timber revenues were to be divided along the four sectors identified before. The deliberation does not state whether the division would be performed after the forest operating costs have been accounted for. Yet, this makes sense because one has to remember that the council was only scheduled to receive royalties not operate itself the council forest. For local villagers, to the extent that the forest operating costs appear to swallow an important part of the FCD revenues resulting in less money for local development as well as their 10 percent, it makes perfect sense for them to request that the division occurs before (see CRDKO 2003a). Finally, were it not for the fact that the FCD operating costs swallow more than half of the FCD revenues, that issue would be a non-starter in Dimako.

Sitting allowances	660,000	12,446,152
Allowances for the municipal council commissions	330,000	
Duty allowance for the mayor ( <i>indemnité de fonction</i> )	721,287	
Other allowances and insurances	919,418	
Duty allowances for deputy mayors	480,858	
Duty allowance for the mayor ( <i>indemnité de représentation</i> )	406,287	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,496,666</b>	

Source: (CDKO 2009a, 5)

In the first place, the table shows that during the January-July 2009 period, for its normal operations, the council spent about 15.5 million CFAF. That figure equaled 37 percent of the net revenues for that period –about 42 million CFAF after removing the forest operating costs- instead of the mandated 30 percent. In comparison, the first section of the Chapter showed that for the same period, the official amount of money dedicated for local development only totaled 41 percent of the net revenues, 9 percent less than the mandated 50 percent (see subsection 7.1.1.2).

Second, the further analysis of the table reveals that whereas 2.3 million CFAF were disbursed for the DCH compound, 7.9 million CFAF were to cover the permanent staff salaries and about 3.5 million CFAF for various compensations to the mayor and his deputies. The overall observation about these expenses is that they appear questionable. Firstly, in the case of the DCH compound, Table 7.1 (see note 9) in the section on local development observed that in 2005 the costs for the compound were supported at one time by the local development 50 percent leading one to question their inclusion again here, thus their authenticity. Likewise, in the case of

the 7.9 million CFAF disbursed on behalf of the permanent staff, the same question can be raised. In fact, the previous lines observed that the FCD *staff and personnel expenditures* already included the salaries of the permanent staff, and this allegedly constituted one of the ways for the mayor to overestimate the FCD operating costs as well as misappropriate the council forest revenues. Finally, regarding the various compensations -all perfectly legal- purportedly paid to the mayor and his deputies, which almost totaled 3.5 million CFAF for the said period, it is difficult to identify the actual direction of the money inasmuch as all these expenses are directly connected to the mayor or his deputies.<sup>202</sup>

Put another way, only the mayor and his deputies are supposed to have received this amount of money, and only they can guarantee that they have effectively received it or not. As one NGO representative put it “in all the villages, people are despondent. You [referring to the mayor] cannot capture all the council revenues. The FCD represents seventy five percent of the council revenues. If the [municipal] council cannot even have a minimum of oversight on the most important resource of the council, how do we expect to have good governance?” (25 January 2010). That is why the discontent about the FCD issue is also about the overall governance of the Dimako Council; about the fact that in practice the municipal council, the deliberative body, of Dimako Council has no say on forest or council matters; that only the mayor seems to be benefiting from the council forest and the council revenues as well as allegedly putting the Dimako Council *en coupe réglée*, meaning he is reportedly plundering the council.<sup>203</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> Cerutti et al (2010, 135) makes a similar point in their analysis of eight local councils benefiting from the RFA revenues in Cameroon when they observe that “several other budget categories cover a large spectrum of intangible expenditure which is hardly traceable and seems to depend on the discretionary power of the mayors”.

<sup>203</sup> A prime example, the truck that the council uses to conduct official business and also transport forest workers shall illustrate this state of affairs. To begin with, the story of the truck is interesting because of the



To conclude this section, it can be noted that all the above examples appear to show a similar pattern to the one described in the previous section on local development; a pattern from the mayor of not utilizing the money for local development nor for the Dimako Council operating costs, but only for himself through the various techniques detailed above. This alleged pattern, which seems visible everywhere through a thorough examination of the council financial records as well as a comparison of those expenditures with the reality on the ground as performed here, appears to support the contention that the officially declared figures are not simply accounting mistakes; rather the data seems to indicate a *deliberate* strategy designed by the Mayor of Dimako to personally benefit from the forest revenues through arrangements that *only* he knows and controls as in the case with the various examples reviewed above.

In the end, the mayor's alleged misappropriation strategy looks like it is intended to make it harder for attentive observers to obtain a clear picture of the state of the FCD revenues as well as the utilization of those revenues.

---

'mystery' surrounding it. In effect, in the past, Dimako Council used to own a truck, but the truck had to be sold because of engine and mechanical failures. In the absence of the official transaction record, it is unclear to whom the truck was sold to. What is certain in this story is that to the extent that the council no longer owned a truck it had to rent it from somewhere. Unsurprisingly, the company which 'won' the bid, known as *Kakouandé et Fils* (K&F), and which many believe is a front company for the mayor (see section 5.6), happened to belong to the mayor's wife. Like with the rental agreement of the timber harvesting machines, the details of the deal are unknown, though a local estimate puts the daily cost of renting the truck at 50,000 CFAP, a figure impossible to confirm or deny. Equally important, like the mayor's bulldozer, the KF truck *-la benne* at it is known in town- is beset with engine and mechanical failures and has neither insurance nor brakes according to the council workers. In fact, the truck has been involved in a number of local accidents -with a major one- which shall be discussed in the next chapter, in 2007 having wider implications for local politics. The entire issue about the KF truck can be summed as follows: on top of allegedly 'renting' his Bulldozer to the council, the mayor is also reportedly renting his truck to the council and billing it as part of the council operating costs, in order to conduct the official business of the town he represents as the chief executive.

### 7.2.2 Popular discontent and the decline of the 10 percent

To begin with, pursuant to the 2003 revenue sharing formula, two ways exist for local villagers to directly benefit from FCD timber revenues. The first is through the abovementioned 50 percent reserved for local development while the second is through the 10 percent ‘to eat’ (in-cash handouts), the focus of this section.<sup>204</sup> Save these two schemes -which in theory represent 60 percent of timber revenues- local villagers are excluded from 40 percent of the FCD revenues insofar as the remaining 40 percent are allotted for matters that, at first glance, do not directly benefit them.

For Mayor Mongui, the rationale behind the 10 percent idea was to help ensure that local villagers directly feel, that is individually, the FCD revenues. As he argued:

you know the reality is that when the state functionaries and the small businessmen party at the end of the year, the small amount that local villages received [the 10 percent] is enough to say that at least I have eaten the meat from the council forest [that is to say that local villagers *directly* feel the impact of the council forest in contrast to water boreholes for instance which benefit everyone]. This act by itself has put some serenity in the council; there has never been any social movement, and I am proud of that (9 March 2010).

Though the mayor is correct to point out that there has not been a large scale social movement in town over the issue of the utilization of the forest revenues, it remains that his assessment of a ‘serene’ climate is inconsistent with the evidence in the field. Indeed, besides the lack of local development achievements to show after six years of timber harvesting revenues, the other sensitive issue in local politics pertains to the handling and decline of the 10 percent to ‘eat’.

---

<sup>204</sup> At this stage, it is worth mentioning that initially local villagers and the municipal council had opposed the 10 percent idea when proposed by the mayor. However, as one councilor acknowledged, the mayor imposed his will and the idea became the council official policy.

### 7.2.2.1 The decline of the 10 percent

The issue which has arisen in Dimako Council is that local villagers have protested against what they see as the inexplicable decline of the revenues allotted to them. As CCG member 7 explains: “in the beginning, things were going well. I am talking about the money that belongs to the people that he [the mayor] often gives at the end of the year. But today, this does not work anymore. We are not given as much money as before, only the first time it was good, [and] people were happy” (1 September 2010). That story about the decline of revenues allotted to villagers mirrored the pattern noted above a propos the lack of development achievements.

To give an example about the villagers’ claim, below Table 7.7 provides self-reported figures in selected villages of the Dimako Council. Except for the years 2004-2005 where villagers reported ‘significant’ amount of cash being handed out, the pattern which is evident from the table is of a downward trend.

**Table 7.7. 10 percent to ‘eat’ distributed in selected villages of Dimako Council (CFAF thousand)\***

<i>Villages</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Akano	400,000	200,000	200,000	NA	NA	150,000
Beul	400,000	250,000	0 <sup>2</sup>	150,000	150,000	150,000
Djandja	400,000	200,000	NA	NA	150,000	150,000
Grand Pol	800,000	500,000	350,000 <sup>1</sup>	350,000	250,000	250,000
Longtimbi	750,000	750,000	NA	500,000	300,000	250,000
Tahatte	350,000	350,000	NA	250,000	250,000	100,000

*Source:* interview data

\* Note that these data as well as the years come from the participants recollection not necessarily supported by documentary evidences. However, in the absence of council documents, these give the reader a general picture of the situation regarding the decline of the 10 percent reserved to villagers.

<sup>1</sup> This particular figure is to be taken cautiously not only because officially logging operations did not occur during that year, but also because some villages reported receiving cash handouts while others did not provide that information or could not remember.

<sup>2</sup> Villagers specifically declared that they did not receive anything that year in contrast to before where information was or could not be provided.

Furthermore, a detailed examination of the table indicates that in those six selected villages, the 10 percent revenues constantly declined and reached their lowest level around the years 2008-2009. In all but two villages, Longtimbi and Tahatte, where revenues declared remained constant in 2004 and 2005, the decline began in 2005, a surprising result in light of the fact that 2005 represented the year where officially timber revenues reached their high peak, more than 345 million CFAF (see Table 5.2).<sup>205</sup>

In Dimako, the decline of the 10 percent is not a trivial issue not only because of the scarcity of local employment, but also because of what the decline has meant individually for each villager. Take the examples of both the Grand Pol and Longtimbi villages in Table 7.7 above which have respectively received in 2004 800,000 and 750,000 CFAF. Whereas in 2004, per capita allocation was 1,000 in Grand Pol and 750 CFAF in Longtimbi, in 2009 per capita allocation was 310 in Grand Pol and Longtimbi 250 CFAF. Hence, per capita allocation went down from 2004 to 2009 by about a third, leading one villager to complain that in 2009, after utilizing the money to buy food as required and apportioning it among all villagers, each villager received about a mackerel and half.<sup>206</sup> For that villager, this was unacceptable, especially in the FCD era and all the timber revenues received which were supposedly designed to benefit local villagers. As CCG member 18 further noted: “I do not see the advantage of the council forest for local villagers. We do not reap any benefit from this forest; at the end of the year the mayor comes to fool us with leftovers [meaning the 10 percent]” (11 September 2010).

---

<sup>205</sup> Though the data only covers six villages out of the council approximate two dozen villages which receive those funds (see below), the general pattern of decline of the 10 percent ‘to eat’ was substantiated in the twenty four villages –out of thirty two– visited for this study. However, those data were not included above because of their incompleteness.

<sup>206</sup> This fish is widely used in the local diet not only because of its affordability but also easy availability.

In the end, the case of Grand Pol and Longtimbi villages narrated above are symptomatic of the malaise in Dimako about the utilization of timber revenues designed for local villagers. Indeed, whereas, as the evidence in the preceding section has shown, the council operating costs keep increasing or remain significant, the revenues reserved for local villagers, through local development and the 10 percent are constantly declining while the officially declared amount point to the villagers benefiting from substantial returns from the FCD. As one forest observer concluded “the Mayor of Dimako is telling everybody the same story. We established the 10 percent, and [through it] we are giving rice to old ladies; they also have to eat something from the council forest since they do not have any children [supposedly because education takes the bulk of the FCD revenues]. When you ask people if they receive the money, some say yes, others say no. However, at the end you only hear the mayor talk of a 40 million figures!!!” (8 April 2010).

To illustrate the point raised by the aforementioned forest observer, a brief final example shall be presented. Below Table 7.8 provides the council officially declared expenditures for the period of January to July 2009.

**Table 7.8. 10 percent to ‘eat’ expenditures from the FCD revenues, January-July 2009 (CFAF thousand)**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Officially declared amount</i>	<i>Projected 10% per 2003 revenues formula</i>
Bonuses and other allowances	300,000	<b>4,148,719</b>
Conference and seminar allowances	630,416	
Gifts and relief assistance	385,000	

Allowances CSE members	400,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,715,416</b>	

Source: (CDKO 2009a, 5)

From Table 7.8, two issues are immediately noticeable. First, although Table 7.8 is limited to the period of January to July 2009, the figures indicate that the funds earmarked for local villagers for that period are below the mandated 10 percent. In reality, the table shows that instead of the 4 million CFAF allocated for local villagers, less than 50 percent (around 1.7 million CFAF) of what is legally mandated has been officially reported as expenditure.

The second issue, and the more important, is that instead of direct in cash handouts at the end of the year, the expenditures included items such as *Bonuses and other allowances*, *Conference and seminar allowances*, and *Allowances for CSE members*, items which are unrelated to local villagers' share. Specifically about the *CSE members' allowances*, the council document creating the organization states that the council budget bears its operating costs (see CRDKO 2004a), thus in theory these should not be included in the villagers' 10 percent. More importantly, Chapter 6.0 before showed that among the contentious issues between Mayor Mongui and the CSE members, the compensation sits at the top. Therefore, whence are those figures derived? Similarly, who are those local villagers who received bonuses as well as allowances for attending some conferences and seminars when most local villagers have shied away from the FCD and prefer to attend their fields, precisely because of what they see as the lack of redistribution of the timber revenues?

This situation has led some villagers to complain that the mayor is not only benefiting from the council forest revenues reserved for local development and the council operating costs,

but also the villagers' 10 percent. Councilor 4 expressed his discontent as follows: "before we knew the mayor was fabricating stuffs, but we did not care because we were content with the 800,000 or 900,000 CFAF we received" (3 September 2010). But today, because of the decline, the issue has taken another turn in town with villagers openly complaining about Mayor Mongui's alleged misuse of FCD timber revenues as Box 7.2 above showed.

A final issue, linked to the above point -though not visible in the table- regards the ambiguity of the selection criteria for receiving the money. In 2004, according to a council document, voter registration lists were used to apportion the 12 million CFAF reserved for local villagers (CRDKO 2004b).<sup>207</sup> On the other hand, as was already apparent from Table 7.7, in recent years different villages have received different allocations. Chief 1 lamented the situation in the following words:

The first year the council gave for the 10 percent of the population 400,000, the second year 200,000, the last 2 years 150,000. Nowadays, everything depends on how they feel. The first years they said that timber was not selling; now they say that timber is still not selling despite the fact that we are seeing a lot of loaded trucks leaving the town. What we are lamenting is the fact that the 10 percent keeps dwindling. If it was stable, we would be OK. Maybe next year they will give us less, maybe 100,000!!! (5 September 2010).

Notwithstanding the fact that by using voter registration lists, not only did this exclude non or unregistered voters, but it also contributed to a general and growing unease in town. In the end, in town, local villagers are neither content with the 50 percent reserved for development projects, nor with 'their' 10 percent share.

---

<sup>207</sup> Note that in 2004 if we are to follow the council figures (FCD total revenues [179 million CFAF] minus the forest operating costs [140 million CFAF], about 4 million (10 percent) should have been reserved to local villagers. Yet, the figures reported by the council totaled 12 million CFAF (see CRDKO 2004b, and also Table 7.5 above). This further strengthens the argument made here about the mayor's alleged dubious and questionable financial practices in the overall management of the FCD.

#### **7.2.2.2 Growing tensions over the allocation of money**

According to local villagers as well as council records (see CRDKO 2004b), in previous years in order for Dimako villages to receive the 10 percent funds, each village had to set up a committee to oversee the distribution of the funds which were then officially handed over in front of all local villagers. Further, in each village, the committee was headed by a councilor, assisted by the village chief, the CCG member and the leaders of the local youth and women chapters of the ruling party CPDM (see CRDKO 2004b). For Mayor Mongui, two major reasons were at the heart of this scheme. First, by putting councilors in charge of the distribution of the funds, they could be made more accountable insofar as they are elected officials. Second, by also associating all the other local organizations, this would create a more open and transparent process and alleviate the risk of conflict (see CRDKO 2004b).

That system was officially in effect for a few years until it was changed leading to an increase of the conflict over the allocation of the 10 percent which was already visible in town. From the public and ‘participative’ process where the money was handed over in front of all villagers, the current process is under the sole responsibility of councilors and local villagers have assimilated that to another of the mayor’s strategy to siphon off the revenues in cohort with local councilors. Although councilors denied any wrongdoing, the change from the 2004 ‘inclusive’ village committee to the sole councilors’ responsibility has alienated many villagers, in particular because this has coincided with the decline of the 10 percent. In some villages, for instance, prior conflicts between councilors and chiefs have erupted into the open over the matter of the 10 percent as well as symbolic issues of local status and preeminence. A chief once complained that the mayor was attempting to sap its authority because when the funds were distributed in 2009, his nemesis, the councilor, was in charge of the distribution.



Equally important, the tension has also been heightened because of the fact that following the lack of development projects in the council, some village chiefs, CCG members and councilors have argued that the 10 percent ‘to eat’ instead of being used for food be better used to improve villages conditions. Obviously, the tempers have flared between, on the one hand, those who seek to use the revenues for local development instead of buying food and drinks, and, on the other hand, those who believe that the 10 percent ‘to eat’ should be reserved for its ‘original’ purpose, that is to eat. As Mayor Mongui argued in a 2004 letter, the 10 percent “funds shall be used in accordance with the real wishes [*sic*] of the population to buy food (meat, fish, rice and drinks....)” (CRDKO 2004b).

Finally, it is important to mention that Dimako 10 percent ‘to eat’ does not involve all Dimako residents. In effect, while in practice it is difficult to distinguish who is and who is not an autochthon in town, the 10 percent in-cash handouts are exclusively reserved for Dimako Council natives. The rationale behind the idea is that only Dimako natives have rights over the forest, for they are the ‘real owners’ and, thus, they should be the only ones to benefit. That practice of excluding non-natives has been mentioned by Peter Geschiere (2004; 2009, especially chapter 3 which deals with the case of the Eastern Region forests) who lamented that in the wake of the 1994 *Forest Law*, autochthony claims have increased in Cameroon’s forest regions.

For distributional purposes, in Dimako these natives have been exclusively assimilated to local villagers located mostly out of Dimako town -the largest and most populated area- that is the center of the council. Hence, this has led to a situation where other Dimako inhabitants, especially the dominated-nonnatives (*allogènes*) downtown Dimako as well as some Dimako town quarters, are excluded from the FCD revenues. In 2004 for instance, only 22 villages out of the 32 villages and quarters of the council purportedly received that allocation (see CRDKO

2004b).<sup>208</sup> The tension in town is not only related to the decline of the 10 percent revenues, but also over what natives or non-natives residing throughout the council -but not in the ‘selected’ villages- perceive as blatant discrimination. That fact stands in contrast to Mayor Mongui’s 2000 speech where he specifically mentioned that all efforts had been made during the process of creating the FCD for all of the council villages to benefit from the council forest revenues (see Mongui Sossomba, 2001a, 133-134).

For one local chief, this situation was regrettable, for as he argued when a town develops, it is not only because of the natives, but also because of the non-natives’ contribution. In his view, the exclusion of other inhabitants from the council benefits and the concomitant capture of the forest benefits by the mayor were part of the tragedy of the FCD. A tragedy where, as this chapter has suggested, the Mayor of Dimako, through his capture of the council forest, appears to have misappropriated as well as personally benefited from the 50 percent revenues reserved for local development; the FCD as well as the council 30 percent operating costs and finally, the villagers’ 10 percent.

In conclusion, as the title of this chapter *Foret Na Mongui* suggested, despite his public pronouncements, it seems the mayor was never interested in spending the money for local development or local villagers; his goal all along appears to personally seek to benefit from the forest resources. The next chapter shows why it was so imperative for the mayor to capture the council forest.

---

<sup>208</sup> In 2004, based on electoral rolls, the money was officially distributed to twenty two villages subdivided into five groups as follows. *Group 1*: more than 400 registered Dimako town; *group 2*: from 200 to 400 registered Ngolambélé, Longtimbi, Petit-Pol, Grand Pol, and Baktala; *group 3*: Toungrelo, Tonkoumbé, and Simeyong; *group 4*: Nguinda, Akano, Nkolbikon, Mayos, Bongossi-Ngombol, Kouen, Lossou, and Beul; and *group 5*: Djandja, Kandala, Petit-Ngolambélé, Nkolmeyanga, Tahatte (see CRDKO 2004b).

### 7.3 SUMMARY

Following Chapter 6.0 which described forest management inside the FCD, the goal of this chapter was to present the evidence regarding the other side of forest management decentralization in the council, namely local development. The main conclusion of this chapter is that instead of the timber revenues being used for local development or to the benefit of the local population, the bulk of the more than 1 billion CFAF (2.1 million USD) in timber revenues received since 2004 seems to have been utilized in ways contrary to the objectives of the Dimako experiment in local natural resource management. Indeed, the field evidence presented throughout the chapter suggested that through the use of various strategies –overestimation, overbilling and fabrications- as well as schemes, such as the rental agreement and the FCD operating costs, the Mayor of Dimako has attempted to conceal the fact that most of the money appropriated either for local development, the council operating costs as well as the 10 percent earmarked for local villagers appears to have been misappropriated, with the mayor appearing as the main beneficiary. The next chapter reveals what has become *politically* of the mayor since the creation of the council forest.

## 8.0 BEYOND DECENTRALIZED FOREST MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: THE MAKING OF A *BIG MAN*

“That mayor really screwed us a lot. All his money comes from the council” (Chief 1, 2 September 2010).

“The mayor when he has issues, he does not deal with street-level bureaucrats; he directly calls the [forest] minister and the minister calls down the echelon to solve the problem” (A forest worker, 17 February 2010).

“The mayor of Dimako he threatens, he intimidates. When he sees that your eyes start to open [meaning that you start to understand what he is doing], he pushes you aside... He is a crocodile, no councilor can tell you the truth about the mayor; he has his own trusted people” (A local villager, 6 May 2010).

“Now, he wants to become president of the Chamber of Agriculture and he needs the GICs’ votes...so he is obedient [meaning that he is acting like he cares about the villagers’ plight and will attempt to solve their problems]. But once he will get the votes, it is over. Where are you going to see him again?” (A Dimako resident, 26 April 2010).

Chapters 6.0 and 7.0 above have described what have become of the two goals, sustainable forest management and local development, of forest management decentralization in Dimako Council. As such, the evidence in Chapter 6.0 suggested the *deliberate* harvest of the council forest outside of the forest administration rules and regulations as well as the complete disregard of the management plan, all this putting in doubt the long term sustainability of the forest. Equally, Chapter 7.0 revealed that, following his capture of the council forest, the Mayor of Dimako

seemed to have been neither interested in local development nor improving the lot of local villagers; rather, the data indicated that the mayor appears to have utilized the council forest for personal gain through the various maneuvers detailed above. On the whole, the previous two chapters have indicated that in the entire Dimako Council, following the forest management decentralization, the Mayor of Dimako has been the main beneficiary, especially financially, of the council forest project, if not the *only* one. The following chapter, the last before the conclusion, describes how thanks to the council forest resources in large part, Mayor Mongui expanded his power as well as achieved national prominence.

## **8.1 THE MAKING OF A *BIG MAN***

This section chronicles the rise of the Mayor of Dimako from a ‘small’ chief executive of the impoverished rural Dimako Council to a position of national prominence, that is a ‘true’ *Big Man*. The section main contribution resides in showing how the council forest project enabled the Mayor of Dimako to achieve his political ambitions, but also how the mayor skillfully used his connection to the Dimako native Chantal Biya to advance his own power-building agenda.

### 8.1.1 The quest for hegemony



**Figure 8.1. Mayor Mongui (with the white hat) being mobbed during his arrival for the rally in honor of the appointment of his nephew, 6 March 2010**

*Source: author*

On 15 March 2011 by presidential decree N° 2011/072, Janvier Mongui Sossomba, Mayor of Dimako, was appointed president of the Chamber of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Forests of Cameroon (*Chambre d'Agriculture, des Pêches, de l'Élevage et des Forêts*), or CAPEF after its French acronym (see Cameroon Tribune 2011; Mbodiam and Elvido 2011). For the 64 years old Mayor Mongui, the news that he was to preside over the interests of the 'Farmer's Parliament' -as it is locally known- was expected, though long-awaited. As one Dimako resident put it a year earlier, "he wants to be appointed president of the Chamber; he *really* wants it!!!" (19 March 2010, emphasis added).

For Mayor Mongui, who appears to have long sought to achieve national prominence, the Chamber presidency was ideal for several reasons.<sup>209</sup> First, since 2008, the position had been vacant following the resignation of the late former president Philémon Adjibolo who previously held the position for ten straight years (see Eya 2011).<sup>210</sup> As a member of the National Assembly, by law Adjibolo could not cumulate both positions, hence he had to vacate one position and he chose the Chamber presidency, not without some controversy (see Belibi 2008).<sup>211</sup>

Second, for the mayor, the position was also ideal because in the past he had been a former civil servant at the Ministry of Agriculture -the Cameroon Tobacco Company-, thus presumably he would be at ease with the Chamber area of competence. Third, following the 2009 reorganization of the Chamber after a period of inertia, the Chamber was set to become once again an important player in Cameroon's agricultural world (see ROC 2009c; Sonkey 2011).<sup>212</sup> In theory, this meant national exposure for the Chamber president. Finally fourth, and perhaps the most important reason, the position, though not a government ministerial one, held

---

<sup>209</sup> By his own admission, in a 2011 press article, Mayor Mongui indicated that in 2002 he had intended to run to be a member of parliament (*député*) for the Haut-Nyong division. However, according to him, despite being 'favored' by the early polls, he had to abandon the project because of 'harassment' by the media about his tenure at the helm of the Dimako Council (for more about the details of the story, see Elvido and Ngouem 2011).

<sup>210</sup> Adjibolo, known for his *franc parler*, was not only regarded as a 'true' *Big Man*, but also as one of the East Region's *Big Men*, if not *the Big Man*, until he passed away on Sunday 12 June 2011. At one time, Adjibolo, who held various high state positions and had been involved in politics since the 1960s, had been mayor for fifteen years of the Kadey division town of Batouri.

<sup>211</sup> Since that 2008 resignation, the Chamber vice-president Samuel Duclair Fandjo had been running the organization on an interim basis. Because the former president Adjibolo was from the East Region, some people had speculated that President Biya might appoint another Easterner to fill up the position. As one Dimako villager declared about the person to be appointed "he is bound to come from the East" (12 March 2010).

<sup>212</sup> According to the latest reorganization, the Chamber is composed of 200 members representing the four sectors of Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock; and Forests (ROC 2009c). Among the main duties of the Chamber are the following: defend the interests of farmers (*le monde rural*); protect and represent them in decision-making organizations as well as institutions; train and represent farmers in national and international agricultural forum (see Sonkey 2011).

the rank and privileges of junior government minister (*Sécrétaire d'Etat*), definitively thrusting his or her holder firmly onto the national stage.

To achieve that ultimate goal of being the Chamber president, the mayor did not spare any efforts. First, on 5 February 2010, he summoned the local representatives of the Common Initiative Groups (GICs), the Chamber's *collège électoral*, to City Hall to announce his intention to run to be a member of the Chamber during the then-upcoming July national election. As one participant to the meeting recalled, "the mayor summoned us because soon a lot of things [money and assistance] will come, so he is running his campaign. He is candidate; it seems that the state wants to help the GICs and they [the GICs] need a president" (5 February 2010). The meeting over, the mayor 'thanked', that is gave some money to, the approximately thirty-five attendees. Second, the mayor reportedly spent more than half a million CFAF to administratively register local GICs for the election. That step of registering the GICs was indispensable inasmuch as only officially registered GICs, that is recognized by the central state, comprised the Chamber's electoral college.

On 11 July 2010, the awaited Chamber elections were held amid cries of electoral fraud as well as farmers' disenfranchisement (see Onohiolo 2010; Samnick 2010). But once the elections over, and the results validated by the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) Jean Nkuété, everyone was expecting the presidential appointment -which eventually arrived on 15 March 2011.

From that 2010 February day when Mayor Mongui announced his intention and the presidential appointment, it took a little more than a year for the news to arrive; but at last, the news was there and the efforts had clearly paid off. Indeed, as one newspaper writer remarked, "Mr. Janvier Mongui Sossomba received news on his appointment with total *jubilation* at the



Dimako Council where he [has been] mayor [for] 24 years” (Sonkey 2011, emphasis added). Immediately, the mayor “assured Cameroonians that he [would] revitalize and re-awaken the Chamber with the collaboration of his executives and all those willing to give ideas” (Sonkey 2011).

Whereas Mayor Mongui was still ‘jubilating’ over his triumphant appointment, the news quickly spread around Dimako as well as in Bertoua where the mayor’s private -but also main official- residence sits in the middle of the Mokolo neighborhood between two regional seats of power, the Regional Governor’s mansion and, ironically, the Regional office of the Delegation of the Forest Administration. The news was significant for local as well as regional politics, for in an instant the mayor had completed his march towards national prominence. As one Dimako observer exclaimed upon learning the news, “the mayor got a terrific promotion...*he now has a bodyguard*” (16 March 2011, emphasis added). The bodyguard image suggested that the mayor at the present commanded a political power and stature sufficient enough for it to warrant this type of state protection as well as privilege, only reserved to a few national political figures.

Viewed broadly, the mayor’s trajectory was astonishing, for not long ago, in fact seven years ago, Mayor Mongui was the chief executive of the Eastern remote, impoverished, and rural local council of Dimako. But, almost exactly seven years after the official start of timber harvesting in the FCD on 17 March 2004 and the first timber revenues, Mayor Mongui went from being a ‘small’ mayor of a rural local council to the holder of a national position with the rank equivalent to that of a junior government minister.

On the other hand, for observers of council forestry in Cameroon, the political rise of the *Big Man* Mongui, which started well before this latest appointment, could have never been achieved without the Dimako Council Forest project; in effect, the FCD, that is more generally

the forest management decentralization, created the *Big Man* Mongui. Without the forest resources, the *Mayor* of Dimako would have been nothing more than the *mayor* of Dimako, meaning a ‘small’ resourceless mayor of an impoverished rural local council in one of the poorest, yet resources-rich, regions of the country. To understand Mayor Mongui’s trajectory, a brief look at his political history pre-FCD is necessary.

#### **8.1.1.1 A ‘small’ local elected official among many**

From the moment the Dimako Council hosted the French-funded API-Dimako project in 1992, and the start of timber harvesting operations in the FCD as well as the flow of the first timber revenues in 2004, a dozen years had passed. That is the time it took before the first experiment in decentralized local council forest management in Cameroon was underway. During those years, the Mayor of Dimako’s primary role -as the council chief executive and a member of the steering committees of both API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* (see API-Dimako 1995b, 2; Forni and Chatelperron 1999, 3)- was to ensure that the council forest project went from abstraction to reality. Beginning in 1994, that role was to become more critical because SFID, the town main tax contributor as well as employer, was afforded the special economic zone as well as tax-free statuses, thus further contributing to the deterioration of the already shaky council finances (see Mongui Sossomba 2001a, 142).

For the mayor who before the creation of the FCD, as Chapter 5.0 alluded to before, had been in place since 1987 the council forest project seemed like a ‘one in a lifetime occasion’ to realize his political ambitions. A former civil servant and the private owner of a small logging company, Mayor Mongui at the onset of his political career was at the head of the impoverished and SFID-dependent Dimako Council. As such, Mayor Mongui was merely another administrator, hence the term *administrateur municipal*, of an everyday countryside council; an

insignificant local elected official at the head of a council whose total revenues were averaging about 26 million CFAF annually in the six years period prior to the FCD (see subsection 5.7.3.5).

That lack of revenues, in the words of Dimako municipal tax collector, earned the council the unenviable title of *a structure de fonctionnement*, meaning a resourceless local government whose primary function was dominated by administrative tasks rather than the provision of basic services or revenues-generating activities as expected by its constituents (Bimbar 2006, 17). Within that environment, as Poum Bimbar put it, “the office of the Mayor therefore had almost no *raison d’être*” (2006, 18, emphasis added). In fact, the mayoral position was mostly a ceremonial position, and Mayor Mongui was the temporary holder of the office since 1987.

Though he was the council chief executive, but because the mayor position had no *raison d’être*, the mayor’s primary focus was on ensuring the prosperity of his private ventures. In spite of this focus, by all accounts, Mayor Mongui was a minor player in the timber trade; in reality, at one point the mayor had to oversee one of his companies, FODDI, filed for bankruptcy in the early 2000s because of financial woes (see section 5.6). Furthermore, in the SFID-dominated local economy and politics, the mayor was seen more as a small businessman than an elected official motivated by the pursuit of power and higher political offices. Indeed, Chapter 5.0 pointed out that the main reason why the local population was opposed to the idea of the council forest in the first place was because of the fear of the *logger* Mongui, the small businessman, not the *Mayor* Mongui, the elected official, capturing the forest for his own private firm (see subsection 5.7.3.3).

For local villagers, the impression that the mayor was more interested in his private firm compared to his political fortune rested at least on two reasons. First, in the pre-FCD era, as mentioned above, the French SFID was the focus of local politics and economy inasmuch as

villagers depended on the company for their living and political power was the company's preserve. As Bimbar again notes in the period of inadequate local financial resources, that is pre-FCD, "the council was not even known by the population. Its role among the community was not even understood by its inhabitants" (2006, 18).

The second reason, and related to the previous one, was that in this context the council as the seat of the local government was not the object of attention; hence, the mayor's objectives could not be fathomed or were totally irrelevant to local villagers. It is for that reason a local chief could, for instance, declare that "before the forest [was created] we were not mingling with the mayor. Whether he was bad or not we did not know [whether he would capture the forest for himself]; it is only because of the forest that we are mingling with him" (Chief 22, 19 September 2010). With the council forest project, and in particular in 2004 when the first timber revenues commenced flowing into the council coffers, the mayor's true motives increasingly appeared evident for all to see. The financial resources that all along he had lacked to further his political ambitions were at hand, and ready to be put to work.

#### **8.1.1.2 Building political power through the council forest project**

For Mayor Mongui, as the evidence presented in the previous chapter suggested, the council forest turned out to be a boon, for on the whole he seemed the *sole* beneficiary of the project. To be sure, outside of any central, regional and local scrutiny, the mayor was allegedly able to misappropriate as well as personally benefit from the beginning the timber revenues through questionable expenditures, such as the FCD rental agreement as well as operating costs. Together those two expenditures consumed approximately half of the more than 1 billion CFAF of the council forest total revenues over the period 2004-2009. What is more, the mayor appears

to have used the council forest like his private commercial venture to apparently overbill the council forest and cover his private expenses. As one local villager commented:

He had a Sales of Standing Volume at Giwa in the Lom and Djerem [division] so the operating costs of his Sales of Standing Volume, fuel, workers, and sometimes the machines, were paid by the council forest which means that over there it cost him zero Franc. *Because of that money, he became financially powerful.* You see when you can run a logging company without paying for operating costs, you benefit a lot. *He has been mayor since 1987; he has been there for a long time. Before he was very unhappy like everybody else but with the creation of the council forest, he got some wings.* Whatever the case, he was not very powerful before the creation of the council forest. You know as a small logging company, you have to cover the operating costs as well as the other expenses, and if you not too careful you end up losing money. *It is only from 2003-2004 and onwards that he started to become powerful* (17 June 2010, emphasis added).

But the road to financial and political power as well as national prominence was not at all guaranteed from the outset. Certainly, an episode illustrates how the mayor two years prior to the official start of timber harvesting operations in the FCD almost lost the helm of the council because of his lack of financial resources to sustain his political ambitions. In 2002, after the nationwide council elections, before the municipal council was set to renew Mayor Mongui's mandate -a formality as in the past- a few councilors dissatisfied with the mayor's performance attempted a *coup (d'état)* to remove him. The mayor, unaware of his changing fortune, survived thanks to the support of two trusted councilors who alerted him that another councilor was proposing between 50 and 100,000 CFAF to each councilor –excluding the mayor and the challenger between 1.15 and 2.3 million CFAF for the twenty three councilors- to switch allegiance.<sup>213</sup> As one local villager, aware of the details of the episode, recalled “the mayor *begged* the councilors [because] he did not have *yet a lot of money* at the time” (19 March 2010,

---

<sup>213</sup> Although the practice is illegal, it is widely believed to be in use throughout local/rural councils, especially in light of the fact that most local rural councilors such as in Dimako are part-time elected officials who for the most part are unemployed and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Thus, sums like the ones proposed above represent significant amounts of money.

emphasis added). Indeed, because of his lack of financial resources to offer a counter proposal to the discontented councilors, the mayor was forced to ‘beg’ to stay in power. In the end, the two councilors who warned the mayor about the intrigue convinced their colleagues that Mayor Mongui deserved another chance, and consequently he weathered the challenge.

The 2002 episode and his reelection as Dimako chief executive assured, Mayor Mongui refocused his efforts on ensuring that the project for which he had been involved since the mid-1990s became a reality. On the one hand, for the political actor that the mayor represented, the 2002 episode and the near humiliation of losing power and not benefit from the upcoming timber revenues served as a reminder that the financial resources to sustain his political ambitions were still lacking, and that if he were to achieve his *Big Man* dream, episodes such as this one had to be averted at all costs. On the other hand, albeit the episode also stood as a warning for Mayor Mongui, because of the 2001 issuing of the FCD gazettement decree a year earlier (see section 5.7.4), it was only a matter of time for the council forest and its resources to be at his disposal and the 2002 story, hence potential challenges to his rule, would belong to the past. In fact, since that almost fateful event, as shall be shown in the following section, the mayor has used all means at his disposal, primarily intimidation and cooptation and money, to ensure that he remained unchallenged in town.

Whereas local villagers were preoccupied that the interests of the logger predominate over those of the elected official, in truth they should have been worried about both because they were inseparable. It appears that for the *logger* Mongui, harvesting the forest without any consideration for its long term survival as well as privately accumulating the FCD timber revenues were only the first steps in his overall power-building scheme. All along, the final objective, it seems, was for *Mayor* Mongui to use the newly-acquired financial resources to

further his political aims. In his apparent quest to build and strengthen his political power, the mayor still needed some support to prosper out of outside scrutiny. And in that regard, Dimako benefited from one important asset, that is it represented the birthplace of Cameroon's current First Lady, Chantal Biya. The mayor, quickly seeing the opportunity, seized onto this fact and, as a shrewd political actor, exploited to his advantage his relationship with the Dimako native.

### 8.1.2 The President of the Republic in the East



Figure 8.2. “Dimako’s Youth behind President Paul Biya” reads the banner, 6 March 2010

*Source: author*

In Cameroon, outside of academic and policy circles, Dimako Council is better known for being the birth town of Chantal Biya, Cameroon's current First Lady. Certainly, the town represents the place where as a youngster Chantal Vigouroux spent most of her childhood before tying the

knot with President Paul Biya on 23 April 1994 -two years after the death of his first wife Jeanne-Irène Biya (see Dikouba 2004). Over the years, thanks to that union, the Dimako Council has benefited from several ‘gifts’ from the First Lady, ‘the daughter of the village’ as she is referred to in town, notably through her foundation. The ‘gifts’ have ranged from schools computer equipment to the annual *Festi-Foot* summer soccer tournament, where local teams with names borrowed from the big Europeans clubs, such as *Barcelone de Tombo* or Milan AC, battle for local hegemony alongside community groups promoting health efforts against sexually transmitted infections (see Okole 2006, 2009; Tchakounte 2007).<sup>214</sup>

Far from the debates about sustainable forest management, conservation, decentralization, local development and the likes, for Dimako villagers, only one person, *Maman* Chantal is responsible for the creation of the council forest. Though the evidence points otherwise, as Chapter 5.0 above alluded to, local villagers and even a lot of the current breed of councilors, CCG members, and some chiefs, who were involved in some capacity during the efforts of *Forêts et Terroirs*, argue that it was not accidental that the town was chosen as the site of the first council forest ever created in Cameroon. For local villagers, among all the ‘gifts’ that *Maman* Chantal has provided the council since her union with the president, the FCD constitutes the ultimate gift that the central state, through her intervention, afforded their community.<sup>215</sup>

The perception that Chantal Biya was the originator of the FCD project, albeit contrary to the extant evidence, rests at least on two ideas. First, it revolves around local villagers’ expectation about the redistribution of power, in terms of ‘concrete’ achievements, from the

---

<sup>214</sup> Officially, Festival Football (*Festi-Foot*) is organized by a young Dimako *elite* Oswald Baboke (see below for more on him) under the sponsorship of the First Lady. The 2009 edition of the tournament was especially ‘dedicated’ to her husband President Biya (see Okole 2009).

<sup>215</sup> That assertion has even been encountered among some notable forest administration officials who, in theory, should have been privy to the ‘true’ information.



center to their village, in particular now that ‘one of their own’ is at the pinnacle of state power. As Chief 30 remarked “Chantal Biya was born and raised here; she knows this is her village. Even when she does [things] in Nanga [Eboko; the village of origin of her mother], she cannot forget Dimako” (16 September 2010). In this view, a project of such importance as the council forest could not have been initiated first in Dimako without the First Lady intervention.

Second, and of more importance here, this belief was cultivated and reinforced by an event that happened in 2001 where Mayor Mongui prominently figured at the center. To illustrate, after the issuance by Cameroon’s Prime Minister of the FCD gazetting decree as well as the reception of the document by local authorities, Mayor Mongui convened a public meeting. Officially, the meeting was designed to unveil the decree in front of local villagers as well as the *Forêts et Terroirs* team. However, in town, instead of a ‘regular’ public meeting, the meeting turned into a political rally followed by a march covered by the official state channel Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) as well as other local media. During the rally, the mayor publicly thanked President Biya as well as Dimako’s ‘daughter’ Chantal for ‘offering’ the town a council forest and for not abandoning her native village. To the astonishment of all the *Forêts et Terroirs*’ team members present, nowhere was mentioned the critical contribution of the project.

Needless to say that not only was the mayor’s act in Dimako not well received by the project team, but also it is said that when the local representative of the *French Cooperation* in Yaoundé was informed of the matter, he was flabbergasted that Mayor Mongui did not utter a single word about the French assistance for the creation of the FCD. However, within the council, as this former *Forêts et Terroirs* member observed “the image that stayed was that this [the FCD] was a gift from the First Lady although this was the work of the French Cooperation.

*The mayor seized on the opportunity. You know politicians here are like that*” (1 April 2010, emphasis added).

#### **8.1.2.1 The First Lady connection *et la récupération politique***

For the project team members, the Mayor of Dimako’s act was surprising not only because of their conception of the project as purely technical, but also because within all the town residents, as a *membre averti* of the project (see Forni and Chatelperron 1999, 3), that is well-informed, no one apart from Mayor Mongui was well positioned to differentiate the history of the FCD, having been involved from the onset in the two predecessors of the FCD. On the other hand, if one takes a political perspective and sees the mayor as a self-interested elected official attempting to build his political power, there was a ‘pure’ political advantage in holding this rally to thank President Biya and his wife. Indeed, for the mayor, this was an act of *récupération politique*, or of political opportunism, designed to curry favor from the First Lady, and ultimately her husband, as well as associate himself with them, a pattern that would be repeated in another key event in March 2010 as the reader shall witness later in this chapter.

The 2001 political rally was especially significant to the extent that in town, and in Bertoua where he resides, Mayor Mongui has been known as an ally as well as family related, sometimes as an uncle, President’s Biya father in-law, or a cousin, to the Dimako native Chantal Biya.<sup>216</sup> How that alliance or family relationship came to be about is unknown, especially given the fact that Chantal’s family is originally from the central town of Nanga Eboko, while the

---

<sup>216</sup> Singer (2008, 110, note 65) for instance observed that “the mayor is known to be a high-ranking member of the RDPC, President Biya’s political party, and a close friend of Chantal Biya, the First Lady. In fact, Dimako has benefited from the gift of a school from Chantal Biya and its secondary school was recently equipped with a computer lab thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Secondary Education (one of the three schools in the country to have benefited from such a grant, the other two being in Yaoundé)”.

mayor's, from extant document, is indigenous to Dimako. As one local actor for instance remarked:

He has this bogeyman *true or not* so people are afraid; he always reminds people of his [family] connection to the First Lady. Yet, it is not true. At the time, he was the most prominent person [in town] so that when something came up, he captured that because he was the mayor. Just like that, you take a hat and you put it (...) At the national level he is an influential figure; here in Dimako, he is our problem (...) The truth is that when the First Lady's wedding with the Head of State happened, he acted as the bride's godfather since he was the town's mayor. So she relied on him and thus at the beginning he started having higher responsibilities such as member of the central committee of the CPDM and so on. In the past, *he was a frequent guest at the presidential palace so everybody started to be afraid of him* (...) he did everything for people to see his face on TV so that he could intimidate them (26 February 2010, italics added).

How much support did he, or does he still, enjoy is uncertain.<sup>217</sup> What seems certain is that at one point the mayor appeared to have benefited from the First Lady's patronage, and still does some argue as seen by his latest appointment. More importantly, by projecting himself as a close ally of the First Lady, Mayor Mongui was able to politically exploit to his advantage this relationship and benefit from it, especially at the beginning of his political rise. An illustration of that state of affairs came in the early days of the FCD when the forest administration, then MINEF, was putting bottlenecks into the council path. A former CCG member remembered that

---

<sup>217</sup> In the absence of the testimonies from the main concerned parties, it is really difficult to ascertain the extent of that support. In the East Region, two main explanations have been advanced about the mayor's relationship with the First Lady. The first one maintains that in the past the mayor had benefited from the First Lady patronage, but lately because she had been displeased with the mayor over his handling of the council as well as over some 'business' dealings, the mayor had reportedly fallen out of favor. In this view, while he continues to use her mantle to protect himself, he has no longer her entire backing. On the contrary, some argue that Mayor Mongui still enjoys her support and more importantly has been able to politically exploit the relationship to his advantage with her knowledge. For these observers, the fact that in 2010 and 2011 respectively, Oswald Baboke, the mayor's nephew (see below), and the mayor himself were appointed to senior positions within the state apparatus is a sign that the mayor's clout is still potent, and that if disagreements there were those were minor and quickly resolved.

the First Lady intervened to tell the minister “to leave Dimako run their forest and that the forest belongs to Dimako”.<sup>218</sup>

For Mayor Mongui, it was important to cultivate the First Lady’s patronage not only because it could shield him from outside scrutiny, thus allowing him to quietly build his power, but also because it could greatly enhance his chance of achieving national prominence. However, an immediate issue that the mayor had to confront in order to benefit from the forest resources was to keep at arm’s length the numerous state functionaries, especially the forest administration officials whom he had known from his days as logger as well as involvement in the Dimako Council Forest Project, and who knew that behind the Dimako Council, Mayor Mongui had in fact captured the council forest as Chapter 5.0 already indicated.

#### **8.1.2.2 Mister Untouchable**

Above, Chapter 6.0 pointed out that the forest administration, in spite of the legal authority to oversee the implementation of council forests’ management plans, has been on the whole absent on the FCD matter. That absence it was noted was due to several internal and external issues besetting the forest administration. Moreover, since MINATD (the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization) -the ministry overseeing local councils- has remained on the sidelines on the issue of the utilization and alleged misappropriation of council forests’ revenues, de facto the forest administration has become the overseer of local councils, though it lacks the appropriate jurisdiction. In the view of some of the ministry officials, this situation has encouraged the overall misuse of the council forest revenues, and in order to tackle

---

<sup>218</sup> In that sense, this might explain why in 2001 Mayor Mongui publicly thanked the First Lady and President Biya. Indeed, the mayor probably surmised that in the future to move the project forward, their help might be needed. That having been said, from the viewpoint of *Forêts et Terroirs*, the mayor should also have thanked the French for their help.

that issue a recent report recommended the implication of MINATD to address the reported mismanagement issue in council forestry (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 33; 36).<sup>219</sup>

That having been said, the absence of the forest administration in Dimako still appeared troubling because for some local and regional forest administration officials used to dealing with private firms, the FCD, at the start, represented just another occasion to extort some *gombo*, that is money, from the council, and in particular since Mayor Mongui, the logger they knew, was in charge, this could prove easy. But for Mayor Mongui, the occasion was at hand to take revenge on some forest administration officials -whom all along he had seen as an impediment to his quest for hegemony- for all those years where they stood in front of his private activities and sought to extort money from him, and now wanted to do the same with the FCD. As he declared about their [the field inspectors] general attitude towards the council forest:

We are under the impression that the deconcentrated offices [meaning local and regional forest administration officials] are not in line with the council forestry policy that the central actors are trying to put into effect. Since the signature of the agreement between MINFOF and ACFCAM [designed to assist as well as speed up the gazetting of council forests], we are on better terms with the central offices than with deconcentrated offices. We are under the impression that at the level of people in the field, engineers, deconcentrated offices' agents are there to look for fraud, and crackdown rather than to provide assistance. They should be here to assist us. *They treat local councils like ordinary (vulgaire) timber harvesting firms* (9 March 2010, emphasis added).

---

<sup>219</sup> It should however be pointed out that the forest administration officials, at the central, regional and local levels, lost a lot from the 1994 reforms, for those ended the forest administration monopoly on forest management in the country. Thus, their statement should be cautiously waived against the other evidences. As some observers have pointed elsewhere, forest officials have put, and still are putting, a lot of bottlenecks along the way in order for logging firms to 'bribe' them to get for instance official documents. That is why, Mayor Mongui's frustration expressed above about the difficulties that he encountered with the forest administration field inspectors, the study argues, should be seen along these lines. Forest administration officials, the study would suggest, are not disinterested officials who only look for the health of forests. To be sure, the evidences point otherwise. Finally, given the past history of the ministry and the abysmal working conditions of its staff, it is fair to say that those officials have had the most to lose from the current changes. Hence, voicing their opinions is also a way of voicing their discontent with their own situation, on top of hiding their shortcomings.

While some local and regional forest administration officials saw the mayor as the ‘same old’ *logger* Mongui whom they could extort money, *Mayor* Mongui had a long time ago figured out the leverage that he could hold over these low and middle level civil servants. In fact, with the council forest, the mayor had realized early on that he was no longer simply the small businessman Mongui or the *vulgaire*, his words, owner of a private timber harvesting firm; rather, he was an elected official who happened to be at the same time a logger. That elected official now had at his entire disposal about 17,000 hectares of a council forest, hence enormous financial resources in the form of standing timber, which, as the gazetting decree stated, was part of the council private estate, no longer the state or the public domain.<sup>220</sup>

Equally important, with the First Lady connection and his skillful use of it, the mayor understood that it was possible for him to keep these officials, or any state officials for that matter, at bay and harvest the forest without any outside interference. And even if some of these officials tried to ‘scrutinize’ him, he could use his relationship with the First Lady, and later his growing financial resources, to escape scrutiny. It is for that reason that a local chief could for example declare that the mayor “believes he is the President of the Republic in the East; that he is the father in-law of the President of the Republic [of Cameroon Paul Biya]. That is why, he thinks he is above the law” (Chief 28, 17 September 2010).

The mayor immediately made it known to the forest administration officials that the balance of power had changed. Now that the financial resources he had lacked before were available, the time had come to *fully* utilize the First Lady’s *bogeyman*, and in turn intimidate those officials as well as keep them at bay. An anecdote, famous among the East Region

---

<sup>220</sup> The animosity between the forest administration and the mayor was symbolized in some way by the rapport the mayor entertained with the UTO Doumé-Dimako composed of the staff of the former *Forêts et Terroirs* project whom he believed to ‘spies’ of the forest administration eastern provincial -now regional- delegation (see Chapter 5.0).

veterans' forest administration officials, will illustrate the change of fortune from the *logger* Mongui to the *Mayor* Mongui and its impact on the forest administration officials. The story begins this way. One day, a few forest administration officials visited the mayor after inspecting the forest and reportedly finding some violations. Whereas both parties were seeking to find a common ground, that is most likely the officials were attempting to extract some money out of the mayor to forgo the issue, unfortunately no one was willing to budge. Because of the stalemate, it is said that at one point, the mayor ended the talks by declaring that henceforth he was not talking as the logger, but as the mayor, *l'él*u or the elected official. The forest administration team got the message and departed.

In the above story the mayor was arguing at first with forest officials as a logger, which he is personally through not only his private activities, but also the Dimako Council and the FCD, attempting to settle the violations issue in some way. However, faced with the insistence of the forest administration officials, the mayor put on his elected official and mayoral hat to escape the situation. The subtext of all this is that as an elected official and a mayor he disposes of some leverage that could be activated anytime. Therefore, forest administration officials had to be cautious when threading the needle. One forest administration official summed up the predicament facing his colleagues as follows:

Council forests you have to admit, it is politically sensitive. People used to say that the [forest] administration was not interested in council forestry [because] it is an area where *mayors like to intimidate people*. They say I was with the head of the ruling party, so it is a way to intimidate people since mayors are usually from the CPDM. You will sometimes see that these mayors are influential members of the party. *The forest revenues go not only into the mayors' pockets, but also inside the party's coffers. No one openly says it, but we know our context; if you try to implement sustainable forest management by ignoring the politicians who are involved in forest harvesting, you do it at your own peril.* The mayors they will go complain at the presidency that you want to stir up the populations and cause troubles. In all African countries, *politicians have significant room for maneuver; you bother them, they go complain to the top* (4 May 2010, emphasis added).

For some forest administration officials who had hoped to get some ‘gombo’ from the mayor, the obstacle proved difficult, if not insurmountable, insofar as standing in the way of the mayor meant a direct confrontation, whether it was true or not, with the wife of the president or the mayor’s other purported allies won over the years.<sup>221</sup> In all fairness, that form of political protection or the use of forest resources to fend off any outside scrutiny is not new in the forestry sector. Certainly, the authors of the 2006 audit of Cameroon’s forestry sector remarked about the 50 percent RFA revenues that “the administration does not play its executive and supervisory role as far as the utilization of the RFA is concerned, even though the dual order [*Arrêté Conjoint N° 0122*] gives it the authority. *The [central state] functionaries seem to fear the political connections of mayors most of whom are either connected to a member of government, or are now rich men and vastly influential*” (Karsenty et al. 2006, 103, emphasis added).

That the mayor has used the threat of his political connections as well as current stature to prevent outside organizations from entering and investigating the FCD has already been documented above in Chapter 6.0 with the REM case. To recall, for the mayor, to the degree that council forests are part of local councils’ private estate, the team did not possess jurisdiction to conduct that inspection, a claim REM emphatically denied as previously mentioned. Deliberately

---

<sup>221</sup> About what he calls the mayor’s ‘intimidation attempts’, the same aforementioned forest administration official went on to comment that: “You go to inspect the forest and the mayor tells you that he was on the phone with the minister of forests not long ago. *You have never seen the minister so you understand that the mayor is trying to intimidate you. If you press him too much, he can call the First Lady Chantal Biya and say that MINFOR people are harassing us and then you are transferred to a remote part of the country.* These people are very powerful; you are nothing but a mosquito and you want to get crushed. We are civil servants and we are trying to protect our job. *The [colleagues] have told us that the issue of Dimako you have to forget it; only look at it with your eyes. You do not want any trouble. Even the delegate does not look into this issue...so you understand that this is a delicate matter*” (19 April 2010, emphasis added). If the Regional Delegate, who has jurisdiction over the East Region’s forest administration, fears Mayor Mongui and has largely stayed away from the council forest because of the political ramifications of the enterprise, it is difficult for lower-level functionaries to venture into the council forest affair.



missing from the mayor's argument was the fact that the same 1994 *Forest Law*, which provided for council forests, also afforded the forest administration monitoring and control jurisdiction over the implementation of the forest management plan.

On the other hand, the mayor's claim was based on more than his interpretation of the law. Indeed, the mayor's 2008 position contrasted with his 2004 'open' stance when Global Witness Cameroon, then assuming REM role, visited the FCD and found some violations as reported in Chapter 6.0. Whereas in 2008, the mayor objected to REM inspecting the forest, in 2004, the mayor did not find any issue with Global Witness Cameroon visiting the council forest. The first obvious reason for not allowing REM was that between both periods, four years had passed and more violations were allegedly being committed inside the FCD.

The second reason, and of more importance for the study, was that, between both inspections, Mayor Mongui was no longer the *logger-mayor* but an elected official at the head of the now rich Dimako Council. What is more, in the wake of the council forest project, the mayor, through his holding of various positions among which the ACFCAM presidency prominently figured at the center, had become an important player within regional and forest politics. His appetite for additional power, which would be materialized through a position at the national level, was insatiable and, almost inevitably, would lead him to the 15 March 2011 abovementioned presidential appointment.

## **8.2 YES-MAN COUNCILORS (*THE BENI OUI OUI*)**

The *Béni oui oui* is a French term used to describe someone who is obedient, who agrees with his or her superior all the time even when the decisions taken are against his or her own interest. In

Dimako, that term is widely utilized by the local population -and even among councilors themselves- to designate their councilors whom they regard as subservient elected officials. For the villagers, the councilors deserve that appellation because, in spite of their knowledge of the situation in town, they have proven unable to challenge the mayor and make him account for the governance of the entire council, in particular over his utilization of the timber revenues. In truth, as narrated in the preceding lines, the *béni oui oui* appellation or yes-man councilors is not new in the council, for it predates the FCD and the timber revenues era.

Though, as the previous chapters have made it apparent, the independence of the CCG was jeopardized from the start and its creation did not prevent Mayor Mongui's capture of the FCD, in the local economy and politics dominated by the French SFID, the issue of the mayor's domination of the municipal council was not *the* focal point. In other words, local villagers, notwithstanding their criticisms, accommodated themselves with the situation. However, in the wake of the 2002 departure of the French company, which has resulted in increased dependence of local villagers on the council, controlling the FCD and its timber revenues has taken center stage in local politics. In this battle for the control of the council forest and timber revenues, the role of the municipal council as the local deliberative body, especially following the capture of the forest by Mayor Mongui, has become critical.

This final section of the chapter looks at how faced with local challenges to his capture of the council forest the mayor has employed various techniques, including intimidation and the use of the forest resources to coopt political opponents as well as for electoral purposes -the 'stick and carrot' technique-, to protect his newly found financial power as well as further consolidate his power base locally. In so doing, the mayor suppressed potential challengers to his rule from emerging in town and continued his road unto the national stage unabated.

### 8.2.1 Divide and conquer

First of all, to set the stage for this section, it is important to remind the reader that by Cameroonian law, elected mayors, except in major urban centers such as Doula or Yaoundé, are at the head of ‘strong’ council executives.<sup>222</sup> That is the case because the deliberative municipal councils in Cameroon’s local government system have been traditionally weak, and this weakness has been reinforced in some way following the 2004 decentralization laws supposedly designed to strengthen local councils (see for instance ROC 2004a, 2004b, 2008b).<sup>223</sup> The omnipotence of local mayors, and the reinforcement of their powers compared to the municipal councils after the 2004 laws, led for instance one former Dimako councilor to mildly lament that “the mayor has been given enormous powers; he is the authorizer (*ordonnateur*); he is the *president of everything*” (3 June 2010, emphasis added).

While legally the ‘permanent’ local mayors run the day-to-day operations, in contrast municipal councils –composed of part-time councilors– are *only* supposed to convene four times annually or once every three months for a maximum of seven days at the time (ROC 2004b, Art. 30, 1).<sup>224</sup> Thus, despite a municipal council legal mandate of overseeing a local mayor and

---

<sup>222</sup> In major metropolitan centers such as Yaoundé, Doula or Bertoua in the East, the position of mayor is held by an appointed civil servant known locally as the *Délégué du Gouvernement* who is likened by some as a kind of super-mayor. Regarding the creation of these super-mayors, Mawhood (1983a, 193) remarked that in 1969, “it was the prospect of a big-city mayor becoming so powerful as to embarrass the government that caused the creation... of a special structure for the towns of Douala, Yaoundé, and Nkongsamba. Their commune [municipal] councils continued to be chaired by an elected mayor, but he was allowed no other function. The whole of his executive and ceremonial role was transferred to a Government Delegate, a civil servant appointed together with a number of assistants to take the place of the assistant mayors”.

<sup>223</sup> Note that while local mayors’ powers may have been reaffirmed or strengthened after the 2004 decentralization laws and the various decrees issued after, this does not necessarily mean that local councils’ powers have suffered the same trajectory. That having been said, it is important to note that the mayor is a councilor chosen from among his or her peers. Finally, in theory, any councilor can run for mayor while in reality because of the party list mode of election, the mayor is usually known in advance (see Kuaté 2002, 83; 100 and beyond).

<sup>224</sup> In fact, by law, the position of a local councilor is not a full-time occupation. Article 49, 1 for instance of the ‘law on councils’ obliges the employers of any local councilor to provide him or her time to attend the

ensuring his or her accountability, in practice, a mayor usually dominates a municipal council. Indeed, Jean-Pierre Kuate, a Cameroonian observer of local governance, before the 2004 decentralization laws remarked that in a “context marked by a strong council executive facing a deliberative body with reduced powers and a more or less discreet role, it is inevitably around the mayor that the local life revolves” (2002, 82). Whereas institutionally a local mayor holds the upper hand on the municipal council, the fact still remains that legally the municipal council holds the power to make a mayor accountable for his or her management. Hence, in theory, a municipal council can sanction a local mayor during his or her tenure.

Seen this way, for any local mayor establishing a ‘working’ relationship with the municipal council is the first critical step. For a power building-driven mayor such as the Mayor of Dimako with higher aspirations, the urgent matter is not only establishing a ‘working’ relationship; rather, it is achieving a total control of the municipal council. As it will become clear in the following lines, in order to fully benefit from the forest resources and avoid the municipal council sanction, Mayor Mongui needed to ensure the complete loyalty of his fellow councilors. That objective was central, for this meant that the Dimako Council Municipal Council would *further* become an irrelevant deliberative body -which it already was as the term *béni oui oui* suggested- that could not thwart his *Big Man* quest.

Having neutralized the central state functionaries, primarily from the forest administration, who might have exposed him and threatened his control of the council forest, for the mayor the unconditional subservience of the municipal council over the years had become a critical concern. Though he might, or claimed to, have commanded the support of the Dimako

---

municipal council sessions (see ROC 2004b). Generally, on top of the four annual sessions mentioned above, a mayor can convene the municipal council as many times as he judges necessary usually for an extraordinary session (see ROC 2004b, Art. 31, 1). Finally, the mayor is the president of the municipal council and as such presides over the council sessions (see ROC 2004b, Article 29, 2).

native Chantal Biya, the dissatisfaction in town over his handling of the council forest was growing, and local challenges to his rule were slowly emerging in particular inside ‘his’ once docile municipal council. In fact, the challenge, as the 2002 attempted *coup (d’état)* episode narrated above illustrates, had commenced even before the first timber revenues started flowing.

For the mayor, the mounting challenges to his local leadership, increasingly fueled in turn by the discontent over his alleged capture of the timber revenues, was that although he had been in power for more than two decades, his position at the helm of the council was becoming threatened by his opponents’ desire to also benefit from the timber revenues. That was the case because as his power grew regionally and nationally in forest circles thanks to the forest revenues, his support locally was shrinking precisely because of the discontent over the FCD. Consequently, if he were to continue to *fully* benefit from the timber revenues and fulfill his ambition of becoming a ‘true’ *Big Man*, some arm-twisting was mandatory.

#### **8.2.1.1 The mayor reigns with ‘terror and fear’**

In that enterprise of domination, the mayor was aided early on by his local reputation as an authoritarian figure contemptuous of local councilors. In effect, for local villagers one issue which had become apparent over their years of attending the municipal council sessions was that the mayor was a formidable adversary, for he did not tolerate any dissent from his peers. As one villager remarked “during the municipal council session, he does not like people who ask questions. He speaks alone and says that it is over. People are afraid of the *baobab*, so they shut up” (15 September 2010, emphasis added). Similarly, another one added that “he says that in the Pol Sector there are no educated people; he even insults councilors, he says that they are lousy, that they are inept and illiterate” (11 September 2010).

But the mayor's attitude towards local councilors was not exceptional, for the same 'courtesy' also extended to local villagers. To illustrate, residents point out for instance that it is not simple for local villagers to approach the mayor and interact with him. That position is sometimes contrasted with that of the neighboring Mayor of Doumé who apparently has been 'open', meaning listening and providing services, towards local villagers even though they are not residents of his council.<sup>225</sup> In town, stories about local villagers' 'bad' encounters with the Mayor of Dimako are common, leading them to eschew this type of opposition.<sup>226</sup> This point is made by a local villager during his recount of an encounter with the mayor:

You know our mayor he insults us in our *patois*. [He asks] Who are you? Why are you here? I came to talk about a problem and I needed to see the mayor not his deputies. I saw one of his deputies and he told me that the mayor was in his office so I went to see him. When I got into his office, a councilor was there, and that day I brought a small chicken for the mayor. He asked me why you have come

---

<sup>225</sup> Four immediate hypotheses about the distinction between the behaviors of the Mayors of Dimako and Doumé can be suggested. The first obvious one is the fact that compared to the mayor of Dimako, the current mayor of Doumé is relatively new on the local political scene having been elected for the first time in 2007 after the dissatisfaction about the previous mayor's performance had reportedly reached alarming levels and he had apparently lost the ruling party support. Hence, it can be suggested that as a newcomer and less 'entrenched' mayor, he still needs 'popular' support to build his power and stay in office. The critical question in this hypothesis is how long can the mayor of Doumé remains responsive to local villagers when the whole political system is unresponsive, in particular given the threat that he might represent for the survival of the 'unaccountable' elites which currently dominate the country. In other words, the risk exists that if he continues in his current path, he might become a 'target' of some in the ruling elite insofar as his stance might 'delegitimize' their mode of governance. The other hypothesis directly related to the previous one is one advanced by Dimako villagers who believe that the larger pool of educated residents and *elites* [educated villagers] in Doumé positively constrains the local elected officials' behaviors. In this view, the level of education in Doumé and the political competition of ideas and positions between local elites make it difficult for one man to completely dominate local politics as in Dimako. The third hypothesis, also from Dimako villagers, centers on the positive 'personal' characteristics –his 'personality'– [leadership] of the mayor of Doumé who is simply viewed more favorably than the mayor of Dimako. A fourth and final hypothesis relates to the inherent distinction between the schemes in vogue in the two towns. In Dimako one is talking of council forests which, until recently, have received less scrutiny compared to the more highly visible RFA revenues for which some prominent local mayors have been sent to jail, though not yet formally found guilty. This 'less' versus 'more' scrutinized schemes could have had for effect to put the mayor of Doumé under more pressure to perform than his counterpart in Dimako. Finally, it is worth mentioning that it would be interesting to find in what regard the people of Doumé hold their mayor, for most of the hypotheses suggested here are based on fieldwork carried out in Dimako not Doumé.

<sup>226</sup> The image of the mayor in town was that if villagers sought to address him, he would dismiss them as 'dogs; as one villager put it. The mayor was even known as someone who would stop his car in the middle of the street to fight someone else because he had heard that that person had criticized him. Over the years, these 'stuffs' of legend contributed to creating the legend of the authoritarian figure. Added with the capture of the forest revenues, this created a dynamic combo of all-out fear.

here. As I was sitting down, as soon as the mayor made a sign, the councilor grabbed me and threw me outside of his office. I come to see the mayor and I am being thrown outside. I said damn and I was stunned! The chicken that I brought they kept it. The mayor made a sign, and I did not even say why I came to see him (15 September 2010).

That pre-FCD era reputation of Mayor Mongui, which overtime grew, as an assertive figure who was antipathetic and did not hesitate to curse or ridicule local councilors as well as villagers in front of the whole assembly was to serve well the mayor when, thanks to the forest resources and the patronage of the First Lady, he started to acquire more political power. Buoyed by the forest resources, the discrepancy of power which was already apparent in the pre-FCD era between on the one hand Mayor Mongui, an educated former civil servant and private entrepreneur, and on the other hand, a group of local councilors who, for the most part, were illiterate or uneducated was accentuated. As one regional official aptly put it, the reign of ‘terror and fear’ was definitively set into motion.

Now, the mayor was no longer simply the mayor who cursed, ridiculed and chastised local councilors as well as villagers for all to see, he was an elected official with the financial wherewithal as well as patronage of important personalities who could threaten and put to jail anyone who dared challenge him locally. As one local villager remarked, “people here are afraid of him because he is the mayor. He has connections and a lot of titles and responsibilities. He has influence everywhere; he can give orders to the CB [*Commandant de Brigade*] to take anyone and put him in jail” (12 March 2010).

Whereas in town some were still confounded after all those years that the mayor could address in such a demeaning way his fellow councilmembers in front of the whole assembly, the reality was that the mayor was just expressing the *rapport de force* prevailing within the municipal council. In effect, the mayor was just reflecting the fact that he had extended his

domination of the municipal council that local villagers had seen as a threat to the council forest project as Chapter 5.0 before mentioned. That is to say, the *béni oui oui* had become more than the term suggested. Simply put, local councilors are too afraid to challenge the mayor, especially now that he has become a *Big Man*. Today, in Dimako, almost no local councilor has dared challenge the mayor over his utilization of the timber revenues for fear of reprisal. Indeed, over the years, councilors have learned that the mayor is a political actor willing to go the distance to crush his opponents, particularly his fellow councilmembers, if they oppose him. As Chief 14 argued: “if fifteen councilors are against him and the villagers are behind them, it is over. But already the councilors are afraid; the mayor slaps and insults the councilors. When he arrives at City Hall, it is like the *lion* is there. *We are talking now because he is not here. If he was here, we could not dare to speak*” (14 September 2010, emphasis added).<sup>227</sup>

Unaware of, or suspecting, each other’s allegiance, councilors have been reluctant to come forward and openly challenge the mayor. At the same time, the mayor has been able to further exploit the local divisions -the ‘divide and conquer’ rule- primarily between councilors and chiefs, to his advantage to consolidate his power base locally. A local anecdote recounted multiple times among councilors shall illustrate this state of affairs.

---

<sup>227</sup> As an illustration, during the 30 November 2009’s municipal council session, the mayor rebuked and threatened two councilors in front of local villagers present because they had illegally occupied two houses in the former SFID’s *Camp Blanc*- the residential compound reserved to the middle and upper management executives. The mayor took this act in spite of the fact that some of his family members were also living in the Camp, leaving some to argue that the mayor was using a double standard. In the end, the mayor gave both councilors twenty four hours to vacate the premises. Globally, the issue of the future of SFID properties has become a major issue in local politics. This is the case because officially Mayor Mongui has requested on behalf of the council the properties. On the other hand, following the 2008 creation of the *Forêt Industrielle et Agricole de Dimako* (FIAD), which, according to the mayor, is a council corporation, the speculation in town is that the mayor intends to capture the assets for himself. These fears have been heightened by the 2009 episode at the municipal council session as well as the conflict between the mayor and another councilor known as ‘Maman Titi’ -the sister of the late Superior Chief of Dimako André Bangda- over a house in the camp she was reportedly ‘offered’ by SFID from which the mayor sought to expel her.



The story involved a couple of village chiefs as well as councilors crossing paths somewhere in the region. One of the councilors commenced the conversation by criticizing the mayor over the FCD issue forcing the other members present to jump into the conversation. At the end of the discussion, everyone departed his own way. Later on, the councilor who initiated the conversation allegedly called the mayor and reported the whole meeting. At the following municipal council session, the mayor made sure to publicly confront all the parties present, thus reminding the entire assembly as well as his critics that he was aware of their moves. As one villager commented “he has created inside the town an intelligence gathering network like Al Qaeda [note the comparison]. Suffice for anyone to say anything and one of his agents go to tell him what is happening” (12 June 2010).

For local villagers, the councilors’ fear of suffering the mayor’s vengeance has enabled him to apparently continue benefiting alone from the council forest. Furthermore, for villagers, if councilors, who have been elected alongside the mayor and hold the legal power to make him account for his actions, cannot face up to him, then challenging him is a lost cause. One Dimako resident summed up the predicament facing the town in these words, “If we had people here [to denounce the mayor], it is a small village, things would change; but you have to be like *Nelson Mandela*” [willing to sacrifice yourself for the good of the community]” (16 September 2010, emphasis added).

Since no *Nelson Mandela* has emerged locally, the mayor has been allowed to extend his domination over the municipal council and the entire Dimako Council, hence control the council forest. The result of this domination is that the municipal council has further become a rubber stamp body which approves everything the mayor submits without discussion. That is why for instance, all the official acts relating to the financial management of the council forest, though

questionable as the evidence presented above suggested, have been validated by the municipal council without question.

### **8.2.1.2 Witchcraft and the power of the dark side**

At another level, the ‘almost’ irrational fear, from the outside observer’s vantage, of offending the mayor displayed by local councilors as well as villagers is incomprehensible if one does not venture outside of the ‘physical’ world. Indeed, for local councilors as well as villagers, the fear of challenging the mayor is also in part rooted in their conception of the pursuit of power and the use of ‘unsavory’ methods to achieve it. To clarify, Peter Geschiere in several works has shown that for the Maka ethnic group who live in Cameroon’s East Region, witchcraft is thought to be a powerful weapon (Geschiere 1982, 1997). Though Dimako villagers are mostly from the Bakoum and Pol ethnic groups, they share a similar worldview about the importance of witchcraft and its relationship with the pursuit of power. In effect, for local villagers, the mayor is not only utilizing his financial and political power to stave off any local challenges, but also his ‘magical’ power,<sup>228</sup> with this being potentially lethal. A local actor summed up the worldview this way: “people told me that if I was praying before once daily, with the mayor you have to pray thrice because he is very powerful” (19 May 2010).

In fairness, the so-called use of witchcraft to achieve political objectives is not exclusively limited to the mayor, for it is also a lens through which some villagers look at local politics or life in general. To be sure, that permanent fear of the occult is illustrated by an episode that happened in February 2010. A retired *Gendarmerie* captain and founder of a local NGO in

---

<sup>228</sup> Sahlins (1963, 291) remarks for instance that for a ‘classic’ Melanesian *Big Man*, a demonstration of ‘magical powers’ is among the ‘kinds of skills that command respect’, and also fear in the case of Dimako it might be added.

the Longtimbi village died in a car accident on his way to Yaoundé. Before his death, the retired captain was involved in local politics; in particular, there were rumors that he had been locked in a fight for the Longtimbi chieftaincy with the current chief. Because of that fact alone, some villagers speculated that foul play was involved. For them, it did not matter that the captain died at the wheels of his own car, nor to know the circumstances surrounding the accident in the country's notoriously dangerous roads. For them, the captain's death was simply due to an occult battle that he 'evidently' lost as his death suggested.

While for scientific observers, references to witchcraft or occult powers in forest management shall be seen as a deviation from the actual object of study, in Dimako Council this is a critical element to understand local councilors as well as villagers' attitude towards Mayor Mongui. The fears of the occult, of being hurt by 'invisible' forces, coupled with the authoritarian image of the mayor have ensured local villagers' submission. For villagers past events have vindicated their claim that the mayor is prepared to use his 'powers', if challenged, to get rid of his political opponents in unorthodox way, read witchcraft, especially those who seek to get closer to the FCD. As one villager put it "when you ask what is happening [with forest revenues] they [meaning the mayor] say that you like to put your eyes on everything. Because of that, they will try to harm you, not only physically, but also through mystical means" (13 September 2010).

One main event will illustrate the importance of witchcraft in understanding local councilors as well as villagers' fear of the mayor. The event in question occurred on 16 December 2006 and involved a seemingly banal car accident -note the similitude with the above 2010 crash. The event began with the death of Mayor Mongui's mother in-law and his invitation extended to the chiefs, councilors, and other local residents to assist him at the funeral ceremony

in the Djandja village. While attendees were being transported from Dimako town to Djandja village, the KF truck (*la Benne*) (see subsection 7.2.1.3, note 203) and a small passenger bus that the mayor had rented to transport the guests collided at the level of Kouen's village primary school (see Map 5.1 for a panorama of the situation). The result was that several people instantly died as well as others got injured (Elvido 2010, notes that five councilors lost their lives in the 2006 accident).<sup>229</sup> Among the most prominent deaths at the site of the accident were *Camp Nord* and *Grand Pol* chiefs, the younger brother of *Tombo* chief, as well as two of the mayor's nephews, most notably the then-logging manager. On the injured side were several councilors.

Following the crash, villagers have complained not only about the lack of compensation by the insurance company or the council, but also about the adequacy of those compensations for the ones who received them. More importantly for our purpose, villagers saw the mayor's hand behind the tragedy. First, the mayor was the one who had invited the councilors as well as chiefs; and second, he was the one who had rented the small passenger bus belonging to one of his trusted fellow councilmember. Therefore, local villagers found it hard to believe that this car accident happened by coincidence no matter the fact that the old KF truck apparently does not have working brakes. Instead of a mechanical or a human error for example, witchcraft, commandeered by the mayor, *of course*, was thought to have 'induced' the accident. Finally, villagers also saw with the death of the logging manager a vindication of their claim that something was not right with the forest, for as one villager argued "[he] knew everything about

---

<sup>229</sup> Reportedly, the KF truck was on its way from Djandja to Dimako to pick up the funeral equipment, chairs as well as council staff and guests, whereas the small passenger bus was coming from Dimako and carrying some guests. The collision happened right at Kouen's village, about three kilometers from Dimako town.

the revenues so he could not get fooled; people believe he got killed for that” (6 September 2010).<sup>230</sup>

Among the councilors, the trauma was total not only because some of their colleagues lost their lives or got injured, but also because apparently Mayor Mongui, the council chief executive, did not provide them any solace, further confirming to them his ‘cold-blooded’ personality. Councilor 14 for instance pointed out that, following the accident, he had become more wary of the mayor especially given the fact that the mayor denied that he ever invited the councilors in their official capacity but as friends, meaning that the council revenues or insurance policy would not be used to cover the costs of treatment or compensate them.<sup>231</sup>

In truth, one can find several examples such as the one mentioned above about so-called witchcraft events that occurred in town and are being blamed on the mayor by some villagers. Whether one believes in the potency of witchcraft or not is irrelevant; what is critical here is that this view of Mayor Mongui as willing to resort to unorthodox means just reinforced his local narrative as an uncaring, authoritarian personage who would go the distance to preserve his power, i.e., stay atop the council and continue benefiting from the forest resources.

---

<sup>230</sup> According to the council records, the late Gbapol Engelbert was officially hired as logging manager effective 1 May 2004.

<sup>231</sup> It is critical to note that even in the case of the car accident, the discontent expressed is accentuated, if not the result of, by the lack of appropriate compensation. Hence, money issues are ‘almost always’ at the root of the matter.

### 8.2.2 Elections and the *politics of the belly*



**Figure 8.3. Inside DCH Deliberation Room a banner says “Dimako people thank you *Maman* Chantal Biya” for the appointment of the mayor’s nephew, 6 March 2010**

*Source:* author

On 4 March 2010 in Yaoundé, 310 kilometers away from Dimako, one of the town’s most prominent promising young elite Oswald Baboke, locally known as his “Excellency”, was appointed as Technical Advisor in the office of the President of the Republic of Cameroon (see Cameroon Tribune 2010).<sup>232</sup> Though Oswald had been apparently working for a while at the

---

<sup>232</sup> Oswald, who holds a doctorate from the *Institut des Relations Internationales du Cameroun (IRIC)/Université de Yaoundé II* obtained in July 2001, was precisely appointed in the president’s *cabinet civil*. In town, it is said that Oswald is a ‘humble’ and discreet man who shuns being called his ‘Excellency’. But because of his ‘already’ important official responsibilities in the office of the president, in deference to him, some local villagers, in particular in the mostly-dominated Muslim Pwengué neighborhood, prefer to call him that way. More importantly, it is unclear what attitude Oswald holds towards his uncle, especially on the issue of the FCD. While

presidency in some capacity, the news of his latest appointment was significant for local politics. Indeed, those who knew Oswald also knew that he was Mayor Mongui's nephew. That promotion was to play a major role in town, for two days after, on 6 March 2010, the mayor held a political rally and march to publicly thank President Biya and his wife Chantal for the appointment of his nephew, 'a son of Dimako' as he put it. At the same time, he also called for the candidacy of President Biya for the 2011 presidential election.<sup>233</sup> Apart from the date and the occasion, the ceremony resembled the 2001 rally recounted above where the mayor thanked the First Lady for the creation of the FCD. In fact, amid the numerous attendees were, as usual, the CRTV, the official government channel, as well as several regional news outlets invited to cover the event and disseminate the 'good' news.

In his celebratory speech, delivered, notably, in the absence of the central character, the mayor took ownership of the promotion and reminded local villagers that Oswald was *his* son - being the son of his sister. What is more, throughout the speech, Mayor Mongui made sure to mention that he had *personally* raised his nephew as well as advised him during the course of his life leading to this seminal appointment. As one council employee exclaimed during the rally "the boss is politically *recuperating* the event...This is pure political opportunism".<sup>234</sup>

---

some see him as the nephew of the mayor, thus definitely in collusion with him or at least being aware of his actions, others have pointed out that privately he has criticized his uncle, especially on the issue of the FCD. In the absence of 'hard', concrete evidences, it is impossible to confirm or deny all these claims.

<sup>233</sup> Indeed, the period since the end of 2009 and onwards saw an onslaught of CPDM initiatives calling for the candidacy of their leader Biya. Those initiatives culminated in multiple 'pleas' published in the governmental newspaper *Cameroon Tribune* as well as the publication of a book, reedited four times since, *L'Appel du Peuple* (The People's Call) purportedly revealing the country's desire for Biya to run again for presidential office.

<sup>234</sup> Previously, it seems Oswald Baboke had held various positions around the presidential couple, most notably as an aide (*chef de cabinet*) of the First Lady. It is said that he was introduced to Chantal Biya by his uncle Mayor Mongui. Whether Oswald 'owes' all these appointments to his uncle, as the mayor implied during the speech, or was recommended by him to the First Lady, the evidence at hand is insufficient to support the mayor's version. Rather, what the evidence supports is that the mayor during that 2010 March rally used the appointment for his own political aggrandizement.

For the power-seeking Mayor Mongui, and soon to be a national *Big Man*, the March 2010 appointment of his nephew was a godsend because the previous year had been in some way an *Annus horribilis* for his ambitions. In effect, 2009 was the year when the discontent about the council forest, which was already simmering, had reached its highest expression, putting him on a colliding path with the local population. As the preceding chapters have described (see in particular Box 6.1 and Box 7.2), local villagers had threatened to bring into the open the issue of the ‘bad’ governance of the FCD. Some in the town had even menaced to write a protest letter to the Regional Governor in Bertoua exposing the mayor for what they saw as his mishandling of the whole council forest project.<sup>235</sup> By troubling the peace and order in town, the local threats, if they had materialized, could have brought undue attention to the FCD as well as possibly jeopardize the mayor’s hegemonic quest.

Therefore, for Mayor Mongui, the appointment of his nephew came at the appropriate time because it constituted a perfect occasion to remind discontented villagers that he was still a potent adversary for those who doubted his reach. At the same time, whether he was at the origin of the appointment or not, it was an occasion for the mayor to emphasize that he still benefited from some support at the highest level, and that the people who sought to challenge him had to be careful. As he noted during his tribute on that 6 March rally, Oswald’s appointment in the state apparatus was the highest ever achieved for a Dimako native. The implication of that statement was that his power and connections with higher officials, in particular the First Lady, were limitless and could be used to reward allies or punish opponents. That last statement was

---

<sup>235</sup> To calm the rumblings, as Chapter 6.0 mentioned above, the mayor had for instance promised CCG members that he would pay back the compensations owed as well as resume the payments. In the same way, to woo the local chiefs who had felt marginalized on the FCD issue, the mayor, after officially inviting the chiefs to the 30 November 2009 municipal council session, promised that he would include them in the future into the management of the council forest. This was seen as a ‘tacit’ acknowledgment that the chiefs would receive some form of monetary compensation.



critical, for at a basic level following the difficult 2009 year, the speech reminded local villagers why they had voted for Mayor Mongui in the past and why they would likely support him in the future.

The political rally was the type of event which got Mayor Mongui reelected in the past precisely because in some way he was now sharing -or about to share- the timber revenues with the entire community. Indeed, later on, villagers would get treated to drinks, food and music all night long. Even his main adversaries, comprised of some local councilors, and to some extent CCG members as well as chiefs, who had repeatedly voiced critical opinions against him leading him to see them as his enemies, attended the event. Though they knew, as one chief acknowledged, that the mayor was using them for political purposes, that is to show the outside world that everything was going well in Dimako, they nonetheless did not have a choice but to attend the event.

Whereas some among these local representatives feared that their absence would openly signal to the mayor their opposition to his policies, others came because this was the town's main activity on this Saturday and the occasion was there to at last 'eat' some of the timber revenues. A villager summed up the issue as follows: "people are complaining [about the mayor] but when the election will come they will yet again vote for him. Here it is the politics of the belly (*la politique du ventre*); you give them food and drink and again they will vote for you even after all that they have said before [even after they have railed against you before]" (6 February 2010).

Hence, to understand in part why the mayor has been able to stay out of trouble, one has to look at the fact that he has reportedly utilized the timber revenues to strengthen his position by either co-opting his political opponents, or for largesse during electoral contests. Indeed, it would be simply wrong to assume that the Mayor of Dimako was able to get reelected in town just

because of the reign of ‘terror and fear’ or the fear of witchcraft as highlighted above. After all, he almost lost power in 2002 precisely because of the councilors’ disdain for his reign of ‘terror and fear’. Thus, to consolidate his power, the mayor needed to expend the resources that the council forest brought in, and, as a shrewd politician, that is what he did.

#### **8.2.2.1 Cooptation and the fear of losing their jobs**

In actuality, those who have dared challenge the mayor have met a serious contender in Mayor Mongui, for the mayor has skillfully utilized the forest resources to co-opt and reward many of the local councilors, especially the young ‘educated’ promising ones, whom he had sensed might threaten his hold of the council. The rationale for that strategy was well summarized by a local observer who remarked that “politicians here believe that you cannot allow two roosters to be in the same chicken coop (*bassecour*); [because] if you allow another one to hang around, it will grow and eventually challenge you (7 February 2010). Everytime someone has attempted to challenge the mayor about his handling of the council affairs, the mayor immediately co-opted the person. Where cooptation attempts have failed, the mayor removed the troublemakers as in the case of the councilors who have opposed him. As this former councilor argued, “I was a councilor before...when we approve budgets, they are supposed to be put into practice. But, as soon as my eyes got opened, the mayor did everything to sideline me” (16 September 2010).

In the same way, the mayor has ensured that his purported local allies, especially among councilors, are rewarded. To illustrate, Dimako Council current municipal tax collector was a former schoolteacher as well as councilor elected in 2002 alongside Mayor Mongui. A couple years later, he had to resign when he was sent by the municipal council, read the mayor, to the *Centre de Formation pour l'Administration Municipale* (CEFAM), the local government training

center, to become a municipal tax collector. At the end of his curriculum in 2006, he was appointed as the municipal tax collector, effectively handling the council financial affairs (for an overview of the municipal tax collector's role see Kuaté 2007, 393-397).

How is it possible for the former schoolteacher-councilor to be sent to the training center, and then get his first appointment in Dimako, his native town? Dimako residents insisted that it is because of the fact that he had been co-opted by the mayor. In return for his political allegiance, the mayor then used his political connections to get him the local job. Whereas on the one hand, the municipal tax collector appointment was facilitated by the fact that for some time the position in the council had been vacant, on the other hand, this appointment was troubling for some local villagers, in particular given the fact that the 2006 audit of the forestry sector observed that the mismanagement of the RFA revenues had been rendered possible because of the complicity between some local mayors and municipal tax collectors (see Karsenty et al. 2006, 103), a dangerous parallel to the FCD.<sup>236</sup> The case of the municipal tax collector, though one of the most prominent, is not exceptional in that respect. Indeed, within and without the municipal council, there exists a variety of examples of local villagers who have been subdued by the mayor.

In reality, the mayor has been able to co-opt some of the councilors because of another critical institutional weakness, on top of the municipal council own issues already alluded to

---

<sup>236</sup> When the issue was raised with the municipal tax collector, he simply declared that “MINFI [the Ministry of Finances] and MINATD had the latitude to appoint me anywhere they desire; it was coincidence that brought me here” (5 March 2010). The presidential *Decree N° 94/232 of 5 December 1994* defining the role and responsibilities of municipal tax collectors in its *Article 5* mainly stipulates that the decision to appoint them is jointly done by both the ministries in charge of local councils and finances for provincial [now regional] capital cities and councils which total revenues reach at least 250 million CFAF (see Kuaté 2007, 393-397). Furthermore, it seems that to be sent to CEFAM the municipal council has to approve the proposition and then the mayor sends the trainee to the center which, because it purportedly receives local councils’ financial contributions, cannot turn down the trainee. Then, the trainee sent by the said council has to come back to serve in his/her council, but it is unclear in what capacity.

before, in the local electoral system. To be sure, the political contest at the local level appears to be rigged from the start. That is the case because in Cameroon's local elections, only party list voting is allowed. This means that independent candidacies for local elections are not permitted. Hence, in order to run for office, a candidate must be selected by a political party and be on the running list, with the order on the list being very significant since it can determine the place that one will occupy when the time to elect the council executive comes (for more see Kuaté 2002, 25-38).

Within that electoral environment, Mayor Mongui has guaranteed for instance that 'his' municipal council is composed of non-threatening councilors. As this local observer pointed out "in each village we know each other. We know who is capable and who is not. But in the case of the mayor, he sits in his office and tries to co-opt the people that he knows cannot confront him. He is the one to pay for the applications ...the councilors act like they are *his employees*. They do not know their responsibilities; that the mayor is [also] a councilor and they can replace him with another councilor (26 February 2010, emphasis added). For Dimako residents, once the mayor is able to handpick his municipal council team as well as the one covering the 25,000 CFAF deposit (*caution*) that each candidate is required to pay to the public treasury to run, councilors have already forfeited their right to challenge him on any count (Cerutti et al. 2010, 136, make a similar point when they talk of local councilors' 'theoretical accountability to the people but practical dependence on the mayor').

Because of the local standards of living, it is difficult for villagers to amass the resources to challenge the mayor and run by themselves for office, especially since the losing candidate or

party does not get reimbursed the deposit (see Kuaté 2002, 49).<sup>237</sup> That is why, some local villagers believe that the municipal council has been unable to challenge the mayor because local councilors already ‘owe’ him for being on the list. As the same local observer quoted above concluded, the mayor “did everything to surround himself with mediocre people because he wants to be autonomous; he wants people to depend on him for everything (...) as a politician if you fight him, he believes that you are his enemy. It is the politics of the belly; everything for me, nothing for the others even if they have nothing inside the belly” (17 June 2010).

The fact that the local elections are conducted on a party list vote has meant that, notwithstanding the mayor’s alleged utilization of the timber revenues for electoral purposes, local villagers have a lesser role in choosing the mayor than a party, in this case the ruling CPDM. As another villager commented about why it has proven difficult to vote the mayor out of office despite villagers’ constant recriminations:

It is not easy, his allies are strong. Even his deputies and councilors he is the one choosing them. The orders come from the top. Cameroon is a democratic country, is it true? You are the one voting him and after that he forgets that you exist. If he finds out that [someone] talked against him, he will crush him. Many people are afraid; because of fear when asked questions they said that everything is OK. *He tells everyone that he will leave office when he is ready. If you refuse to vote him here, he will get chosen anyway by the top.* He promises a lot; maybe this year [he will do something] since the elections are near. *Whether you vote him or not, he himself knows who is going to vote him. He will get voted by the top* [he will get selected by the top despite villagers’ criticisms] (15 September, italics added).

An illustration of the rigged nature of the local electoral contest in town came in late March 2010 when the mayor’s sister was appointed as the local head of Elections Cameroon

---

<sup>237</sup> Kuaté (2002, 49) notes that the deposit is given back to each candidate who has been elected as well as to those who have at least reached 5 percent of the total votes cast (*suffrages exprimés*). For the unlucky ones, the money goes to the state treasury.

(ELECAM), the central state arm organizing political elections.<sup>238</sup> That appointment came amid a national controversy, which began in the early months of 2010, surrounding ELECAM because the previous law governing that agency, which made it autonomous and independent from central control, primarily MINATD, was amended. Thus, the change in law effectively made MINATD again the chief organizer of elections in the country (Kini Nsom 2010; Kini Nsom and Gwarbarah 2010). Though all of this was happening in the wake of the 2011 presidential election for which Biya is running for the fourth time, the implication for local politics was clear. Once again, the mayor had triumphed over his local opponents and the 2012 local reelection, if he sought it, would be a ‘mere’ formality.

#### **8.2.2.2 Feeding the rooster before the market day**

The final strategy, related to the previous one, that the mayor has used to consolidate his hold onto power in town, and thus benefit from the timber revenues, prelude to his national rise, was to employ the timber revenues not only to woo the local population, but also against his political opponents, especially around electoral contests or other important social and political events. Chief 24 calls this practice ‘feeding the rooster before the market day’. This simply means that one feeds the rooster the day before it gets sold. If one attempts to feed it before, it is a pure waste of resources. Translated at the level of politics, this signifies that a politician only takes care of local villagers, the electors, the day of the vote, or the immediate period preceding it. Beyond that, he or she is under no obligation to answer their requests, though that might occasionally happen.

---

<sup>238</sup> Privately, it is said that the First Deputy Mayor was ‘disappointed’ over that appointment, for the mayor promised to get his son appointed to that position. Hence, the surprise when the decision appeared in the government-controlled newspaper the *Cameroon Tribune*. It seems that the mayor bypassed his deputy and rather got his sister appointed to that critical position overseeing all elections at the local level.

In effect, the previous chapters have shown that rather than the timber revenues being used for local development or reforesting the forest, the money has been reportedly squandered and misappropriated. In the same way, when the money has been distributed to local villagers, it has been mostly given in the form of cash handouts, such as the 10 percent to ‘eat’ for instance. Although, the mayor has devoted less money than anticipated to local development efforts, one thing the mayor did, especially during the early years of the FCD, was to ‘flush’ local villagers with cash. Notwithstanding the fact, as Chapter 7.0 demonstrated, that the sums received by local villagers were a tiny fraction of the FCD revenues, in a context where the local economy was dormant, these sums represented significant resources for cash-strapped villagers.

Albeit local councilors were at first reluctant to have the 10 percent established, the mayor decided otherwise because all along his political objectives seemed clear. The 10 percent ‘to eat’ would remind local villagers that he had been there when they needed him the most; at ‘the end of the year when they had no money to party like the others’ as he put it above. Thus, it is in that regard that one has to look at the issue of the establishment of the villagers’ 10 percent to ‘eat’ as part of the 2003 revenues sharing formula.

The 10 percent to ‘eat’, and more generally a fraction of the forest resources dedicated to local villagers, was a political move that would be utilized when needed. In effect, a local villager attributes the mayor’s longevity to the fact that he is a clever politician who knows how and when to utilize the timber revenues. As she remarked “people are not afraid of the mayor; the only thing one can say is that the mayor is able to convince everybody. After the first term, they [villagers] decided not to vote for him anymore, but they still voted him. The mayor is a *wise* man because some years he sends people food and drinks and this quiet them down” (17 September 2010, emphasis added).

On the whole, buoyed by the financial resources coming from the FCD, the mayor has been able to silence his critics. For instance, during the 2004-2006 period, he reportedly gave each councilor 300,000 CFAF in cash. The mayor has used the strategy of giving money everytime he has faced local challenges as in the first CCG election as chapter 6.0 before described. To take a more recent example, in 2007, for the first time since the return of multipartism in the country, a group of local councilors and other residents challenged the mayor for the ruling CPDM party primary for the control of the Dimako Council. Facing the list led by Mayor Mongui was a former councilor *Maître* Lucie Mana, a Bertoua notary (*huissier de justice*), and Onésime Ebongué, now the manager of the CADBAP (*Communauté Active pour le Développement Bakoum-Pol*) community forest.

The list *Mana-Ebongué*, the intellectuals' list as it was called by opposition to Mayor Mongui's so-called 'illiterate' one, was no match for the mayor. This was not 2002 when the mayor had no resources and had to 'beg' the local councilors to get reelected. This was three years after the first timber revenues started flowing into the council coffers. The 2007 primary election episode happened exactly three years after the council had officially received more than 600 million CFAF (1.2 million USD) in timber revenues during the years 2004-2006. Those resources appeared to have been quickly put to use and, despite the fact that for the first time in Dimako two lists ran for popular suffrage, the mayor's adversaries easily lost. Whereas, as one local commentator put it, incumbent elected officials such as the mayor amass financial resources all year long to distribute them around elections time, the challengers believe that political support from villagers is enough to win local elections. Apparently, the mayor's 2007 adversaries did not learn that lesson, for they did not possess the strength nor the resources to



compete with him. For one villager, “for the mayor to go down, you have to vote down the entire list and that would require a powerful list to accomplish that” (20 September 2010).

As a last point, in town it is believed that in the next municipal election scheduled for the summer of 2012, the same people who unsuccessfully ran in 2007 shall run again; but this time it is unclear who they will face in light of Mayor Mongui’s latest appointment. Particularly interesting is the fact that as of March 2010, Mayor Mongui is no longer the only manager of a forest in Dimako. Indeed, in 2008 and 2010 respectively the CADBAP and APOBA community forests were officially put into exploitation leading to a political race for local supremacy, hence more local conflicts between the three managers.<sup>239</sup> A regional official summed up the whole predicament facing community and council forests in the Dimako Council as follows:

Council forests and community forests should work together for local development. However, I notice that creating both types of forests generate conflicts. The manager of the CADBAP forest is not on good terms with the manager of the council forest the mayor, while the manager of the APOBA community forest is not on good terms with the one from CADBAP...*They now see each other as adversaries instead of seeing each other as development actors. Everyone wants to be seen as the leader instead of using the forest resources for development...Instead of being development actors, they have become leadership-seeking actors. Everyone is in his corner and wants to say that it is He [the leader] although this was not the primary objective. All these people are using the forest titles [community and council forests] in order to strengthen their leadership, not for local development* (4 May 2010, emphasis added).

In reality, this has been the central argument of this study; a story of power, politics and the pursuit of hegemony and *Bigmanship* via the forest management decentralization -which

---

<sup>239</sup> While the CADBAP Community Forest includes the three villages of Petit-Pol, Mayos, and Beul, the APOBA Community Forest covers the Pol Sector’s villages of Petit-Pol, Nkolbikon, Tonkoumbé, Siméyong, Nkolmeyanga, and Grand Pol. A third community forest, the Paloba (*Progrès des agriculteurs Longtimbi-Baktala* or Progress of the Longtimbi-Baktala farmers) covering the Bakoum villages of Longtimbi and Baktala was supposed to have started in 2010 too, but it is unclear if it did in fact commence its activities as of the writing of this study.

resulted in the entrenchment of the so-called patrimonial state-, not of sustainable forest management or (local) development.

### **8.3 SUMMARY**

This chapter has described what has become politically of the Mayor of Dimako in the wake of the council forest project. First, the chapter chronicled the rise of the *Big Man* Mongui from the humble position of the head of a small and impoverished rural local council in the East Region to a position of national prominence. The chapter argued that without the council forest project Mayor Mongui would have likely remained a marginal actor within local, regional, and national politics. That is to say that the forest management decentralization in the country created the *Big Man* Mongui. Overall, the chapter observed that the forest resources and the patronage of the Dimako native Chantal Biya, as well as the mayor's political exploitation and intimidation maneuvers, helped cement his hold onto local politics and continue benefiting from the forest resources, prelude to his national rise. The last chapter, the conclusion, summarizes the main findings of this study as well as discusses its implications for the current decentralization theory and practice.

## 9.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: THE HARD LESSONS FROM THE EASTERN FRONT

“The East is the country’s poorest region although it is endowed with forests, mines, and gold. The issue here is that people are uneducated and the [regional] elites in Yaoundé only think of themselves” (A Bertoua resident, 15 January 2010).

“The idea of council forest is a good idea; the real issue with council forestry is governance...currently, it is the mayor’s reserved domain” (A forest administration official, 3 June 2010).

“When it is time to cheat, he is really good at it. In reality, there were no [forest] inspections. Even the rare inspection missions that went into the forest, when they faced the mayor they did not know what to do anymore. The *real* issue is that the mayor and the minister [of forests] are CPDM party comrades; he [the mayor] calls him to tell him that he is facing some troubles, and when it is serious the minister calls the Secretary General of the party and the story might even go to the presidency and you are told to leave the mayor alone...*Now, elections are coming, people are looking for money, are you going to stand in the way of a mayor?*” (A government official, 23 May 2010, emphasis added).

When the French-funded *Forêts et Terroirs* project was phased out in late 2001, the Dimako Council Forest, as part of Cameroon’s 1994 landmark forest management decentralization, had been officially created. Though it would take another three years for the council forest to be operational, the first experimentation of an elected local government in the Congo Basin region, the second largest reservoir of tropical forests after the Amazon, managing a natural resource was set into motion. In the region, this constituted a test for a new type of forestry; a type where

instead of the central state leading the way as in the past, elected local councils were put in charge to try out a different approach to forest management as well as local or rural development. The rationale was that this would improve both forest management and local development prospects, and thus relegate the failures of previous centralized approaches to the dustbin of history. This concluding chapter summarizes the overall findings of the Dimako Council Forest experiment, the main subject of this study. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Whereas the first briefly summarizes the major findings of the dissertation, the second section discusses these findings in light of the relevant literature as well as the implications of the Dimako case study for the decentralization theory and natural resources management at large. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the limitations of the study as well as areas in need of further research.

## **9.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

The central question addressed at the onset of this dissertation was straightforward: why did the forest management decentralization in Dimako Council fail to achieve the goals of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and local development? In other words, what accounted for the failures of the theoretical predictions of improved forest management as well as enhanced prospects for local development following the transfer of powers, resources, and responsibilities from the central state to the Dimako Council local government? In order to answer that question, the dissertation examined the case of the Dimako Council -the first elected local council to benefit of this type of transfer in Cameroon's forest management decentralization-, and the

Dimako Council Forest located in the East Region of the country, the largest forest region as well as main site of timber production.

The dissertation found that neither SFM nor local development occurred in the Dimako Council following the transfer of powers, resources, and responsibilities from the central state to the elected local council. In effect, the evidence presented in Chapter 6.0, which dealt with forest management, indicated that in spite of the existence of two successive forest management plans, the Mayor of Dimako appeared to have *deliberately* disregarded the management documents when harvesting the council forest, preferring instead to concentrate on the two most commercially valuable species *ayous* and *lotofa*, hence putting in doubt the long term sustainability of the forest. This situation seemed to have been rendered possible because the previous chapter (Chapter 5.0) had indicated that before the official start of forest harvesting in the council forest, the mayor had already captured the council forest. Thus, instead of the Dimako Council ‘government’ managing the council forest, it was the mayor who, in truth, was really behind it.

Second, following the mayor’s capture of the council forest as well as his alleged disregard of the management plans and the forest rules and guidelines, the evidence in Chapter 7.0 suggested that through various techniques, the Mayor of Dimako captured the council forest timber revenues for himself. Indeed, the evidence in the chapter indicated that, at least, approximately half of the 1.05 billion CFAF (2.1 million USD) received in timber revenues appears to have personally benefited the mayor through the various schemes detailed above, notably the rental agreement. All this was happening at the same time that almost no timber money was allocated to local development or improving Dimako villagers’ livelihood. Overall,

the same chapter noted the lack of development achievements in the council in the aftermath of the forest management decentralization.

Finally, the last chapter to report the findings of this study, showed how the Mayor of Dimako, a relatively ‘small’ and insignificant local elected official at the head of a rural local council, became overnight a national figure (*Big Man*). In effect, the chapter traced the mayor’s political rise to the council forest project and argued that primarily thanks to the council forest revenues, later complemented with his skillful exploitation of his relationships in the state apparatus -the main one being the Dimako native but also Cameroon’s First Lady Chantal Biya- the Mayor of Dimako fulfilled his *Big Man* dream.

In the end, the answer to the central question of this dissertation is simple. The forest management decentralization in Dimako Council failed to achieve the goals of SFM and local development because the Mayor of Dimako, taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by the forest law, captured the council forest and utilized it for power-building purposes. To be sure, the field evidence suggested that in the mayor’s scheme to achieve the *Big Man* status, the capture of the council forest was a prerequisite in order to have access to the timber revenues. That is why the harvesting of the council forest according to the management plans was pointless, for the main objective was to capture the timber revenues for personal benefit. In turn, the timber revenues would provide the indispensable resources to launch the quest for national prominence. Thus, the forest was never valued for itself or for what it could bring to local development, but for what it represented financially and politically, that is a resource as any other which could help launch a national career. The *Big Man* concept was critical because, in two words, it illustrated the quest for personal power that the council forest represented for the elected Mayor of Dimako.

Seen this way, instead of laying down or creating the conditions for improved forest management as well as local development, the forest management decentralization in Dimako Council ‘created’ a *Big Man* and a local potentate who in turn used the forest resources to further strengthen his power locally before moving on to the national stage.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, the major contribution of this study is to show that the decentralization theory of natural resources management instead of solving the ‘bad’ governance issues that it purportedly identified in the first place has in effect extended and entrenched the reach of the patrimonial state as well as aggravated the state of affairs in Dimako, leading to question its potency. The next section discusses the implications of these findings in light of the decentralization, natural resources governance, and development literature as well as the future of the decentralization theory.

## 9.2 DISCUSSION

This study began as an attempt to examine and explain the failure of Cameroon’s forest management decentralization in Dimako Council. Indeed, following the 1994 *Forest Law* scholarly assessments about the experience of the first ever created council forest in the Congo Basin, the Dimako Council Forest, were still lacking at the same time that the country was witnessing an increase in the number of council forests being created primarily because of the support of international donors in the form of the PAF2C as Chapter 4.0 above described. Thus, the dissertation sought to fill that gap in the literature as well as explain the Dimako experiment. The following section starts by examining the main discussion points -but also the three main

---

<sup>240</sup> Note that in this study a *Big Man* does not necessarily have to be a potentate. The term simply reflects a type of leadership.

theoretical arguments for the failures of previous experiments- which have arisen from the study of the Dimako Council experience and ends by considering the implications of the Dimako case study for the decentralization theory and natural resources management.

### **9.2.1 The lack of financial resources and central obstacles**

Almost three decades ago, Mawhood remarked that decentralization:

suggests the hope of cracking open the blockages of an inert bureaucracy, curing managerial constipation, giving more direct access for the people to the government and the government to the people, stimulating the whole nation to participate in national development plans. But what do we often see in practice? Experiments with local government that end in chaos and bankruptcy; 'decentralized' structures of administration that only acts as a more effective tool for centralizing the power; regional and district committees in which government officials make decisions while the local representatives sit silent; village councils where local people participate but have no resources to allocate (1983b, 1).

What Mawhood then realized about decentralized experiments was a general assessment shared by a lot of scholars. Indeed, earlier studies of decentralization had pointed out that the lack of financial resources, central obstacles to cede powers and responsibilities to local governments were at the root of the failures of decentralized experiments to achieve their officially stated goals the world over (see Ferroukhi 2003; Larson 2003). On the other hand, today the situation is different. In fact, despite the validity of these above findings, in Dimako Council the study has shown that there was no shortage of financial resources for the council forest experiment to succeed, or central obstacles to impede its progress. Rather, the problem was elsewhere. The issue was about the alleged mismanagement and misappropriation of the council forest revenues for other purposes.



In truth, as the authors of the 2006 Audit of the Forestry Sector, -abundantly referred to in this study- had already observed in the case of the RFA revenues, while some of the governance shortcomings identified in the utilization of those revenues were to be blamed on the central state, most of the dysfunctions resided with the local councils (Karsenty et al. 2006, 102). That is to say that the central obstacles as well as the lack of financial resources cannot bear the fault for the shortcomings of the Dimako experience as the evidence presented above suggests. That is the case because the study has shown that from 2004 to 2009, at least 1.05 billion CFAF (2.1 million USD) were *directly* received into the council coffers.

Contrary to past decentralization experiments where local governments had to wait for central government transfers, in the case of Cameroonian council forests, as mentioned above, once the forest is gazetted and transferred to local councils, the council is responsible for managing the forest. More importantly, by law, all the revenues of the council forest are the council property; indeed, unlike in the RFA revenues scheme where the money is divided between the central state, local councils, and local communities, in council forestry, 100 percent of the revenues go to the local council, which until recently, with the introduction of minimum standards for utilizing the money, were free to use those revenues as they wished.

Specifically on that last point about the lack of minimum standards for utilizing the forest revenues, some local observers saw the absence of those standards as at the root of the matter insofar as local mayors did not have guidelines, unlike in community forests and RFA revenues (see MINEFI and MINATD 1998), which could constrain their utilization of the money. That is why some local observers favorably greeted the 2010 issuance of *Arrêté* 0520 which established regulatory provisions regarding the use of council forests' revenues (see MINATD, MINFI, and

MINFOF 2010, for instance Article 4).<sup>241</sup> The CTFC, as the chief operating agency of the PAF2C -while deploring that the changes did not go far enough- has, through the voice of his director, welcomed the change as it reportedly bodes well for the future of council forestry in the country (Kemajou 2010, 3).

Though that change is welcomed, it is important to note that the issuance of provisions like those of *Arrêté* 0520 does not solve the issue of the alleged ‘bad’ governance, as could be seen through the example of the 1998 *Arrêté* 0122 which, despite having been issued since 1998, did not prevent the misuse of community forests money as well as RFA revenues (see Karsenty et al. 2006, 91-95; 101-103). Hence, simply issuing an administrative edict without enforcing it will be worthless. Certainly, the issue in Dimako was not whether a legal or administrative provision existed or not to compel the mayor to behave in ways congruent with the forest management decentralization objectives, for it existed. In effect, the study showed that even the 2003 revenues sharing formula -legally adopted by the municipal council led by Mayor Mongui himself- did not prevent him from disregarding the council deliberation about the utilization of the timber revenues. The key for success, the evidence presented in the study would suggest, is enforcing the already existing institutional framework, that is the current rules though they may be imperfect (see below). That is “structures -however defined- do matter” (Peters 2008, 5).

### **9.2.2 Technical assistance and the capacity argument: the CTFC as the answer?**

Some proponents of council forestry in the country, who are aware of the issues described herein in the Dimako Council, have argued that the Dimako Council trajectory should not be construed

---

<sup>241</sup> The *Arrêté* 0520 was an update of the 1998 *Arrêté* 0122 which prescribed the use of RFA as well as community forests’ revenues. Previously, this administrative order had not included council forests.

as representative of the council forestry experience in the country. Furthermore, they have argued that the Dimako experience preceded the launch of the PAF2C which, through the CTFC, is providing technical as well as financial assistance for local councils to help ensure the success of the forest management decentralization. For these observers, the CTFC was the missing link and, it is said that, since the launch of the PAF2C local mayors working with the CTFC have shown a commitment and a willingness to act to improve forest management in the country as well as utilize the forest revenues for local development.

One example among many cited is the case of the Mayor of Doumé Council -about fifteen minutes from Dimako- who has been pointed out as one of the most committed mayors for sustainable forest management and local development (see also subsection 8.2.1.1). Indeed, it has been noted for instance that although Doumé is still in the process of gazetting and acquiring its council forest, the mayor has already demonstrated its dedication by reforesting old fallows in the area reserved for the future council forest. As one council forest proponent once declared, “the council forests that are being created with the support of the CTFC will be exemplary forests”, supposedly because the other local mayors do not want to repeat the Dimako experience of alleged ‘bad’ forest management. In other words, the issue according to that last observer, and other proponents of council forestry, was the absence of technical assistance in managing the council forest which doomed the experiment.

Again, as with the absence of administrative and legal provisions to direct the use of the forest revenues, the assessment that technical assistance is the issue is missing the point. To be sure, the issue is not simply one of lack of capacity, for one thing that forest policy has accomplished in Cameroon is to bring flexibility to the sector. By that it is meant that following the 1990s reforms, many organizations are now involved in forestry and one can find former

forest administration officials now working in various other capacities, such as in private commercial firms, NGOs, development projects as well as numerous Cameroonian nationals and expatriates working in the sector. Hence, technical assistance is available if one seeks it. As documented in this study, the problem in Dimako was not its absence; rather, the evidence suggests a deliberate and conscious attempt by the mayor to evade forest rules and regulations as well as use the money for everything but local development.

Certainly, the caveat -about the commitment of some local mayors currently involved with the CTFC as well as the role of the CTFC- advanced by these local proponents of council forestry should be taken seriously. However, as the researcher got reminded when visiting the now defunct site of the *Forêts et Terroirs* project -with all the project documents littering the floor- the extant evidence shows that Mayor Mongui was once a committed party to the effort to create a council forest in Dimako; a party too eager for local villagers as pointed out in Chapter 5.0. One has to remember that it took about a dozen years between the launch of API-Dimako in 1992 and the official start of timber harvesting in the FCD in 2004. All over that period the Mayor of Dimako appeared committed to seeing the dream of the council forest happening as well as benefited from the assistance of the two French-funded projects. But, the study showed where all this apparently led to.

Furthermore, when the researcher raised the issue of project documents littering the floor in Dimako, one of those proponents conceded that the mayor had already gotten the resource -the forest-, so why would he need to preserve the project documents? In other words, the project and its documents were a conduit to the resource, not the resource itself. Therefore, the documents were no longer needed in spite of their value for forest management. Similarly, what prevents the so-called 'committed' mayors of today, even with the CTFC support, from repeating the

experience of Dimako? Nothing, the study results would suggest. Like the Mayor of Dimako, local mayors, maybe not all, have clearly seen, or shall see, the value of having a council forest, and more importantly being at the head of one. They have seen how one of their fellow ACFCAM members has been able to accumulate financial and political power, and project himself in places where he might not have been, absent the forest resources and the forest management decentralization. Hence, in the same way as API-Dimako and *Forêts et Terroirs* were conduit to the forest resources, so the risk exists that the PAF2C and the CTFC shall become too.

The situation is compounded by the fact that the CTFC is at the service of mayors, not the other way around. As CTFC officials like to remind outside observers, they are not there to substitute for mayors and councils but to technically assist them. In other words, they cannot force mayors into abiding by the forest laws as well as using the forest resources for local development. Rather, what the CTFC can do is to *encourage* and *persuade* mayors that it is in their long term interest to engage in sustainable forestry as well as use the funds as originally intended. However, for local politicians who seek to build and reinforce their own power, the results of the Dimako case suggest, the CTFC shall be powerless unless the overall structure of incentives for local mayors is changed.<sup>242</sup>

To conclude, the study does believe that one cannot overnight transfer powers and responsibilities over a portion of the forest and expects that a local council abides by SFM principles. It is simply unrealistic. Providing technical assistance shall, without a doubt, help

---

<sup>242</sup> To be fair to proponents of council forestry, it is true that the FCD as well as the other three council forests -Moloundou, Gari Gombo and Yokadouma- got their start before the PAF2C was launched. Therefore, the program cannot be faulted for their shortcomings. Nevertheless, the program, through the CTFC, has sought to assist the four council forests in existence to redress their problems but, as can be seen by the case of Dimako, it does not appear to have achieved that aim yet. Because of the fact that the CTFC has been involved in providing technical assistance as well as attempting to improve council forest management in the four preexisting forests, de facto the CTFC 'owns' them.

alleviate some of the concerns surrounding the management of council forests. Yet, in the absence of a clear commitment and strong accountability mechanisms to enforce the forest laws, and laws regarding the management of public funds -that is the overall structure of incentives needs to be adapted to constrain behaviors- mayors shall be free to run council forests unimpeded as in the case of Dimako. The evidence already exists for this conclusion as seen in the 2009 MINFOF-GTZ-CTFC report widely referred to throughout this study (see Om Bilong et al. 2009).

### **9.2.3 Downward or upward accountability?**

The last argument to be reviewed here regards the downward accountability dimension as being critical for the success of decentralized experiments. To recall, accountability is defined as “the exercise of counterpower to balance arbitrary action. It is manifested in the ability to sanction. The accountability relation is established through an ensemble of sanctions. Accountability is constituted by the set of mechanisms that, in theory, ensure that policy outcomes are as consistent with local needs, aspirations, and the best public interest as policy makers can make them” (Ribot 2004, 18).<sup>243</sup> More importantly, *downward accountability* “refers to situations where local bodies can be held to account by the populace through an ensemble of positive or negative sanctions” (Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010, 36). By contrast, *upward accountability* refers to a situation where local authorities are more answerable to central authorities than to the local populations.

---

<sup>243</sup> Accountability mechanisms include elections; public meetings; public reporting requirements; recall; protest; etc (see Ribot 2004).

As pointed out in the first two chapters of the study, for the ‘democratic’ decentralization school, downward accountability and representation is the key to ensuring that the objectives of decentralization are met. On the other hand, in Dimako Council, the study evidence showed that there was no such downward accountability mechanism at the local level. In fact, it could be argued that there was simply no accountability, downward or upward, insofar as the mayor appeared free to harvest the council forest in ‘unsustainable’ ways as well as reportedly misappropriate as well as benefit from the forest revenues without being troubled by local and outside observers. Surely the mayor seems to have benefited from the complicity of some central actors to the extent that the central state did not play its monitoring and auditing role, but it is difficult to argue that in his quest for national prominence, the mayor was answerable to any central authorities. Rather, the evidence suggests that he skillfully utilized the patronage of important personalities to achieve his means, which is altogether a completely different proposal.

Does this mean that downward accountability does no matter in achieving the official goals of decentralization? Not necessarily. The study shall argue that it certainly matters, but less than theorists would like to believe. To illustrate, in Cameroon, the current local electoral system of party list and no independent candidacy as well as the ‘historical’ status of local councils and mayors as extensions of the central state (see Guimdo 1998), though evolving, has meant that in practice the entity holding leverage on local mayors still remains the central state, primarily through the supervisory ministry of territorial administration (MINATD). That is why, for instance, even if the forest administration could effectively monitor the implementation of the forest management plan in council forests, it would still remain powerless in enforcing the legal provisions regarding the utilization of timber revenues. It is in this way that one has to understand, aside from the forest administration’s own shortcomings, not only the plea of some

of the ministry officials for the involvement of MINATD (see Om Bilong et al. 2009, 33), but also the issuing of the abovementioned 2010 *Arrêté* 0520 involving the three ministries of finances, forests, and territorial administration.

Specifically about the issue of the local electoral system, the previous chapter showed that in the current system the chance of reaching downward accountability is almost nonexistent because of the fact that the elections appear already subverted from the beginning. That is why, in Dimako Council local villagers believe that because of the power differential between them and the mayor, it is not possible for change to ‘come from below’. In fact, in some cases they have emphasized that ‘change has to come from above’. What they mean by ‘change from above’ is simply for the central state to intervene and investigate the actions of the mayor and his so-called development achievements, that is to make him account for his actions.

In truth, villagers believe that if the central state was involved from the start in the forest management decentralization, for instance monitoring, supervising and constantly auditing the direction of funds, the current situation in Dimako could have been averted. The villagers’ rationale for the intervention of the central state is simple. First of all, since the central state is the one that transferred powers and responsibilities to the council and helped create the council forest, it is appropriate that it be the one who monitors and audits the mayor and make him account for the use of forest revenues. Second, villagers believe that insofar as their numerous calls for reform to the mayor went unheeded, the only entity which legally can apply some pressure remains the central state primarily through MINATD. But as the dissertation has illustrated, MINATD was clearly invisible in decentralized forest management, having not appeared to recognize its critical role.



The idea of the central state, through MINATD, as the guarantor of local accountability would seem far-fetched given the history of domination of the African centralized state (see Wunsch and Olowu 1990). After all, one of the primary rationales for decentralizing is because of the so-called ‘failures’ of the central state in the first place. In the same way, it has been noted elsewhere that through their purported alliance with local actors central state actors, notably MINATD officials (governors, prefects, sub-prefects), have been complicit in subverting the goals of the forest management decentralization (see for instance Oyono 2004c), so presumably that would disqualify them for playing a positive role in the future. Thus, (re)involving the central state seems in itself at first counterintuitive given its past, and also, current shortcomings.

Those, the study shall argue, are fair questions. However, a clear distinction has to be made between the policy prescriptions that are inferred from the results of the field investigation from the traditional central state dominance of localities. This matter is given more urgency because of the tradition of French centralization that Cameroon inherited. In French, the word which in practice has come to determine the over-dominance of the central state over local councils is known as *tutelle*. In Cameroon, it is against this *tutelle* that local councils, mayors and independent observers have been at war mostly. In spite of the new decentralization laws, some observers have noted that although the *tutelle* mechanism has moved from *a priori* to a *posteriori* scheme, it still remains that local councils are, according to these observers, unfairly subjected to supervision of the central state through unaccountable local deconcentrated authorities such as prefects and governors (see Soh 2004 for instance).

Nevertheless, what the study is arguing is not a return to that kind of overbearing *tutelle*, but rather to a mechanism combining coercion and monitoring to ensure that council forestry goals are not diverted from their original goals. This prescription is based on the realization that

left alone it would prove difficult for council forestry to reach its objectives because, as the Dimako example indicates, it is easy for these goals to be diverted from their original intent. The thought of a powerful and ‘permanent’ mayor at the head of a strong executive in contrast to part-time municipal councilors and local villagers dispersed throughout the council is enough to warrant this caveat against leaving local councils to run their affairs alone as the current decentralization theory advocates. This is especially critical since we are talking of forest management which involves significant revenues as well as requires important technical skills.

Hence, the fact that the study has argued here that accountability mechanisms to the central state appear to be important for council forestry in reaching its goals should not be construed as an endorsement of the *tutelle* mechanism that has been denounced for a while in Cameroon, and that many local actors have sought to alter. On the other hand, council forestry is a different type of forest management. Certainly, politicians in Cameroon have been in the past holders of forest titles. However, council forestry is a different kind of forest title; one where mayors and councils are not the temporary holders, but the forest has been permanently granted to them.

It is fair to say that council forestry has rendered forest policy more complicated in Cameroon. That is why, so far, the answers to this new type of forestry have yet to be found. Where before the relationship was traditionally between forest officials and timber harvesting firms, now on top of community forestry and other participatory schemes, forest officials have had to deal with an increasing number of elected politicians, some with powerful allies, but all potentially having at their disposal forest resources that can be used, as apparently in the case of Dimako, to increase their power and project themselves into national circles where previously some might have been absent. How to deal with elected officials without antagonizing them is

the current dilemma facing council forestry proponents. It is because of that predicament that the guarantor idea is based on the recognition that, in the absence of alternate local centers of power, outside powers are needed to help local villagers not only counterbalance a dominant and unaccountable local elected official, but also because in Cameroon MINATD possessed the formal powers as well as responsibilities over local councils. Hence, it needs to be part of the ‘solution’, if solution there is.

That having been said, the study does not wish to convey the opinion that only central accountability matters in contrast to ‘democratic’ decentralization scholars who have argued that the critical factor for decentralized forest management achieving its goals is downward accountability. But what the Dimako evidence makes clear is that in the current local political configuration where the mayor sits at the head of a strong executive assisted by part-time councilors all elected on a party-list, local villagers have all but a slim chance of their concerns being heard. Downward accountability is important; but, it has been largely irrelevant in Dimako Council and can, in truth, be contrary to the objectives of the decentralization program. To illustrate, the study showed that when periods of downward accountability were present, that is when the Mayor of Dimako’s acts were congruent with some of the wishes of the local populations about the utilization of forest revenues, it was when the mayor reportedly utilized the money for personal in-cash handouts to local villagers.

Those acts which the previous chapter argued had a political payoff, it could be argued, ran contrary to the long-term objectives of the forest management decentralization of ameliorating local livelihoods through the provision of essential services since the money is individually distributed instead of being for instance invested in infrastructure development which could benefit the whole town. In the same way, because the mayor and his associates have

sometimes argued that the issue with the lack of development achievements was also due to the fluctuation of timber revenues (see Table 5.2), some local villagers have proposed that more trees be cut to solve the issue.<sup>244</sup> Hence, in theory if the issue was the insufficiency of timber revenues not the alleged capture of the timber revenues, and the Mayor of Dimako was downwardly accountable he would have responded to the wishes of his electors by cutting more trees. Presumably, this is not what theorists are advocating when they are talking about downward accountability as the key for success. That is to say, the presence of downward accountability might not *always* be congruent with the goals of decentralized natural resources governance experiments.

In the end, it seems that among all critical elements needed to ensure that council forestry reaches its goals of sustainable forest management as well as local development, accountability mechanisms are central to it. First, accountability towards the central state combined with a dose of coercion to compel local actors, especially the main one the mayor, to behave in ways congruent with the objectives of the forest management decentralization. That is to use the words of Ribot et al. among the set of incentives directed at altering local politicians' behaviors, *upwards accountability* appeared to be the missing element for the success of the forest management decentralization in the Dimako Council.

The second dimension of accountability pertains to the forest dimension; to the fact that technical assistance is needed, as mentioned before, in order to ensure that management plans do not simply stay on the council shelves but are implemented. Both the technical assistance and the

---

<sup>244</sup> Faced with contrary evidence, on top the education argument reviewed in the preceding chapter, the mayor and his associates have advanced another reason, the low production timber figures resulting in the downward fluctuation of timber revenues—really the decline- of the FCD revenues, for the lack of development achievements or the incompletion of certain projects. As the argument goes, following the revision of the 2001 management plan, FCD revenues have decreased primarily because of the reduction of the annual harvesting area from about 3,000 on average to less than 500 hectares. Hence, the situation has resulted in less revenues being available for local development.

upwards accountability dimensions are key for the future of council forestry in Cameroon. That is to say that MINATD and MINFOF –the current forest administration- cooperation as well as coordination in council forestry appear critical for achieving the goals of the program.<sup>245</sup> Insofar as MINATD constitutes the key pressure point on mayors and that MINFOF reportedly possesses the technical *savoir faire* to help councils harvest timber sustainably as well as implement the management plan provisions, both ministries working together shall help ensure that local councils do not repeat the Dimako experience, or at least mitigate some of the most obvious reported abuses.

On the other hand, the above scenario supposes that the two ministries, especially MINFOF, resolve their own internal issues, which is not an easy task, in particular given the national context where political elites have been for the most part unaccountable and trying to cling to power by all means, but democratic ones (see Fonchingong 2004; Gros 1995; Takougang 2003) as well as oblivious of the respect of the ‘rules of the game’. Hubert Kamgang, a presidential candidate in the 2004 Cameroon election, summed up the predicament facing the country in the following words: “when Paul Biya was asked the question about the siphoning of public funds, he replied “where is the evidence?”. *People have realized that they can do all they want as long as they do not get caught*” (Boyomo 2009, 7, emphasis added). Hence, the incentive to bypass or disregard the current (legal) rules is enhanced insofar as sanctions are rarely applied, if at all.

The issue is rendered especially difficult not only because local mayors have seen their powers reinforced not only following the 2004 decentralization laws (see ROC 2004a; 2004b),

---

<sup>245</sup> The CTFC could also impact the technical assistance side though the study is less confident on the utilization of forest revenues side in the absence of the central state intervention. Note that the ‘guarantor’ idea assumes no large scale reform of the current local electoral configuration which, if changed, could alter the accountability mechanism by giving more leverage to local people vis-à-vis their local elected officials.

but also, and perhaps the most important point, because most of the local mayors are from the CPDM ruling party, and thus applying the pressure on local mayors, even from MINATD, to behave according to standards that the national politicians do not even obey themselves would prove thorny a predicament. However, in the absence of the resolution of these internal and national issues first, it is more likely that the Dimako experience shall get replicated elsewhere, with the disastrous consequences both for SFM and local development as documented here.

#### **9.2.4 A revised theory of decentralization?**

The point about the importance of resolving the internal and national issues first seems to stand as a critical element for the future of the decentralization theory that the Dimako case study suggests. Indeed, in the end, the larger question that the Dimako experiment raises pertains to the issue of the relevance of the wider political system and whether it is simply possible to seek to bypass the central scale and reform the local scale without altering the wider political economy, in particular in states such as Cameroon where the central level is not known for exemplary behavior. As Topa et al. argue “can reform in one sector change the wider trajectory of society in any meaningful way? Or will the forest sector remain at variance with the rest of the country until it succumbs to the inertia that prevails elsewhere?” (2009, 128).

This issue is critical because many scholars and policymakers have regarded the forestry reforms as a way out of the crisis of governance in African states (see for instance Brown et al. 2002; Brown, Vabi, and Nkwinkwa 2003). It is thought that by reforming sector by sector -in this case the forestry sector- it shall be possible to build on those reforms and shake up the foundations of the so-called African patrimonial state. However, the Dimako case makes clear that local level or sectoral reforms cannot be completely dissociated from the wider political

economy, for those reforms takes place within the larger (political) system which enables or constrains behaviors. Failure to do so only seems to lead to a further entrenchment of the governance model –the so-called patrimonial state- that the reforms sought to dismantle in the first place. Time has finally come to recognize, after the 1990s local and participatory shift, that the local scale is not necessarily ‘better’ than the central one, and that individuals interact in a wider arena where the rules of the game, the incentives constrain or enable behaviors. That is to say that there are no inherent reasons why local elected officials would not behave like the ones at the central level when given the same opportunity to accumulate financial and political power. Local, regional or national loci of power are capable of repeating the mistakes of centralized forest management as the Dimako example illustrates.

Thus, the issue of the decentralization of natural resources management inevitably leads us back again to the question of the reform of the wider political system- the structure- in which local elected officials operate, an issue which, after the early 1990s mixed attempts at democratic reforms, has been, for the most part, eluded in recent years. As Philip Woodhouse once put it “reform at the local level cannot therefore be a substitute for a progressive political agenda at the centre” (1997, 546). Indeed, the lesson from the Dimako case seems to be that an only focus at democratizing the local level without altering the wider political economy is more likely to lead to failures of decentralizing experiments, especially of schemes which resemble the Cameroonian model of council forestry (for a contrary view on the role of local democracy on national democracy, see Fox 1994).

It would be wrong, the study argues, to see the Dimako experiment as another case of a ‘good’ theory, but just another failure at implementation. Ultimately the story of the failure of the Dimako experiment in achieving its officially stated objectives is not so much a story about

an individual actor reportedly ‘gaming’ the system, but more generally it is an indictment of all the participatory and decentralization/local schemes assumptions which provided such a platform in the first place by imbuing the local scale with inherent ‘good’ governance properties- ‘the small is beautiful’ paradigm. In so doing, these participatory schemes supported by various decentralization theorists bypass the conflict and asymmetry of power that exist in local polities as in other scales of governance, further contributing to the degradation of the local state of affairs.

As mentioned in the introduction, the decentralization theory, and in particular the current emphasis on decentralizing the management of natural resources, is as much a reaction to the so-called failures of the previous centralized approaches to natural resources management than an inherent belief –sometimes empirically supported but not all the times- on the superiority and preferability of local solutions over national ones, a view that has been lately ‘fashionable’ in development circles. On the other hand, what the Dimako case suggests for the decentralization theory and natural resources management is that scholars and practitioners might have to rethink their deeply held assumptions. Too many cases of mixed successes and outright failures seem to indicate that it is time to revamp the theory and set aside indiscriminate assumptions about the local scale to reflect a more ‘realist’ model.

Three immediate assumptions, some already critiqued by other scholars, need to be discarded. The first apparent, discussed at length in the introduction, is to stop viewing decentralization as free of conflict, power as well as power asymmetries; to throw away the harmonious view of the local and community. The time has come to problematize those assumptions and look at decentralization as an inherently political process subject to the same vagaries of the political system with winners and losers as in any other process. The second



assumption, related to the one above, which needs to be thrust aside is the one that holds that the local scale is immune to the governance issues that have plagued the central level and which considers it as intrinsically the ‘right’ scale of governance (see Purcell and Brown 2005).

The issue as the introduction argued is not about the scale of action, for the evidence in Cameroon since 1994 and the world above has shown that the same predicaments noted before with the centralized approaches have been repeated at the local levels. Simply thinking that by transferring powers and resources over forests to local actors, in this case elected officials, shall improve forest management as well as conduce to the proper utilization of forest resources for local development without taking into account their own interests as well as their operating environment has proven naive an idea. Also in need of discard as well as deep rethinking is the belief that scholars and practitioners hold that the transfer of powers, resources and responsibilities to local levels *necessarily* leads to more efficient, flexible, equitable, accountable and participatory local governance outcomes (see Andersson, Gibson, and Lehoucq 2004, 421).

The third and final assumption which the Dimako case study suggests needs to be revised concerns the role of central states in supporting and enabling decentralization efforts. As Chapter 2.0 and the preceding section demonstrated, most of the extant literature takes for granted the negative role of the central state in furthering the aims of decentralized experiments. That assumption is based on the fact that for a number of years central states have in effect tried to retain most of the powers they were supposed to have transferred to local entities. On the other hand, as the Dimako case study indicates, the presence, or lack thereof, of the central state can be a decisive factor for or against the success of these programs. Indeed, more than three decades ago, David Leonard, in his 1977 study of agricultural administration in Kenya, argued that “in a decentralized administrative structure the center needs to be every bit as strong as in a

centralized one, but the reorientation required is one of technical service rather than of hierarchical control” (quoted in Rondinelli 1981, 144). In other words, central states can sometimes play a positive role, particularly when they exhibit themselves ‘good’ governance characteristics.

To conclude, the implication of the Dimako case study for the decentralization theory at-large is that local elected officials are embedded within the wider system and they are in turn influenced by it. This means that decentralized experiments happen in a wider political arena and that the rules of the game which are in effect nationally also enable local actors to take advantage of the process, especially when they appear to be selectively enforced, if not at all. By not recognizing this critical factor, it seems the current decentralization theory has fallen victim to this trap and only served to reinforce the current inequalities as well as entrenched one detrimental form of governance. In the end, rather than focusing on opposing the central and the local scales, both need to be thought as mutually influencing each other, with the central potentially having a decisive impact through its role of enacting, enforcing or not the rules of the game which allow or not the reproduction of some forms of governance.

### **9.3 LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This section briefly indicates the limitations of the study as well as suggests further areas of research for the future of decentralized experiments in natural resources management.

### **9.3.1 Limitations of the study**

To begin with, though the study has argued that the pattern described in Dimako Council can be found in other council forests in Cameroon, thus its findings are potentially relevant for the study of forest management decentralization, it remains the case that the instance of the Dimako Council Forest only represents one instance among many others in the world, though five currently in the case of Cameroon. Thus, more needs to be done to examine other cases to determine whether the pattern described here holds. At another level, the absence of satellite forest cover data could have greatly enhanced the findings of the study, for they could have shown whether the alleged pattern of illegal logging and unsustainable harvest described in the study is widespread as argued here.

Second, the main assumption of the study of self-interested elected officials only motivated by the pursuit of power can be disputed in light of the conventional critique of rational choice theories. That having been said, the study did not argue that elected officials are only motivated by the pursuit of power; it also argued that the overall structure of incentives will determine their behavior if power is their sole motivation. In other words, if local politicians seek to acquire power at the expense of SFM and local development, in theory if the institutional structure (administrative and legal sanctions from the central government, electoral sanctions from the local population, etc.) works, they shall adjust their behavior. It is the absence of those institutions, especially the central state, which made the Dimako case fail, the study would suggest.

Finally, the dissertation was only interested in studying the implementation of the management plan, not its quality, though in passing it briefly critiqued the changes which occurred in the Dimako case which, it was argued, weakened the overall quality of the

management plan and further compounded the issue. This is an important point, for it has been generally observed that the quality of management plans in the country is problematic, with the ministry in charge of forests approving management plans that do not even meet its own criteria. That the technical quality of officially approved forest management plans in Cameroon is arguable was beyond the scope of this study. Indeed, this study focused on the implementation of the officially approved management plans for the Dimako Council Forest. Although the quality might have been problematic, as suggested in Chapter 6.0, it had nonetheless to be implemented as is. Additionally, since management plans are legally revisable every five years, it would have been possible to ameliorate them. That is not what happened in Dimako Council. Still, that is an issue which affects the study insofar as the quality of the management plan might have affected the practice in the Dimako Council Forest, though the study harbors some doubts in light of the evidence presented here. It nonetheless constitutes a limitation of the study.

### **9.3.2 Implications and suggestions for further research and policy**

The main implication of this research is that scholars and policymakers overlook the role and impact of elected officials in the failure or success of forest management decentralization at their own peril. In effect, both have to recognize that decentralization is about power and forest -and more generally natural resources- is power. Consequently, the local elected officials' interests cannot be taken at face value; rather, they have to be problematized. Similarly, attention needs to be paid to the overall structure of incentives which constrains or enables local elected officials to pursue their personal objectives at the expense of the broader goals of decentralization programs. Also in need of problematization are the major theoretical assumptions of the current theory of decentralization of natural resources management.

Finally, from the preceding three main suggestions for further studies arise. The first obvious one is for scholars to examine whether the overall pattern described here exists elsewhere. The second one, and perhaps more interesting for scholars interested in Cameroon, is to determine whether the experience of the council forests which have been created with the assistance of the PAF2C -and which supposedly benefit from the technical assistance and financial guidance of the CTFC as well as are in theory currently more scrutinized- shall be different. The last one regards a comparison of community and council forests to ascertain which model of decentralized natural resource management holds greater promise, if any, for the future of both natural resources and local development in the world.

## EPILOGUE

On 15 February 2011, a month before his appointment, Mayor Mongui and the entire Dimako Council community greeted the German Ambassador in Cameroon Reinhardt Buchholz and the Ministry of Forests Elvis Ngollé Ngollé for a visit of the Council Nursery. After touring it, both officials made a surprising announcement. In fact, they “solemnly declared Dimako as the *‘Premiere école de gestion de la forêt communale au Cameroun’*, [that is the First school of council forest management in Cameroon] (...) [and] afterwards invited all the forest councils of Cameroon to visit the town to learn so that future generations may have forests to manage” (Elvido 2011a). Were both officials jesting when extolling the virtues of the Dimako experiment, or were they really unaware of the situation in Dimako? How could it have been the case when in the council forestry milieu it is an open secret that council forests, and in particular Dimako’s, have turned out as the private properties of local mayors as the 2009 MINFOF-GTZ-CTFC report widely quoted throughout this study made clear.

The answer is simple. Everyone was playing its role. For the German Ambassador, representing the donor, this served as a justification for their continued support, and their [naïve] hope, as one European technical assistant once put it, that the seeds for ‘better’ governance in the forestry sector over the long run would be planted through continued engagement. For the Cameroonian authorities, since the Germans and the donors were ‘insisting’ that the country managed its forests ‘sustainably’, when in the first place they had been reluctant, they gave them

an *example* of ‘sustainable forest management’. Finally, for the Mayor of Dimako, the apparent sole beneficiary of the project, it was just another occasion to sell and reinforce his *Big Man* image, conferring with the German Ambassador as well as the Minister in charge of forests. Missing in the picture were the conditions of most of the local villagers and the entire Dimako Council as well as the council forest.

As the evidence above described, the only beneficiary of the entire forest management decentralization seems to be Mayor Mongui. After allegedly harvesting the council forest outside of the forest administration rules and regulations as well as capturing the council forest revenues, he was able to extend his power at the national level where today instead of council forest revenues averaging around 176 million CFAF (352, 000 USD) a year, he would potentially have at his disposal 850 million CFAF (1.7 million USD) of annual budget to manage (see Mbodiam 2011b). Based on the evidence presented above, it can be suggested that the *Big Man* Mongui shall utilize that position to further strengthen his status, especially in light of the fact that the Chamber itself has been known more for being a sinecure, that is a cash cow and a place to reward friends and allies (see Mbodiam 2011a; Ntiga 2011).

That having been said, by wanting to extend his power at the national level, thus becoming a ‘true’ *Big Man*, the Mayor of Dimako might have exposed himself to more scrutiny and political competition, hence more trouble, which could potentially derail the enjoyment and continuation of his status. The signs are already visible. Indeed, a recent newspaper article revealed that less than three months after his CAPEF appointment, the mayor had been a ‘victim’ of a blackmail attempt over the alleged misappropriation of a check of 721 million CFAF (1.44 million USD) of RFA revenues, incidentally not the council forest (see Elvido and Ngouem 2011). Surprisingly enough, the mayor paid the informant -who was also the reporter attempting

to recoup the information with the mayor- in order to obtain possession of the copy of the check. It is only when the attempt failed, presumably because the reporter did not apparently possess the copy, that the mayor contacted the police.

What this episode illustrates is the danger that comes with national exposure, especially in a country where it is widely known that the President does not hesitate to put in jail embarrassing political actors, whether friends or foes. A parallel exists with the Mayor of Yokadouma Council -incidentally ACFCAM honorary chairman before his demise- Paulin Abono Moampamb, later a junior government minister for Public Works who was arrested under suspicions of mishandling the council RFA revenues and lately found guilty (see Mahop 2011; Ntiga 2008). For the moment, thanks to the forest management decentralization, the mayor is enjoying his hardly acquired *Big Man* status. For how long remains the question.



## APPENDIX A

### GLOSSARY OF FOREST TERMS

The following forest terms used throughout this study have been reproduced as well as adapted from the following sources: (FAO 2003, 118-124; ITTO 2005, 35-36; Lele et al. 2000, xxvii-xxx); U. S. Department of Labor).

**ANNUAL ALLOWABLE CUT:** Volume of timber that can be harvested from a given forest area in a year.

**ANNUAL COUPE:** Precise extent of forest to be harvested during a year. Depending on the underlying criterion (surface or volume to be harvested), we distinguish between surface area coupe, volume coupe and surface area coupe with regulated volume.

**BUTTRESS:** Ridge of wood above the ground between the main lateral roots and the base of the tree stem.

**CONSERVATION:** Rational and prudent management of natural resources to achieve the greatest benefit, while maintaining the potential of the resource to meet future needs.

**CONVENTIONAL LOGGING:** Conventional logging has come to be viewed as less concerned with forest regeneration through management—frequently lacking government control—and unsustainable, that is, not focused on long-term timber supplies.

**COUPE:** Specific area of forest to be harvested during a particular period of time (see AAC). In forest harvesting, this generic term is also used to designate all felling and cross-cutting operations.

**EXTRACTION (SKIDDING):** Operation whereby trunks or logs are taken from felling site to landing by winching and skidding by wheeled tractors.

**FELLING OR CUTTING CYCLE:** Under selection (polycyclic) harvesting systems, the number of years envisaged between two successive harvests on a specific tract of forest (compare with Rotation).

**FELL (FALL):** To cut down trees

**FELLER (FALLER):** An employee who fells trees

**FOREST:** Ecosystem with a minimum of 10 percent crown cover of trees and/or bamboo, generally associated with wild flora and fauna and natural soil conditions and not subject to agricultural practices. Forests are in two categories: *Natural forests*: forests composed of tree species known to be indigenous to the area. • *Plantation forests*: established artificially by afforestation on lands previously non-forested within living memory, or established artificially by reforestation on land that was forested, by replacement of the indigenous species with a new and essentially different species or genetic variety.

**FOREST [TIMBER] HARVESTING:** All tree felling, extraction and conversion operations as far as handling (stacking, grading and storage) of logs at the landing.

**FOREST MANAGEMENT UNIT:** A clearly defined forest area, managed to a set of explicit objectives according to a long-term management plan

**FRONT END LOADER:** A mobile machine mounted on a wheeled or tracked chassis, equipped with a grapple, tuck, bucket, or fork-lift device, and employed in the loading, unloading, stacking, or sorting of logs or materials.

**HARVEST INVENTORY:** Survey operation whereby trees to be felled are counted and marked, and their species, diameter, status and quality recorded, together with future crop and heritage trees that need to be protected.

**LANDING:** Any place where logs are laid after being yarded and before transport to the worksite

**LOGGING:** The process of harvesting timber from a forest, logging has come to be used in the context of unsustainable cutting, which is cutting that is not focused on long-term timber supplies.

**MINIMUM HARVESTING DIAMETERS:** Diameter below which harvesting of a given species is not allowed. MHDs can differ from one country to another

**MINIMUM MANAGEMENT DIAMETERS:** Diameters from which the management plan envisages the extraction of targeted tree species felling cycle. MMDs are determined on the basis of the forest structure, diameter distribution, increment and mortality of main species, and the rotation regime.

**REDUCED IMPACT FOREST HARVESTING (OR RIL REDUCED-IMPACT LOGGING):** Practices aimed at optimizing operational efficiency and minimizing negative impact on environment, workforce and local population [Well-managed logging, usually supervised].

**REFORESTATION:** The replacement or establishment of a tree crop on forestland.

**ROTATION:** Planned number of years between the formation or regeneration of a crop of trees and the time when the same crop is felled for final harvest. The age at the time of harvest is referred to as the exploitable age when this coincides with the rotation, and as the harvesting age when not.

**SHIFTING CULTIVATION:** Farming systems in which land is periodically cleared, farmed, and then returned to fallow; synonymous with slash-and-burn or swidden agriculture.

**SKIMMING:** Metaphorical expression designating the hyperselective harvesting of a handful of species. Skimming can jeopardize the sustainability of polycyclic systems. By utilizing a smaller volume of timber than planned, it creates a constant need for new areas, and, as market demands for new species rise, it tempts foresters to repeatedly re-enter already harvested blocks without observing the felling cycle.

**TIMBER:** Wood that can be converted into industrial forest products. This term is sometimes synonymous with industrial roundwood and may also designate certain large pieces of sawnwood (construction timber).

**TROPICAL MOIST FORESTS:** Natural forests with varying degree of disturbance and crown cover, located between the Tropic of Cancer in the North and the Tropic of Capricorn in the South, comprising numerous species with permanent foliage and dominated by a relatively high ambient humidity.

**VOLUME:** The estimated or measured quantity of wood in a log, trunk, bole or tree, usually expressed in cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>).

## APPENDIX B

### METHODS

#### B.1 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS AND INDICATORS

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Operational definition</i>	<i>Primary indicators</i>
Forest Management Plan (Sustainable Forest Management (SFM))	Implementation of the officially approved forest management plan provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MHD and MMD</li> <li>- logging rotation cycle</li> <li>- Reforestation</li> </ul>
Local development	Implementation of development projects agreed upon by the Municipal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potable water provision</li> <li>- Electricity</li> <li>- Construction and maintenance of roads, bridges</li> <li>- Construction works</li> <li>- Sports equipment;</li> <li>- Construction, maintenance, and supply of schools as well as health centers</li> <li>- Provision of medications</li> <li>- All other projects fulfilling community interest</li> </ul>
Personal enrichment	Alleged misappropriation of the council forest revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overestimations</li> <li>- Overbilling</li> <li>- Fabrications</li> <li>- The rental agreement</li> <li>- The FCD operating</li> </ul>

		costs
<i>Big Man</i> /Pursuit of political power	Achievement of national prominence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intimidation</li> <li>- (Patronage)</li> <li>- Cooptation and use of forest resources</li> </ul>

Note that the table does not include all indicators and is only provided as an illustration.

## B.2 DATA CODING RAW CATEGORIES

<i>Repeating Ideas</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Theoretical constructs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Eastern president of the republic</li> <li>- Divide and conquer</li> <li>- Yes-man councilors</li> <li>- He is very powerful</li> <li>- Building political power</li> <li>- Fear of losing their jobs</li> </ul>	Powerful and untouchable politician	Big man
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of transparency</li> <li>- Forêt na Mongui</li> <li>- CCG by name only</li> <li>- Revenues shortfall</li> <li>- FIAD is actually working</li> <li>- Arrears</li> </ul>	Non transparent management	Governance problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable forest management is dead</li> <li>- Collusion and passivity of deconcentrated authorities</li> <li>- Problems with logging partners</li> </ul>	Forest management is dead/forest is badly run	Bad forest governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The agreed-development projects are not completed</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Unfulfilled promises</li> <li>- Popular discontent and resentment</li> </ul>	Lack of concrete achievements	Something about absence of development projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The state has to intervene and look what is going on inside the FCD</li> <li>- Technical assistance vs. repression/crackdown</li> <li>- Good government for things to work well</li> </ul>	Outside help needed for change	Accountability and capacity building

## APPENDIX C

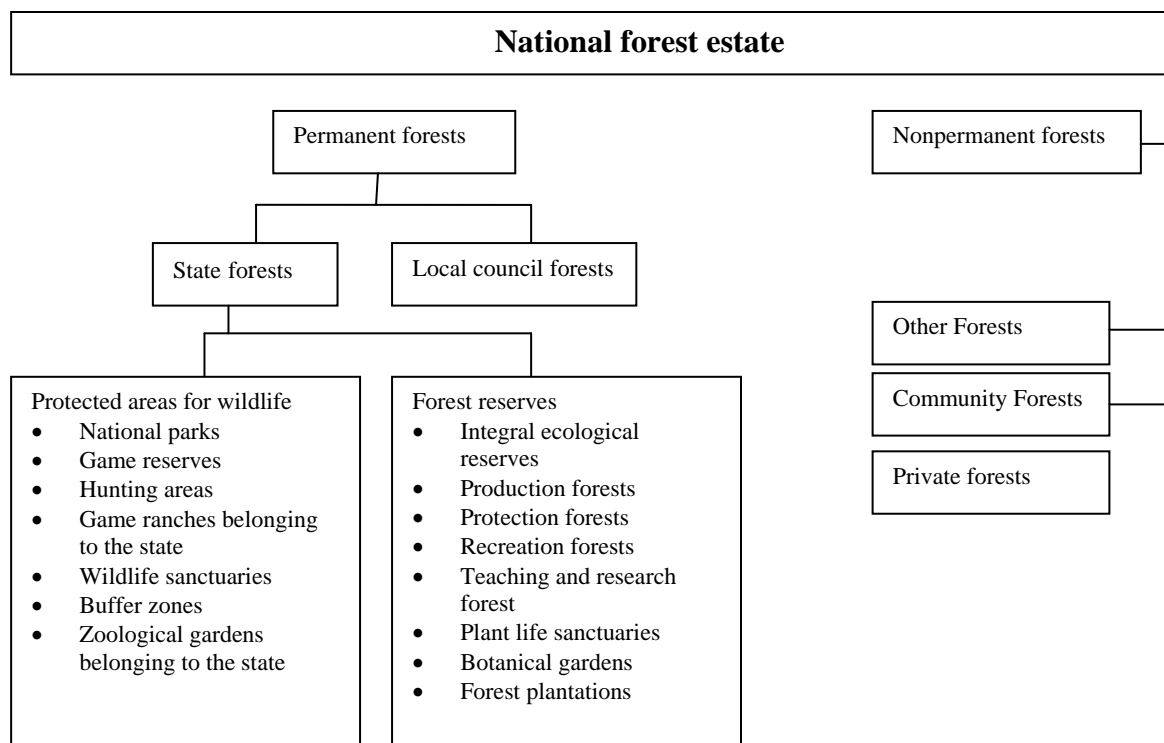
### CAMEROON'S POPULATION BY REGIONS

<i>Regions</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</i>	<i>Population (2010)</i>
Adamaoua	Ngaoundéré	63,691	1,015,622
Centre	Yaoundé	68,926	3,525,664
East (Est)	Bertoua	109,011	801,968
Far North ( <i>Extrême-Nord</i> )	Maroua	34,246	3,480,414
Littoral	Douala	20,239	2,865,795
North ( <i>Nord</i> )	Garoua	65,576	2,050,229
Northwest ( <i>Nord-Ouest</i> )	Bamenda	17,812	1,804,695
West ( <i>Ouest</i> )	Bafoussam	13,872	1,785,285
South ( <i>Sud</i> )	Ebolowa	47,110	692,142
Southwest ( <i>Sud-Ouest</i> )	Buéa	24,571	1,384,286
TOTAL INHABITANTS	19,406,100		

Source: <http://www.minatd.cm> ; and (Nyuylime 2010)

## APPENDIX D

### CAMEROON'S FOREST ESTATE SINCE 1994



Source: adapted from (Topa et al. 2009, 30)

## APPENDIX E

### COUNCIL FORESTS

#### E.1 ESTIMATED COSTS FOR THE GAZETTING PROCESS AND THE LAND

##### TITLE FOR A LOCAL COUNCIL FOREST\*

<i>Types</i>	<i>Costs</i>
Preliminary steps (collecting data about the region, maps, and so on) <sup>1</sup>	700,000-1,160,000
Information campaign for local decentralized authorities	500,000-1,500,000
Information campaign for local populations	1,000,000-2,500,000
Convening the Gazetting commission session	500,000-1,500,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL GAZETTING</b>	<b>2,700,000-6,660,000</b>
Costs associated with the land title <sup>2</sup>	189,098,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>191,798,000-195,758,000</b>

*Source:* Adapted from (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 19 and 22)

\* These costs do not include other costs such as frequent travels to the capital needed to advance the process, compensating local villagers for their field, and so on

<sup>1</sup> Not included in the official steps, but nonetheless important for administrative purposes

<sup>2</sup> At a base price of 1FCFA for a square meter (m<sup>2</sup>) for a forest of 16,000 hectares



## E.2 SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING STAGES

### STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Long term > 15 years

- formulation of the strategy of sustainable management of forest area
- global and thematic mapping at 1:200,000, 1:50 000 and/or 1:20,000
- analysis of the forest and its socio-economic environment
- quantitative and qualitative assessment of forest resources and wildlife
- management decisions:
  - determining the harvesting cycle [*rotation d'exploitation*]
  - minimum diameters for harvesting and management
  - sustainable yield and annual allowable cut

### TACTICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Medium term: 5 to 7 years

- mapping at 1:50,000, 1:20,000 and /or 1:10,000
- delimitation and demarcation of boundaries
- establishing harvesting areas: sectioning into management units and annual cutting blocks
- pre-determination of harvest activities in space and time
- establishing modalities for survey methods and harvesting (equipment and workforce)
- harvesting program: characteristics of units and blocks, strata sizes
- planning of primary road network

### OPERATIONAL PLAN

Short term: 1 year

- planning of harvesting operations at the level of the annual allowable cut
- harvesting map at 1:10,000 or 1:5,000
- complete harvest inventory
- identification and marking of trees
- layout of secondary forest roads, skid trails and landings
- training of staff, worker safety
- monitoring, control and evaluation of harvesting

Source: (adapted from FAO 2003, 15)

### E.3 GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. *Forest biophysical characteristics* (the section provides the general characteristics of the forest and the environment)
2. *Socioeconomic environment* (in this section the socioeconomic survey data are integrated into the management plan)
3. *State of the forest* (describes the forest inventory results)
4. *Proposed forest management objectives* (this section contains the division of the forest into series as well as the *environmental measures* to be taken based on the EIE. Finally, other provisions regarding fauna, research and monitoring and more importantly how forest management activities will coincide with local populations' usage rights are included here)
5. Provisions about the *length* and *revision* of the management plan (by law the management plan is in effect for 30 years revisable every five years)
6. *Economic and financial statement* (this section describes the expected costs and revenues of the proposed management scheme)

Source: (MINFOF and GTZ 2008, 25-26)

### E.4 TYPES OF COUNCIL FORESTS TAXES

Types of harvesting	RFA	Felling Tax	Sawmill Tax	Log Export Tax	Progressive Surtax
Self-management ( <i>en régie</i> )	No tax	No tax	No tax in order to encourage timber processing	Taxes paid <i>by</i> the council	Taxes paid <i>by</i> the council
Sale of Standing volume	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the local council by the harvesting firm	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the local council by the harvesting firm	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the state treasury	Taxes paid if logs exported	Taxes paid if logs exported
Private authorization to log	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the council	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the council	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the state treasury	No taxes	No taxes
Exploitation permit	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the council	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the council	Taxes paid <i>to</i> the state treasury	No taxes	No taxes

Source: Adapted from (Noiraud et al. 2007, 64)

## E.5 COUNCIL FORESTS GAZETTED AND CURRENTLY OPERATING\*

<i>Names and (Divisions)</i>	<i>Area (ha)</i>
Dimako (Haut-Nyong)	16,240
Moloundou (Boumba and Ngoko)	42,612
Gari Gombo (Boumba and Ngoko)	22,206
Yokadouma (Boumba and Ngoko)	40,000
Djoum (Dja and Lobo)	15,270
Messondo (Nyong and Kellé)	16,864
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153,192</b>

Source: (ACFCAM and CTFC 2010, 21; Om Bilong et al. 2009, 6)

\*Only Dimako, Moloundou, Gari Gombo, and Yokadouma have been in operations for more than three years. Djoum only started timber harvesting operations in 2010.

## E.6 COUNCIL FORESTS IN CAMEROON, NOVEMBER 2010

<i>Types</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Estimated Area (ha)</i>
Council Forests (FCs) gazetted and harvested under an officially approved management plan	05	125,157 <sup>1</sup>
FCs gazetted and management plans in progress	07	127,487 <sup>2</sup>
FCs waiting gazetting decree and management plans in progress	07 <sup>3</sup>	183,928 <sup>4</sup>
FCs gazetting process started	15	260,440 <sup>5</sup>
FCs created by plantation or in project of creation by plantation	26 <sup>6</sup>	NA
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>697,012<sup>7</sup></b>

Source: (Adapted from CTFC figures CTFC 2010a)

NA: not available

ha: hectares

<sup>1</sup> Dimako (16,240), Gari-Gombo (29,255), Moloundou (42,612), Yokadouma (21,780), and Djoum (15,270) Council Forests.

<sup>2</sup> Lomié (15,690), Messondo (16,864), Nanga Eboko (19,755), Dzens (25,182), Minta (32,770), Akom II (11,626), and Efoulou (5,600) Council Forests.

<sup>3</sup> Ambam Council in the South Region, near the Gabon border, is for the moment involved in the gazetting process not the management plan.

<sup>4</sup> Yoko (29,500), Ndikiniméki (23,080), Ambam (44,620), Batouri (14,152), Messaména/Mindourou (36,507), Salapoumbé (24,150), and Nguti (11,919) Council Forests.

<sup>5</sup> Angossas (22,120), Ayos (12,006), Bélabo (9,914), Doumaintang (37,966), Doumé (40,700), Ebolowa (15,270), Mbang (19,821), Mundemba (34,163), Ndélélé (10,550), Sangmélina (32,820), Yingui (25,110) Council Forests. However, the figure does not include Ndom/Gambé/Nyanon, Mvangan, Massock-Songloulou, and Makak Council Forests.

<sup>6</sup> Nguibassal, Foumban, Demdeng, Tonga, Mandjou, Meiganga, Mora, Darak, Hilé Alifa, Blangoua, Makary, Goulfey, Waza, Kolofata, Mozogo, Mogodé, Mokolo, Méri, Maroua 1<sup>er</sup>, Maroua 2<sup>e</sup>, Maroua 3<sup>e</sup>, Kalfou, Karhay, Tokombéré, Kaélé, and Lagdo Council Forests.

<sup>7</sup> Excluding council forests being created by plantation

## APPENDIX F

### DIMAKO COUNCIL VILLAGES ORGANIZATION BY SECTOR

*Savanna sector:* 4 villages Longtimbi, Baktala, Ngolambélé, and Petit-Ngolambélé

*Forest sector:* 3 villages Djandja, Kouen and Toungrelo.

*Pol sector:* 11 villages Petit Pol, Grand Pol, Tahatte, Nkolméyanga, Siméyong, Bongossi, Akano, Tonkoumbé, Ngombol, Nkolbikon, Mayos

*Dimako town:* 5 villages Kandala, Nguinda, Koumadjap, Beul, and Lossou  
And 9 quarters: Tombo, Kpwengué, Ayene, Camp Nord, Camp Hévéa, Mokolo, Source, Madagascar, and Dieu-Connaît

## APPENDIX G

### DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST PROJECT

#### G.1 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF API-DIMAKO

1. The forest massif was to be rationally exploited (harvested) according to a management plan written and implemented with the assistance of the commercial partner SFID. The exploitation (timber harvesting) was to be accompanied by silvicultural activities in order to replenish and conserve the forest.
2. Shifting agriculture (slash and burn) was to be stabilized by rural development projects (*opérations de développement rural*) building on local potentialities as well as local knowledge of local populations, autochthones and Pygmies and women.
3. Peripheral research activities were to be conducted on silviculture, harvesting and agroforestry techniques and on how to better use forestry resources.
4. The project was to help in defining the human, technical and financial resources needed to carry out the new role envisioned by the then-emerging form of forest management.

*Source:* (Esteve et al. 1993, 2)

## G.2 OVERVIEW OF SOME OF API-DIMAKO ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Forest inventories over an area of 510,000 hectares as well as the creation of a forest and cartography database over the area.
2. The creation of a new method of harvest inventory complete with map references
3. The project provided guidelines for the later forest administration forest management guidelines
4. Studies were conducted and information gathered on the damage that forest logging operations were producing as well as the ways to mitigate it through Reduced Impact Logging (RIL) techniques
5. Information was produced about local villages' tenure system and customs as well as use of forest resources for the eastern Bimba and Bandongoué villages.
6. Finally, assistance was provided for the preparation of the administrative process of creating a community forest, for instance for the Bimba village. Furthermore, the project pioneered the use of the approach of including local populations into administrative processes for FMUs boundary demarcation as well as forest management

*Source:* (Collas de Chatelperron 2000, 2; Forêts et Terroirs 1997, 5-6).

## G.3 AREAS OF INTERVENTION AND OBJECTIVES OF *FORÊTS ET TERROIRS*

**Zone 1** covering 256,000 hectares included FMU 10-046, the FCD, as well as areas to be later reserved for some villages' community forests. Priority was given here to gazetting and updating the management plan of the FCD, gazetting FMU 10-046 as well as implementing its management plan ; and finally to assisting local villagers in establishing community forests.

**Zone 2** covering 327,000 hectares was represented by four FMUs already inventoried for which API-Dimako had produced management plans proposals (FMUs 10-059, 10-060, 10-038, and 10-031). Here, technical assistance as well as training was to be provided to the target participants regarding the gazetting process and the implementation of the management plan.

**Zone 3** over 162,000 hectares involved FMUs (10-054, 10-058, and 10-057) which were being harvested though the gazetting process had yet to be completed or the management plan established. Here, the focus was on the provision of technical assistance and training to engage in the gazetting process.

*Source:* (Forêts et Terroirs 2000b, 3-5)

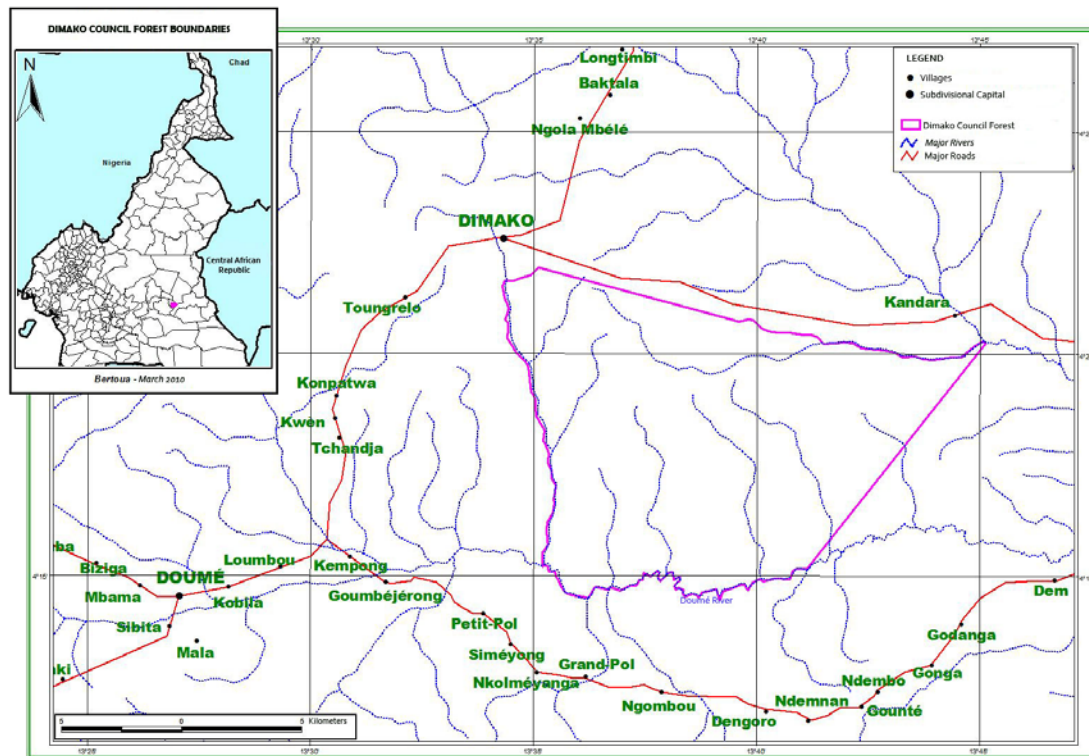
#### G.4 DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST MAJOR MILESTONES

- **April 1999:** information campaign for local deconcentrated authorities as well as local elites
- **22 June 1999:** creation of the Consultative Management Committee (CCG)
- **23-30 June 1999:** information campaign for local populations for the then-17 villages of the council/subdivision
- **12 October 1999:** CCG mission outlined by *Arrêté* 11
- **7 December 1999:** meeting headed by the Haut-Nyong prefect to approve the limits of the council forest between the populations and the forest administration
- **7 December 1999:** meeting of the Gazetting Commission to officially approve at the local level the council forest project
- **13 June 2000:** training SFM CCG members and municipal councilors
- **23 June 2000:** establishment of the technical letter
- **July 2000:** gazetting application submitted to MINEF
- **March 2001:** FCD boundaries delimited on the ground
- **13 June 2001:** the gazetting decree creating the FCD is signed by the prime minister specifying that the forest is reserved for timber harvesting/production
- **6 January 2003:** the management plan is approved by MINEF Letter N°0042/MINEF/SG/DF/SDIAF/SA
- **2003:** 40 million CFAF FEICOM equipment grant to start timber harvesting operations
- **6 August 2003:** *Deliberation 7* is adopted by Dimako Council Municipal Council creating the revenues sharing formula
- **March 2004:** start of timber harvesting in the FCD
- **28 April 2004:** creation of the CSE
- **2006:** Revision of 2001 management plan and change from five years Area Coupe to AAC
- **2006:** officially because of administrative delays, no timber harvesting occurred in the FCD that year

*Source:* (Collas de Chatelperron 2001b, 5; CRDKO 1999a, 1999b, 2003a, 2004a; Efundène 2000; Forêts et Terroirs 1999, 2000a; Global Witness Cameroon 2004a, 1; Mekok Balara 2001a, 6) and interviews data.



## G.5 DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST BOUNDARIES



Source: Adolphe Ondoua, adapted from (Mekok Balara 2001a, appendix 13)

## G.6 MONTHLY ALLOWANCE FIGURES FOR CSE MEMBERS (CFAF THOUSAND)

<i>Members</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Deputy mayors	30,000
Councilors	30,000
CCG members	15,000
Secretary General	15,000

Source: (CDKO 2007a)

## APPENDIX H

### DIMAKO COUNCIL REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

#### H.1 FCD PROJECTED AND OFFICIALLY DECLARED REVENUES, 2004-2009

(CFAF MILLION)\*

Year	Projected	Officially declared	Balance	% officially declared/projected
2004	142,353,150	179,603,808	+37,250,658	126.2
2005	450,000,000	345,598,854	-104,401,146	76.8
2006	162,500,000	84,912,000	-77,588,000	52.3
2007	334,080,000	171,726,821	-162,353,179	51.4
2008	364,080,000	158,353,594	-205,726,406	43.5
2009	87,000,000	113,480,586 <sup>1</sup>	+26,480,586	130.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,540,013,150	1,053,675,663	-486,337,487	68.4

*Source:* (CDKO 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007b, 2007c, 2008b, 2008c; 2009a, 4)

\*2009 figures are from January to July

## H.2 DIMAKO COUNCIL TOTAL REVENUES, 1998-2003 (CFAF MILLION)

<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
49,967,002	21,055,911	27,922,232	27,711,196	17,898,131	15,590,825	160,145,297

*Source:* Adapted from (Bimbar 2006, 14)

## H.3 DIMAKO COUNCIL REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FIGURES, 1998-2010 (CFAF MILLION)\*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Recurrent Revenues</i>	<i>Investment Revenues</i>	<i>Recurrent Expenditures</i>	<i>Investment Expenditures</i>	<i>Total Revenues</i>
1998	n/a	n/a	40,473,272	9,493,730	49,967,002
1999	n/a	n/a	16,680,987	4,815,599	21,055,911
2000	n/a	n/a	20,585,360	7,274,821	27,922,232
2001	n/a	n/a	22,723,181	4,710,905	27,711,196
2002	n/a	n/a	13,244,617	4,653,515	17,898,131
2003	n/a	n/a	13,980,868	1,480,868	15,590,825
2004	236,501,293	14,079,300	228,944,460	17,879,367	250,580,593 <sup>1</sup>
2005	358,069,645	2,769,728	225,915,315	133,306,981	360,839,373 <sup>2</sup>
2006	110,388,685	24,859,470	90,961,782	42,034,299	135,248,155 <sup>3</sup>
2007	190,539,999	13,395,869	168,648,437	35,556,308	204,435,868 <sup>4</sup>

2008	180,368,224	14,017,853	150,179,649	34,326,239	184,505,888
2009	117,440,898	268,347,194	160,363,047	225,425,045	385,788,092
2010	262,392,800	47,238,487	210,563,270	103,068,017	313,631,287
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,455,701,544</b>	<b>384,707,901</b>	<b>1,363,264,245</b>	<b>624,025,694</b>	<b>1,995,174,553</b>

Source: (Bimbar 2006, 17; CDKO 2003b, 2004b, 2005b, 2006c, 2007c, 2008c)

\*2009 and 2010 projected costs from the council provisional budgets not the administrative accounts; the budget and administrative accounts are divided as usual into two main parts -revenues and expenditures- each composed of two main sections recurrent and investment revenues and expenditures.

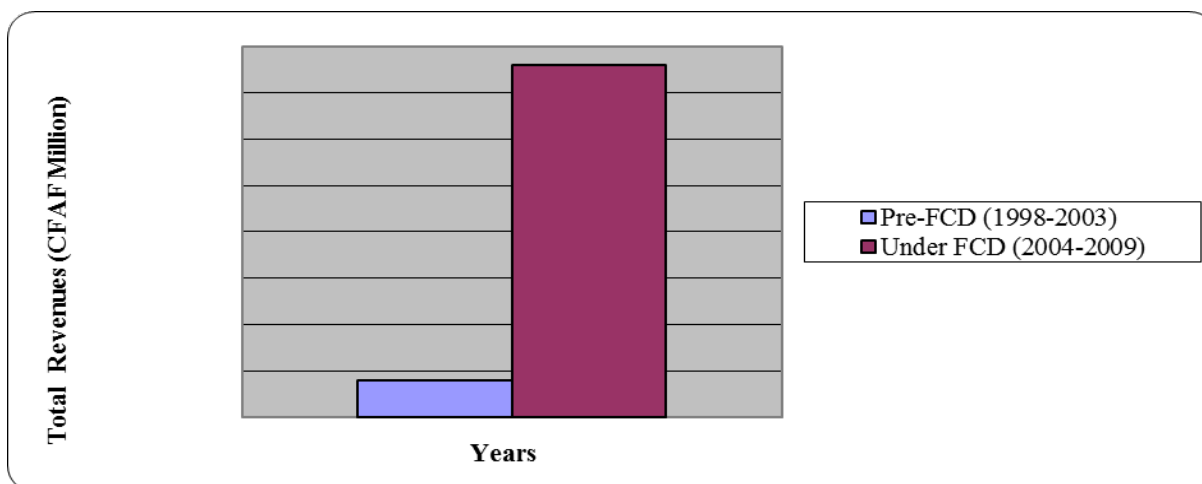
<sup>1</sup> 2005 overall expenditures totaled 246,823,827 thus the council carried a positive balance of 3,756,766 for the following year.

<sup>2</sup> 2005 overall expenditures totaled 358,915,315 thus the council carried over a positive balance of 1,924,058 for the following year.

<sup>3</sup> 2006 overall expenditures totaled 132,996,081 thus the council carried over a positive balance of 2,252,074 for the following year.

<sup>4</sup> 2007 overall expenditures totaled 204,204,745 thus the council carried over a positive balance of 231,123 for the following year.

#### H.4 COMPARISON OF DIMAKO COUNCIL TOTAL REVENUES, 1998-2009\*



Source: (BIMBAR 2006, 14; CDKO 2003B, 2004B, 2005B, 2006C, 2007C, 2008C, 2009B)

\*The 2009 figures are projections from the council provisional budget

## APPENDIX I

### DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST TIMBER HARVESTING FIGURES, 2004-2009 AND MISCELLANEOUS

#### I.1 2004-2005 FELLED TIMBER VOLUMES (CUBIC METERS)\*

<i>Tree species</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>
Aningré-R	22.562	193.816
Ayous	7,110.527	10,012.03
Bété	171.089	397.954
Bossé-C	41.276	117.024
Dibétou/Bibolo	51.117	328.689
Doussié-B	31.131	54.512
Eyong	38.038	281.215
Fraké	776.293	512.126
Iroko	67.908	481.128
Kumbi	21.201	290.633
Lotofa	1,991.871	3,191.59
Padouk-Rouge	31.188	453.627
Sapelli	82.112	1,759.389

Tali	211.305	532.905
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,647.608</b>	<b>18,606.638</b>

*Source:* (Mongui Sossomba, n.d)

\* These figures are incomplete because the 2006 management plan reported a volume of felled timber of 33,685.740 cubic meters without providing the actual breakdown (see CDKO 2006b, 40).

## I.2 APRIL-NOVEMBER 2007 FELLED TIMBER VOLUMES (IN CUBIC METERS)

<i>Month</i>	<i>Ayous</i>	<i>Bété</i>	<i>Dibétou</i>	<i>Iroko</i>	<i>Lotofa</i>	<i>Sapelli</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
April	772.465	55.809	-	40.030	-	22.507	890.811
May	651.680	13.967	-	-	-	30.422	696.069
June	426.798	19.110	-	-	181.370	15	642.278
July	505.554	12.625	-	3.953	-	-	522.132
August	81.193	-	-	-	-	-	81.193
NI	955.367	5.997	4.657	10.946	-	65.939	1,042.906
October	315.812	-	-	-	-	-	315.812
November	585.740	-	-	18.914	437.120	-	1,041.774
NI	758.205	-	-	49.076	111.565	15.953	934.799
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5052.814</b>	<b>107.508</b>	<b>4.657</b>	<b>122.919</b>	<b>730.055</b>	<b>149.821</b>	<b>6,183.464<sup>1</sup></b>

*Source:* (adapted from CDKO n.d.)

<sup>1</sup> There is a 15.69 minor difference between the original document figures of 6,183.464 and the computation above which gives 6,167.774. This might be attributed to a computation error. For consistency, the original figure is kept.

- Not included

- NI: No period indicated, might be September in the first case and December in the second

### I.3 FELLED TIMBER 2008 (IN CUBIC METERS)\*

<i>Tree species</i>	<i>Logs</i>	<i>Volume</i>
Ayous	327	2,191.171
Lotofa	348	1,314.57
Padouk R	42	236.668
Bété	31	95.398
Sapelli	8	49.760
Tali	24	146.202
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>4,233.356<sup>1</sup></b>

*Source:* (adapted from CDKO 2008e, 3)

\*This period includes the months of April, May, July, August, October and November 2008 and the figures are based on sold timber not felled. The exact figure reported as felled in 751 stems for 6,703.995 cubic meters. However, because no actual breakdown is provided, those figures are used rather.

<sup>1</sup> There is almost a 200 cubic meters difference between the figures reported in the original document and my computation of the original figures which gives 4,033.769 cubic meters. The cause of this discrepancy is unknown. However, for consistency purposes, the original total is kept as.

### I.4 2009 FELLED TIMBER VOLUMES (IN CUBIC METERS)

<i>Species</i>	<i>Number of stems</i>	<i>Volume</i>
Ayous	416	7,140.674
Iroko	02	18.289
Lotofa	258	1,260.636
Padouk-R	01	7.485
Sapelli	07	65.22

Tali	41	351.174
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>8,843.478<sup>1</sup></b>

Source: (adapted from CDKO 2010a, 2).

<sup>1</sup> There is a 0.06 minor difference between the above data and those reported in the report 8,843.540, probably due to a computation error.

## I.5 THE FIVE MOST FELLED SPECIES IN THE FCD, 2004-2009 (CUBIC METERS)\*

<i>Species</i>	<i>2004<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2005<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2007<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>2008<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>2009</i>
Ayous	7,110.5	10,012.03	5,052.8	2,191.2	7,140.7
Lotofa	1,991.9	3,191.6	730,05	2,468 <sup>4</sup>	1,260.6
Fraké	776.3	512.2	NA	NA	NA
Tali	211.3	532.9	NA	146.2	351.2
Sapelli	82.1	1,759.4	165.6	49.8	65.2
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	10,172.1	16,008.1	5,948.5	3,701.4	8,817.7
<b>PERCENT SUB-TOTAL</b>	95.5	86	96.2	87.4	99.7
<b>OTHERS</b>	475.5	2,598.3	235	532	25.8
<b>PERCENT OTHERS</b>	4.5	14	3.8	12.6	0.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	10,647	18,606.4	6,183.5	5,387.2	8,843.5

Source: (CDKO 2008a; 2008d, 3; 2010a, 2; n.d; Mongui Sossomba n.d.)

\*officially, no harvesting occurred in 2006

NA: officially no mention of the harvesting of that species

<sup>1</sup> Incomplete figures because the council reported the global figure of 33,685.7 cubic meters for both periods in the 2006 management plan (see CDKO 2006b, 40).

<sup>2</sup> Does not include the extended period (1 January-14 February 2008) figures of extracted not felled 1,745.7 cubic meters of unspecified species.

<sup>3</sup> These figures are based on timber sold not felled; the total breakdown of the 6,704 cubic meters of timber felled was unavailable, thus those figures were instead used.

<sup>4</sup> Includes the extended period (January to February 2009) figures of 1,153.8 cubic meters of lotofa



## I.6 SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES FOUND IN THE DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST

<i>Local species name</i>	<i>Scientific name</i>	<i>Local species name</i>	<i>Scientific name</i>
Acajou bassam	<i>Khaya anthotheca</i>	Ilomba	<i>Pycnanthus angolensis</i>
Acajou blanc	<i>Khaya ivorensis</i>	Iroko	<i>Milicia excelsa</i>
Acajou g folioles	<i>Khaya grandifoliola</i>	Kapokier	<i>Bombax buonopozense</i>
Aielé	<i>Canarium schweinfurthii</i>	Kondroti	<i>Bombax breviscupae</i>
Ako	<i>Antiaris africana</i>	Kossipo	<i>Entandrophragma candollei</i>
Alep/Omang	<i>Desbordesia glaucescens</i>	Kotibé	<i>Nesogordonia papaverifera</i>
Amouk/Mambodé	<i>Detarium macrocarpum</i>	Koto	<i>Pterygota macrocarpa</i>
Angueuk	<i>Ongokea gore</i>	Kumbi	<i>Lannea welwitschii</i>
Aningré Altissima	<i>Aningeria altissima</i>	Landa	<i>Erytroxylum mannii</i>
Aningré Robusta	<i>Aningeria robusta</i>	Lati	<i>Amphimas spp</i>
Assamela /Afrormosia	<i>Pericopsis elata</i>	Longhi	<i>Gambeya africana</i>
Avodiré	<i>Turreanthus africanus</i>	Lotofa/Nkanang	<i>Sterculia rhinopetala</i>
Ayous	<i>Triplochiton scleroxylon</i>	Moabi	<i>Baillonella toxisperma</i>
Azobé	<i>Lophira alata</i>	Movingui	<i>Disthemonanthus benthamianus</i>
Bahia	<i>Mitragyna ciliata</i>	Mukulungu	<i>Autranella congolensis</i>
Bété	<i>Mansonia altissima</i>	Mutondo	<i>Funtumia elastic</i>
Bilinga	<i>Nauclea diderrichii</i>	Naga	<i>Brachystegia eurycoma</i>
Bodioa/Noudougou	<i>Anopyxis klaineana</i>	Niové	<i>Staudtia kamerunensis</i>
Bongo H	<i>Fagara heitzii</i>	Oboto	<i>Mammea africana</i>
Bossé clair	<i>Guarea cedrata</i>	Okan	<i>Cylicodiscus gabonensis</i>
Bossé foncé	<i>Guarea thompsonii</i>	Onzabili	<i>Antrocaryon klaineum</i>
Bubinga E	<i>Guibourtia ehie</i>	Ossanga	<i>Pteleopsis hylodendron</i>
Bubinga Rose	<i>Guibourtia tessmanii</i>	Ozigo	<i>Dacryodes buettneri</i>

Bubinga Rouge	<i>Guibourtia demeusei</i>	Padouk rouge	<i>Pterocarpus soyauxii</i>
Dabéma	<i>Piptadeniastrum africanum</i>	Padouk blanc	<i>Pterocarpus mildbraedii</i>
Diana Z	<i>Celtis zenkeri</i>	Pao rosa	<i>Swartzia fistuloides</i>
Dibétou / Bibolo	<i>Lovoa trichilioides</i>	Sapelli	<i>Entandrophragma cylindricum</i>
Difou	<i>Morus mesozygia</i>	Sipo	<i>Entandrophragma utile</i>
Douka/Makoré	<i>Tieghemella africana</i>	Tali	<i>Erythrophleum ivorensis</i>
Doussié blanc	<i>Afzelia pachyloba</i>	Tchitola	<i>Oxystigma oxyphyllum</i>
Doussié rouge	<i>Afzelia bidipensis</i>	Tiama	<i>Entandrophragma angolensis</i>
Doussié Sanaga	<i>Afzelia africana</i>	Tola	<i>Gosweilerodendron balsamiferum</i>
Ebène	<i>Diospyros crassifolia</i>	Wenge	<i>Millettia laurentii</i>
Ebiara Edéa	<i>Berlinia bracteosa</i>	Zingana	<i>Microberlinia bisulcata</i>
Ekouné	<i>Coelocaryon preussii</i>		
Emien	<i>Alstonia congensis</i>		
Eyong	<i>Eribroma oblonga</i>		
Fraké	<i>Terminalia superba</i>		
Fromager	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>		
Iatandza	<i>Albizia ferruginea</i>		

Source: (Mekok Balara 2001a, 65-66)

## I.7 DIMAKO COUNCIL FOREST SPECIES RECONSTITUTION RATE FIGURES (2001 MANAGEMENT PLAN)

<i>Species</i>	<i>MHD</i>	<i>% Reconstitution</i>	<i>MMD</i>	<i>% Reconstitution</i>
Acajou à gr. folioles	80	140	<b>80</b>	140
Amouk/Mambodé	50	114	<b>50</b>	114
Aningré « R »	60	75	<b>80</b>	152

Aningré A	60	45	<b>100</b>	88
Avodiré	60	554	<b>60</b>	554
Ayous	80	47	<b>100</b>	104
Bété	60	159	<b>60</b>	159
Bilinga	80	263	<b>80</b>	263
Bossé clair	80	35	<b>100</b>	105
Bossé foncé	80	140	<b>80</b>	140
Diana Z	50	99	<b>50</b>	99
Dibétou / Bibolo	80	47	<b>100</b>	123
Emien	50	25	<b>110</b>	199
Eyong	50	223	<b>50</b>	223
Fraké	60	31	<b>80</b>	100
Fromager	50	16		<20%
Iatandza	50	70	<b>60</b>	135
Ilomba	60	91	<b>60</b>	91
Iroko	100	17	<b>110</b>	175
Kapokier	60	4	<b>120</b>	118
Kondroti	50	133	<b>50</b>	133
Kotibé	50	102	<b>50</b>	102
Koto	60	169	<b>60</b>	169
Kumbi	50	13	<b>90</b>	291
Lati	50	74	<b>90</b>	105
Longhi	60	14	<b>90</b>	118
Lotofa/Nkanang	60	93	<b>70</b>	106
Niové	50	96	<b>50</b>	96
Padouk blanc	50	111	<b>50</b>	111
Padouk rouge	60	131	<b>60</b>	131

Sapelli	100	21	<b>110</b>	117
Tali	50	12	<b>90</b>	125
Tola	100	140	<b>100</b>	140

*Source:* (Mekok Balara 2001a, 65-66)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ACFCAM, and CTFC. 2010. *Rapport d'Activités: Premier Semestre 2010*. Yaoundé, Cameroun.
- ACFCAM, and FFEM. 2007. *Programme d'Appui aux Forêts Communales du Cameroun*. Yaoundé, Cameroun.
- Agrawal, Arun. 2001a. Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources. *World Development* 29 (10): 1649-1672.
- . 2001b. "The Decentralizing State: Nature and Origins of Changing Environmental Policies in Africa and Latin America, 1980-2000." Presented at the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30 to September 2 (draft), San Francisco, CA.
- Agrawal, Arun, and Ashwini Chhatre. 2006. Explaining Success on the Commons: Community Forest Governance in the Indian Himalaya. *World Development* 34 (1): 149-166.
- . 2007. State Involvement and Forest Co-Governance: Evidence from the Indian Himalayas. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 42: 67-86.
- Agrawal, Arun, and Clark. C. Gibson. 1999. Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Conservation. *World Development* 27 (4): 629-649.
- Agrawal, Arun, and Jesse Ribot. 1999. Accountability in Decentralization: A Framework with South Asian and West African Cases. *The Journal of Developing Areas* 33 (4): 473-502.
- Alemagi, Dieudonné, and Robert A. Kozak. 2010. Illegal Logging in Cameroon: Causes and the Path forward. *Forest Policy and Economics* 12: 554-561.
- Allen, Hubert JB. 1999. Farmers' Weekly to Journal of Agronomic Sciences. Changing Conceptions of Local Governance in *Public Administration and Development* and its Predecessors. *Public Administration and Development* 19 (5): 439-452.
- ANAFOR. 2007. *Projet de Plan d'Opérations Annuelles pour la Mise en Œuvre de la Convention ANAFOR/Commune de Dimako*.
- . 2008. *Convention ANAFOR/Commune de Dimako*. Yaoundé, Cameroun.

- Andersson, Krister P. 2002a. "Can Decentralization Save Bolivia's Forests? An Institutional Analysis of Municipal Forest Governance." PhD Dissertation Indiana University.
- . 2002b. "Explaining the Mixed Success of Municipal Governance of Forest Resources in Bolivia: Overcoming Local Information Barriers." Center for the Study of Institutions, Population and Environmental Change (CIPEC), Indiana University.
- . 2004. Who Talks with Whom? The Role of Repeated Interactions in Decentralized Forest Governance. *World Development* 32 (2): 233-249.
- . 2006. Understanding Decentralized Forest Governance: An Application of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 2 (1): 25-35.
- Andersson, Krister P., Clark C. Gibson, and Fabrice Lehoucq. 2004. The Politics of Decentralized Natural Resource Governance. *PS-Political Science and Politics* 37 (3): 421-426.
- . 2006. Municipal Politics and Forest Governance: Comparative Analysis of Decentralization in Bolivia and Guatemala. *World Development* 34 (3): 576-595.
- Andersson, Krister P., and Elinor Ostrom. 2008. Analyzing Decentralized Resource Regimes from A Polycentric Perspective. *Policy Sciences* 41 (1): 71-93.
- Andersson, Krister P., and Frank van Laerhoven. 2007. From Local Strongman to Facilitator: Institutional Incentives for Participatory Municipal Governance in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (9): 1085-1111.
- API-Dimako. 1995a. *Collaboration entre le Programme Tropenbos de Kribi et le Projet API de Dimako*. Douala, Cameroun: Document rédigé avec la collaboration de la Direction du Programme TROPENBOS de Kribi.
- . 1995b. *Projet Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako: Procès-Verbal du 5<sup>e</sup> Comité de Pilotage 01<sup>er</sup> Décembre 1995*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun.
- Arghiros, Daniel. 2001. *Democracy, Development, and Decentralization in Provincial Thailand*. Richmond, VA: Curzon.
- Assembé-Mvondo, Samuel. 2005. Décentralisation des Ressources Forestières et Justice Environnementale: Analyse des Evidences Empiriques du Sud-Cameroun. *Law, Environment and Development Journal* 1 (1): 35-49.
- . 2006a. Forestry Income Management and Poverty Reduction: Empirical Findings from Kongo, Cameroon. *Development in Practice* 16 (1): 68-73.

- . 2006b. Decentralized Forest Resources and Access of Minorities to Environmental Justice: An Analysis of the Case of the Baka in Southern Cameroon. *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 63 (5): 681-689.
- . 2009. State Failure and Governance in Vulnerable States: An Assessment of Forest Law Compliance and Enforcement in Cameroon. *Africa Today* 55 (3): 85-102.
- Assembé-Mvondo, Samuel, and Phil René Oyono. 2004. An Assessment of Social Negotiation as A Tool of Local Management: A Case Study of the Dimako Council Forest, Cameroon. *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research* 19 (4): 78-84.
- Assembé-Mvondo, Samuel, and Francis Sangkwa. 2009. "Council Forests: The Case of Dimako." In *In Search of Common Ground: Adaptive Collaborative Management in Cameroon*, eds. Maritew Chimère Diaw, Tony Aseh and Ravi Prabhu. Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). 95-115.
- Auerbach, Carl F., and Louise B. Silverstein. 2003. *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Azebaze, Alex Gustave. 2004. "Invité Pr. Ndiva Kofele-Kale, Constitutionnaliste et Homme Politique : "Les Régions Camerounaises sont étranglées par Yaoundé"." In *Le Messager*. Douala, Cameroun. 15.
- Bako-Arifari, Nassirou. 1997. *Processus de Décentralisation et Pouvoirs Traditionnels: Typologies des Politiques Rencontrées*. Rome: Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Alimentation et l'Agriculture (FAO).
- Bardhan, Pranab. 2002. Decentralization of Governance and Development. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16 (4): 185-205.
- Bartley, Tim, Krister Andersson, Pamela Jagger, and Frank Van Laerhoven. 2008. The Contribution of Institutional Theories to Explaining Decentralization of Natural Resource Governance. *Society and Natural Resources* 21 (2): 160-174.
- Bassett, Thomas J., Chantal Blanc-Pamard, and Jean Boutrais. 2007. Constructing Locality: The Terroir Approach in West Africa. *Africa* 77 (1): 104-129.
- Batterbury, Simon. 1998. Local Environmental Management, Land Degradation and the 'Gestion des Terroirs' Approach in West Africa: Policies and Pitfalls. *Journal of International Development* 10: 871-898.
- Belibi, Jean Francis. 2008. "Chambre d'Agriculture: Philémon Adjibolo sollicite l'Arbitrage de Paul Biya." In *Mutations (16 Janvier)*. Online at <http://www.cameroon-info.net/stories/0,21588,@,chambre-d-agriculture-philemon-adjibolo-sollicite-l-arbitrage-de-paul-biya.html> (retrieved 21 January 2011).
- Beligné, Vincent. 2009. "PAF2C: Le Programme tel qu'il évolue." *CTFC Infos* 001, 4-5.

- Benjaminsen, Tor A. 1995. "Natural Resource Management and Decentralization: Towards Comanagement in Mali." Presented at the "Reinventing the Commons", The Fifth Common Property Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IACSP), 24-28 May, Bodo, Norway.
- Bertault, Jean-Guy. 2000. *Rapport de Mission au Cameroun du 4 au 10 Janvier 2000, Projet Forêts et Terroirs*. Montpellier, France: CIRAD-Forêt/Forêts Naturelles.
- Bigombé Logo, Patrice, ed. 2004. *Le Retournement de l'Etat Forestier: L'Endroit et l'Envers des Processus de Gestion Forestière au Cameroun*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Presses de l'UCAC.
- Bigombé Logo, Patrice, Nicole Guedje, and Daou Veronique Joiris. 2005. "Forest Management Decentralization in Cameroon. Which Impact on Local Development." In *International Symposium Tropical Forests in a Changing Global Context*. 8-9 November 2004. Brussels, Belgium: Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 149-174.
- Bigombé Logo, Patrice. 1996. Contestation de l'Etat et Attestation d'une Identité Spatiale au Cameroun Méridional Forestier. *Polis-Revue Camerounaise de Science Politique* 1 (N° Spécial): 129-138.
- . 2002. "Forest Management Decentralization and Social Conflicts in Cameroon: Rethinking Intergenerational Access to Forests and Its Resources in Southeastern Cameroon." Presented at the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP) Conference, Harare, Zimbabwe.
- . 2003a. "Fiscalité Forestière Décentralisée et Développement Local au Cameroun Méridional Forestier: Leçons Apprises des Expériences Récentes et Proposition d'un Processus de Renforcement des Capacités Locales." In *Deuxième Atelier International sur la Foresterie Participative en Afrique. Préparer l'Avenir: Des Conditions de Vie Durables en Milieu Rural grâce à la Gestion Participative des Ressources Forestières*. 18-22 February 2002. Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania: Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 375-380.
- . 2003b. *The Decentralized Forestry Taxation System in Cameroon: Local Management and State Logic*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Environmental Governance in Africa Working Paper 10.
- . 2006. "Les Élités et la Gestion Décentralisée des Forêts au Cameroun. Essai d'Analyse Politiste de la Gestion Néopatrimoniale de la Rente Forestière en Contexte de Décentralisation." In *Gestion concertée des Ressources Naturelles et de l'Environnement, du Local au Mondial: pour un Dialogue entre Chercheurs, Société Civile et Décideurs*, 26-28 juin. Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines, France.
- Bimbar, Poum. 2006. "L'Exploitation Forestière et l'Autonomie Financière de la Commune de Dimako." Mémoire du Diplôme du Cycle I du CEFAM Option Finances et Trésorerie Centre de Formation pour l'Administration Municipale (CEFAM).



- Bindzi, Isaac, and Tarounga Beramgoto. 2008. *Etude de la Traçabilité des Bois et Produits 'Bois' provenant des Forêts Communales et des Petites UFA*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Projet PPP FSC/GTZ/PNUD.
- Bird, Richard, and Edgard R. Rodriguez. 1999. Decentralization and Poverty Alleviation: International Experience and the Case of the Philippines. *Public Administration and Development* 19 (3): 299-319.
- Blaikie, Piers. 2006. Is Small Really Beautiful? Community-based Natural Resource Management in Malawi and Botswana. *World Development* 34 (11): 1942-1957.
- Blair, Harry. 2000. Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries. *World Development* 28 (1): 21-39.
- Boone, Catherine. 1998. State Building in the African Countryside: Structure and Politics at the Grassroots. *Journal of Development Studies* 34 (4): 1-31.
- . 2003. Decentralization as Political Strategy in West Africa. *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (4): 355-380.
- Borie, Jean-Michel. 2001. "Revue des Actions en Aménagement du Projet Forêts et Terroirs." In *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*, ed. Philippe Collas De Chatelperron. Yaoundé, Cameroun: CIRAD. 73-80.
- Bowen, Glenn. A. 2009. Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal* 9 (2): 27-40.
- Boyomo, Georges Alain. 2009. "Hubert Kamgang: L'Economie Camerounaise ne répond pas aux besoins des Populations " *Les Cahiers de Mutations (Hors Série N° 03)*, 7.
- Brown, David , Michael B. Vabi, and Robert Nkwinkwa. 2003. "Governance Reform in the Forest Sector: A Role for Community Forestry?" Presented at the the XII<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress to be held in, 21-28 September, Quebec City, Canada.
- Brown, David, Kate Schreckenberg, Gill Shepherd, and Adrian Wells. 2002. *Forestry as an Entry Point for Governance Reform*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Brown, H. Carolyn Peach, and James P. Lassoie. 2010. Institutional Choice and Local Legitimacy in Community-Based Forest Management: Lessons from Cameroon. *Environmental Conservation* 37 (3): 261 -269.
- Brunner, Jake, and Francois Ekoko. 2000. "Cameroon." In *The Right Conditions: The World Bank, Structural Adjustment, and Forest Policy Reform*, eds. Frances J. Seymour and Navroz K. Dubash. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI). 59-82.

- Cameron, Robert. 2003. "Local Government in South Africa: Political Decentralisation, Party Centralization, Corruption and Maladministration." In *Decentralisation and Democratic Governance: Experiences from India, Bolivia and South Africa*, ed. Axel Hadenius. Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell International. 105-150.
- Cameroon Tribune. 2010. "Nomination de Responsables au Cabinet Civil de la Présidence de la République: Décret N° 2010/060/CAB/PR du 4 Mars 2010." In *Cameroon Tribune* (5 mars). Yaoundé, Cameroun. 3.
- . 2011. "Chamber of Agriculture: Daunting Task Awaits New President." In *Cameroon Tribune* (16 March). Online at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201103170974.html> (accessed 23 March 2011).
- Carret, Jean-Christophe. 2000. La Réforme de la Fiscalité Forestière au Cameroun: Débat Politique et Analyse Économique. *Bois et Forêts des Tropiques* 54 (264): 37-53.
- CCG. 2009a. *Requête à Monsieur le Maire de la Commune de Dimako (10 mai)*. Dimako, Cameroun.
- . 2009b. *Requête à Monsieur le Maire de la Commune de Dimako (30 novembre)*. Dimako, Cameroun.
- CDKO. 2003a. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2003*.
- . 2003b. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2003*.
- . 2004a. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2004*.
- . 2004b. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2004*.
- . 2005a. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2005*.
- . 2005b. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2005*.
- . 2006a. *Lettre N° 11/06/TPDF/CR/DKO du 8 Mars 2006: Transmission du Plan d'Aménagement révisé de la Forêt Communale de Dimako pour Approbation*.
- . 2006b. *Plan d'Aménagement Forêt Communale de Dimako*.
- . 2006c. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2006*.
- . 2006d. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2006*.
- . 2007a. *Arrêté du 13 Octobre 2007 N° 013/AM/CDKO/M/SG accordant une Indemnité aux Membres de la Commission de Suivi de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*.
- . 2007b. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2007*.
- . 2007c. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2007*.

- . 2008a. *Etat d'Exploitation des Essences de la Forêt Communale de Dimako d'après le Permis Annuel d'Opération des Assiettes N° I et II-I*.
- . 2008b. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2008*.
- . 2008c. *Compte Administratif/Administratif Account: Exercice/Financial Year 2008*.
- . 2008d. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Rapport Annuel d'Activités, Exercice 2008*. Dimako, Cameroun: Cellule Forestière Communale (CFC).
- . 2008e. *Exécution de la Convention de Collaboration entre l'ANAFOR et la Commune de Dimako*.
- . 2009a. *Procès-Verbal N° 04/PV/CM/CDKO de la Réunion d'Évaluation des Activités d'Exploitation dans la Forêt Communale de Dimako*.
- . 2009b. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2009*.
- . 2010a. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Rapport Annuel d'Activités, Exercice 2009*. Dimako, Cameroun: Cellule de la Foresterie Communale (CFC).
- . 2010b. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Plan Annuel d'Opération Exercice 2010 Assiette Annuelle de Coupe N° 3-I*. Dimako, Cameroun: Cellule de la Foresterie Communale (CFC).
- . 2010c. *Commune de Dimako: Plan de Développement 2010-2014*. Dimako, Cameroun: CTFC et CANADEL.
- . 2010d. *Budget Communal/Council Budget: Exercice/Financial Year 2010*.
- . n.d. *Exploitation pour le Compte de l'Exercice 2007*. Dimako, Cameroun.
- Cerutti, Paolo Omar, Verina Ingram, and Denis Sonwa. 2009. "Les Forêts du Cameroun en 2008." In *Les Forêts du Bassin du Congo: Etat des Forêts 2008*, eds. Carlos de Wasseige, Didier Devers, Paya de Marcken, Richard Eba'a Atyi, Robert Nasi and Philippe Mayaux. Luxembourg: Office des Publications de l'Union Européenne. 45-59.
- Cerutti, Paolo Omar, Guillaume Lescuyer, Samuel Assembé-Mvondo, and Lucas Tacconi. 2010. The Challenges of Redistributing Forest-Related Monetary Benefits to Local Governments: A Decade of Logging Area Fees in Cameroon. *International Forestry Review* 12 (2): 130-138.
- Cerutti, Paolo Omar, Robert Nasi, and Luca Tacconi. 2008. Sustainable Forest Management in Cameroon Needs More than Approved Forest Management Plans. *Ecology and Society* [online] 13 (2): 36 <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol13/iss2/art36/> (retrieved 15 June 2011).

- Charnley, Susan, and Melissa R. Poe. 2007. Community Forestry in Theory and Practice: Where Are We Now? *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36: 301-354.
- Cheema, G. Shabbir, and Dennis A. Rondinelli. 2007. "From Government Decentralization to Decentralized Governance." In *Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices*, eds. G. Shabbir Cheema and Denis A. Rondinelli. Cambridge, MA; Washington, DC: Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University ; Brookings Institution Press. 1-20.
- Cheka, Cosmas. 2007. The State of the Process of Decentralization in Cameroon. *Africa Development* 32 (2): 181-196.
- Clément, J, and P. Dubus. 1993. *Projet d'Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako (Cameroun): Compte Rendu Mission d'Appui du 27.03 au 7.04. 1993*. Paris and Nogent-Sur-Marne: Office National des Forêts et CIRAD-France.
- Cohen, John M., and Stephen B. Peterson. 1996. *Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Decentralization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute of International Development.
- Collas de Chatelperron, Philippe. 2000. *Impacts des Acquis des Projets API et Forêts et Terroirs*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2001a. "Vers la Coordination des Usages Forestiers dans l'Est Cameroun." Presented at the Journée-Débat sur les Forêts Tropicales: des Espaces à Partager, des Enjeux à Négocier, Paris, Salon International de l'Agriculture.
- . 2001b. "Appropriation des Contextes Economiques et Juridiques de la Nouvelle Loi Forestière du Cameroun par les Administrations Territoriale et Forestière, les Populations et les Exploitants Forestiers." Presented at the 7<sup>e</sup> Atelier Annuel du Programme Régional de Gestion de l'Information Environnementale (PRGIE), Yaoundé, Cameroun.
- , ed. 2001c. *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*. Edited by Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. Montpellier, France: CIRAD.
- CRADEL. 2007. *Gestion de la Foresterie Communale: Étude sur les Options Organisationnelles*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Rapport Final.
- CRDKO. 1999a. *Délibération du 22 Juin 1999 N° 04/D/CR/DKO créant un Comité Consultatif de Gestion de la Forêt Communale*.
- . 1999b. *Arrêté N° 11/99/AM/CR/DKO du 12 Octobre 1999 portant Définition des Attributions du Comité Consultatif de Gestion de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*.

- . 2003a. *Extrait du Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Municipal de la Commune Rurale de Dimako, Séance du 06 Août 2003: Délibération N° 7/D/CR/DKO portant Répartition des Revenus Provenant de l'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale de Dimako.*
- . 2003b. *Monographie de la Commune Rurale de Dimako: Rendez-vous/To Dimako.* Dimako, Cameroun.
- . 2004a. *Note de Service N° 02/04/NS/CR/DKO portant Création d'une Commission de Suivi de l'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale de Dimako.*
- . 2004b. *Répartition et Gestion des Fonds en Espèces destinés aux Populations.*
- . 2005a. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Plan Annuel d'Opérations pour l'Année 2005.* Dimako, Cameroun.
- . 2005b. *Procès Verbal de la Session Ordinaire du Conseil Municipal de la Commune Rurale de Dimako: Séance du 30 Novembre 2005.* Dimako, Cameroun.
- . 2006. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Plan de Gestion Quinquennal du Bloc d'Aménagement N° 2.*
- . 2008. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Plan Annuel d'Opérations Exercice 2008 AAC N° 2-3.* Dimako, Cameroun: Cellule Foresterie Communale (CFC).
- Crook, Richard C. 1994. Four Years of the Ghana District Assemblies in Operation: Decentralization, Democratization and Administrative Performance. *Public Administration and Development* 14 (4): 339-364.
- . 1996. Democracy, Participation and Responsiveness: A Case Study of Relations between the Ivorian Communes and their Citizens. *Public Administration* 74 (4): 695-720.
- . 2003. Decentralization and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The Politics of Local-Central Relations. *Public Administration and Development* 23 (1): 77-88.
- Crook, Richard Charles, and James Manor. 1998. *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability, and Performance.* Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Crook, Richard Charles, and Alan Sturla Sverrisson. 2001. *Decentralisation and Poverty-Alleviation in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis or, is West Bengal unique?* Brighton, England: Institute of Development Studies.
- CTFC. 2008. *Etude et Analyse des Contrats de Partenariat, du Fonctionnement des Cellules de Foresterie Communale et la Stratégie Commerciale des Ressources Forestières dans Quelques Communes Forestières du Cameroun.* Yaoundé, Cameroun: Centre Technique de la Forêt Communale.

- . 2010a. "Listes des Forêts Communales du Cameroun." Online at [http://www.foretcommunale-cameroun.org/fortscommunales\\_24012009094214.asp](http://www.foretcommunale-cameroun.org/fortscommunales_24012009094214.asp) (retrieved 20 February 2011).
- . 2010b. "Tableau de Bord des Activités du PAF2C: Résultats du CTFC et ses Partenaires." *CTFC Infos 04*, 15.
- Dalle Ngok, Pierre Caillou. 2010a. "Présidentielle: Qui contre Biya en 2011?" In *L'Aurore Plus*. Douala, Cameroun. 6.
- . 2010b. "Alternance: G11, Une Symphonie qui s'achève derrière les Barreaux." In *L'Aurore Plus*. Douala, Cameroun. 7.
- Daloz, Jean-Pascal. 2003. "Big Men" in Sub-Saharan Africa: How Elites Accumulate Positions and Resources. *Comparative Sociology* 2 (1): 271-285.
- De Vries, Michiel S. 2000. The Rise and Fall of Decentralization: A Comparative Analysis of Arguments and Practices in European Countries. *European Journal of Political Research* 38: 193-224.
- Degnbol, Tove. 1995. "The Terroir Approach to Natural Resource Management: Panacea or Phantom-The Malian Experience." Presented at the "Reinventing the Commons," The Fifth Annual Conference of The International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP), 24-28 May, Bodoe, Norway.
- Delvienne, Quentin, Guy Merlin Nguenang, Y. Decleire, M. Nkolo, A. Carillo, A. Biwolé, and A. Ghysels. 2009. "Les Expériences de Classement des Forêts Communales révélatrices d'une Faible Maîtrise des Enjeux Fonciers au Cameroun." Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).
- Desai, Vandana, and Robert B. Potter, eds. 2008. *The Companion to Development Studies*. London: Hodder Education.
- Diamond, Larry. 2008. The Rule of Law versus the Big Man. *Journal of Democracy* 19 (2): 138-149.
- Dickovick, J. Tyler. 2005. The Measure and Mismeasure of Decentralization: Subnational Autonomy in Senegal and South Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43 (2): 183-210.
- Dikouba, Massoma. 2004. "Chantal Biya: Le Vrai Visage. Portrait d'une Première Dame Objet de toutes les Controverses." In *Aurore Plus* (25 juin). Online at <http://www.cameroon-info.net/stories/0,14804,@,chantal-biya-le-vrai-visage-portrait-d-une-premiere-dame-objet-de-toutes-les-con.html> (accessed 22 February 2011).
- Dougueli, Georges. 2010a. "Reportage à Kondengui, la Prison Centrale de Yaoundé." *Jeune Afrique*, Online at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2553p032-035.xml1/->

- [justice-corruption-prison-Urbain-Olanguena-Awono-Reportage-a-Kondengui-la-prison-centrale-de-Yaounde.html](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2574p032-035.xml0/justice-corruption-detournement-bakassila-derniere-proie-de-l-epervier.html) (accessed 8 January 2010).
- . 2010b. "La Dernière Proie de l'Épervier." *Jeune Afrique*, Online at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2574p032-035.xml0/justice-corruption-detournement-bakassila-derniere-proie-de-l-epervier.html> (accessed 4 June 2010).
- Durrieu De Madron, Luc, Eric Forni, Alain Karsenty, M.E. Loffeier, and J.M. Pierre. 1998. *Le Projet d'Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako (Cameroun) (1992-1996)*. Montpellier, France: CIRAD-Forêt; Série FORAFRI Document 7.
- Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. 2009. "Cameroon: from the Pre-colonial to the Post-colonial Periods." *Les Cahiers de Mutations (Hors Série N° 03)*, 4-5.
- Eaton, Kent. 2001. Political Obstacles to Decentralization: Evidence from Argentina and the Philippines. *Development and Change* 32 (1): 101-127.
- Efandène, Régine. 2000. *Rapport de Formation sur la Mise en Œuvre de l'Aménagement de la Forêt Communale de Dimako: 13 Juin 2000, Module V*. Dimako, Cameroun: Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Egbe, Samuel Egbe 2001. The Concept of Community Forestry under Cameroon Law. *Journal of African Law* 45 (1): 25-50.
- Ekoko, François. 2000. Balancing Politics, Economics and Conservation: The Case of the Cameroon Forestry Law Reform. *Development and Change* 31: 131-154.
- Elong, Jean Gabriel. 2005. *Organisations Paysannes et Constructions des Pouvoirs dans le Cameroun Forestier*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Presses Universitaires de Yaoundé.
- Elvido, Sebastian Chi. 2010. "Dimako: Hécatombe dans la Chefferie Traditionnelle." In *Mutations (19 Août)*. Online at <http://www.quotidienmutations.info/aout/1282201871.php> (accessed 10 July 2011).
- . 2011a. "Dimako: Le Cameroun et l'Allemagne célèbrent la Forêt." In *Mutations (21 Février)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/institutionnel.php?subaction=showfull&id=1298269150&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=4&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/institutionnel.php?subaction=showfull&id=1298269150&archive=&start_from=&ucat=4&) (accessed 22 February 2011).
- Elvido, Sebastian Chi, and Patricia Ngo Ngouem. 2011. "Répression: Janvier Mongui Sossomba jette un Journaliste en Prison." In *Mutations (21 Avril)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/vivre-aujourd'hui.php?subaction=showfull&id=1303401277&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=3&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/vivre-aujourd'hui.php?subaction=showfull&id=1303401277&archive=&start_from=&ucat=3&) (retrieved 16 August 2011).

- Engberg-Pedersen, Lars. 1995. *Creating Local Democratic Politics from Above: The "Gestion des Terroirs" Approach in Burkina Faso*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).
- Essama-Nssah, Boniface, and James Jerome Gockowski. 2000. *Cameroon: Forest Sector Development in A Difficult Political Economy*. of *Evaluation Country Case Study Series*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Esteve, Jean. 2000. *Etude sur le Plan Pratique d'Aménagement des Forêts Naturelles de Production: Application au Cas de l'Afrique Centrale*. Paris: Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux (ATIBT).
- Esteve, Jean, Claude Frouin, Bernard Leduc, and Henri-Felix Maitre. 1993. *Projet d'Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako: Aide-Mémoire de Mission d'Evaluation de Projet, Propositions de Relance*. Nogent-Sur-Marne, France: CIRAD-Forêt.
- Etoungou, Patrice. 2003. *Decentralization Viewed from Inside: The Implementation of Community Forests in East Cameroon*. Vol. 12 of *Working Paper Series*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- Eya, François Xavier. 2011. "Philémon Adjibolo: L'Apparatchik de la Kadey se retire." In *La Nouvelle Expression* (Mardi 14 Juin). Online at <http://www.lanouvelleexpression.info/actu/3687.html> (accessed 17 June 2011).
- Ezzine de Blas, Driss, Manuel Ruiz Perez, Jeffrey A. Sayer, Guillaume Lescuyer, Robert Nasi, and Alain Karsenty. 2009. External Influences on and Conditions for Community Logging Management in Cameroon. *World Development* 37 (2): 445-456.
- FAO. 2003. *Regional Code of Practice for Reduced-Impact Forest Harvesting in Tropical Moist Forests of West and Central Africa*. Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- FEICOM, and ACFCAM. 2010. *Convention Cadre de Partenariat N° 001/CCP/FEICOM/DG/DCPCA/ACFCAM/2010 entre le Fonds Spécial d'Equipement et d'Intervention Intercommunale et l'Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun*.
- Ferroukhi, Lyes, ed. 2003. *Municipal Forest Management in Latin America*. Bogor, Indonesia; Ottawa: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) ; International Development Research Centre (IDRC).
- Flick, Uwe. 2002. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- FNCOFOR, ONF International, and ACFCAM. 2007. *Programme d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Communales du Cameroun*. Yaoundé, Cameroun.



- Fonchingong, Charles C. 2004. The Travails of Democratization in Cameroon in the Context of Political Liberalisation since the 1990s. *African and Asian Studies* 3 (1): 33-59.
- Fonchingong, Tangie Nsoh. 1998. Multipartyism and Democratization in Cameroon. *Journal of Third World Studies* 15 (2): 119-136.
- Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (FAC). 1997. *Convention de Financement 166/CD/96/CAE entre la République Française et la République du Cameroun pour l'Exécution du Projet 'Forêts et Terroirs'*.
- Forêts et Terroirs. 1997. *Lettre de Commande*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 1999. *Présentation de l'Exposé lors de la Réunion de Consultation sur la Forêt Communale de Dimako tenue le Mardi 7 Décembre 1999 à l'Hôtel de Ville de Dimako sous la Présidence de Monsieur le Préfet du Département du Haut Nyong*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000a. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Note Technique*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000b. *Présentation du Projet Forêts et Terroirs*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Forni, Eric, and Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. 1999. *Etat d'Avancement du Projet Forêts et Terroirs au 31 Décembre 1998*. Dimako, Cameroon: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Fortmann, Louise, Emery Roe, and Michel van Eeten. 2001. At the Threshold between Governance and Management: Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa. *Public Administration and Development* 21 (2): 171-185.
- Fox, Jonathan. 1994. Latin America's Emerging Local Politics. *Journal of Democracy* 5 (2): 105-116.
- Furniss, Norman. 1974. The Practical Significance of Decentralization. *The Journal of Politics* 36 (4): 958-982.
- Geschiere, Peter. 1982. *Village Communities and the State: Changing Relations among the Maka of South-Eastern Cameroon since the Colonial Conquest*. London, Boston and Melbourne: Kegan Paul International Ltd.
- . 1997. *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia.
- . 2004. "Ecology, Belonging and Xenophobia: The 1994 Forest Law in Cameroon and The Issue of 'Community'." In *Rights and The Politics of Recognition in Africa*, eds.

- Harri Englund and Francis B. Nyamnjoh. London and New York: Zed Books, Palgrave Macmillan. 237-259.
- . 2009. *The Perils of Belonging: Autochtony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gibson, Clark C., and Fabrice E. Lehoucq. 2003. The Local Politics of Decentralized Environmental Policy in Guatemala. *Journal of Environment and Development* 12 (1): 28-49.
- Global Witness. 2005. *Achievements and Lessons learned from Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) in Cameroon*. Global Witness.
- . 2009. *Trick or Treat? REDD, Development and Sustainable Forest Management*. London and Washington, DC: Global Witness.
- Global Witness Cameroon. 2004a. *Rapport de l'Observateur Indépendant N° 099Fr: Mission Conjointe UCC-Observateur Indépendant, Forêt Communale de Dimako 18 mai 2004*. Yaoundé, Cameroun.
- . 2004b. *Report of the Independent Observer N° 099En: Central Control Unit-Independent Observer Joint Mission, Dimako Council Forest, 18 May 2004*. Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Goldman, Michael. 1998. "Inventing The Commons: Theories and Practices of The Commons Professional." In *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for The Global Commons*, ed. M. Goldman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 20-53.
- Grainger, Alan. 2008. "Tropical Moist Forests and Development." In *The Companion to Development Studies*, eds. Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter. London: Hodder Education. 324-330.
- Greenpeace. 2007. *Forest Reform in the DRC: How The World Bank is Failing to Learn The Lessons from Cameroon*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Greenpeace International.
- Grindle, Merilee S. 2007a. *Going Local: Decentralization and The Promise of Good Governance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2007b. "Local Governments that Perform Well: Four Explanations." In *Decentralizing Governance: Emerging Concepts and Practices*, eds. G. Shabbir Cheema and Dennis A. Rondinelli. Cambridge, MA; Washington, DC: Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University ; Brookings Institution Press. 56-74.
- Gros, Jean-Germain. 1995. The Hard Lessons of Cameroon. *Journal of Democracy* 6 (3): 112-127.

- Guimdo, Bertrand-Raymond. 1998. Les Bases Constitutionnelles de la Décentralisation au Cameroun: Contribution à l'Etude de l'Emergence d'un Droit Constitutionnel des Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées. *Revue Générale de Droit* 29 (1): 79-100.
- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162: 1243-1248.
- Heller, Patrick. 2001. Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre. *Politics and Society* 29 (1): 131-163.
- Heller, Patrick, K. N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri. 2007. Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India. *World Development* 35 (4): 626-648.
- Higman, Sophie, James Mayers, Stephen Bass, Neil Judd, and Ruth Nussbaum. 2005. *The Sustainable Forestry Handbook: A Practical Guide for Tropical Forest Managers on Implementing New Standards*. 2nd ed of *The Earthscan Forestry Library*. London, Sterling, VA: Earthscan; ProForest Limited; and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).
- Hope, Kempe R. 2000. Decentralization and Local Governance Theory and the Practice in Botswana. *Development Southern Africa* 17 (4): 519-534.
- Hope, Kempe R., and Bornwell C. Chikulo. 2000. Decentralization, The New Public Management, and The Changing Role of The Public Sector in Africa. *Public Management Review* 2 (1): 25-42.
- ITTO. 2005. *Revised ITTO Criteria and Indicators for the Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests including Reporting Format*. Yokohama, Japan: International Tropical Timber Organization.
- Jardin, Jean-Luc. 1995. *Étude de l'Abandon de Bois sur les Parcs d'Exploitation en Forêt*. Dimako, Cameroun: Projet Aménagement Pilote Intégré de Dimako (API), Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun.
- Jeune Afrique. 2010. "Détournements: 14 Affaires, 215 Milliards de FCFA." *Jeune Afrique*, Online at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2553p032-035.xml2/justice-condamnation-detournement-de-fonds-urbain-olanguena-awonodetournements-14-affaires-215-milliards-de-f-cfa.html> (retrieved 16 August 2011).
- Johnson, Craig. 2001. Local Democracy, Democratic Decentralisation and Rural Development: Theories, Challenges and Options for Policy. *Development Policy Review* 19 (4): 521-532.
- Kaimowitz, David, Cristian Vallejos, Pablo B. Pacheco, and Raul Lopez. 1998. Municipal Governments and Forest Management in Lowland Bolivia. *Journal of Environment and Development* 7 (1): 45-59.

- Kamdem, Jean Baptiste. 2006. *Marges de Manœuvre des Communes dans la Gestion de leurs Ressources Naturelles: Guide. Gestion du Patrimoine Communal Tome 1*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation et au Développement Local (PADDL) et Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).
- Kamto, Maurice. 2000. *Consultation Juridique sur les Étapes de Classement d'une Forêt Communale: Cas de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun.
- Kanté, Ahmadou M. 2006. *Décentralisation sans Représentation: Le Charbon de Bois entre les Collectivités Locales et l'État*. Dakar, Sénégal: Conseil pour le Développement de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales (CODESRIA); World Resources Institute (WRI); Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD).
- Karsenty, Alain. 1999. Vers la Fin de L'Etat Forestier: Appropriation des Espaces et Partage de la Rente Forestière au Cameroun. *Politique Africaine* 75: 147-161.
- . 2010. Forest Taxation Regime for Tropical Forests: Lessons from Central Africa. *International Forestry Review* 12 (2): 121-129.
- Karsenty, Alain, Guillaume Lescuyer, Driss Ezzine de Blas, T. Sembres, and Cédric Vermeulen. 2010. "Community Forests in Central Africa: Present Hurdles and Prospective Evolutions." Presented at the Taking Stock of Smallholder and Community Forestry: Where Do We Go from Here?, 24-26 March, Montpellier, France.
- Karsenty, Alain, JM Roda, A. Milol, E. Fochivé, and INS. 2006. *Audit Economique et Financier du Secteur Forestier au Cameroun*. Département Forêts du CIRAD et Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances du Cameroun.
- Kauneckis, Derek, and Krister P. Andersson. 2009. Making Decentralization Work: A Cross-National Examination of Local Governments and Natural Resource Governance in Latin America. *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)* 44 (1): 23-46.
- Kemajou, Baudelaire. 2010. "Editorial." *CTFC Infos* 4, 3.
- Khadiagala, Gilbert M., and Winnie M. Mitullah. 2004. "Kenya's Decentralization through the Devolution of Power: Advances and Limits." In *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, eds. Philip Oxhorn, Joseph S. Tulchin and Andrew D. Selee. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press. 190-207.
- Kini Nsom, Yerima. 2010. "Speaker clashes with Hon. Ayah over Elecamlaw." In *The Post*. Buea, Cameroun. 2.
- Kini Nsom, Yerima, and Daniel Gwarbarah. 2010. "MINATD Re-empowered to Handle Elections?" In *The Post*. Buea, Cameroun. 2.

- Konings, Piet. 1996. "The Post-Colonial State and Economic and Political Reforms in Cameroon." In *Liberalization in the Developing World: Institutional and Economic Changes in Latin America, Africa and Asia*, eds. Alex E. Fernández Jilberto and André Mommen: Routledge. 244-265.
- . 2004. "Good Governance, Privatization and Ethno-Regional Conflict in Cameroon." In *Good Governance in the Era of Global Neoliberalism: Conflict and Depoliticization in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa*, eds. Jolle Demmers, Alex E. Fernandez Jilberto and Barbara Hogenboo. New York: Routledge. 306-330.
- Konings, Piet, and Francis B. Nyamnjoh. 1997. The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35 (2): 207-229.
- Kuaté, Jean-Pierre. 2002. *Les Elections Locales au Cameroun: L'Election des Conseillers Municipaux et du Maire*. Douala, Cameroun: MACACOS.
- . 2007. *Les Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées au Cameroun: Recueil de Textes*. 4th ed. Douala, Cameroon: Les Dynamiques Locales.
- Kumar, Chetan. 2005. Revisiting 'Community' in Community-Based Natural Resource Management. *Community Development Journal* 40 (3): 275-285.
- Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lacam, Jean-Patrice. 1988. Le Politicien Investisseur: Un Modèle d'Interprétation de la Gestion des Ressources Politiques. *Revue Française de Science Politique* 38 (1): 23-47.
- Larson, Anne M. 2002. Natural Resources and Decentralization in Nicaragua: Are Local Governments Up to the Job? *World Development* 30 (1): 17-31.
- . 2003. Decentralisation and Forest Management in Latin America: Towards A Working Model. *Public Administration and Development* 23 (3): 211-226.
- . 2004. Formal Decentralisation and the Imperative of Decentralization 'from Below': A Case Study of Natural Resource Management in Nicaragua. *European Journal of Development Research* 16 (1): 55-70.
- . 2005. "Democratic Decentralization in the Forestry Sector: Lessons Learned from Africa, Asia, and Latin America." In *The Politics of Decentralization: Forests, People and Power*, eds. Carol J. Pierce Colfer and Doris Capistrano. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan. 32-62.
- Larson, Anne M., and Fernanda Soto. 2008. Decentralization of Natural Resource Governance Regimes. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 33: 213-240.
- Larson, Anne, and Jesse Ribot. 2004. Democratic Decentralization through A Natural Resource Lens: An Introduction. *The European Journal of Development Research* 16 (1): 1-25.

- Lassagne, Antoine. 2005. Exploitation Forestière, Développement Durable et Stratégies de Pouvoir dans une Forêt Tropicale Camerounaise. *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 29 (1): 49-79.
- Laurent, Pierre-Joseph. 2000. Le "Big Man" Local ou la "Gestion Coup d'Etat" de l'Espace Public. *Politique Africaine* 80: 169-181.
- Le Vine, Victor T. 1971. *The Cameroon Federal Republic*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Lele, Uma, Nalini Kumar, Syed Arif Husain, Aaron Zazueta, and Lauren Kelly. 2000. *The World Bank Forest Strategy: Striking the Right Balance*. of *World Bank Operations Evaluation Department*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Mahop, Charles. 2011. "Operation Epervier: 30 ans de Prison pour Paulin Abomo Moampamb, ex Secrétaire d'Etat aux Travaux publics." In *Le Jour* (24 Août). Online at <http://www.cameroon-info.net/stories/0,29240,@,operation-epervier-30-ans-de-prison-pour-paulin-abomo-moampamb-ex-secretaire-d-e.html> (retrieved 13 September 2011).
- Mandeng Ambassa, Patrice. 2009. "1960-2010: les Effets de la Politique Economique sur la Croissance au Cameroun." *Les Cahiers de Mutations (Hors Série N° 03)*, 6.
- Manor, James. 1999. *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- . 2002. "Democratic Decentralization and the Issue of Inequity." Presented at the World Resources Institute (WRI) Conference on Decentralization and The Environment, 18-22 February, Bellagio, Italy.
- Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. 1999. *Designing Qualitative Research*. of 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matose, Frank, and Scotney Watts. 2010. Towards Community-Based Forest Management in Southern Africa: Do Decentralization Experiments Work for Local Livelihoods? *Environmental Conservation* 37 (3): 310 -319.
- Mawhood, Philip. 1983a. "Applying the French Model in Cameroon." In *Local Government in the Third World: The Experience of Tropical Africa*, ed. Philip Mawhood. New York: John Siley & Sons Ltd. 177-200.
- . 1983b. "Decentralization: The Concept and The Practice." In *Local Government in the Third World: The Experience of Tropical Africa*, ed. Philip Mawhood. New York: John Siley & Sons Ltd. 1-24.
- . 1983c. "Conclusion: The Problem of Decentralization for Governments." In *Local Government in the Third World: The Experience of Tropical Africa*, ed. Philip Mawhood. New York: John Siley & Sons Ltd. 249-255.

- Mbodiam, Brice R. 2011a. "Chambre d'Agriculture: La Renaissance après 25 ans de Somnolence?" In *Mutations (11 Mai)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305101324&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=2&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305101324&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&) (accessed 11 May 2011).
- . 2011b. "Janvier Mongui Sossomba: Un Forestier pour relancer la Chambre d'Agriculture." In *Mutations (11 Mai)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305100900&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=2&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305100900&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&) (accessed 11 May 2011).
- Mbodiam, Brice R., and Sebastian Chi Elvido. 2011. "Janvier Mongui Sossomba: Un Forestier à la Tête de la Chambre d'Agriculture." In *Mutations (16 Mars)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/economie.php?subaction=showfull&id=1300258959&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=26&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/economie.php?subaction=showfull&id=1300258959&archive=&start_from=&ucat=26&) (accessed 16 March 2011).
- McDermott, M.H., and K. Schreckenberg. 2009. Equity in Community Forestry: Insights from North and South. *International Forestry Review* 11 (2): 157-170.
- Médard, Jean-François. 1992. Le "Big Man" en Afrique: Analyse du Politicien Entrepreneur. *Année Sociologique* 42: 167-192.
- Mehler, Andreas. 1997. "Cameroon: une Transition qui n'a pas eu lieu." In *Transitions Démocratiques Africaines: Dynamiques et Contraintes (1990-1994)*, eds. Jean-Pascal Daloz and Patrick Quantin. Paris: Khartala. 95-138.
- Mekok Balara, Marcelin. 2001a. *Commune Rurale de Dimako: Plan d'Aménagement de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2001b. "Projet d'Aménagement d'une Série Agro Forestière dans la Forêt Communale de Dimako." In *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*, ed. Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. Yaoundé, Cameroun: CIRAD. 87-94.
- Mekok Balara, Marcelin, and Jean Michel Borie. 2000. *Actualisation du Plan d'Aménagement de la Forêt Communale de Dimako (16200 ha)*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Mendouga Mebenga, Luc. 1999. *Perception de la Forêt Communale de Dimako par les Populations: Rapport des Travaux de Réunions Villageoises*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000a. *Rapport d'Enquête Socio-économique en vue de la Réalisation du Plan d'Aménagement de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et

- Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000b. *La Tragédie des Mille Francs*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Mendoza, Guillermo A., and Ravi Prabhu. 2000. Development of A Methodology for Selecting Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management: A Case Study on Participatory Assessment. *Environmental Management* 26 (6): 659-673.
- Menye, François. 2007. *Appui à la Gestion Durable et la Valorisation des Produits d'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale de Dimako: Rapport de Stage effectué à Dimako (Est) du 2 Octobre au 31 Décembre 2007*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Programme d'Appui au Programme Sectoriel Forêts et Environnement (ProPSFE).
- Meynen, Wicky, and Martin Doornbos. 2004. Decentralising Natural Resource Management: A Recipe for Sustainability and Equity? *European Journal Of Development Research* 16 (1): 235-254.
- MINATD. 2008. *Guide du Maire et du Conseiller Municipal*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Décentralisation (MINATD), FEICOM et Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle de l'Ambassade de France au Cameroun.
- MINATD, MINFI, and MINFOF. 2010. *Arrêté Conjoint N° 520 MINATD/MINFI/MINFOF du 03 Juin 2010 fixant les Modalités d'Emploi et de Suivi de la Gestion des Revenus provenant de l'Exploitation des Ressources Forestières et Fauniques destinés aux Communes et aux Communautés Villageoises Riveraines*.
- MINEF. 1999. *Décision N° 1354/D/MINEF/CAB du 26 Novembre 1999 fixant les Procédures de Classement des Forêts du Domaine Forestier Permanent de la République du Cameroun*.
- . 2001. *Arrêté N° 0222/A/MINEF/25 Mai 2001 fixant les Procédures d'Élaboration, d'Approbation, de Suivi et de Contrôle de la Mise en Œuvre, des Plans d'Aménagement des Forêts de Production du Domaine Forestier Permanent*.
- MINEFI, and MINATD. 1998. *Arrêté Conjoint N° 0122 MINEF/MINAT du 29 Avril 1998 fixant les Modalités d'Emploi des Revenus provenant de l'Exploitation Forestière et destinés aux Communautés Villageoises Riveraines*.
- MINEP. 2005. *Arrêté N° 0070/MINEP du 22 Avril 2005 fixant les Différentes Catégories d'Opérations dont la Réalisation est soumise à une Etude d'Impact Environnemental*.
- . 2009. *Lettre N° TR/00000069/R/MINEP/CAB/CIE Termes de Référence de l'Étude d'Impact Environnemental relative à l'Exploitation de la Forêt Communale de Dimako*.
- MINFOF. 2005. *Stratégie Nationale des Contrôles Forestiers et Fauniques au Cameroun*.



- . 2006. *Lettre N° 0056/L/MINFOF/SG/DF/SDIAF/SA du 22 Mars 2006 portant Notification de l'Approbation du Plan d'Aménagement de la Forêt Communale de Dimako.*
- . 2007. *Permis Annuel d'Opération N° 0776/PAO/MINFOF/SG/DF/SDAFF/SIGIF, Convention Définitive d'Exploitation, Commune Rurale de Dimako (1; 2-1).*
- . 2008. *Permis Annuel d'Opération 2008, Convention Définitive d'Exploitation, Commune Rurale de Dimako (2-1; 2-3).*
- . 2009a. *Permis Annuel d'Opération 2009, Convention Définitive d'Exploitation, Commune Rurale de Dimako (2-4).*
- . 2009b. *Lettre N° 0060/L/MINFOF/SG/DF/SDAFF, Demande de Prorogation du Certificat de l'AAC 2-4 de l'UFA 388 a/n Commune de Dimako.*
- MINFOF, and GTZ. 2008. *Brochure d'Information sur les Forêts Communales au Cameroun.* Yaoundé, Cameroun.
- Minnemeyer, Susan, Henriette Bikié, Jean-Gaël Collomb, Louis Djomo, Roger Ngoufo, and Samuel-Alain Nguiffo. 2000. *An Overview of Logging in Cameroon.* Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- Mongui Sossomba, Janvier. 2001a. "Attentes des Populations et Stratégies de Gestion de la Forêt Communale de Dimako, Province de l'Est." In *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*, ed. Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. Yaoundé, Cameroun: CIRAD. 131-134.
- . 2001b. "Premier Discours d'Ouverture." In *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*, ed. Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. Yaoundé, Cameroun: CIRAD. viii-ix.
- . 2009. *Cérémonie de Signature du Protocole d'Accord entre le Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune (MINFOF) et l'Association des Communes Forestières du Cameroun (ACFCAM): Discours de M. Mongui Sossomba Janvier, Maire de la Commune de Dimako et Président de l'ACFCAM. Yaoundé, le 10 Novembre 2009.*
- . n.d. *Forêt Communale de Dimako: Statistiques des Bois Exploités en 2004 et 2005.* Dimako, Cameroun.
- Montero, Alfred P., and David Samuels. 2004a. "The Political Determinants in Decentralization in Latin America: Causes and Consequences." In *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America*, eds. Alfred P. Montero and David Samuels. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 3-33.

- , eds. 2004b. *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Montgomery, Phyllis, and Pat H. Bailey. 2007. Field Notes and Theoretical Memos in Grounded Theory. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 29 (1): 65-79.
- Morrison, Karl, Paolo Omar Cerutti, Phil René Oyono, and Matthew Steil. 2009. *Broken Promises: Forest Revenue-Sharing in Cameroon*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- Mpayiguia, François, and Gervais Ondoua. 2000a. *Rapport d'Enquêtes Socio-Economiques autour de l'UFA 10-046: Village de Ngombol*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000b. *Rapport d'Enquêtes Socio-Economiques autour de l'UFA 10-046: Village d'Akano*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000c. *Rapport d'Enquêtes Socio-Economiques autour de l'UFA 10-046: Village de Nkolmeyanga*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000d. *Rapport d'Enquêtes Socio-Economiques autour de l'UFA 10-046: Village de Nkolbikon*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . 2000e. *Rapport d'Enquêtes Socio-Economiques autour de l'UFA 10-046: Village de Siméyong*. Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs. Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Naab, Matthias Zana. 2005. "Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance in Ghana: Assessing the Performance of District Assemblies and Exploring the Scope of Partnerships." PhD Dissertation University of Pittsburgh.
- Nach, Charles. 2004. "Projet de Loi d'Orientation: De la Montagne à la Souris?" In *La Nouvelle Expression* (30 juin). 9.
- Nankam, Appolinaire. 2009a. "Inauguration: Les Communes Forestieres ont une 'Maison'." *CTFC Infos* 001, 4.
- . 2009b. "Interview Janvier Mongui: Les Partenaires Nationaux hésitent encore." *CTFC Infos* 001, 10.
- . 2010. "Interview M. Mongui Janvier, Maire de la Commune de Dimako: "Nous sommes pour la Transformation Locale de Bois des Forêts Communales"." *CTFC Infos* 003, 10.
- Ndoumbé Diwouta, Franck. 2004. "Etat des lieux en Afrique: Le Cameroun au bas de l'Echelle Continentale." In *La Nouvelle Expression*. 8.

- Ngniado, Alphonse. 1999. *Projet de la Forêt Communale de Dimako: Présentation*. Dimako, Cameroun: Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- . n.d. *Un Sommier de la Forêt: Pour Quoi Faire?* Dimako, Cameroun: Forêts et Terroirs, Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts du Cameroun et Coopération Française.
- Nguenang, Guy Merlin, Quentin Delvienne, Vincent Beligné, and Marie Mbolo. 2007. "La Gestion Décentralisée des Ressources Forestières au Cameroun: Les Forêts Communales après les Forêts Communautaires." Presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Conférence sur les Écosystèmes Denses et Humides d'Afrique Centrale (CEFDHAC), 20-23 Novembre, Libreville, Gabon.
- Nijenhuis, Gery. 2010 "The Impact of Decentralization on Local Development: The Case of Bolivia." In *Decentralized Development in Latin America: Experiences in Local Governance and Local Development*, eds. Paul Van Lindert and Otto Verkoren. London; NY: Springer. 69-86.
- Niksic, George Martin. 2003. "Democratizing Decentralization in South Africa: A Case Study of Local Government in Port Elizabeth." PhD Dissertation York University.
- Njoh, Ambe J. 2011. Municipal Councils, International NGOs and Citizen Participation in Public Infrastructure Development in Rural Settlements in Cameroon. *Habitat International* 35: 101-110.
- Nkoum-Me-Ntseny, Louis-Marie-Magloire, and Patrice Bigombé Logo. 2004. "La Problématique de la Gestion Participative des Ressources Forestières au Cameroun : Etat des Lieux et Perspectives." In *Le Retournement de l'Etat Forestier: L'Endroit et l'Envers des Processus de Gestion Forestière au Cameroun*, ed. Patrice Bigombé Logo. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Presses de l'UCAC. 277-298.
- Noiraud, Jean-Marie, David Abouem a Tchoyi, Martin Nkolo Ndzodo, and Michelle Pongoue. 2007. *Analyse Comparée des Textes Relatifs à la Législation Forestière et la Décentralisation au Cameroun*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: JMN Consultant; GTZ/Programme de Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles (PGDRN).
- Ntiga, Léger. 2008. "Cameroun: Paulin Abono Moampamb arrêté." In *Mutations (14 Mars)*. Online at <http://www.cameroon-info.net/stories/0,22208,@,gouvernance-paulin-abono-moampamb-arrete.html> (retrieved 16 August 2011).
- . 2010. "Forêts Communales: Un Projet miné par des Lenteurs Administratives." In *Mutations (8 Juin)*. Online at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201006080933.html> (accessed 16 August 2010).
- . 2011. "Et Que de Brocantes!" In *Mutations (11 Mai)*. Online at [http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305100521&archive=&start\\_from=&ucat=2&](http://www.quotidienmutations.info/unfait-unjour.php?subaction=showfull&id=1305100521&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&) (accessed 11 May 2011).

- Nyuylime, Lukong Pius. 2010. "Cameroon's Population Hits 19.4 Million." In *Cameroon Tribune*. Online at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004150565.html> (accessed 22 November 2010).
- O'Neill, Kathleen M. 2003. Decentralization As An Electoral Strategy. *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (9): 1068-1091.
- . 2004. "Decentralization in Bolivia: Electoral Incentives and Outcomes." In *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America*, eds. Alfred P. Montero and David Samuels. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 35-66.
- . 2005. *Decentralizing the State: Elections, Parties, and Local Power in the Andes*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Okole, Serges Olivier. 2006. "Dimako: La Jeunesse en Phase avec Chantal Biya." In *Cameroon Tribune* (29 Août). Online at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200608290155.html> (retrieved 22 February 2011).
- . 2009. "Dimako fête Paul Biya, en Football." In *Cameroon Tribune* (6 Juillet). Online at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200907060892.html> (retrieved 22 February 2011).
- Olowu, Bamidele. 2001. *African Decentralization Policies and Practices from 1980s and Beyond*. The Hague, Netherlands: Institute of Social Studies.
- Olowu, Dele. 2001. *Decentralization Policies and Practices under Structural Adjustment and Democratization in Africa*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).
- Olowu, Dele, and Paul Smoke. 1992. Determinants of Success in African Local Governments: An Overview. *Public Administration and Development* 12 (1): 1-17.
- Olowu, Dele, and James S. Wunsch. 2004a. "Conclusions." In *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Decentralization*, eds. Dele Olowu and James S. Wunsch. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 237-272.
- , eds. 2004b. *Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Decentralization*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Om Bilong, Godefroy, Armand Zongang Ngongang, Eric Kaffo Nzouwo, Adolphe Serge Lamont Ondoua, and Guy Merlin Nguenang. 2009. *Etat des Lieux de la Mise en Œuvre des Plans d'Aménagements des Forêts Communales dans la Région de l'Est: Rapport de Mission, 26 Novembre-10 Décembre 2009*. Bertoua, Cameroun: MINFOF; GTZ; CTFC.
- Onohiolo, Souley. 2009a. "L'An 2008." In *L'Etat du Cameroun 2008*, ed. Fabien Eboussi Boulaga. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Edition Terroirs. 19-34.
- . 2009b. "Comment la Redevance Forestière est détournée à l'Est." In *Le Messager*. Douala, Cameroun. 5.

- . 2010. "Chambre d'Agriculture: Jean Nkuete défie la Cour Suprême." In *Le Messager* (13 Août 2010). Online at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201008130764.html> (retrieved 20 January 2011).
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing The Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. of *The Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxhorn, Philip. 2004. "Unraveling the Puzzle of Decentralization." In *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, eds. Philip Oxhorn, Joseph S. Tulchin and Andrew D. Selee. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Press. 3-30.
- Oyono, Phil René. 2004a. The Social and Organizational Roots of Ecological Uncertainties in Cameroon's Forest Management Decentralization Model. *European Journal of Development Research* 16 (1 ): 174-191.
- . 2004b. One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? Paradoxes of Natural Resources Management Decentralization in Cameroon. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42 (1): 91-111.
- . 2004c. *Institutional Deficit, Representation, and Decentralized Forest Management in Cameroon: Elements of Natural Resource Sociology for Social Theory and Public Policy*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- . 2004d. Assessing Accountability in Cameroon's Local Forest Management. Are Representatives Responsive? *African Journal of Political Science* 9 (1): 126-136.
- . 2005a. Profiling Local-Level Outcomes of Environmental Decentralizations: The Case of Cameroon's Forests in the Congo Basin. *Journal of Environment and Development* 14 (3): 317-337.
- . 2005b. The Foundations of The *Conflit de Langage* over Land and Forests in Southern Cameroon. *African Study Monographs* 26 (3): 115-144.
- . 2009. New Niches of Community Rights to Forests in Cameroon: Tenure Reform, Decentralization Category or Something Else? *International Journal of Social Forestry* 2 (1): 1-23.
- Oyono, Phil René, Paolo Omar Cerutti, and Matthew Steil. 2009. *Forest Taxation in Post-1994 Cameroon: Distributional Mechanisms and Emerging Links with Poverty Alleviation and Equity*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- Oyono, Phil René, and Samuel Efoua. 2006. La Représentation Environnementale au Cameroun: Une Exploration des Liens entre les Choix Institutionnels, la Démocratie Locale et les Résultats de la Gestion Décentralisée des Forêts. *Africa Development* 31 (2): 149-184.

- Oyono, Phil René, Charlotte Kouna, and William Mala. 2005. Benefits of Forests in Cameroon: Global Structure, Issues involving Access and Decision-Making Hiccoughs. *Forest Policy and Economics* 7 (3): 357-368.
- Oyono, Phil René, Jesse C. Ribot, Samuel Assembé-Mvondo, and Patrice Bigombé Logo. 2007. "Improving Decentralized Forest Management in Cameroon: Options and Opportunities from Ten Years of Experience." *CIFOR Governance Brief* 33.
- Pacheco, Pablo. 2005. "Decentralization of Forest Management in Bolivia: Who Benefits and Why?" In *The Politics of Decentralization: Forests, People and Power*, eds. Carol J. Pierce Colfer and Doris Capistrano. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan. 166-183.
- Pagdee, Adcharaporn, Yeon-Su Kim, and P. J. Daugherty. 2006. What Makes Community Forest Management Successful: A Meta-Study From Community Forests Throughout the World. *Society and Natural Resources* 19 (1): 33-52.
- Painter, Thomas, James Sumberg, and Thomas Price. 1994. Your "Terroir" and My 'Action Space': Implications of Differentiation, Mobility and Diversification for the "Approche Terroir" in Sahelian West Africa. *Africa* 64 (4): 447-464.
- Parker, Andrew N. 1995. *Decentralization: The Way forward for Rural Development?* Washington, D.C.: World Bank
- Parker, Andrew N., and Johann F. Kirsten. 1995. Decentralization: Toward A Revitalized Strategy for Rural Development. *Agrekon* 34 (4): 242-249.
- Parry, Taryn Rounds. 1997. Achieving Balance in Decentralization: A Case Study of Education Decentralization in Chile. *World Development* 25 (2): 211-225.
- Peters, B. Guy. 2005. *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New' Institutionalism*. Second ed. London and New York: Continuum.
- . 2008. "Institutional Theory: Problems and Prospects." In *Debating Institutionalism*, eds. Jon Pierre, B. Guy Peters and Gerry Stoker. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 1-21.
- Picard, Louis A. 1983. Decentralization, "Recentralization" and "Steering Mechanisms": Paradoxes of Local Government in Denmark. *Polity* 15 (4): 536-554.
- Picard, Louis A., Robert Groelsema, and Ted Lawrence. 2008. "Donors, Public-Sector Reform and Decentralization: Democracy and Civil Society in Ghana." In *Foreign Aid and Foreign Policy: Lessons for the Next Half-Century*, eds. Louis A. Picard, Robert Groelsema and Terry F. Buss. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe. 146-172.
- Picard, Nicolas, Ludovic Ngok Banak, Salomon Namkossereana, and Yves Yalibanda. 2009. The Stock Recovery Rate in A Central African Rain Forest: An Index of Sustainability based on Projection Matrix Models. *Canadian Journal of Forest Research* 39 (11): 2138-2152.

- Poissonnet, Mikael, Alexis Parmantier, Brigitte Wingaarde, Emmanuel Bifane Elle, Julien Demenois, and Guillaume Lescuyer. 2006. Espoirs et Difficultés du Transfert de la Gestion Forestière à Deux Communautés de Guyane et du Cameroun. *Bois et Forêts des Tropiques* 60 (289): 5-16.
- Purcell, Mark, and J. Christopher Brown. 2005. Against the Local Trap: Scale and the Study of Environment and Development. *Progress in Development Studies* 5 (4): 279-297.
- Reed, Maureen G., and Shannon Bruyneel. 2010. Rescaling Environmental Governance, Rethinking the State: A Three-Dimensional Review. *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (5): 646-653.
- REM. 2008. *Rapport de l'Observateur Indépendant N° 084/OI/REM: Mission Conjointe BNC-Observateur Indépendant*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Resource Extraction Monitoring.
- . 2009. *IM-FLEG Cameroon: Progress in Tackling Illegal Logging in Cameroon, Results March 2005-December 2009*. Cambridge, UK: Resource Extraction Monitoring.
- Requête des Populations de Tombo I, Tombo II, Dieu-Connaît et Kampala (3 Janvier)*. 2009. Dimako. Cameroun.
- Ribot, Jesse C. 1999. Decentralization, Participation and Accountability in Sahelian Forestry: Legal Instruments of Political-Administrative Control. *Africa* 69 (1): 23-65.
- . 2002a. *African Decentralization: Local Actors, Powers and Accountability*. of *Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Paper N° 8*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).
- . 2002b. *Democratic Decentralization of Natural Resources: Institutionalizing Popular Participation*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- . 2003. Democratic Decentralization of Natural Resources: Institutional Choice and Discretionary Power Transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Public Administration and Development* 23 (1): 53-65.
- . 2004. *Waiting for Democracy: The Politics of Choice in Natural Resource Decentralization*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institution (WRI).
- . 2005. "Choosing Representation: Institutions and Powers for Decentralized National Resources Management." In *The Politics of Decentralization: Forests, People and Power*, eds. Carol J. Pierce Colfer and Doris Capistrano. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan. 87-106.
- . 2008a. *Building Local Democracy through Natural Resource Interventions An Environmentalist's Responsibility: A Policy Brief*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).

- . 2008b. *Non-Décentralisation Démocratique au Sénégal: Le Non-Transfert de l'Autorité sur les Forêts*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute (WRI).
- . 2009. Authority over Forests: Empowerment and Subordination in Senegal's Democratic Decentralization. *Development and Change* 40 (1): 105-129.
- Ribot, Jesse C., Arun Agrawal, and Anne M. Larson. 2006. Recentralizing while Decentralizing: How National Governments Reappropriate Forest Resources. *World Development* 34 (11): 1864-1886.
- Ribot, Jesse C., Jens Friis Lund, and Thorsten Treue. 2010. Democratic Decentralization in sub-Saharan Africa: Its Contribution to Forest Management, Livelihoods, and Enfranchisement. *Environmental Conservation* 37 (1): 35 -44.
- Rice, Richard E., Cheri A. Sugai, Shelley M. Ballay, and Gustavo A.B. da Fonseca. 2001. *Sustainable Forest Management: A Review of Conventional Wisdom*. of *Advances in Applied Biodiversity Science*, no. 3. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, Conservation International.
- ROC. 1981a. *Loi N° 81-13 du 27 Novembre 1981 portant Régime des Forêts, de la Faune et de la Pêche*.
- . 1981b. *Law N° 81-13 of 27 November 1981 laying down Regulations of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries*.
- . 1983a. *Décret n° 83-169 du 12 Avril 1983 fixant le Régime des Forêts*.
- . 1983b. *Decree n° 83-169 of 12 April 1983 to lay down Forestry Regulations*.
- . 1994. *Loi N° 94-01 du 20 Janvier 1994 portant Régime des Forêts, de La Faune, et de La Pêche*.
- . 1996. *Loi N° 96-12 du 5 Août 1996 portant Loi-Cadre Relative à la Gestion de l'Environnement*.
- . 2001. *Décret N° 2001/386 CAB/PM du 13 Juin 2001 Portant Incorporation au Domaine Privé de la Commune Rurale de Dimako d'une Portion de Forêt de 16240 ha*.
- . 2004a. *Loi N° 2004/017 du 22 juillet 2004 d'Orientation de la Décentralisation*.
- . 2004b. *Loi N° 2004/018 du 22 juillet 2004 fixant les Règles Applicables aux Communes*.
- . 2005. *Décret N° 2005/0577/PM du 23 Février 2005 fixant les Modalités de Réalisation des Etudes d'Impact Environnemental*.
- . 2008a. *Décret N° 2008/377 du 12 Novembre 2008 fixant les Attributions des Chefs de Circonscriptions Administratives et portant Organisation et Fonctionnement de leurs Services*.



- . 2008b. *Décret N° 2008/0752/PM du 24 avril 2008 précisant Certaines Modalités d'Organisation et de Fonctionnement des Organes Délibérants et des Exécutifs de la Commune, de la Communauté Urbaine et du Syndicat de Communes.*
- . 2009a. *Loi N° 2009/011 du 10 juillet 2009 portant Régime Financier des Collectivités Décentralisées.*
- . 2009b. *Loi N° 2009/019 du 15 Décembre 2009 portant Fiscalité Locale.*
- . 2009c. *Décret N° 2009/249 du 06 Août 2009 portant Changement de Dénomination et Réorganisation de la Chambre d'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et des Forêts du Cameroun.*
- Rondinelli, Dennis A. 1981. Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 47: 133-145.
- Rondinelli, Dennis A., John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema. 1983. *Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Rossmann, Gretchen B., and Sharon F. Rallis. 1998. *Learning in The Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rougier. n.d. "Organization." <http://www.rougier.fr/organigramme.html?&L=1> (retrieved 25 January 2011).
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. 1963. Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (3): 285-303.
- Samnick, Emmanuel Gustave 2010. "Elections: Tripatouillages à la Chambre d'Agriculture." In *Mutations* (22 juillet). Online at <http://www.quotidienmutations.info/juillet/1279780163.php> (retrieved 16 August 2011).
- Sangkwa, Francis. 2001. "Perceptions Villageoises du Foncier et Problématique du Classement: Cas de la Forêt Communale de Dimako." In *Gestion Durable des Forêts au Cameroun: Vers une Foresterie Responsable, Contributions du Projet Forêts et Terroirs, Actes de l'Atelier d'Échanges, Yaoundé (Cameroun), 4-6 juillet 2000, CIRAD-MINEF-ONADEF-ONF*, ed. Philippe Collas de Chatelperron. Yaoundé, Cameroun: CIRAD. 125-130.
- Sharma, Narendra P. , Simon Rietbergen, Claude R. Heimo, and Jyoti Patel. 1994. *A Strategy for the Forest Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Sharpe, Barrie. 1998. 'First the Forest': Conservation, 'Community' and 'Participation' in South-West Cameroon. *Africa* 68 (1): 25-45.

- Sieffert, André, and Hua Xuong Pierre Truong. 1992. "Mode de Production et Stratégies Paysannes des Communautés Rurales de la Zone forestière dans l'Est-Cameroun: Diagnostic pour le Projet d'Amenagement Pilote Intégré." Mémoire présenté pour l'obtention du Diplôme d'Ingénieur d'Agronomie Tropicale, Option Foresterie Rurale Centre National d'Etudes Agronomiques des Régions Chaudes (CNEARC).
- Silva, Eduardo, David Kaimowitz, Alan Bojanic, Francois Ekoko, Togu Manurung, and Iciar Pavez. 2002. Making the Law of the Jungle: The Reform of Forest Legislation in Bolivia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, and Indonesia. *Global Environmental Politics* 2 (3): 63-97.
- Singer, Benjamin. 2008. *Cameroonian Forest-Related Policies: A Multisectoral Overview of Public Policies in Cameroon's Forests since 1960*. Paris: Unpublished Report part of a PhD on Tropical Forest Policies at the Institut d'Études Politiques and CIRAD.
- Smedt, De. 2009. 'No Raila, No Peace!' Big Man Politics and Election Violence at the Kibera Grassroots. *African Affairs* 108 (433): 581-598.
- Smith, Brian C. 1985. *Decentralization: The Territorial Dimension of The State*. London; Boston: G. Allen & Unwin.
- Snyder, Richard. 2001. Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36 (1): 93-110.
- Soh, Alphonse. 2004. "Moins d'Etat pour plus d'Etat: les Nouvelles Lois maintiennent l'Essentiel du Dispositif de Tutelle même si le Champ d'Intervention des Communes s'élargit." In *Mutations*. Yaoundé, Cameroun. 11.
- Sonkey, Doh James. 2011. "Chamber of Agric gets President at last!" In *The Sun* (26 March). Online at [http://the-news-from-cameroon.com/article.php?article\\_id=1851](http://the-news-from-cameroon.com/article.php?article_id=1851) (accessed 20 April 2011).
- Soudan, François. 2010. "Ces VIP Camerounais derrière les Barreaux." *Jeune Afrique*, Online at <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAJA2553p032-035.xml0/cameroun-justice-corruption-paul-biyaces-vip-camerounais-derriere-les-barreaux.html> (retrieved 16 August 2011).
- Steiner, Susan. 2007. Decentralisation and Poverty: Conceptual Framework and Application to Uganda. *Public Administration and Development* 27 (2): 175-185.
- Takougang, Joseph. 2003. The 2002 Legislative Election in Cameroon: A Retrospective on Cameroon's Stalled Democracy Movement. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41 (3): 421-436.
- Tandja, Michel. 2008. *Analyse Financière des Comptes des Communes: Manuel d'Utilisation des Ratios*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Presses de l'UCAC.

- Tchakounte, Alain. 2007. "Dimako: Sport et lutte contre le Sida font bon ménage." In *Cameroon Tribune*. Online at <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200708270747.html> (retrieved 22 February 2011).
- Tesi, Moses K. 2000. "The Environment in Cameroon: Forest Resource Utilization, Forest Policy, and Forest Management." In *The Environment and Development in Africa*, ed. Moses K. Tesi. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 145-186.
- Thede, Nancy. 2009. Decentralization, Democracy and Human Rights: A Human Rights-based Analysis of the Impact of Local Democratic Reforms on Development. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 10 (1): 103-123.
- Tieguhong, Julius Chupezi. 2009. "Sustainable Forest Management in Cameroon." In *In Search of Common Ground: Adaptive Collaborative Management in Cameroon*, eds. Maritew Chimère Diaw, Tony Aseh and Ravi Prabhu. Bogor, Indonesia: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). 412-441.
- Topa, Giuseppe, Carole Megevand, Alain Karsenty, and Laurent Debroux. 2009. *The Rainforests of Cameroon: Experience and Evidence from A Decade of Reform*. Washington, DC: The World Bank Publications.
- Touo, Herman. 2009. Conflicting Narratives of Observation Reports on Cameroon's 2004 Presidential Election and the Problematic Role of the State Bureaucracy in the Electoral Process. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research* 1 (6): 101-116.
- Vandenhoute, Marc, and Jean-Louis Doucet. 2006. *Etude Comparative des 20 Plans d'Aménagement Approuvés au Cameroun*. Yaoundé, Cameroun: Pour le Compte de GTZ/PGDRN, Programme de Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles.
- Whiteman, A., and A. Lebedys. 2006. The Contribution of the Forestry Sector to African Economies. *International Forestry Review* 8 (1): 31-43.
- Woodhouse, Philip. 1997. Governance and Local Environmental Management in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy* 24 (74): 537-547.
- World Bank. 2008. *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of the World Bank Support, 1990-2007*. Washington, DC: World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG).
- Wunsch, James S. 2000. Refounding the African State and Local Self-Governance: The Neglected Foundation. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38 (3): 487-509.
- . 2001. Decentralization, Local Governance and 'Recentralization' in Africa. *Public Administration and Development* 21 (4): 277-288.
- Wunsch, James S., and Dele Olowu. 1997. Regime Transformation From Below: Decentralization, Local Governance, and Democratic Reform in Nigeria. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 31 (4): 66-82.

- , eds. 1990. *The Failure of The Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Yin, Robert K. 1994. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. of *Applied social research methods series*, v. 5. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Young, David.W. 2007. Independent Forest Monitoring: Seven Years on. *International Forestry Review* 9 (1): 563-574.
- Zülsdorf, Günther, Antonio Carillo, Martial Nkolo, and Quentin Delvienne. 2008. *Analyse de la Procédure de Classement et d'Immatriculation Foncière des Forêts Communales au Cameroun*. Bertoua, Cameroun: GTZ/PROPSFE (Programme d'Appui au Programme Sectoriel Forêt-Environnement).