

SPATIAL RIVALRIES AND SAND MINING IN SA'A: A CASE STUDY OF LAND CONFLICTS BETWEEN SAND MINERS AND WOMEN FARMERS.

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Abstract: *This study focuses on a gendered approach to land management in peri-urban areas. It focuses on the diminishing role that women continue to play despite the various changes that have taken place in society. The aim here is to set up a socio-anthropological material of lived situations that allow for the analysis of a conflictual situation generated by sand exploitation in two villages of the Sa'a district, namely Avazam and Song Ntsaga. The hypothesis adopted is as follows: the man owns the land and the woman manages it. This established order has so far allowed a fair balance for both. Today, the man claims to be the manager and invades the woman's agricultural space. The confrontation of these two actors generates conflicts with regard to the specificity of the roles of each. To verify this hypothesis, data was collected through documentary research, interviews and direct observation. The data collected gave rise to three articulations: the city's demand for sand, the modalities of access to the land and finally the management of the land in relation to the exploitation of the sand.*

Keywords : gender, rivalities, duable development, environnement.

1 The draining of the village by the city

The urbanisation of the city of Yaoundé has had repercussions on its periphery, of which the department of Lékié, and mainly the district of Sa'a, is an example. The villages of Sa'a, which are potentially rich because they are conducive to food crops, have been influenced by the city in several ways, the most recurrent of which is that of space. Contact with the capital has modified the interests and needs of the villages. The relationship between urbanisation and spatial occupation is changing. Urban expansion is inexorably accompanied by food and infrastructure needs. Food crops are becoming cash crops. Over the years, in parallel with the decline of crops for export, population growth in the capital has led to a frantic demand for food. Because of its large population, Sa'a is a market where most food production is absorbed by the city of Yaoundé. The "buying-seling¹" criss-cross the villages in search of foodstuffs, in order to sell them in Yaoundé. In such a context, any increase in food supplies can only be achieved by enlarging the cultivable area in order to increase agricultural production. However, these villages are densely populated areas with populations of 200 to 400 people per km². Therefore, the land is highly contested, as it is thanks to its exploitation that rural people make some money. The parallel growth of population and production leads to a rapid reduction in the available land. Farms become smaller and smaller, and the disproportion between the cultivable area and the growing demand of the city becomes greater. Following Rambaud, (1960), we can add that urbanisation is manifested by the introduction of the notion of accumulation into rural societies. The latter makes it possible to build up a network of redistribution and thus offers better control over individuals and the means of production. Those who have more then dominate those who have not and can make them their dependents. This means that the production system has an impact on the formation of social stratifications

¹ Buying-seling is a reseller of food products purchased from rural women. She generally buys her supplies in the surrounding villages or from women who come to sell their products in markets such as Mokolo, Mvog Mbi, Essos...

or hierarchies (Abéga, 2007). This leads rural people to change their relationship with the land. However, the problem that arises is generally that of the rational use of space by the populations. This generally results in conflicts.

As can be seen, the city has affected the agricultural land area through the intensification of old cultivation methods and marketing prospects. The direct repercussions of urbanisation on this periphery are the search for arable land, as rural people have no other activity than farming and must therefore have sufficient crops to have a surplus to sell. Agriculture in the Sa'a region is therefore marked by the co-existence of cash crops (cocoa) for export, and food crops for family and urban consumption.

Contrary to all expectations, it is not the coexistence of these crops that leads to discord between men and women farmers, as they sometimes even farm together in households, but the exploitation of sand. In fact, in the study area, the subjection of agriculture to sand occupation is becoming more widespread. In the past, women in these villages did not have problems with space for production. Introduced in Avazam and Song Ntsaga a few years ago, sand exploitation has taken on great proportions, blurring the women's mode of appropriation of the land. The need to make high profits has led farmers to exploit large areas of land. This disproportionate expansion of land through sand mining has been accompanied by a clear reduction in the space available for agriculture, and thus for women. This can be attributed to the urbanisation of the city of Yaoundé, in that the modernisation of housing and infrastructure requires sand.

While it is known that sand is mined in Ebebda, it was also done marginally in Avazam and Song Ntsaga. But with the opening up of this region marked by the erection of a bridge, thus allowing trucks to have access, sand exploitation has become one of the main commercial activities of these villages. Today, the land that is suitable for agriculture is the site of competition between sand mining and agriculture. The former is taking over almost all the space that was previously reserved for the latter, which is relegated to plots that are of little use to sand farmers because they are far from the sandy areas. The dynamics of the demand for sand are increasingly reducing the amount of land available for cultivation.

Today, women farmers in Avazam and Song Ntsaga face two problems: producing enough to consume and selling the surplus. Urban food pressure and household security lead them to have several fields, playing on their number and their respective agricultural values. This strategy avoids any possibility of stock-outs. According to Nkaloulou (2001), speaking of Congolese society The peasant woman generally works on four fields. The first is put under cultivation, while the second, started the previous year, enters its exploitation phase, the third is productive for the second year and the fourth is at the end of its exploitation and is starting to fallow. For this author, this sequence corresponds to the four-year cassava crop cycle. Contrary to the author's view, this cycle does not only correspond to the cassava cycle. The multiplicity of fields also corresponds to a need to have several agricultural products throughout the year. It should be noted that a field has several crop varieties. These do not have the same production time. For some, such as banana plantain, it takes two years to harvest, while maize takes only three months, etc. So if she needs plantain, for example, she will go to the field she grew two years ago. It is clear that to ensure continuity before the harvest of the cultivated fields, she must have others. In other words, to ensure food security, she needs a lot of space. The fields therefore periodically return to old, previously developed land, where the fertility has returned to its original level after a more or less long fallow period with trees. This system consumes quite a lot of space, in the sense that it requires a large area of land for a few square metres actually ploughed, but it gives the soil time to recover afterwards. In addition, food crop farming has remained practically traditional. The most recurrent is slash-and-burn agriculture, which, contrary to what is generally accepted, is seen by women farmers as the only appropriate method of farming to ensure the protection of the land. It is therefore clear that women farmers are aware of the balance between exploitation and restoration.

To quote Nkaloulou (2001:90), *'for land to continue producing, it must be protected against certain destructive factors. This is why the duration of exploitation of a piece of land will not exceed the cultivation cycle of its main crop, in order to allow a rapid reconstitution of the forest tissue or the vegetation cover and thus the edaphic complex. Contrary to what is said, the peasant woman often does not abandon the land because it is exhausted. She puts it to rest as a sine qua non for returning to it later. For example, in order to allow the land to recover quickly, the peasant woman must avoid clearing the land. She also gives the cut trees every chance to bud. The vegetation cover is then quickly reconstituted. Forest or savannah species quickly take over. Within a few years, the fallow plants restore the soil complex to its original state. And the land can be cultivated again.*

In order to preserve their soil, the women farmers thus raise the issue of space management. What about hourglasses?

The rush of peasant farmers to become sand miners and the commercial growth of this resource raises the issue of overexploitation of sand. The latter is based on the notion of unlimited resources. In this region, the sand occupies a large area in terms of extent. This impression of inalterability leads to an overexploitation of this material. It is estimated that more than ten 22-tons trucks make several rounds of sand per day. Sand is taken from all directions, especially around the bridge and beyond, in order to supply a buoyant market, which is Yaoundé. This overexploitation is one, if not the main factor, behind the degradation of the soil in the two villages. The need for foreign currency encourages farmers to collect at too fast a rate to allow the sand to reconstitute itself, which makes the fragile exploitation-reconstitution balance precarious. While in Ebebda the sand is extracted from the river, in Avazam and Song Ntsaga it is a sandy strip, which is not as easily replenished as the rivers. However, the soils of this region owe much of their fertility to the cover of the material, which has great value and provides vital protective services. The sand protects the soil from the effects of erosion, flooding, etc. The disappearance of sand is worrying because of the loss of the functions it provides, especially the pedologic functions (soil protection). A tour of these villages reveals huts that are in danger of collapsing because sand has been dug up to a few metres from the concessions. The sand continues to flow not far from the houses, which favours their deterioration, the foundations of which are visible in those that are attacked. The exploitation of sand also has quite serious consequences for the health of the population. The stagnation of water in the quarries favours the proliferation of malaria-transmitting mosquitoes, which determines an important pathogenic context. Malaria remains a real handicap that slows down human activity.

If at the beginning it was the fallow land that was targeted, the lure of profit is such that even the food fields are destroyed. The arable land is removed, the diggers go as far as the clay or rocky areas. One can therefore imagine the tensions that can exist between men and women, especially since today we meet peasants who no longer have any space to make food fields, or who no longer have fruit trees, which constitute a very large financial contribution in the region. The trees are collapsing because the sandmen are digging around them. They go so deep that they attack the roots. Also, these villages are now landlocked because of the trucks that have destroyed the road. It is clear that this area is evolving towards an almost general impoverishment, because of the decrease in cultivable areas, and the consequences mentioned above. As a result of these effects, we are witnessing a serious degradation of the environment and a disruption of the spatial organisation.

2 Spatial organisation

In both villages, the layout of the settlement reflects in principle a spatial plan of the main families. Each village is divided into lineage areas and each head of a family has the right to own plots of land inherited from the father or a relative. The fields of the members of the same domestic unit are grouped together next to each other according to these divisions.

The spatial organisation is also reflected in the organisation of production spaces. The latter is marked by the social division of roles and tasks between the sexes. The man devotes himself to cash crop activities. Apart from a few minor activities, he has an exclusive monopoly on the transaction of cash crops for export, although this is no longer as profitable as it once was. Women, on the other hand, find their social fulfilment in food crops. The food fields are her property, although this is defined through marriage. The distribution of space is carried out as follows: each man inherits from his father or a family member a space to build and practice agriculture. Each woman receives from her husband the land she needs for the crops she will grow during her life in the village. As the demographic pressure is strong, each family jealously guards its space. Some families are obliged to borrow or to make do with the spaces just behind the houses. Others go further into the forest depending on their land tenure. Land has both symbolic and material functions for rural people.

2.1 The land: a symbolic element

More than a space for the materialisation of people, the land fulfils a symbolic function in the perception that rural people have of it. In the holistic vision that these populations have of it, the land is beyond morpho-structural identities.

For Magnant (1996), who has studied the Sara society in Chad, land is for these populations both an element of nature that harbours forces that make it fertile, and an unalterable asset that is essential for food production. For Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994), the inalienability of land is due to its sacred and extrapatrimonial function. This is why it is the property of the lineage. This author considers that if land remains inalienable, it is simply because of the persistence of mystical and religious foundations of land rights. This religiosity has a lot to do with the nutritive function of land. Indeed, the fact that the land feeds the peasants means that it is clothed in a mystical-religious halo, because it is the source of life. Everything it produces is the will of the gods and the ancestors. Melone (1972) refutes all these hypotheses that tend to make the land sacred and thinks that it is a way for the elders to assert control over the land. They therefore take as their basis its belonging to the genies. When this explanation is no longer sufficient, it is said that the land is a community asset and belongs to the lineage. For this author, these explanations tend to fight against the tendency towards individualism.

2.2 Land: a material good

It is the place where individuals materialise, in the sense that it represents a factor of group cohesion. It is always ready to bear the burdens of the community. What characterises the land is its permanence, because although clans come and go, the land remains unchanging and always ready to bear the burdens of the community. The traditional organisation of African societies distinguishes between two main roles: that of the owner of the land and that of the user. Even if land remains a community asset, its use is complex, as it can change from collective to individual use. Land therefore has several uses within a community or household. For example, even if the members use the same production unit, they may have different purposes, ensuring subsistence in one case, or providing income in the other. This divergence of objectives can lead to conflicts within the household. The distinction between plantations and food fields generates a segmentation of the lineage exploitation at the level of the family or household, which tends to take on great autonomy for individuals.

2.2.1 Access to land

In principle, all members benefit from the usus of the land and each bears sole responsibility for cultivating his land, regardless of gender. However, he does not establish his crops on just any part. The locations of the fields, the boundaries of the fields, are passed on from father to son, from husband to wife, from mother to daughter or daughter-in-law. In fact, in the modalities of access to the land, there are two main roles: that of owner and that of

manager. Men see themselves as the owners of the land, while women have only a strict right to manage it.

a- Men and access to land

If there is one fact that recurs in the readings, it is that access to land is essentially reserved for men. For Verdier (1986: 12), it is generally the man who founds a territory, so the rights to the land are transmitted only through the (male) line of the founder. In this sense, the land becomes inalienable and cannot be given to outsiders. It serves the reproduction of the group, and to take it out of the lineage would be to reduce the space for present and future generations.

Why is land passed on between men? Once again, sacredness will play a major role in this appropriation because, according to Gény (1992: 44), in Africa many rural populations consider land to be a divine element. As a result, it cannot be appropriated by humans. It is a heritage belonging to the ancestors who have entrusted the management of its use to their descendants living on the land. As a result, the latter cannot transfer ownership to a stranger since they are usufructuaries. They can only grant a right of use.

It was with colonisation and the introduction of cash crops that the soil became an asset and an object of individual appropriation. It can be said that it is appropriated by men because it is the latter who practice cocoa farming, which permanently alienates the soil on which it is planted, unlike food crops which are temporary. As the land belongs to the person who has valued it through the act of clearing and cleaning, the man therefore acquires the right of ownership through this crop for the rest of his life. According to Santoir (1992), the conditionality of registration of cocoa farmers for subsidies imposed by the German administration is another reason for this appropriation of land by men, which will give rise to the right of ownership and, at the same time, promote the right to land for men.

b- Women and access to land

Bazzi-Veil (2000) in her analysis of the profile of African women, argues that in Cameroon, women, who represent 51% of the population and participate in more than 75% of agricultural production, are only 3.2% landowners in the North West region and 7.2% in the South West region, i.e. at the national level less than 10%. We do not question these claims, nor do we question the claim that men have a monopoly on the control of property management in the community. This can be seen in most parts of the Central Region where the occupation of space shows the constant preoccupation of men to control the land. Thus, cocoa farms are prominent in the immediate vicinity of the villages, while food crops are increasingly removed from the houses as they fallow. Although these spatial disproportions are a result of the monopoly of control of the land by men, the fact remains that once acquired by women, they keep it as long as they live in the community. This is all the more true as the system of land use is individual and therefore as the descendants of the same ancestor inherit the property bequeathed by him. Each one exploits the land that belongs to him with his wife. The latter therefore generally exploit the land of their husbands and if, before, agricultural activity was controlled by the men insofar as it was they who decided on the location of the crops, more and more, the women themselves are taking the initiative to open new fields according to the fallow periods. They choose the land that suits them based on the nature of the soil. Delpêch (1985: 339), speaking of the Eton women in the department of Lékié, also believes that even if, in *Beti* custom, the woman has land only through her husband, the hold of the monetary economy increased by urban proximity is such that she has become aware of her financial power. To do this, she closely controls the land she cultivates, considers it her property and does not hesitate to lodge complaints when she feels her rights are threatened. Yet the law states that regular maintenance of a plot of land showing that its occupation meets a need reinforces the rights of the user. When a fallow land is cleared, each of the women returns to the plot she was cultivating, and is allocated the same locations. Also children have a right to the land that was

cultivated by their mother. Nowadays, each woman can claim a kind of right to the land, since each time the land is cleared, she finds it again, and each child has a virtual right to the land cultivated by his mother (Binet 1956). For this author, the woman also has rights to her former fallow land as a representative of her children.

In the light of what has just been analysed, it is because of the principle of exogamy that women only have a right of use over the land. At the time of marriage, they leave their family to live with their husband. As a result, they cannot own or control the land. Although the land, because of the permanence of the food fields, is owned by women. However, they only have the right to usufruct. This form of appropriation determines a limited hold on the land for women. However, it should not be assumed at first sight that the fact that women do not have land is a sign of segregation. According to Verdier (1986:13), because of exogamy, women occupy an ambivalent position in society, insofar as they are called upon to live in their husband's lineage. Thus, without ceasing to be part of their lineage as a sister, they enter their husband's lineage as a wife. The women's dual status as sister and wife thus gives them an ambiguous and mobile position that prevents them from receiving land inheritance in either lineage. For the latter, it is not a question of an incapacity specific to their sex, but of an incompatibility linked to the rule of exogamy which requires that land be transmitted to men. Irène Albert (1993:46), for her part, believes that even if these are isolated cases, there are women who inherit land. For this author, they often inherit from their fathers, who have no brothers, or from their mothers. In this case the land is shared between all the children, boys and girls. However, it should be noted that all these women who inherit are either single and remain in their father's village, or they are married in a neighbouring village, otherwise it is impossible for them to work in these fields because of their distance. With Albert, therefore, the birth hypothesis is not verified. It is mainly because of the distance, the lack of means that would allow them to exploit their plots by paying a labourer that women often do not have land in their native village.

It may happen that during the fallow period, the wife takes the initiative to open a new field on her husband's land without asking his permission. It is imagined that if the marriage lasts for a lifetime, the wife owns her fields. It was noted that among the *Beti*, it is increasingly the woman who 'reserves' the land for the man in the sense that when she farms a plot, it will later revert to her son. In this case, it is difficult to say that women are marginalised in land management. Similarly, as has been said, unmarried women who remain in their communities are not adversely affected, as they have plots of land that they cultivate, so that it is difficult for a male relative to take over this land without conflicts arising. It is in this sense that, according to Binet (1959), the clearing of natural forest under customary law is an act of development that confers important rights on the person who carries it out. The system finds its internal regulation through the constraints of manual labour.

The woman can freely open up fields on clan territories or on her husband's territory. However, the man can use his power as landlord to take away a plot from her. He can do this directly or subtly. Santoir (1992) shows how men have taken plots away from women by growing cocoa on food fields. Over time, these mixed fields became pure cocoa fields. These strategies of exclusion of women to guarantee access to land will be repeated in the exploitation of sand in Avazam and Song-Ntsaga. Indeed, there is a confrontation between these two social actors over the use of land because of a new activity that provides foreign currency.

3 Spatial conflicts

Rivalry is assimilated to conflict, which is understood as an expression of divergent interests linked either to different social positions or to personal strategies (Olivier de Sardan, 1995: 176-177). For Hogue et al (1989: 81) the term conflict in the social sciences refers first of all to the notion of a human relationship or interaction between individuals... the resources available to the actors are generally limited. Consequently, their objectives will sooner or later conflict. Rather than a dissociated and pathological phenomenon as Durkheim ((1912) 1986) thought, Simmel ((1908)1992) conceives of conflict as a normal, and sometimes necessary and

beneficial, form of social life, in that it expresses a discrepancy between the established rules and the new problems that arise in the social system, "*conflict is less a pathology than a phenomenon in the incessant production of the social system by itself. It is central to the dynamics of society as well as to the vitality of society*" (1908:31). A conflict can be seen as a tension between actors who seek to assert divergent interests. For Ferréol (1995), '*conflicts oppose, in very diverse forms, individuals or groups whose interests diverge. These confrontations are capable of upsetting the existing order. Either by changing the ownership of existing means or by modifying the relationship of authority*'. They are therefore indicative of social dynamics. Conflicts related to land can be considered to be all 'phenomena of tension and competition for natural resources and the confrontations that may result from them: competition, disagreements, disputes, declared opposition or confrontations (symbolic violence being as important as physical violence)' (Chauveau and Mathieu, 1993: 243). As for Feeny (1988), he defines social conflicts as '*mediation mechanisms through which a social demand for change is expressed*'. For this author, it is economic changes that are sources of conflict. This is reflected in the case of conflicts between households in the sense that the increasing scarcity of agricultural land, accentuated by the sale of sand, leads to conflicts over the land. These conflicts are then seen as a reflection of the inadequacy of social systems of land management and the evolution of land through bargaining. Indeed, when land becomes valued, as is the case with the sale of sand, then it becomes the object of increased covetousness, which leads to conflicts.

The conflicts we will study arise from disagreements and disputes over access to and control of sandy land. These conflicts arise because of multiple demands and competing pressures on the land. The exploitation of sand on increasingly scarce arable land has led to strong competition for scarce space. This is the case for the households we interviewed.

3.1 The disputed spaces

Spaces are contested according to needs and priorities for land use. The first are the food fields, because of agricultural production, which requires great pressure on the land. The demographic pressure and the scarcity of arable land lead to strong competition, which mechanically leads to violent clashes.

a- The food fields

The food fields remain the preserve of the women. In both villages. During the various interviews, it emerged that each woman has her own fields, the number of which varies according to her needs and availability. This appropriation of the food fields by the women attests to a great deal of autonomy in the organisation of activities and in the management of harvests, but this is only in the form of usufruct.

b- Fallow land

The fallows that are scattered in different agricultural areas are intended to allow the land to recover its fertility. It should be noted once again that, in principle, it is the women who return to these areas to grow crops. The fact that men compete for these areas which are under the control of women demonstrates the limited control they have over this domain which is theirs, due to the sexual division of roles.

3.2 The parties involved in the conflicts

These conflicts have involved several actors with different interests. Ngo Mboua (2002) lists the categories of actors at two levels, horizontal and vertical. The vertical level generally concerns conflicts between farmers and the administration. Horizontal conflicts, on the other hand, are between different actors. We are interested in the second level. The horizontal level includes households, families, neighbours, etc. Men are more involved in these conflicts than women. The latter are mostly married women. In this article we focus only on conflicts between domestic units.

3.3 Household conflicts: a case study

The case of Mr. and Mrs. Abega is representative of all the household conflicts we have identified in Avazam and Song-Ntsaga. The couple lives on the border between Avazam and Song-Ntsaga, more precisely in Elesogue, but considers themselves to be from Avazam. In this hamlet, the houses of the two villages face each other, on either side of the road, which, it should be noted, is impassable at this level by cars because of the degradation of the road by the trucks transporting the sand. The couple, like most peasants, are mainly engaged in agriculture.

As the owner of a large sandy area that he shared with his brother, he practised sand exploitation in parallel with agriculture, and had no "problems" with his wife, as each occupied his own space. It should be noted that his wife was against this sand exploitation, because she felt that she had several children to whom she would have to leave land as an inheritance, as the demographic pressure in the locality made land a rare commodity. When sand mining expands in the area, Mr Abéga mines sand continuously for months. The demand increases every day and the sand decreases. He has no choice but to turn to the spaces used by his wife. He asked her permission, but she refused. He ignores the ban, because as he says, *'I don't want to be imposed on, I can't bend over backwards in front of my wife'*. He calls in the sand diggers he has recruited for this purpose, and they clear Mrs Abega's entire field. This is the confrontation between the two spouses. According to the husband, *'she had to follow me with a machete. Well, I ran away because I had the upper hand'*. The couple argued and Mr Abéga did not fail to remind her that she was a foreigner because, as his wife said, *'he had told me: is this your father's land? Didn't you turn your back on the place where you were born? Don't come and tell me about my heritage. He had used the word heritage that, here at home, he is the only one to manage his heritage.'*

This testimony by Mrs Abéga clearly shows the low status of women in the context of marriage. As a mobile element of society, in a patrilineal system, women can only access land through marriage, which has an impact on their social situation. Her ability to develop the land through agriculture for subsistence, trade or inheritance for her children may be questioned depending on the circumstances. Indeed, even if she is able to open a field on her husband's land, he can evict her at any time. Divorce or widowhood are not the only factors that call into question her right to use the land. This injustice is all the more alarming because she is not compensated. In the best of cases, her husband can be satisfied with showing her another space so that she can make another field. However, she needs a minimum of 3 to 6 months between sowing and harvesting. This situation forces her to resign herself because, as Mrs Abéga says, *"I let it happen, because if I started to insist that he should not sell his sand any more, then maybe I would leave"*. There is thus a source of imbalance in the unit. As the woman is not the owner, she disappears from this exchange structure, which once again excludes her, to the benefit of the man who monopolises the spaces that are reserved for him, because as Mr Abéga states, *'even 60 m from where we are now, there was a field there that I had torn out'*.

The patrilineal system and the virilocal residential mode of marriage mean that women are not considered to be fully integrated into their husband's group. In fact, the woman who leaves the country remains an outsider. ADJAMOGBO (2000), who studied the Gban society in the south-central part of Côte d'Ivoire, shows that within the domestic unit in which she lives and works, the woman is above all considered as a passing stranger, who is obliged to leave if she wishes to do so when her husband dies. This status gives her few rights in the village where she lives and works, where she remains on the margins of community decision-making. Her role is mainly limited to the production of children and food to ensure the survival of the lineage.

In general, women have a dual status, firstly in relation to their family of origin and secondly in relation to their husband. This is an ambiguity that is unfavourable to women, as it always places them under the authority of men, particularly their fathers or husbands. However, this social organisation converges towards an entirely male control of society. Although the crisis in cash crops and the demand for food in the city has enabled the women of

this locality to be at the centre of economic production, thanks to the production of food crops, which gives them a certain economic independence, the exploitation of sand has once again disrupted this activity to the benefit of men exclusively, who monopolise the best land and call into question the balance between exploitation and the restoration of the environment, which is of concern to the women farmers.

Conclusion

Women, as managers of the agricultural land they exploit, are dispossessed of it according to the circumstances. Indeed, the exploitation of sand in the villages of Avazam and Nsong-Ntsaga has turned the men and women of this locality into economic rivals who compete for the production areas. While there used to be relative stability in the management of the land, this has been challenged by the introduction of sand mining. The recognition of the effort made by the individual to work is recognised for men to appropriate the land, which is not the case for women, as they are a mobile element of society. Their access to land is indirect and temporary. Permits to farm can be challenged at any time. Although their form of agriculture is environmentally friendly, they are embedded in a system that takes great care to keep them out of the management of land and material assets. Once again, it appears that it is men who control the financial circuit through sand mining, as was once the case with cocoa farming.

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