The assertion of rights to agro-pastoral land in North Cameroon: a cascade to violence?
Noorduyn, R.E.

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Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research is positioned within the rich domain of research on distribution and management of resources in general, that is mostly economically directed. Here the range of resources is condensed into natural resources. Natural resources are entities of nature that serve different - mostly simultaneous - functions for human beings. These different functions can be related to human health, material wellbeing and immaterial wellbeing. As such, natural resources can be seen as economic resources, cultural resources or health-giving resources. They have functions that are directly connected with these three domains: for example when people gather leaves from a certain tree to use to alleviate diarrhoea, or when a community is proud of its steep hilltop and connects origin tales to it\(^1\). The relation between nature and its functions can also be an indirect one, when the natural resources serve to maintain (or are) support-systems for the three\(^2\). The central focus of the present study is whether or not a causal link exists between environmental scarcity (that is: a scarcity in natural resources) and violence, and the possibility to discern certain patterns in this connection or in the avoidance of the connection.

In order to study this complex, the non-violent reaction to scarcities such as the environmental one, should also be made clearer. Only studying situations in which both violence and environmental scarcity exist will lead to the conclusion that a combination of the two, indeed, exists (Levy 1995). However, such a combined existence need not automatically also be a causal linkage. It has to be stressed, though, that “[i]f the thesis could be proved false in the favourable case [as could be the case when studying situations in which both variables exist, RN], then it would most likely be false for intermediate cases.” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 75-76). Nevertheless, to

\(^1\) See Zwaal (2003).
\(^2\) Apart from having these human serving functions, nature also has intrinsic values (see e.g. De Groot 1992).
avoid criticisms of the Levy type ("evident cases"). This research focuses on the turning point within the causal chain of environmental scarcity towards violence as marked out in Chapter 2.

That is why the focus of the research can be described as follows: Is there a causal link between environmental scarcity and violent outbreaks. Is it possible to discern patterns therein and how do people avoid the chain of actions that develop into violence when indeed environmental scarcity has been perceived? The latter means: what is the causal link between environmental scarcity and non-violence? In this research I am looking for patterns in both the direction to violence and in the diversion away from violence. That is the pre-violent moment of assertion of rights to the environment.

As can be seen in the research question, both environmental scarcities (in the actors perception and in reality) as well as social patterns of behaviour are the focus of this study. Thus, the exact status of the environment has to be established during the research.

However, to clarify the relationship between the two, it is specifically the practices and strategies of people to overcome or prevent insecurities in general, and (growing) insecurities related to natural resources and resulting scarcities thereof in particular, that have to be identified and analysed. Thus, the principles that set these practices and strategies should be the focus of the study. For that reason I have chosen to use methodological tools that are rooted in sociological theories and that have proven to be useful for the study of the everyday life of actors. Besides using a method that allows me to combine both the desire to add to theory building as well as to more profound context-dependent insight. I have used methods for analysis that are actor oriented.

To avoid generating a study into too many variables, only one type of natural resource is chosen as an example, namely land. The natural resource of land is an economic resource when actors use it to maintain their material livelihoods. In a direct way, they use the land to gather products to eat - wild products or agricultural or pastoral products - to clothe themselves and to build housing and shelters. Land is also an economic resource when it is used as an exchange object in economic transactions. The example above about the hilltop shows land as a cultural resource. As was explained in the Introduction, land can be the basis of a community's identity: can play a role in power relations, etc. Indirectly, land can serve as the bearer of other useful natural resources, such as minerals, waterholes, rivers, fish-canals or trees. Although land is a natural resource it is also, partly, man-made. Investments in physical infrastructure, for example, define the outlook and use-perspectives of land. All these different aspects play a role in perceptions of land-scarcity and therefore have to be studied.

The research methodology serves to answer the questions posed. Describing the methods used for both data gathering as well as analysis provides an insight into the course of the research and creates possibilities for later duplication of the research. Thus, in this chapter I will describe which approach I used and how I used it. I will discuss the research questions, the research strategy and the research implementation with regard to place, time, which data I gathered and how. At the end I will deal with specific difficulties that arose due to this type of research and how I tried to overcome them.

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1 See Zoomers (2001a 16): the difference between practices and strategies is related to, on the one hand, "a set of repeated and related activities conducted" over a short time-span and, on the other hand, systematic and conscious behaviour in a long-term development perspective.
3.2 Research questions

3.2.1 The main question
What are the key causalities in the linkages between environmental resource scarcity, the pre-violent assertion of rights to the environment and the (non-)avoidance of violence itself?

3.2.2 Questions for the research
The questions to be answered in this research reflect people’s reactions in six different situations of a combination of natural resource scarcity and violence. Schematically Figure 3.1 describes the six situations in a Matrix. In reality, however, the six situations are not static throughout time or for a specific place. Scarcity of environmental resources differs from season to season and from year to year. It differs from user to user (within one user group (rich and poor persons for example, or women versus men) and between groups (pure pastoralists experience a scarcity of food during the dry season, when grass with which to feed their cattle is scarce while cultivators, on the other hand, have a reduced food supply in the wet season when last year’s yields have already been consumed and the new harvest is not yet ripe).

Figure 3.1  Scarcity versus violence Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no scarcity</th>
<th>scarcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘no violence’</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-violent ass. of rights</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each matrix field a research question can be formulated (I do not cover matrix field A, as that is of no importance here):
1 (field B) How does violence develop even when environmental scarcity is not prevalent?
2 (field C) How is violence avoided even when environmental scarcity exists?
3 (field D) How does violence develop under circumstances of environmental scarcity?

Matrix field X and Y are connected to questions such as:
4 Do people ascertain their rights to natural resources when there is no environmental scarcity (how and why) not refraining to violence?
5 Do people ascertain their rights to natural resources when there is environmental scarcity (how and why), while not (yet) resorting to violence?

* See, e.g., Foeken (1990) and Foeken and Hartog (1990)
3.2.3 Sub-questions
The sub-questions are posed and formalised in the so-called protocols that the research methodology asks to draft (see below). People shape their lives based on perceived securities and insecurities. Insecurities can be defined as situations (in different domains) in which actors are exposed to changes in actual set-ups that will negatively affect their lives and that they perceive as not possible to influence. The different insecurities and the reactions to them can be categorised in specific domains as is described in Figure 3.2. The path of action can go from one domain to another, but mostly goes from an insecurity domain to several other domains. For example, political insecurity can be reacted upon by investments in both the political domain, the economic domain and the social domain, depending on what sort of possibilities the actor has and what (s)he deems effective. Most of the time, also somebody’s insecurities are not limited to one domain. Thus, in practice, people’s lives can be depicted as a complex of different insecurities with different reactions in different domains: The Insecurity Complex.

Figure 3.2 The Insecurity Complex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of insecurity</th>
<th>Domain of action/investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Environmental (rights; phys. circ.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human (personal)</td>
<td>Human (personal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muddle through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The protocols demand that information be gathered in the domains of the different insecurities people perceive and go through: their basic situations (point of departure, so to say, in all domains wherein the insecurities can spring up), their reactions to the insecurities, the structures, institutions etc. that influence these insecurities and the reactions, the historical setting and differences with the actual insecurities and reactions and so forth.

Because the study is intended to focus on the relationship between environmental scarcity...
and (non-) violence, apart from an inventory of general insecurities, and even of environmental insecurities, more detailed attention should be paid to environmental scarcity as such. In the study this is defined as: a situation wherein there is a lack of a certain natural resource, such that not all persons who want to use it can do so. I chose this definition to incorporate emic views of scarcity because people's views and interpretations are the drivers of their actions. I also hope to avoid lengthy discussions between outside specialists on technical details, although I will describe as much of those details as possible to complete the picture with objective data to compare with the emic information. Sub-questions then fall into two types:
1. Those that ask information about the general situations of securities and insecurities.
2. Those that ask more detailed information about the environmental situation, the scarcity of natural resources and the specific reactions connected to that.

Type 1 questions are those that are survey-like regarding people's basic position in the different domains. That is those that lead to information on past and present rules and regulations regarding rights and conflict resolution and those that inquire about changes, etc. The second category of questions are about facts and perceptions on environmental degradation and scarcity, on perceived rights and possibilities as well as on perceptions, attitudes and implementation regarding violence, now and in the past.

3.3 Research strategy

An extensive survey of the literature on the linkage between environmental scarcity and violence proved that there were still doubts as to whether the connection between the two existed (see chapter 1 and 2). These doubts were even more profound with regard to insight into how such a link might develop in the field. Therefore, for this research, a methodology was chosen to help build theory in both directions. By enlarging the insight into the patterns of the causal link from environmental scarcity to violent or non-violent behaviour, more clarity might at the same time be offered on the question of the existence of the connection at all. To reach that goal, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate. Wester et al (2000: 16-17) describes the usefulness of qualitative research to test 'new' theories that are perhaps not yet fully developed and to explore analytical gaps. This coincides with the assertion of Eckstein (1975: 80), that "case studies are valuable at all stages of the theory-building process, but most valuable at that stage of theory-building where least value is generally attached to them. This is the stage at which candidate theories are tested".

Wester et al (2000: 17) also highlight the serviceability of qualitative research when the researcher has a desire for detailed, 'natural' material; when (s)he is focusing on 'discovery'. Thus, for this research, the qualitative methodology and specifically the case-study is apt. Because "people act on the basis of the meanings [they attribute to] the objects [in their envi-

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"[... ] in cases [with environmental problems] where no significant violence is present [...] ask "why not?" ..." (Levy 1995)

"The case study is ideal for generalising using the type of test which Karl Popper called ' falsification' '. Then, "[if the thesis could be proved false in the favorable case. then it would most likely be false for intermediate cases. " (Flyvbjerg 2001: 75)
environment], that together form their world, the researcher should see the objects as the actors see them” (id: 21). Therefore “the research procedure should be as open as possible, [with a] direct contact with the real world” (id: 22). In order to achieve that goal, qualitative research is valuable because that type of research aims to look at certain phenomena in their natural surroundings and studies the processes in their full dynamics over time and space. Qualitative research of cases makes it possible to “deal with the full variety of evidence” (Yin 1984 in Upreti 2001: 29). It recognises the fact that different actors have different psychological and sociological ‘settings’, different options and motivations and thus different strategies to act on that which they perceive as their realities.

Unfortunately, the study of just one case, however deep the insights into the patterns within the case might be, does not easily allow for the addition of generalities to theory. Although the case might be “strategically chosen and properly carried out” (George 1979: 53) to “add to the generalisibility of the case study” (Flyvbjerg 2001: 75). Giddens (1984: 328) highlighted the fact that “traditional small-scale community research […] can easily become [generalising studies] if carried out in some numbers, so that judgements of their typicality can justifiably be made”. This is to say that, to make it easier to come up with generalisations, a comparison of a certain number of different cases should be made. The fact that these case studies are in-depth and thus time-consuming means an excessive number would reduce the chance of reaching the goal. Just adding case studies for the sake of comparison and thereby decreasing the possibilities for an in-depth examination of each case in order to recognise controversies of the initial assumptions, will neither help to test the general insight in the theory, nor clarify the context-dependent factors and processes of the case situations themselves.

For that reason the method of “Structured Focussed Comparison” of Alexander George (1979) was chosen as a tool to use in the research. George’s method consists of the design of a small number of “heuristic and plausibility probe case studies” (sometimes even as small a number as two) and the use of these as “building blocks for theory development” (id: 52).

Structured, focussed comparison works with structured protocols that operationalise the core concepts and relationships, through which strategically chosen cases are described and analysed, and by way of which a comparison of the cases and elaboration on the theory afterwards can be made possible. These protocols and the general questions to be asked for each case are formulated during the design of the study, in which phase the cases themselves are also selected. The research then seeks to identify the conditions under which distinctive types of causal patterns occur. Patterns of special interest are called ‘foci’. These are extra tools to organise the study, connect it to theories and enhance the practicability. These foci will, therefore, feature both during the field study and during the analysis (see also Ch. 2: building of the model). At least two foci are going to be used:

- The degree to which actions can be interpreted as being part of a Boserupian or Malthusian process.
- Ethnic diversity or similarity.

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1 Especially for Environmental Security Research this method is apt (see McNelis and Schweitzer 2001).

2 In accordance with Popper’s example of the falsification of an “all swans are white” theory, Flyvbjerg (2001: 77) declares that the case study is well suited to identify “black swans” because of its in-depth approach: what appears to be “white” often turns out on closer examination to be “black”.
The methodology of 'structured focussed comparison' requires a relatively simple explanatory actor model. A model of 'broad rational choice' is used in this study, i.e. one in which cultural, social or moral elements may be incorporated but under an overall umbrella of decision-making by means of weighing the net merits of alternative courses of action. The model is known by the name "Action in Context". In De Groot (1992), for example, "AiC" describes the complex interactedness of specific things like 'deeper analysis', 'actor's field', 'world views' etc. that are useful to structure the analysis. It allows the researcher to explore the different factors and (other) actors that influence actors' decision-making. By doing so, the researcher takes the actor as the central agent and contextualises outwards to explore the influencing ('secondary') actors and, even further outwards, those that influence ('tertiary') the influencing actors, etc. This allows the study of not only the actor and his livelihood in the local setting, but also of higher level institutions, power relations and dependencies. Substantively, the methodological framework of AiC will, in this study, be connected with (an exploration of) some of the better known theories and concepts from the 'conflict studies' field, as well as those on the interface of man and his environment\(^{10}\).

3.4 Research Implementation

3.4.1 Selection of research area and cases

According to the methodology of structured focussed comparison, after the formulation of preliminary protocols, regions with a certain mutual resemblance with regard to the concepts formulated in the protocols, have to be chosen on behalf of in-depth study. In this study, four criteria were formulated for the cases to comply with (see below), meaning that the cases belong to one 'class'. A fifth criterion employed in the selection is that every case should differ as regards one or two of the variables of theoretical interest. These should, therefore, be cases belonging to the same class but differing from each other in certain important aspects.

The first criterion for making sure the cases belong to the same class was that the cases should be situated in one geographical region. Because Leiden University, in which institute this research is (also) based, has a field research station (CEDC\(^{11}\)) in the Far North Province of Cameroon, this area seemed the most obvious choice to carry out the study. More than ten years of research have already been carried out there and a host of general information and for some regions even profound knowledge is easily accessible. There is a research infrastructure, offering possibilities for assistance, guidance and support from other (often Cameroonian) researchers. Moreover, the researcher's safety is enhanced thanks to the CEDC's excellent contacts with local, regional and national authorities. This Province has a high degree of environmental scarcity and there is widespread conflict, which is sometimes violent. On the other hand, compared to the Central African countries such as Chad and the Central African Republic, and some Western African countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoir), the overall situation is quite peaceful. In general, people handle their everyday disputes reasonably. This situation of

\(^{10}\) Based on Vavda's (1983) "progressive contextualisation".

\(^{11}\) Like the study of livelihood strategies and decision making in rural areas and those that focus on the use and management of natural resources.

\(^{12}\) Centre d'Etude de l'Environnement et du Développement (CEDC) in Maroua, Cameroon.
'normal' behaviour in which negotiations and diverting strategies dominate, but in which people nevertheless resort to (small scale) violence from time to time, offers a good climate to study the development of conflicts in both the violent and the non-violent directions.

With a view to choosing appropriate cases, I made an exploratory visit lasting 2.5 months to the Far North Province in the early year 2000, with the aim being to come up with a list of cases that meet the criteria formulated beforehand. The relevant criteria are incorporated in the research questions.

Because I chose only a certain amount of reaction to the existing conflict as a criterion, the use of violence could still be used as a dependent variable. This, as I explained above, is a response to the criticism of selecting "evident cases". On the other hand, I selected according to both environmental scarcity and conflict because "most likely cases" might help to falsify the (candidate) theory. I wanted to make clear with my research that the supposed evidence might be shown not to be so evident because of the fact that a co-existence turned out to be just that, with no causal connection whatsoever. Thus, combinations C, D and Y of the research matrix (Fig. 3.1) are included. Cases of violent conflict or the pre-violent assertion of rights without environmental scarcity (B and X) are not specifically selected. However, they may turn out to be the case for some of the actors studied. Although the research results of the field station and a general overview of the region seems to indicate that environmental scarcity is all-around, differences in degradation and human pressure still exist. Therefore, it was possible to choose one of the cases so that, at the individual level at least, environmental scarcity may turn out not to be present when performing the in-depth study.

In short, the case selection was based on the presence of violence and environmental scarcity. However, the violence had to be of a limited scale, because large-scale violence always brings scarcity with it and then such cases would be too 'evident' in the eyes of the critics like Levy. The selection criterion 'environmental scarcity' was judged to be present on the basis of information of other researchers and own, albeit preliminary, observations. However, the choice was made such that the possibility remained open to see, during the in-depth research, examples of violence or pre-violent assertion of rights to the environment, without there being any scarcity (question 1 on page 51). Again, this served the possibility to show that, although a case seems evident (both violence and scarcity are prevalent), it is not. This is meant to be an answer to Levy and a warning to ES-scholars to check basic assumptions and not to take seeming scarcity for granted. The choice for moderate scarcity also served the possibility of studying different strategies of people differently positioned as regards the natural resources (this refers to all questions on page 50, but especially question 4 and 5).

Right from the start the usefulness of the field station was evident as it provided me with an experienced guide and interpreter for more than one language who was able to accompany me on my inventory tour. She had grown up in the culture of the Far North, but was also highly educated and had good access to, and was quite at ease with, officials, chiefs and local male villagers. The fact that she was a woman meant I was also able to talk without restriction to female inhabitants. In a four-wheel drive vehicle provided by the field station and together with a driver who was acquainted with the specific region, we travelled throughout the whole province from west to east and as far south as Mayo Oulo and as far north as Ngodeni on the northern border of Waza National Park (see Figure 3.3).

Using suggestions from field station employees, key informants in local centres and formal and traditional authorities, both regional and local, combined with field visits c.q. site-seeings and on-the-spot group and individual interviews, I managed to obtain a list of several cases featuring both environmental scarcity and profound (sometimes even violent) conflict. The abundance of conflict over all sorts of natural resources, ranging from land, via water and fish to wood, made me narrow even further the class to which the cases should belong. I decided to focus on only land as a conflict issue. Why I chose land and no other natural resource is explained in chapters 1 and 2. Land as a bearer of other natural resources is included, but when these other resources as conflict sources can be differentiated from the land they are situated on, I decided to consider the conflict as not being a ‘land conflict’ and so I did not explore it any further. A clarifying example is the situation in which access to and the use of a waterhole in itself is disputed: “I dug it” and not the access over the land that leads to it, not the corridors on the land. Whether or not these conflicts were indeed due to scarcity of land was one of the things to sort out during the research. During this exploratory visit it became obvious that moments of competition and, thus, conflict over natural resources, and in particular land, did not occur throughout the whole year. I will come to this point when describing the time of the field visits.

As for the differing aspects between cases that George’s method requires, these can be found in positions of contested boundaries (over or within formal borders), the domain of identity formation and ethnicity and the influence of the State and its servants. Thus, the focus on ethnic diversity and similarity is made explicit in the choice of the cases with regard to the differing aspects. On the other hand, the focus on the Malthus-Boserup divide can not influence the choice of the cases beforehand, but it is meant to enhance the similarity of investigation and analysis in all three cases.

With all this in mind I chose three different cases:

1. A case that seemed to be dealing with a conflict over a piece of land that is either grazing land or farm land within one, ethnically homogeneous village. Here the State is interfering with the installation of a pasture-forest reserve at the same spot. This case is described in chapter 6.

2. A case that seemed to be dealing with a conflict between different ethnicities, with different modes of using land and making a living: agriculturalists and nomadic cattle-keepers. The agriculturalists are expanding their settlements in the nomadic pasture area. This case is described in chapter 5.

3. A case that seemed to be dealing with a conflict over grazing land positioned at the border between two administrative districts. The two parties involved belonged to two communities of two different ethnicities. Both have lived in the area for quite a long time. One of the groups mainly comprises cattle-keepers, but who are also engaged in agriculture. The other party is mainly, and sometimes only, involved in agriculture. This case is described in chapter 7.

Case one is situated in the middle ranges of the Mandara Mountains along the border with Nigeria, on the high Mogodé plateau. This has been the home of the Kapsiki14 for more than 500 years. For the exact geographical position see Figure 3.3: Dzambou.

14 See, for example, Van Beek (1981).
Figure 3.3 also shows the position of the other two cases. Case two can be found in the Diamaré plain, south of the provincial capital Maroua, in the triangle Mindif, Moulvoudaye, Guidiguis. The bush here serves as one of the last resorts for nomadic or transhumant cattle-keepers (several Fulbe groups as well as Choa Arabs) who, coming from their dry season grazing lands in
the Logone floodplain, need other grounds to graze their animals in the wet season.

The third case is situated in the southern Mandara Mountains, slightly further to the south than the first case (Fig. 3.3: Kila and Oudda). The two involved sub-departments are Mogodé in the north, and Bourha in the south. The two ethnic groups involved are agricultural Bana and cattle-keeping Fulbe.

3.4.2 Time of field research
In the period between mid-2000 and the beginning of 2003 the three case-studies were carried out during three different visits lasting three to four months each. Via continued contacts with local research assistants, the research periods were more or less extended. At the end of 2003 until the start of 2004, I have paid a short visit to all 6 places of research to try and gain a quick impression of important changes since my last stay.

The choice of the moment of study of each case was determined by three considerations. The first was, of course, that I wanted to be there the moment a conflict actually flared up (if at all). That would allow me to observe (and demand about and discuss) what the people were really doing, both in their daily lives as well as during incidents. Conflict over land in the Sahel and Sahel-Sudan zone is a seasonal phenomenon, most fierce during the onset and development of the growing season\(^5\). It is during that period that cultivators have to secure the ability to labour on fields for their next harvest. They feel this pressure all the more because, at that same time, the bottom of the granary becomes visible. The rainy season is the hunger period and at the same time the period that demands the most energy output: people are more tired and irritated due to a lack of food. Perhaps the sight of relaxing pastoralists adds to their frustration since as far as the pastoralists are concerned, the rainy season is a ‘light’ period during which fodder and water for their animals abound, milk production is high and there is no need to walk long distances, etc. Only the rain itself makes living out in camps a bit hard because it is wet and cold and people have to put up with muddy surroundings. Apart from the need for corridors from grazing area to grazing area that can be blocked by fields with growing crops, it is especially this latter aspect that makes pastoralists seek specific places to settle during the rainy period. In the dry period, after the harvest, agriculturalists do not use their fields. Cattle-keepers can make their cattle use whatever is left on the land and/or (finally) leave the area altogether. In short, this ‘dead-season’ is not an appropriate period to study conflicts over land.

On the other hand, trying to study people’s actions and motivations during the agricultural season will be fraught with difficulties because, most probably, the investigator will not be able to persuade the cultivators to devote their precious time to talking with her (him). For that reason, the decision was taken to stay in the areas during the period after the rains had stopped, from the time at which the crops were still standing until after the harvest. In the second case (the new settlements) it was necessary to be around at the moment the cattle nomads arrived to occupy their rainy season camps. So, on this occasion, I arrived just before the onset of the rainy season and tried to meet the new settlers first while they were not yet fully occupied with their agricultural duties. Meanwhile I kept an eye on the weather and the movements into the area of the nomads. Unfortunately, the rains started very late in 2001, so I was obliged to leave with a lot of work undone. As a consequence, I instructed my guide and interpreter to continue the work as best as possible, without my direct supervision.

Having fulfilled these two requirements (namely being there at the moment of a possible conflict outbreak and at the moment that respondents can spend time on interviews), the third objective - that it had to be practically feasible to actually be on the spot - had already been met. At the end of the rainy season, for example, it would have been quite impossible to reach certain areas because of the big current of seasonal rivers and the fact that several places would be flooded.

Because in each case there was a precise moment during the year at which it was best to perform the field research, it was impossible to carry out the required tasks simultaneously. If you have to be present from October to January for all case studies, you can only do that in subsequent Octobers. This made an actual comparison between, for example, climatic or macro-economic influences more difficult.

3.4.3 Information gathered per case

Which data

As already explained in the section on the method of George (1979), the data collection was guided by protocols formulated before the area of the cases was visited and were then revised after the inventory, case-selecting visit. In general, these protocols deal with four categories of data, that connect with the five types of insecurities described in the Insecurity Complex, that were also noticed by Bebbington (1999) in his 'capitals' (the natural (or environmental), human, economic and social-cultural-political domain16) for which both independent and dependent variables were discerned. In addition, the research also featured intervening variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1</th>
<th>Number of persons interviewed for survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oudda</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kubadjé</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>206</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bush-nomads</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of user</td>
<td>Cattle-keepers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle-keepers</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of adult population</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

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See chapter 2 (as is explained, the concept of Cultural Capital is not used as such; Produced capital is incorporated in several of the other domains of the Insecurity Complex, especially in the economic one).
year and per month. The 58 respondents were chosen randomly in the sense that those we encountered in the bush and were willing to participate are part of the sample.

- The number of 'surveyed' women is low and decreases during the research (for each subsequent case), because it appeared that the women provided more or less the same information as their husbands. Several times they added information during the interview with their husband. Although I searched for female-headed households, I only located a few.

Although, in general, qualitative information was gathered, a certain amount of quantitative data had to be listed to aid the insight into the position of respondents, something the protocols also demanded. This concerned, for example, the age and sex of the respondents, the number of household members, the number of cattle and other animals, the yields over a number of years - in short this means survey-like data. In addition to that, quantitative data were gathered to establish an insight into more objective environmental conditions. A good example of this is the rainfall patterns and numbers.

Of each party within the three cases, the survey-like study was carried out as a minimum with almost all inhabitants of the involved neighbourhoods. Moreover, the more in-depth research tried to involve as many persons as possible to facilitate a comparison between the different positions within the village and therefore within the conflict and differences in strategies and behaviour. Table 3.1 shows the number of persons interviewed (for survey-data) per case.

**How was the data collected**

Each case was studied during a period of residence with each of the two parties in the conflict. In practice, this basically meant six weeks per party. With regard to "comparative analysis" Cleuren (2001: 50) remarked that "data collection has to be swift and selective due to time constraints". Nevertheless I tried to examine the local cases in as much detail as possible. In the "new settlement" case (case 2) I also spent a number of weeks in the area from which the settlers came in order to assess push and pull factors. The periods of residence were spent as a guest in the house of one of the inhabitants of the affected village or neighbourhood. In some cases I lived in the house of the neighbourhood chief or one of his representatives, in some cases in the house of the person who also served as an interpreter and guide. This made it possible to observe from very nearby at least the daily lives of, and negotiations within, the household and the neighbours of one (extended) family per case.

The field-studies contained a mixture of a broad range of methods from different disciplines. First, anthropological methods were used such as participatory observation, participatory mapping, semi-structured and open interviews of individuals and groups, ranking methods, and registration of life histories or other relevant narratives. In addition, observational techniques of the social geographical science discipline were employed concerning (among other things) spatial patterns of use and settlement, the position of natural resources and territorial boundaries, the position of the local map within the broader, regional map as well as the registration of the history of all this. Apart from the consultation of published maps - most of

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1 I talked with women more profoundly during unofficial interviews and group discussions.

2 Considering the influence of age not only on lifecycle and possibilities of livelihood strategies, but also on behaviour during conflict (see e.g. Obi (1999); Richards (1996)).

3 As is recommended by Livelihood Research authors (see e.g. Murray 2001: 14).
them dating back a long time—roaming the region, transect walking, following special area boundaries and climbing up to regional high points to survey the area turned out to be very helpful.

Information was checked and double-checked with local informants and with regional administrative civil servants and their dossiers or, if possible, NGOs working in the study area. It proved to be very difficult to obtain more official (census) data. Provincial and district agricultural and veterinary services were willing to deliver, but could only come up with limited archival information. Moreover, with regard to reported conflicts, the authorities involved, ranging from the police and district chief to the departmental court of justice, could not (or would not) provide me with even an overview of incidents that had occurred during recent years, let alone information on the causes that made people seek assistance from these authorities, or the narratives that should accompany each report.

Reproduction of the findings
To make a comparison of the three cases easier, the description of the data of the three case studies (chapter 5, 6 and 7) follows a strict format. This is based, again, on the protocols of data gathering, the insecurity domains and the related capitals as described by Bebbington (1999). Thus, each of the case chapters starts with an introductory piece, followed by a historical overview. Each chapter first deals with the ‘invading’ groups, with their insecurities, investments and claims. The focus then switches to the counter group and lastly the conflict itself.

In the insecurity part I start with the environmental domain. In order to acquire an insight into this type of insecurity I use five indicators on both the aggregate (village) level as well as the individual level where relevant:
1. the physical basis.
2. population density.
3. land availability.
4. commoditisation of land and
5. caloric needs and production (non-agricultural calories included).

The human domain insecurities can cover a very broad and diverse set of aspects, but in this study I focus on two more obvious ones, namely health and education. Economic insecurities are divided into agricultural (crops and livestock) and non-agricultural ones, whether or not farm related. Cash and subsistence production, as well as on and off-farm activities are very interrelated and mixed. Percentages of effort dedicated to the one or the other differ per moment and depend (sometimes afterwards) on production circumstances from micro to macro. However, the collected data has been arranged as well as possible into the four categories and in the same way for each case.

21 When visiting regional courts, archives appeared to have been destroyed by mice and termites. Official records of mounted cases were lost, etc. Regional authorities did not keep the records they were obliged to and even accused me of secretly checking them as regards the performance of their duties.
As regards the description of the social domain insecurities, a selection has been made of a far broader set of aspects. In the social domain, bonds between different (sub) groups as well as linkages from group to group and from one level of society to another - together with the related rules, norms and values - are important as regards making up for otherwise increasing insecurities. When normal variability in such relationships shows a downward trend and risks reaching the threshold of the break down of the social systems altogether, one can speak of a situation of insecurity in the social domain. These are, therefore, the facets described in the chapters.

Insecurities in the political area of the social domain concern insecurities connected to trust and representedness at higher levels. Secondly, they refer to whether or not these higher levels ensure proper governance of the area in the sense of general development efforts, support of local efforts and feasible conflict prevention measures. Last but not least, the political domain is also important as a conflict resolution institute, but this can also fuel conflicts. Therefore, both the general political position of the groups involved and conflict mediation systems are covered under the heading ‘political insecurities’. Land allocation methods and general cultural settings and changes are two sub-sections of the broader social domain.

After the description of the different insecurities of the ‘invading’ group, the investments to counter these insecurities are ordered in more or less the same way. Investments in the environment aim to improve the quality and quantity of natural resources in general, of land in particular and to generate more possibilities for access to and use of those resources. The basic objective is to improve the fulfilment of needs, such as those for food and shelter, both now and the future. That means that, apart from investments in the land, direct investments in higher production can also be made. All these aspects are described in the sections on environmental investments.

Because drawing up an inventory and measuring the total social capital and investments therein demand more research time than was available on this occasion, only the most obvious indicators are given. Subsequent sub-sections describe some examples of development of social bonds and linkages as well as the rules and norms resulting from them in the family and clan, the political domain and the general cultural system of the groups.

The fourth section of each chapter, dedicated to the entry into the new niche, has the same outline as the earlier sections. The fifth section that deals with the claim is different per case because of the differences in the stories. Because the sixth section describes the counter-party, the strict format of the four domains and the indicators used per domain are reapplied here. However, insecurities and investments are dealt with more briefly and in a more integrated fashion so as only to show why the counter-party is motivated to (stick to the) use (of) the piece of land in question.

The last section of each case chapter deals with the ways the conflict is handled. In instances in which both parties claim that the region is theirs, or is to be used as they see fit, they have to arrange something to exclude the others or make sure they themselves can co-habituate with the other group. As is explained in the theory chapter, strategies in conflicts consist of a hierarchy of choosing more and more for one’s own interests. This goes from yielding via problem solving (finding a way out to both parties’ satisfaction) to contending. This last option can be implemented with persuasion or force, in different forms. Only by carrying out the activities that relate to the second of the contending strategies do actors arrive in the last box of the VoE diagram: Box 4. ‘Violence’ (Figure 2.1). All other strategies can be called
‘escapes’. Of course, the actions of both parties are important. Sometimes (or perhaps most of the times) third parties are also important.

3.5 Problems

3.5.1 Language
Because of the orientation towards two different parties per case, speaking directly with the actors would have meant learning more than 5 or 6 languages. Speaking the language of the groups studied certainly has major advantages over the use of interpreters. “The way farmers express themselves reveals important aspects of their way of reasoning, their way of perceiving events, mechanisms and relationships” (Zuiderwijk 1998: 358). Translations almost always remain incomplete. They are often biased and regularly lead to misunderstandings. It is, of course, quite impossible to learn the required languages to a level that avoids all these setbacks and makes it possible to “‘internalise’ some of the basic elements of local modes of reasoning and perceiving things” (id) in the limited time available for a PhD research project.

The help of interpreters was therefore indispensable. For each residence area a key interpreter was hired from that same settlement. The interpreters were male because it turned out that only men had sufficient education combined with enough spare time to act as interpreters. These people also acted as guides in the region and village. Wherever possible a woman interpreter was hired for a couple of days to carry out interviews with women in the settlement. I told all interpreters to translate ‘everything’ ‘always’ and insisted on the fact that I myself wanted to decide whether anything was worthwhile. I also asked them to provide a translation that was as close as possible to the local language words, or my own words when translating in the other direction. This meant translating ‘literally’ and ‘verbally’. When this led to confusion due to proverbial expressions and unfamiliar comparisons, I asked them to provide an explanation in terms that corresponded better to the known idiom. As I experienced on a number of occasions. I had to be attentive to questions about concepts the local language did not include because then the interpreter’s given explanation could already incorporate the answer being sought.

3.5.2 Trust and viability
One of the major problems concerned the bias of the answers. The answers given were not those that the respondent thinks you as a researcher want to hear, as anthropologists warn each other about, but the answers (s)he wants you to hear. That is, the researcher is used as a strategic tool and is sometimes literally deployed to win the ‘battle’. Once, after I had established the different perceptions of different groups on the ‘real’ position of a boundary, the regional chief manoeuvred me into our car and took me to the sub-department chief to explain his case and, of course, win this important civil servant over to act on his behalf. To enhance the reliability and validity of the research and to win the confidence of the villagers. I had to resort to different strategies and tricks.

Before I actually arrived for my stay, I made my plans known to the regional authorities and to the village and neighbourhood chiefs. As soon as I entered the villages (neighbourhoods) I

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22 See, e.g., Obi (1999) about the role of the State in the Ogoni conflict in Nigeria and in the Sudanese civil war.
made clear what my purpose was and that I also intended to spend time on ‘the other side’. Mostly this was greeted with approval since it connected with the African tradition of talking things over, listening and re-listening. I told people again and again I did not take sides and made this clear by my actions as well. When I found myself in situations on the ground in which I had to choose sides I only expressed some doubts regarding high-level authorities and, by doing so, showed my appreciation of the residents’ own feelings and, as I perceived, gained their confidence.

Building enough trust to make it possible for respondents to express their doubts to me about a controversial issue and to explain to me what they thought would be appropriate action, was a difficult task. Stories about my presence and the reason why I was there travelled quicker then I myself did and in certain areas I had to counter-play the prejudices that had arisen as a result. In the Kapsiki village of Dzambou, people thought that I was there because I had actually bought the disputed area. It was me who had turned it into a pasture reserve in the first place, they said. This thought made some respondents very angry towards me and it took a lot of time and efforts to build up new confidence and trust. The fact that I posed rebellious questions helped (“why don’t you go down to the pasture area and destroy the border poles?”), although I used those types of questions in the first place to trigger emotions and acquire more trustworthy answers with respect to the ideas about the controversial issue and the strategies to be used. I deliberately informed my interpreters on this subject and instructed them on how to act, how to pose the questions, how to explain my presence and, quite importantly, to inform me afterwards when they thought the respondent had given the wrong information (for example some persons even lied about the number of children they had, while the real answer was obvious to any observer). This meant I spent a lot of time on double-checking. To safeguard against feelings of uncertainty and doubts regarding my trustworthiness, I explained to every respondent that I would never use any names in any report25. To stress that, I only asked my guide, secretly, the name of a respondent once the interview had ended. Names were necessary to establish family and other social relations of respondents that could be of relevance for the chosen strategy. They were also necessary to connect interview data with information gathered during group sessions and ‘get-togethers’, such as evenings around the household fire, market visits and coincidental meetings ‘en route’ and with field observations.

3.5.3 Researcher bias
Although I attempted to carry out the research from an emic perspective, outcomes are evidently more or less blurred by the etic points of view. For example, with regard to conflicts Warfield (1993: 176) has already mentioned that “culture provides an interpretational lens for the origins of conflict, [...] confounds popular notions concerning the role of parties in conflict, the role of the so-called neutral, and the concept of neutrality”. Thus, the cultural background of the researcher co-shapes the analysis. And not only the analysis, but even the data are influenced by the person, position and points of view of the researcher. Especially when the research focuses on vulnerable information such as conflict behaviour, the accessibility thereof depends heavily on the behaviour of the researcher and how (s)he manages to obtain a sort of neutral and confident position, all of which is again culturally co-determined.

25 As regards the names that are mentioned in this book. I first obtained the unequivocal permission of the persons in question.
Because of these reflections, I will briefly describe those aspects of myself that may be relevant for the interpretation of the results. A very important point in the African context is the fact that I am a middle-aged woman and mother. As a result, I was looked at as someone to be respected and it gave starting points for discussions. I found it easy to intervene and provide assistance with family and household matters. This also generated non-intrusive opportunities to start conversations. On the other hand, I was not a purchasable ‘girl’ so men did not need to ‘keep up’ appearances, although jokes were made regularly to ease possible tensions. The fact that I am a Western-European (Dutch) woman also made me a kind of specialist as regards advice about health-related subjects and education. Although I did not tell people I am a veterinary surgeon, the fact that I was very interested in and used to cattle and other livestock could not be disguised. It opened up discussions with villagers and authorities alike. On the other hand, my own opinion about husbandry is not biased towards cattle prevalence over agriculture.

With regard to conflict and violence, I have to say that, having been raised in an upper middle class and a well educated environment I prefer discords to be settled on the basis of consensus and by argument rather than by force. This opinion is enhanced by my own culture and the fact that my country provides a clear and secure juridical system. I tend to speak out openly, without lying, even to persons with more authority (although respect should always be paid) and I prefer to experience such behaviour in others. In local situations, however, I always kept a bit of a distance from others and did not show what was really going through my mind. At a subconscious level I value people more (and their information) who do not show cruelty (for example against children or animals) and/or who invest in communal goods (for example sharing time with villagers to teach them better agricultural practices, inform them about HIV risks, or who set up a mutual banking system), especially when this is done voluntarily. This entails the risk that I interpret and comment on information from different people with different sorts of prejudices. On the other hand, the fact that I was and am aware of this bias caused me to be more careful when evaluating all the responses (which had to be carried out in a more or less intuitive way).