The assertion of rights to agro-pastoral land in North Cameroon: a cascade to violence?
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Bana, Kapsiki, Tupuri, Fulbe - everybody struggles with a growing competition for land. But does it lead to violence? Does a causal link exist between environmental scarcity and violence? If the answer is "yes", what is the causal chain of events and how do people avoid the outbreak of violence in the event of environmental scarcity? This chapter draws a conclusion with regard to the research questions. At first sight all three cases seemed to consist of some (minor) violence related to natural resources. People fought, wounded each other, threatened each other gravely, damaged each other's belongings, used witchcraft against each other and even took a hostage once (albeit temporarily). Whether the cause was indeed environmental scarcity has yet to be concluded.

To explain causes, it is best to start from the event "that we want to explain and then to work backward in time and outward in space so as to enable us to construct chains of causes and effects leading to those events..." (Vayda and Walters 1999: 169). To answer the research questions the violent outbreaks (small as they are) are the events to be explained. Thus, the analysis will start at the last box of the Violence-or-Escape-diagram (Box 4: "Violence", Figure 8.1) and work its way 'upwards' along the causal chain.

It has to be said, that this last box of the VoE diagram and, thus, the last sub-section of each case description (chapters 5, 6, and 7) is not the last step taken in real life. After the use of small-scale violence - the type of violence noticed in the case studies - a situation can escalate to become large-scale violence. But it is also possible that the status quo of minor violent outbreaks will continue. Even the disappearance of the use of violence is possible', when people see that their strategy of aggression and force has resulted in what they wanted, or when they perceive that violence does not get them any nearer to their goal while, on the contrary, their non-violent group co-members have more success. Each violent event, after all, was accompanied by non-violent actions by other actors.

In this chapter I will subsequently discuss the 'event boxes' of the VoE diagram with their

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1 And, indeed, always will be reached, whether or not after long periods of aggression and suffering.
possible causes. As has been stated, the exercise will start at Box 4. For each case I will briefly say something about future possibilities of outbreaks of violence. In the second section I go more or less backwards in time and discuss Box 3 of the VoE diagram, the assertion of rights, its causes and escapes. In each section this pattern of backward movement is continued until the left side of the original diagram (see chapter 2) is reached. For reasons of clarity, each section will start with the enumeration of the ‘same’ four ‘questions’, although adjusted each time to the section’s subject, namely that of the VoE Box in question.

The first of these ‘four questions’ is not really a question, but concerns the description of the event Box involved. Then the questions about the causes to follow the cascade to violence towards this special Box and about the reason why not everybody has followed the non-Cascade get attention. These first three ‘questions’ focus on the separate cases and therefore describe automatically the differences between the cases. The fourth questions, then, regards the similarities between the cases, because the whole goal of the study was to find enough similarities to make it possible to speak of a pattern. With that same aim I make short side explanations and considerations when it is deemed necessary.

I end the chapter with a section on general conclusions regarding 1) whether or not a pattern is found between scarcity and the outbreak of violence and, vice versa, the outbreak of violence and the existence of scarcity; 2) critics on the theory of Homer-Dixon as one of the most important ES-theories; and 3) the usefulness of the VoE diagram in this type of research.

**Figure 8.1 Reverse VoE diagram**

**8.1 Why violence?**

1 Description of the violent event
2 Is it caused by assertion of rights or is it caused by other factors?
3 Why do not all actors use the escape route of non-violence?
4 What are the similarities between the three cases?
This section ends with a short theorisation that generalises the findings, with a view to improved use of the VoE diagram (section 8.1.5).

8.1.1 Description of events

**Case 1: Baba Deli**

In Dzambou the event consisted of the fist-fight at the Baba Deli meeting in which the authorities indicated the trees to be marked as boundary signs for the official pasture-forest reserve. It was a fight between two groups of Kapsiki agriculturalists. One of the groups consisted of farmers that were against the establishment of a pasture-forest reserve and especially against the boundaries shown at the meeting. The other group consisted of farmers plus two or three cattle keepers (who also cultivate) who approved both the establishment of the reserve as well as the position of the boundaries. The representatives of the first group had already given their formal approval of the reserve in a kind of participatory meeting with the authorities, but the exact location of the boundaries was then decided differently. The changed position of the boundaries favoured the approving group by permitting them to stay housed where they were, while the other boundaries would have obliged them to move. These previously decided boundaries would have followed the location of boundaries as the village inhabitants perceive them as having been drawn in the past in an agreement with a former cattle keeper of Fulbe origin. Those farmers that were against the pasture-forest reserve take the view that such an agreement had a temporary status: the fertility of agricultural fields surrounding the pasture area would determine whether the grazing status would end or not. The fight was started by people from this latter group. Apart from bruises, no wounds or casualties were reported.

It is possible that, in Dzambou, some of those who refrained from violence at the meeting will resort to it in the future, as deliberations of some groups of younger men have shown. They are firmly dedicated to reaching their goal and are discussing several strategies of varying violent natures. Most of those who are considering the use of violence in the future have already used it in the fist fight at the Baba Deli meeting. Obviously, this fight and the absence of any sanctions motivate them more to use violence, although the success of the fight has been nil up to now.²

**Case 2: Kolara-Kobo**

In the whole Diamaré several violent events have been reported, but no outright violence has been recorded in the exact area under study. Nevertheless, the outspoken threats can be considered as (the beginning of) violence and can certainly be placed in Box 4. Thus, the (series of) serious threats uttered directly against the threatened adversary can be considered as the event that has to be discussed here. These threats are aimed at co-users and are, more often than not, directly related to the new clearance of fields, especially on the camps of cattle keepers or, on the other hand, to cattle damage to crops. In particular, verbal threats that are

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² Most probably the farmers' representatives did not have any choice but to agree with the governmental plans.
³ The learning effect, mentioned by Sandole (1993) in his list of reasons for violence (see Chapter 2), is somewhat ambiguous here.
underpinned by threatening gestures, such as the waving of fists or arms, may lead to physical confrontations. In the Kolara-Kobo bush, the violent part of the conflict is something solely between the users in the field (agriculturalists and cattle keepers). The outbreak of violence between cultivators and herdsmen in an adjacent part of the bush, reported by Van der Ploeg (2001), is even hidden from the authorities. Moreover, serious threats to use real violence are not aimed at convincing the authorities to appoint the area to the threatener. The aim is to chase or frighten the other user away.

Violent outbreaks in the broader Diamaré consist, just as often, of encounters between herdsmen as well as between herdsmen and farmers. In the (smaller) area of the study, however, threats by herdsmen against other herdsmen only occur sporadically. For example, some herdsmen consider the bush to be too crowded with cattle and try to prohibit other herds from coming too close. In general, though, up till now cattle keepers have voiced the feeling that it is shameful to chase co-herders (even those of another ethnic origin) away. You should be tolerant about others using your campsite and you should be patient when others jump the queue at watering points.

As has been mentioned earlier, in the study area as such most encounters occur between herdsmen and farmers. At the same time, the violence does not go beyond verbal threats, albeit very outspoken and serious ones. This type of threats is regarded as minor violence. However, all threats can be signs of future violence. Although a threat is something different from plans about how to arrange an attack or an attack itself, the one can quickly develop into the other. Minor threats raise the general level of tension towards the violence threshold.

**Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa**

In the Oudda-Kila case, some users of fields or pasture in Kubadje-Jiksa resorted to violence on a seemingly ad hoc basis. The event to be clarified is a series of such encounters. These events include an attack by the cultivators on a sole and thus vulnerable herder who was near their fields. He was attacked simply because he was there. On another occasion the people reacted to crop damage by cattle by punching someone on the nose. They used the violence to frighten their adversaries away, not to convince the authorities of their rights. The herdsmen, in turn waved their herding stick threateningly in the air or used it to hit a farmer on the head when they discovered him clearing part of the bush. As soon as the farmer called for assistance from his fellow cultivators nearby, the herdsmen retreated. The herdsmen’s threats have not (as yet) resulted in the retreat of farmers that had already entered the area to cultivate. It did, however, make certain farmers (especially the older ones and some women) choose not to start activities in the area at all.

Future larger scale violence may be expected because of agitated young farmers who have

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1. Some of the threats are not voiced to adverse users of the bush, but to researchers or other visitors. These threats can be regarded as belonging to Box 3 of the VOE diagram (see section 2).
2. See also Montiz (in press).
3. The direct cause of the attack by Fulbe youngsters on a Tupuri settlement in Mayo Kobo in 1998 in which several men died is reported to be the disappearance of some Fulbe donkeys, and the idea harboured by the Fulbe that these Tupuri had stolen their animals. Possibly the whole event can be retraced to traditional habits of initiation deeds in the form of livestock theft. These acts occurred abundantly (and mutually) between nomadic cattle keepers and Tupuri.
already discussed basic ‘military’ strategies. A large number of these young men do not have
direct (or future) interests in the disputed area. Also, the adult and adolescent sons in the
herders’ group are annoyed and regularly express their desire to stand up for what they per-
ceive as their rights.

Thus, in all three cases, minor violent events revealed a build-up of tension, without this having
(yet) erupted into full-blown violence.

8.1.2 Assertion of rights or other causing factors?
Case 1: Baba Deli
The violence in Baba Deli was perpetrated by a number of farmers and was aimed at fellow
villagers who had supported the decision by the authorities and who stood to gain from the new
decision. However, the presence of these authorities underpinned the claim to the land by these
farmers vis-à-vis the authorities. Some of the people that participated in the fight did not have
any stake in the pasture fields. Partly it was an escalation of normal behaviour, such as bodily
contact, pushing, yelling threats, which are all part and parcel of the way in which Kapsiki
express themselves during disputes.

The most important reason for the outbreak of the fight at that moment, and why it escalat-
ed, was the anger about the changing of the plans and the unequal treatment of the villagers.
Both triggers of anger were mingled with a general feeling of distrust towards the authorities,
but also towards fellow villagers. In the group of inhabitants without interests in the pasture
zone, the most obvious anger was triggered by the unfair decision by the authorities. Although
this may be a sign of fellow villagers’ loyalty and strong social ties, the fact that the social fa-
bric in Dzambou shows several cracks makes it more likely that the authorities’ behaviour
(implemented inequality) causes a strong feeling of insecurity among the rest of the popula-
tion. “You cannot trust the authorities and their rules.” Nevertheless, (some of) the accusations,
and especially the violence, focus on the favoured Fulbe settlement inhabitants instead of the
State. This may be due to a feeling that fellow villagers are an easier target than the State
(attacking a State representative is totally at odds with the respect people should pay to higher
placed people, and it may turn out to be a dangerous activity). It is certainly partly due to
feelings of jealousy towards the inhabitants of the Fulbe corner because of their very high
yields (at least in the eyes of the other Dzambou-ers).

Indeed, most of the Dzambou farmers with fields in the pasture reserve do not consider their
problem as a problem with the State. Although they know that the State wants a forest reserve,
they go on blaming their fellow villagers who are proponents of the forest pasture reserve for
being the ones that instigated the whole conflict. Even the fact that they are favoured by the
State is not blamed on the State representatives, but on the Fulbe settlement inhabitants them-
selves through accusations of bribery.

The difference between the violence that has already occurred and future violence is the
extent of the organisation and the trigger. As has already been stated, the violence during the
meeting was not inspired by the wish to assert land per se. It was the feeling of unequal treat-
ment that triggered the anger and the use of force. The use of violence was not a deliberate
choice and it flared up due to people’s anger. Future violence may be more organised and have
the deliberate purpose of ascertaining the access to, use of and even ownership of the fields.
How these farmers will defend their long-term interests in the pasture zone in reality is not yet clear, but their plans are. Several people say they will not let go. “We just clear our fields and continue using them, although those cattle keepers do not like it. If they damage our crops we will kill them and their herds. The only way to stop us would be to send a large number of armed police.” Although the focus would be on land security (and thus a tactic for ascertaining of rights to land), the direct cause of a violent outbreak would still be people’s anger at being treated unequally. “Why should they use fields in the pasture area while we are forbidden from doing so?”

For those who continue to use pasture fields, future violence can again be ad hoc and based on direct anger, but then as a result of crop damage and, for example, an encounter with a herdsman who has not checked his cattle (or the reverse, namely a herdsman or proponent of the pasture who catches a farmer red-handed who is clearing a new field or cutting a tree for fuel or construction wood). These ad hoc encounters risk leading to larger scale violence if the above-mentioned dedicated young men devise plans to help each other in such cases.

In short, the violent event that took place during the Baba Deli meeting was for the most part caused by ‘other factors’, although the ascertaining of rights to the land did play a role somewhere deep down in the reasoning and feelings of the actors. At first, pasture field owners gave up their rights and claims. They did so during the Mogodé meeting and by way of a mandate given to their representatives. However, the accord was not given wholeheartedly. Within the power structures they felt they had no alternative but to give in. However, they did so reluctantly and were still acutely aware of the loss of a large area offering (future) agricultural possibilities. When they discovered that another option had been open to others and that these people had used that option, that others had not given up their claims and, indeed, had been successful, their frustration boiled over. The whole process made them reconsider their earlier agreement with the pasture reserve as such, and the former reluctance now changed into total rejection. To underpin this ‘sudden’ rejection, they sought (and found) several substantial arguments, namely the inequality, the lack of justice in the democratic State of Cameroon, the bad governance shown by the sudden alteration in the authorities’ decisions (which was also inexplicable given that nothing had changed in the past two months) and the history of ownership and use of the area.

Now, after the violent event (or after the complex of factors that led to the violence), some of the pasture field owners reasserted the rights to their lands and did so more fiercely. Because of the violent event and the factors that caused it, these people acquired a kind of ‘violent mood’.

The pro-reserve inhabitants of Dzambou do not refer to the use of violence in the future. They expect the State to defend the reserve. However, they did fight back when they were attacked at the Baba Deli meeting and they strongly counter threatening remarks with the warning that they will not flee. There is no reason to think these pasture reserve proponents will refrain from resistance in the event of a direct attack in the future. Nevertheless, the plans of the agitated young farmers are directed more at resisting the State than at assaulting pro-pasture fellow villagers.

The ambiguity towards the State in this case can be explained by the ambiguity of the State’s roles and position. In theory, the State is indispensable as an institution to defend

7 Past violent events and the memories of violent behaviour of the current opponents did not seem to have any influence.
(minority) rights and property. It sets the rules and, specifically, boundaries related to the planned destination of a piece of land. Negotiations on such boundaries need to involve the State. However, in the reality of Cameroon, the State is a puppet in the hands of the rich (that is: those who pay the most) or those who are otherwise able to manipulate the State's objectives. This means that any time the State responds in a sudden and 'strange' way, one can only conclude that bribes are involved. Such bribery can only be performed by the opposing party. Then, this other party is the one that is blamed and is the focus of angry responses.

Case 2: Kobo-Kolara
The violence in the Diamaré (verbal abuse and threats) does not always have a rights-ascertaining origin. From time to time, at least, it is based on ethnic controversies (sometimes only historical ones) or traditions like initiation rules and habits. In addition, since time immemorial, crop damage by cattle has led to (violent) quarrels between herders and farmers. Nevertheless, most of the threats expressed in the study area involve the perceived loss of, and threats to, 'territory'. Reviling opponents, verbal abuse and threats start at the moment that a nomad arrives at his camp site and finds it occupied by new settlements or when he follows his normal track through the bush towards a rich forage spot or watering place and this road is blocked by fields in which a cultivator is busy working. If the farmer is not present, the herder will not waste words on the matter but will just send his herd into the crops. Of course this will lead to angry farmers. An encounter between the victim of the crop damage and the (or an) owner of (the) cattle will at least start off a series of verbal confrontations. Often these are accompanied by threats against the life or property of the other.

The fact that people do not feel backed by the State can also play a role in why they resort to violence. Then it is the ever-continuing investment of effort and money in ascertaining rights to the land that leads to frustration. In that situation the chicanery of the authorities makes people choose the violent path in their endeavour to reach certainty over the land. In such a case they may have learned that it is better to leave the authorities outside their conflicts. For the time being it seems as if in one family or in one group two strategies are used at the same time (or at least alternating): the non-violent, aimed-at-the-State path is discussed in the next sub-section.

The actual low scale violence of threats and verbal abuse can easily escalate into real physical encounters, as happened in the direct vicinity. As shown in socio-biological studies, younger males take and get (from the elders) the right to explore new paths in society, some of which involve the use of force. If small-scale violence by some youngsters pays off, it will be used more often and by a more extended group in the future. On the other hand, violence can go too far and the result may be that those involved have to retreat even further than would otherwise have been necessary.

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8 Montz (2003) mentions that herders even consider themselves to be good cattle keepers when they deliberately send their herds into fields because then they give the animals the best food possible
10 As in the example of Van der Ploeg (2001) after the attack by Fulbe youngsters of the Tupun settlement and the resulting casualties, the nomad families involved retreated totally from the region and their ancestral campsites
Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa

In the Jiksa-Kubadje zone the violent events came about after a build-up of frustrations over crop damage and cattle-route blocking. At first, especially when the number of new users was not very high and the herdsmen could avoid the new fields, occasional incidents of cattle that walked into fields led to peaceful attempts from both sides to persuade the adverse party that the land was not his. That he should not develop fields in an area that belonged to herdsmen or, from the other perspective, that he should not herd his cattle in an area meant to be used for agriculture. With an increase of new fields and no positive response to previous demands to leave the area, together with no effective conflict resolution interventions of authorities, both farmers and cattle keepers became annoyed. They started to underline the persuasion they expressed with minor threats, then with bigger threats and then with minor expressions of violence. Thus, although triggered by the interference they encountered with actual (physical) needs and influenced by absence of effective State (or other mediators) activities, the violence is based on the wish to ascertain the rights to this piece of land. Specifically the future rights to good land are the concern of the actors.

The talks and plans of several youngsters in Oudda may be seen as signs of loyalty towards village members (especially when these youngsters do not have direct interests in the Jiksa area). More than once, the expression of this loyalty has been driven by the perceived option to maintain or raise one’s standing in the village or village neighbourhood via the voicing of unrestricted group membership\(^1\). In addition to that, the memory of the heroic past, that is the fight against the Kapsiki of Kila, made people think they would win again. Indeed, the story was told several times, especially to older boys and young men, with the result that they re-told it and referred to it when talking about their plans. It had the effect of making any attack a defensive and not an aggressive one, thereby giving it more legitimacy and therefore lowering the threshold.

\(^{1}\) For the difference between yielding (withdrawing in a later phase, when challenged) and avoiding (not entering the contested area at all) see Rubin et al (1994) in chapter 2.

Of course at \(t = 1\), actors may have changed position and become a ‘member’ of another category. For example, some actors start with the clearing of family fields in a pasture area and try to safeguard the right to that piece of land, but later on they withdraw from the region. Then, they yield at \(t = 1\).

\(^{11}\) In some cases I even thought that their heroic words were intended to impress local girls, but any inquiries \(I\) made concerning this (to the girls or the men) always provoked negative responses.
8.1.3 Description of the non-violent path

Each of the cases studied included non-violent groups. Within these groups, three interesting types of actors can be detected: 1) those actors who try to reach their goal, 2) those who not only refrain from violence but also from their goal and 3) those actors whose direct interests are not at stake in the conflict, but who nevertheless become involved. Figure 8.2 shows a list of all categories of actors in this stage of the VoE diagram (see also Figure 8.1, t = 0).

Case 1: Baba Deli

In Dzambou the majority of the people that were present at the last village meeting in Baba Deli (where the paint to mark the boundary trees was distributed) did not resort to violence. For some of them the instalment of the pasture reserve did not affect their interests. They were only present out of curiosity or because a village meeting is something villagers have to attend. Others owned or used pasture fields, but refrained from violence because they did not consider that to be a good strategy for safeguarding access to these fields (or because they are not that strong and/or are afraid of getting hurt or even imprisoned, based on past experiences or accounts, etc). Several of these people said that, in the presence of State authorities, one "should be careful not to get a bad name".

Indeed, some of this group gave up their goal – the defence of their fields – altogether. Initially they stated a claim, but after the decision of the sub-prefect they even stopped using the land in the pasture forest reserve. These people considered a good relationship with the authorities to be more important than access to pasture fields. Their yielding served another, more social-political security. They explain their behaviour by referring to their powerlessness regarding the State. Partly this attitude springs from experiences of older people. When they were younger, during the colonial period and directly after independence, the State was eager to use force against those who did not obey its orders\(^1\). In addition, those elderly people are mostly not very well educated and do not know the rights associated with (current) Cameroonian citizenship.

Ideally, when it is clear that two different actor(group)s have claims to the same piece of land, a mutual solution is sought. Some of the people involved, but also other villagers (for example local chiefs) expressed compromises relating to both pasture land conservation and continued farming. Solutions that combine these two with the State objective of the installation and maintenance of forests were not expressed\(^2\). A search for a real solution has not (yet) begun. Apart from the State decrees for meetings that are in fact only intended to inform villagers and not let them have any influence in decisions, there are no initiatives to bring the three groups together. Thus, they cannot search collectively, on the basis of cooperation, for mutually satisfying possibilities.

Case 2: Kobo-Kolara

In the Diamaré bush none of the actors belong to the categories without original stakes in the resource. Most new cultivators just started their fields and settlements and kept quiet. In that way they tried to avoid violent encounters. The cultivators say they do not intend to make the herdsmen disappear as long as they try to keep their cattle out of their fields: "The bush is big

\(^{12}\text{Here 'event memory' (learning) helps to make people refrain from violence.}\)

\(^{13}\text{This demonstrates more clearly the fact that the conflict is not considered to be a discord with the authorities.}\)
enough”. This seems to be the wisest tactic because keeping the authorities out of the dispute increases the possibilities for the farmers to carry on acquiring areas of the bush.

Sometimes, cultivators that started fields in the bush later go back to the surrounding villages or migrate even further away. The reason for this retreat, though, is not that they have yielded to the other party but rather to the difficulties of the Diamaré bush, such as the lack of water or the presence of elephants during the agricultural season.

Most of the herdsmen do not resort to violence either. Even when they find their rainy season camp sites occupied, they just search for another place. They explain that it is shameful to chase other herdsmen away and sometimes this even applies to farmers. They (mostly) decide to leave the area. They are the yielding group (as long as they indeed have other areas to go to)

Sometimes they complain to the local lavan about the loss of their camp site, because he is the chief of the land and it is his job to make intruders leave. But violence ... “that is no option, because the authorities would punish you badly. Haven’t you heard of the ardos of Mayo Kobo who are imprisoned?”

In this case again, only outsiders tried to think of problem-solving strategies. However, until now, nothing has been implemented and this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future without outside help.

**Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa**

In Oudda most of the farmers of the Jiksa zone did not want to use violence. They only wanted to use their ancestors’ fields. Most of them indeed just used their fields, cleared new ones when they thought it necessary and guarded against intruding cattle. The herdsmen on the other hand talked a lot about the problem of losing their grazing land and corridors but choose (as yet) to muddle on. They are trying to avoid damage in the ever-advancing fields and, in the back of their heads, they are weighing up the different options, such as the option of moving away.

There were no farmers of the Jiksa corner who proposed the installation of problem-solving institutions and systems to search for methods whereby the interests of both user-groups can be met. Only outside the group of users and/or owners of Jiksa fields, that is outside the group of people directly involved, did certain Oudda inhabitants try to think about mutual solutions like a rotation system of fields and pasture area. This involvement is due to feelings of general solidarity with both groups and a certain ‘village feeling’ of not wanting to encounter big (and perhaps escalating) problems. However, a meeting to discuss options with both stakeholding groups together has not (yet) been organised. Within the group of herdsmen, a certain hard-headedness has been expressed: “We cannot move. Our houses are here. It is too much of an effort to rebuild them elsewhere.” But this may be just a tactic. It is not wise to tell your adversaries about all the options open to you in advance.

Most of the Oudda inhabitants without an original stake in the Jiksa zone left the situation as it was. They did not interfere. They did not even show up at discussions or at the demon-

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14 These other areas may quickly disappear: in the Adamaoua region for example the number of cattle is rising quickly and the Benoue National Park authorities have become very strict in the defence of the park boundaries.

15 The word ardo is a Fulfulde word roughly meaning ‘the chief of a group of nomads’, comparable with the ‘duoro’ of a neighbourhood.

16 This is the reverse of the kind of learning Sandole (1993) mentions: negative experiences inhibit the expression of people’s inherent violent proneness.
stration of the location of the boundary by the two outer neighbourhoods and some inhabitants of Ouadda Centre (see in section 8.2. the assertion section).

8.1.4 What are the similarities between the three cases?

The violence in our three cases does not seem to be driven by extended deliberations beforehand aimed at long-term gains. Most of the time the direct cause was just anger: uncontrolled anger at sudden, acute threats to subsistence (a fear of real deprivation, not based on scarcity of resources but on damage to belongings without proper reimbursement), a disturbance of habits and expectations or feelings of injustice and insecurity because of arbitrary State actions. For some people the anger was exacerbated because they suspected their adversaries of bribery of the authorities. Bringing these accusations into the open and experiencing that others had the same perception offered them some scapegoats that were easier to attack than the State. Thus, the violence in the three cases was a non-rational physiological reaction to acute threats to basic needs, whether physical or meta-physical.

Part of the violence was instigated by solidarity feelings of farmers without a direct interest in the natural resource itself. Social identity (perhaps deliberately formed in the rights ascertaining phase, but not aimed per se at making allies for the sake of violent outbreaks) is combined with personal identity feelings based on an expression of solidarity and autonomy.

In theory, in new settlements, such as those in Kolara-Kobo, social capital and a collective identity have to be built and that takes time. The fact that all settlers are in the same position and have to rely on each other increases the rate of the process. Having the same enemy binds people together, but also makes them resort to violence more quickly, especially when violence-curbing institutions are far away and when they think (and fear) that the other party will react in the same way. The pre-emptive strike can seem to be indispensable. Then, even without real social capital, same interests may quickly evolve in collective violent action.

Future violence may be used strategically. Several younger, more highly educated owners of fields in the areas newly entered are discussing violent options to ascertain definitively their position on the land. A rational calculation has been carried out as regards the monetary and societal costs of the use of violence versus the benefits and the chances of reaching the goal. Absence or unreliable conduct by the State or State representatives triggers the strategy of taking one’s rights into one’s own hands.

With their contribution to the aggressive plans and their (future) actual assistance in attacks, the people without pasture field interests invest heavily in their social capital and that of the existing village. This phenomenon can only be seen when the new area is entered by members of an already (elsewhere) existing society. In the case of the Diamaré the new users may have the same ethnicity, but geographically they are not from the same society. Therefore, they cannot expect armed help from outside the settlement. Whether or not the

17 In short, an unbearable growth of frustration fuelled by a (perceived) discrepancy between the actual level of fulfilment of needs (whether physical or meta-physical) and somatic and mental well-being on the one hand and the level that the actor thinks is reachable and right on the other.

18 Once again, this was not a deliberate strategy in search of scapegoats; the situation offered it and it was willingly accepted.


20 Deliberate social identity formations can be invested in, for example, to acquire witnesses concerning ownership status vis-à-vis the authorities.
members of a same society will indeed come to the aid of their fellow farmers (or herders21) when armed allies are needed, remains to be seen. Sometimes the expressed loyalty is in fact only an expression of own worries about interests that may be threatened in the future. Involvement in an organised fight will be subject to a rational cost-benefit analysis. Future abstract threats do not weigh heavily.

The difference between the first case and the other two is that the State is only party in the first one. In the other two cases different authorities are involved, but not as representatives of State interests. In such circumstances it is of no use to show off one’s own interests and strength to the State but instead only towards other users and individual power-bearers. When the State is party, threats to and even the use of violence against the State representatives may be considered22. In most cases the use of violence is thought to diminish the support of the State, including when this State has no direct interests itself. Only some of the youngsters suggest that violence aimed at the other users (thus not against the State itself) will help the State to step in for them. “They will see that it is really our land, otherwise we would not risk our lives for it”.

All the deliberate uses of violence are only implemented when the group involved can count on some success. For example, violence is considered to be worthwhile when the State institutions with the task of maintaining order are too far away or are too weak, especially in comparison with the possible rate of ally formation. People are already making calculations about an armed response and the possibility that their adversaries may involve allies in a short enough time. As yet, in the three cases, the violence is small-scale and short in duration because the actors (still) respect the State and its violence-suppressing institutions. This contradicts all the remarks about a weak State in the North of Cameroon. At the same time it confirms deliberations that a weak State can cause conflicts and violence to escalate23.

It seems as if, in the case of actors that still want to reach their goal, the non-violent strategy is backed up by the deliberations that “low profile behaviour” and “not attracting attention” is the best way to succeed in the fulfilment of basic needs. When people come out into the open, they do so collectively. The State is still considered as strong enough to frighten people away from the use of violence or strong statements. Most actors involved do not trust either the other party or outsiders enough to expect successful conflict resolution. Therefore, they do not invest in lobbying or the establishment of consultancy platforms.

Many herders refrain from violence because they do not consider themselves strong enough. They consist of small, dispersed groups that cannot mobilise allies quickly enough.

Thus, in all three cases safeguarding the (access to and use of) natural resources is not the only reason to resort to violence. Not all people refrain from violence because from time to time

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21 In the cases studied no plans of herders were detected to come to the aid of another nomadic or cattle keeping group. Within the nomadic family, solidarity and future assistance were expressed. Only in the Kubaje-Jiksa case could the cattle keepers (theoretically) rely on their farming co-villagers of Kila, who (at least those that knew of the discord with the Oudda farmers) promised to help “our” Fulbe in case of an attack by southerners. Solidarity seemed to have been built on geographical identities, imposed by higher authorities.

22 To discredit or even hit the State, groups that should be protected by that State can be attacked (as was done in Iraq to discredit the US after the war against Saddam Hussein in 2003) but in none of the three cases this complex strategy is the reason behind the violence.

23 For the reasoning that a strong State may trigger conflicts see Nguiffo (forthcoming).
they are overwhelmed by anger and act irrationally, being struck by overflowing frustrations. On other occasions young, strong and educated men in particular consider violence as a good option to underpin their claim *vis-à-vis* the authorities or to frighten away adversaries. However, the plans to implement this strategy are still in the making. However, the absence of sanctions against small-scale (ad hoc) violence may lead to new (and larger) violent outbreaks, because of the learning aspect.

8.1.5 Theorising Box 4

In the preceding sections, the start of the analysis at the events, as Vayda and Walters (1999) advised, have led to the description of mixtures of calculated and eruptive violence. The causes thereof differed from rational to irrational. In short, looking back on the three cases, it seems necessary to enrich the conceptualisation of Box 4 by making a more explicit distinction between the two types of violence. Untangling the "chains of causes and effects" (id: 169), therefore demands different approaches. Rational action is open to rational explanation. Irrational action requires a more hermeneutic, that is 'intuitive', method.

In general, security scientists and politicians are more interested in calculated violence because that seems to risk resulting quicker in large-scale outbreaks. Nevertheless, irrational eruptions of violence are of interest because they are signs of a small distance between, what I call here, the 'tension line' in a society and the 'outbreak of violence threshold' (see Figure 8.3).

**Figure 8.3** *Distance to Violence (DiV = Distance to Violence)*

The tension line may be conceptualised as caused by more rational factors and have lower dynamics than the eruption of frustration that we encountered in the case studies. Eruptions of

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25 However manipulated the calculation may be by 'leaders'.
26 Premeditated, large-scale violence is not to be expected in the near future in any of the three cases. The number of groups involved in strategic 'military' planning (calculated violence) is too small and the build-up of supporting 'troops from outside' has (yet) to be started. Nevertheless, such a process can gather momentum quickly.
frustration may be regarded as being superimposed on the tension line (Figure 8.4). The degree of the eruption together with the Distance to Violence (DtV) determines whether or not such an eruption crosses the Outbreak of Violence Threshold.

When tensions in society or between members of society are low or non-existent, the ‘tension line’ is near the base line (left side of Fig. 8.3 and 8.4). Rising tensions, for whatever reason, cause the tension line to rise, until it might finally reach the Outbreak of Violence Threshold line and violence will start. In other words if, as shown in Figure 8.5, the tension line crosses the Outbreak of Violence Threshold, systematic and relatively calculated violence begins, although violent eruptions also then take place. The distance between the level of the tension line and the violence threshold line (called “Distance to Violence” = DtV) is indicative for the risk of a society to end up in (large-scale) violence. When the DtV is large, a small frustration eruption will not surpass the Violence Threshold (left side of Fig 8.4). With a small DtV small frustrations can lead to eruptive violence (right side of Fig 8.4). Conversely, if (series of) violence eruptions can be found based on relatively small frustrations, the conclusion has to be that such a society suffers from a small DtV and, therefore, has come within the reach of larger scale violence.

Figure 8.4  Frustration eruption in cases of a large or small ‘Distance to Violence’

Theoretically speaking, a large DtV can be bridged by one sufficiently large bout of frustration. If this is a one-off event, it generally concerns just one person because otherwise the tension line would be higher. In other words, a low tension line means a peaceful situation. The large gap in the direction of the violence threshold line can, for example, be bridged by somebody who suddenly becomes totally mad about something. In most cases like this the situation quickly returns to normal with the help of other society members. On the other hand, as can

A good example, and one that also stresses the influence of culture on the position of the societal tension line and thus on the reactions of society members to such ‘mad’ outbreaks, is described by Kpomassie (1998) in his anthropological report of a year on Greenland. The long dark winters at the high latitude and the transition to the totally different other season often causes depressions and madness of inhabitants that may lead to homicide. Yet, to Kpomassie’s African astonishment, the Inuit society does not react with revenge, but with understanding and placation of the victim’s family.
be seen by reactions to crop damage in the past. Sufficiently large frustrations do occur frequently. Thus, what is important is not the frequency of violent eruptions but the underlying DtV width and the reasons for the place of the ‘tension line’.

In other words, eruptions of frustrations are inherent to life. In the case of violent eruptions the frustration is the direct explanation but it does not provide any answer to the question of why this type of frustration resulted in violence on this occasion. Nor does it give any indication about the direction of the ‘tension line’ in the near future. For a further analysis of the situation and in order to acquire a greater insight into the violent event, not the ‘why’ of the event itself is of interest but the reason for the small DtV. Why and how did this small DtV come into being?

As can be inferred from the deliberations about future violence in the preceding sections, another related question concerns the result, the effect of the transgression of the violence threshold. Whether or not the cause of the transgression is itself interesting, the actors and the rest of their society have learned from the violent eruption. Because of this, the DtV will change. Once actors have learned that resorting to violence does not help, and they start to look for other solutions, the tension line may lower. It will rise when the actors have had (some) success or when they have learned that more calculated violence is suitable. In the worst cases, the tension line may even surpass the violence threshold as a result of which DtV is zero and calculated violence begins (see Fig. 8.5).

For example in the case of Jiksa-Kubadjé a series of frustrations (about bush clearances or, on the other hand, crop damage) without violent expression because the general tension was low (left side of Fig. 8.4), but also without solutions to the causes of the frustrations, made the tension line gradually rise. At this moment, therefore, eruptions of frustration may easily surpass the Outbreak of Violence Threshold (right side of Fig. 8.4). It is to be expected that, without any measures, this process will continue and finally the tension line will surpass the threshold line (Fig. 8.5).

In the Diamaré the tension line seems to rise with every encounter between pastoralists and agriculturalists. Now that actors have learned of the treachery of the authorities, the line has ‘jumped’ to a higher level. From this point, threats may easily lead to the temporarily surpassing of the Outbreak of Violence Threshold line (right side of Fig. 8.4). Such violent threats in themselves cause the tension line to rise further, until it may surpass the Threshold line (right side of Fig. 8.5).

At the moment of the clash in the Baba Deli case, the DtV was not very small, but the amount of anger was so high that it surpassed this distance and, indeed, violence erupted. However, the actors could see that the violence did not help. The State persisted and did not change the boundaries again, let alone cancel the whole project. The learning effect made it clear to the actors that they should not re-try the same ‘ad hoc’ violence aimed at pro-reserve

29 For example, Breusers et al (1998) describes the already very frequent conflicts and even violent outbreaks at the beginning of the last century between Fulbe herdsmen and Mossi farmers in Burkina Faso.

20 This learning effect of a negative cost-benefit relationship for the use of violence can be a direct one, or can traverse decennia. For example, the Kapsiki experience with violence during the colonial times heightens the position of their violence threshold. The pride of the Tupuri of their resistance to the Fulbe could make their violence threshold against those Fulbe lower (see chapter 5: this effect is not seen).

villagers. Aroused by the whole event, their strategies are now more calculated. Although some may now wish to work towards peace, others are more inclined to resort to premeditated violence. On the whole, the DtV seems to have decreased.

In short, questions to be posed in Box 4 are:
- What is the violent event?
- What is the effect of this event? What have the actors learned?
- Is the event indicative for a small DtV?
- If yes, what are the origins and causes of this small DtV?
This last question leads us to Box 3 (section 2).

8.2 The assertion of rights

1 Description of assertion of rights.
2 a. Is it caused by entry into a new niche?
   b. Is it caused by other factors?
   c. Why do not all actors use the escape route of non-assertion?
3 What are the similarities between the three cases?

8.2.1 Description of assertion of rights
One of the causes of violent threats and the violent outbreaks is the wish to ascertain the right to land. This is depicted in Box 3 of the VoE diagram. Assertion of rights is only necessary when other people have claims on the same resource.

Case 1: Baba Deli
In the argumentation between the two groups of inhabitants of Dzambou the entering group tries to assert its rights with claims of ancestors’ clearance activities. In the traditional tenure
system. This means that these fields are the property of those ancestors’ offspring. The fact that the land has been fallow for some decades does not play any role. Even people that borrow or rent fields in the new area express their rights of access and use to be based on the rights of the traditional owners.

All owners and users, and even several of the inhabitants without direct land interests strengthen their arguments with the calculation that a pasture reserve is unnecessary in this village. There is only a small number of cattle combined with a large space of fallow fields between the compounds, where these cattle can graze. Apart from the ancestral rights (that are not acknowledged by State law), the reserve-opponents do not refer to reasons why they should have more rights to cultivate than the State has to allow big trees to grow.

The other party does not claim personal or primordial rights but refers to collective historical agreements between the first clearers and cattle keepers. Their claim is that it has been agreed that the pasture area is to be a pasture reserve and to remain so forever. These arguments are, in turn, contradicted by the pasture field owners, in a kind of “yes-or-no” game. The pro-pasture group refers to the State plans of a forest reserve and the conservation of big trees because it benefits their interests to have the same arguments as the powerful State.

It is not only necessary to ascertain claims to the land towards other users, but also towards the State because that is the entity that decides about the factual establishment of the pasture forest reserve, the exact place and boundaries thereof, the right to graze cattle without fear of crop damage (that is: without the obligation of reimbursements), and even possible permission to continue agriculture after the instalment. One way of persuading State representatives is by corruption. According to the anti-pasture farmers, the pro-pasture inhabitants bribed the sub-prefect and lamido of Mogodé, and maybe also the police superintendent and the line-agencies of animal husbandry and agriculture. If this is true, they did so to ascertain their rights to the corner of the pasture where they have their compounds and fields.

In this special case an ownership claim towards the State could also be expressed via the list of ‘owners’ (= actual users) of the sub-prefect. In reality this list does not comprise all owners according to the traditions, because some did not come to the session and others were not accepted by the authorities. Moreover, neither were all users incorporated because several of the lessees and borrowers did not register. They did not consider themselves as owners, although according to State law they do have this status as ‘developers’.

**Case 2: Kolara-Kobo**

In the Diamaré bush the newly arriving Tupuri also refer to the past and to primordial rights. By doing so they claim collective rights. The Fulbe came later and used force to occupy the region, they say. At the same time the farmers use arguments based on State law. But when

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11 If this is (again) true, it is a very opportunistic move by the regional authorities for personal profit. At first they satisfied the majority of the farmers with a delineation of the pasture in a way that everybody, including the Fulbe settlement farmers, would lose their fields (and the latter their compounds as well). Later, they had themselves paid to change the boundaries again. Meanwhile, they deny any bribery by referring to the fact that it is only natural for the Fulbe neighbourhood to remain (in the words of the lamido and the sub-prefect: “where else should those people go?”), but why then did they decide differently in the first place?

12 Namely, those with ownership claims, but who did not use the fields at the moment of registration.

13 See chapter 4: the legal situation about land tenure.
others do the same (like the settled Fulbe of Gadjia\textsuperscript{12}), they protest and explain that the law has been wrongly interpreted. Individual farmers mostly claim rights to individual fields, but not to whole areas. These claims are strengthened in the event of (the risk of) crop damage. Then, the claim pertains to yields of sown crops. In almost all cases, the claim to the land is also made on behalf of sons. Family fathers have moved to the bush to clear new fields for their (future) offspring.

The herders in turn mention the fact that their ancestors already camped in this area long ago on specific camp sites. They refer to neo-traditional authorities\textsuperscript{15} and arrangements, although these are on the verge of disappearing\textsuperscript{16}. A lot of them demand that the local lawan protect their rights because he is the chief of the land. Sometimes this is done after the discovery of settlers on their camp site, while on other occasions herders try to prevent such entries. Apart from drawing the attention of the lawan to cattle keepers' camps, magic is also used to make it impossible for outsiders to use camp sites. Violation of the spell put on such a camp can lead to the death of the intruder. In a way this is a violent way of ascertaining the rights to that specific piece of land. However, it is difficult to be recognised as such by 'rational' western researchers or by a 'rational' State. The entering Tupuri only bother when they know of a spell and when the reputation of the 'camp site owner' with regard to witchcraft adds weight to the threat.

Although certain explicit threats are indeed seen as 'use of violence'\textsuperscript{17}, other more vague and general threats can be considered as only a description of a possible scenario, to underpin the decidedness of the claim. Whether or not the event just surpasses the violence threshold or not, does not make much difference for the analysis.

According to rumours, both groups try to buy allies among the elites. Indeed, they or their representatives visit the regional headquarters to persuade the authorities to choose their side. Whether or not this is accompanied by the (illegal) transfer of money or cattle remains a secret. In the Cameroonian context it is not totally imaginary.

In the widely reported conflict case over settlement in the Mayo Kobo bush on the village territory of Daram (next to Kobo)\textsuperscript{18} different authors mention different amounts of money having changed hands between the newly settled farmers and the Daram or Kobo lawan, between the farmers and the sub-prefect of the region, and between the involved herders and the regional lamido and/or the administration authorities. Each year again, the herders sought the assistance of authorities, after which the farmers had to counter these actions with their own claims, all of which were underpinned with money, these authors claim. In this special case, therefore, rights had to be asserted over and over again because the authorities had an interest in not solving the problem\textsuperscript{19}.

Such a pattern cannot be discerned for the area studied in the current research. Newly settling farmers buy permission for, and the legal status of, the hamlet (via an official acknowledgement of the djaooro) from the local lawan and the regional sub-prefect. Most of the respon-

\textsuperscript{12} See chapter 5, section 6

\textsuperscript{13} See chapter 4, section 1, for the concept of neo-traditional

\textsuperscript{14} See e.g. Moritz, Scholte and Kari (2002)

\textsuperscript{15} See the first section of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{16} Van der Ploeg (2001); Wassoumi (pers. comment); Moritz (forthcoming)

\textsuperscript{17} Although the authorities gain by the continuation of the conflict, perhaps their actions are not caused by this interest. Perhaps they do not have the capacity (legally, military etc.) to solve the problem.
students do not see this as bribery, but as legal fees to be paid for administrative tasks”. Whether
the focus is on historical rights to the land, rights based on customary rules and rights based on
modern State law, each system always demanded a certain payment which is also paid for future
services, like contacts with organisations that will help them to construct a water-well. Once the
legal right to the area has been established, the new village has the right to such services.
Herders that used to camp in the area do not claim their rights vis-à-vis the higher-than-local
authorities (perhaps they refrain from that after their experiences in the above mentioned Mayo
Kobo case). They try to persuade the local lamwar of adjacent Kolara, whom they consider to
be the chief of the land and who himself is a big cattle-keeper with a certain amount of power
in the region, to come up for their rights. But they do not pay him more than they had already
paid for obtaining general permission to use the pasture lands.
Trying to adapt the modern land laws in favour of herders by a kind of simple development
of the bush, has (as yet) only been done by a couple of sedentary Fulbe in Gadjia (see chapter
5). The possibility of pastoral use remained intact, but they were able to claim ownership
rights according to law. This tactic resembles the possibility put forward by certain Kolara-
Kobo bush herders of leaving the older people behind to occupy the camp sites while the
herds are away. This would be a clear-cut claim to the land, but it has not yet been imple-
mented in the research site.

Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa
In Oudda the same pattern of reference to the past is evident. The cultivators claim both vis-à-
vis opponents and outsiders that they have the right to use the fields in Jiksa because their
ancestors once cleared them. Several of them even state that their ancestors built houses in the
contested area and that they only moved because of a lack of water and too many robberies.
Another way of ascertaining the rights to the region is via the route of belonging, that is
creating stories of collective identity. Oudda inhabitants state historical claims to the territo-
ry via heroic stories of a past in which boundaries were determined. For this strategy the Jiksa
owners mobilise fellow villagers with and without direct land interests. Their first-comer rights
are implicitly underlined as they do not even address their opponents, but a third party that
‘ought to know’, because they were present before the opponent group was there. In January
2001, in the actual hamlet territory of the Fulbe in Kubadje, a discussion about the area’s
boundaries was held between two groups of inhabitants of respectively the neighbouring vil-
lage Oudda and the rest of the own village Kila. The Fulbe, definitely an actor in the outcome
of the discussion, were not even addressed. This strategy of disregarding the Fulbe meant that
the Oudda villagers wanted to stress that these Fulbe were mere ‘newcomers’ and have no
rights. To address counter arguments the Bana have collective explanations about the cheating
of (and by) former authorities.

40 It is very difficult for lower class, non-educated people to be sure of the real fee, fixed by law, for this kind
of transactions.
41 In other areas this is already noticeable. For example in the region near Garoua some Mbororo women stay
all year round, while their men-folk go on transhumance (Van Santen, pers. comment. October 2002)
42 See also Chilver (1996): the invention and telling of stories to make up a collective past and build and claim
collective identity bounded to a certain region.
43 The situation was bizarre. The Fulbe were circling around the Kapsiki-Bana meeting that took place next to
their own compounds, but were not interlocutors. They were observers in their own life, so to say.
On the other hand, the adverse users, the Fulbe, claim that the region is theirs, that it was given to them a generation ago by the village chief to live in and that it is meant to be used as pasture. They were there as first users, having encountered an empty bush. Shortly after their arrival their regional chief, the lamido, designated the area a pasture reserve, they say. Thus, in this case the claim extends to a higher political level. The two lamibe became involved because they both claim the area belonged to their territory. This is only of interest to the local actors as long as the claim of their own lamido stresses their own point of view regarding the ownership of the fields. The territory of a certain village or lamidot cannot at the same time be the property of inhabitants of another administrative entity 44. Thus, those Oudda habitants who started to re-use Jiks back up their lamido with the idea that it serves their own interests: if the territory belongs to their lamido, the fields are theirs. In a likely, but converse, way the lamibe use the farmers’ and herders’ arguments to underline their own case 45. Yet, both groups leave the addressing of higher authorities with land and boundary responsibilities to those lamibe. Even in the case of crop damage, individual farmers do not seek the help and judgement of higher authorities on the other side of the boundary, because they expect them to take sides like the lamibe 46.

The two lamibe do not act ambiguously, as reported in the case of other land conflicts in Cameroon (see the Diamaré case above 47). They have a clear-cut interest and act to defend that. It has to be said that this interest is not based on a scarcity of the natural resource land. Neither are the lamibe interested in direct income from the conflict between the users of the land. For example, because all individual claims help a lamido in his own territorial struggle, individual farmers who come to search the help of their lamido of Guili against the Fulbe herders of Kubadjé do not have to pay at all, or only the normal (= reasonable) price for arbitrage. Their complaints merely serve as arguments in the lamido’s struggle with higher administrative levels.

Stating a claim to land without entering the area is also possible. A (small) group of yielding cultivators did not think the whole exercise of starting new fields in Jiksa worthwhile. When you have to guard your fields constantly, risk being attacked by herders or risk losing crops because of cattle damage, why take the effort to clear those big trees at all. Some women especially considered it wiser to invest their time and money in other fields. Nevertheless, they fiercely backed up the land claims of their husbands, sometimes encouraging them not to withdraw.

On the one hand, the threats of the herders pay off. On the other hand, it makes the yielding party all the more dedicated to trying to win the case via others. However, this weak sort of ascertaining from a distance cannot be successful without a factual entry by co-members of the same demanding group. For the herders it may be a sign that threats have to be stepped up in order to put off the rest of the group from entering as well.

44 This escape was suggested by the chief of Kila, when it emerged in the boundary discussion between him and the Oudda inhabitants, that the historical boundary between the two villages did not fit the actual position of the fields. All the other members of the meeting rejected this possibility. see chapter 7
45 For the Guili lamido the reasoning is as follows: if the farmers succeed in ascertaining the rights to the Jiksa fields, this area will be registered as a part of his territory
46 And thus, going to higher authorities is seen as a waste of money.
47 In some areas of the Diamare, authorities without a direct interest in land tend to prolong the conflicts because of their lucrative mediator function
8.2.2 Entry into new niches or other causing factors? Why not just no rights assertion?
The assertion of rights can also be based on causes other than the entry into a new niche. This
is depicted in 'co-causing factors' next to box 3. For the following description the enumeration
of diverse actors' categories of Figure 8.2 can be helpful.

Case 1: Baba Deli
In Dzambou, most of the people that make claims to the pasture reserve land have started fields
on that new land. Now, these farmers want to be sure that they can continue using those fields.
Others, however, try to ascertain rights to pasture fields without having entered them. They
perceive future problems or try to use their claims for other gains. In general the outright ascer-
taining activities only started as a response to the decision of the authorities, which is per-
ceived as unjust.

One of the other reasons to ascertain rights vis-à-vis the authorities is that, if the reserve
were really to be established, the State would have to buy out registered owners48. For
Dzambou farmers, thus, it is important to be acknowledged as such. This is the reason that the
ownership claim was willingly expressed to the sub-prefect when he started to draw up a list
of owners. At that moment, the farmers only counted possible benefits of inscription. They did
not count on a continuation of ownership rights of pasture fields, but on direct (monetary)
gains. Nevertheless, some owners did not add their names and recoiled from this way of ascer-
taining rights, because they were afraid of misuse by the authorities49.

Some of those that started to use land in the pasture reserve did so secretly. They cleared a
proportion of the bush, sometimes in the middle of the contested area so that the area was more
out of sight. They surrounded it with prickly branches to keep out foraging livestock and wild
animals and did not make their presence known to anyone. Of course those who entered the pas-
ture reserve could see that trees and shrubs had disappeared and, later in the year, they could see
that crops were growing. However, the user of these fields tried to prevent disputes by guard-
ing his field against crop damage and, when such damage nevertheless occurred, by refraining
from complaints. Given the general distrust in the authorities, these farmers thought it a waste
of time and money to try to persuade others of their right of use or ownership. They did not reck-
on that any legal buy-out sum would ever reach any owner. On the contrary, they strongly
believed that their adversaries were bribing the State authorities, while they themselves did not
have enough cash or kind to do the same. In any case, that approach was too risky.

For the time being, the only strategy they are using is to complain about their hopeless sit-
tuation (this shows that their goal is still somewhere in their mind), but in the near future they
will search for further possibilities to safeguard their basic interests. This will more or less
return them to Box 1 of the VoE diagram (see below: section 8.4). It is possible that they will
reach Box 3 or even Box 4 somewhere in the future, when their circumstances and the inter-
pretation of their situation have changed. At the moment they only count per year. Some of the
farmers who refrained from claims explained that each additional year that they could harvest

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48 Information with regard to this legal aspect was 'rumoured'. Thus, it depended on social networks and educa-
tion levels as to whether farmers knew and understood. It was not officially announced by State representa-
tives during either of the village meetings.

49 Being known as someone with claims makes one vulnerable to accusations of rebellion, as the story of the
municipality representative, who stood up against the authorities and was subsequently accused of rebellion,
shows (see chapter 6.3.4., 'conflict mediation').
from the pasture fields was another good year with abundant yields and a period of rest for their other fields. "Next year we will see..." Making a fuss would attract the attention of the authorities and that would only lead to quicker expulsion, they reckon.

The short-term goal of having just one year of harvest was met by the regional authorities at the moment they rewarded political support given at the parliamentary and municipal elections of 2002. The promise of a vote for the sub-prefect's party (the RDPC") led to permission being granted to continue pasture field use during that specific year. This could be done more easily if the farmer involved refrained from claiming the fields as inalienable property.

Some of the borrowing or renting cultivators of pasture fields admitted that they did not have real rights to the pasture zone at all. As long as they have the opportunity to use these fields they are satisfied, but claims cannot be made. At best they can support the claim of the owners. Some even refrain from that: "We cannot add any new arguments, and we do not want to have problems."

Others, who stated a claim first, later changed their attitude because of a perceived powerlessness vis-a-vis the State. To this was added the consideration that one should guard a good relationship with this same State.

The pro-pasture villagers indeed managed to have a good relationship with the regional authorities. Otherwise the location of the boundaries would not have been changed. Their claim for a pasture reserve was not a personal claim. On the contrary, this claim brought with it a risk for personal interests. If the Mogodé meeting plans had been implemented, the Fulbe hamlet inhabitants would have lost their (fertile) fields. Only some of the farmers in the Fulbe corner had such numbers of cattle that a nearby pasture, without the risk of crop damage, served their interests. A smaller number still had so many livestock that they could live from them without agriculture. For the others the reason for their claim is more obscure. They may have a long term, whole-community vision. This means that this group is wise enough to see the necessity of a pasture forest reserve for the whole region, for example to curb desertification. Such a reserve would also serve to secure their future options. However, it is not possible to come up with reasons why the Fulbe hamlet inhabitants have better insights in future risks, possibilities and necessities than the rest of the (sometimes better educated) villagers, and why especially they have a greater need for future cattle grazing land than others. I have to remind readers of the fact that the name 'Fulbe' here is only given because of their Islamic religion and not because of other original Fulbe related cultural aspects, such as cattle-keeping.

Nevertheless, the factor of cattle can play a major role in the strategies of the Fulbe corner inhabitants. We can argue that most of the claims came forth from reasons in the social, rather than in the natural capital sphere. Factors that may play a role are solidarity with surrounding cattle owners as an investment in bonds with the rich, trying to establish a better relationship with the regional lamido, because he is the most important traditional authority (and perhaps even more powerful than the officially higher placed sub-prefect) and, thus, aiming to acquire grazing land for his cattle, trying to increase the relationship with the authorities in general because the 'Fulbe' already knew about the State plans for the official establishment of the reserve, they knew they could not block it and they knew also that they had to safeguard their compound corner. A reason that does refer to the natural resource land is the investment in future group interests. Based on a feeling of a shared group identity springing from a mixture

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See Chapter 4: All State representatives are more or less forced to be members of the ruling party.
of the same religion, fulbeïsation (among other things this includes the keeping of cattle) and geographical position, people invest in pastureland establishment to maintain the possibility for their offspring to increase the size of their herds.

All considerations have to take the described risk into account. That means that the Fulbe corner inhabitants had considerable trust either in the lamido as such (as a brother in religion, or based on other social bonding facts) or in their own possibilities to persuade the authorities (whether or not with money).

Several cattle owners, who stumbled with their herd into crops within the pasture reserve boundaries, tried to settle the raised dispute by just paying the compensation sum demanded. In a way this contradicts their claim of 'pasture for ever'; especially now that the sub-prefect had authorised them to refuse to pay. However, they regarded a certain level of social bonding with fellow villagers as more important than their claim. Indeed, this ambiguity is becoming more and more evident1.

Case 2: Kobo-Kolara
In the Diamaré many entering farmers leave the assertion of the right to the land to those at group level. On (or before) arrival they ask for permission from the local djaoro of the new settlement to start fields and a compound but they do not explain, let alone claim, the why and how of their rights there. In such cases the djaoros and interested co-settlers are the ones who have to defend the rights of existence of the whole hamlet.

If individual settlers do claim their rights versus cattle keepers, they do so because they created fields in the bush and now encounter herds in their crops or angry cattle keepers who deny them their right to settle where they are. In those cases the entry into the new niche is the underlying cause of the ascertaining of the rights.

Some people do not stay in the new settlements. After one or two years of disappointing yields, crop damage by wild animals (elephants, birds, etc.) and a troublesome water supply, they withdraw to their former villages or to other new, more promising areas.

Even more herders than cultivators leave. As has been said before, most of them yield and try to find other rainy season camp sites or even other bushes to graze their cattle. Only when explicitly asked during the interviews do they admit to having certain seniority rights in the Kolara-Kobo bush. However, the newcomers cannot and do not claim such rights. Several of the herders explain that they do not even complain to the authorities because they consider the presence of farmers as a sign that the authorities (and especially the chief of the land) approve. Many nomads think that the authorities do not like them and their way of life2.

Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa
In Oudda no cultivators without ownership claims use fields in Jiksa. Only women who work on the land of their husbands do not have ownership rights, but they have direct long-lasting3 inter-

1 This feeling can help when real solutions to the conflict are sought
2 Apart from the confirmation of this stance seen in the lack of State regulations and policy of favouring nomadic herders or at least handling them equally with farmers, this thought may be true because the majority of State representatives in the Far North are from southern provinces and from settled (farming or city-based) families.
3 The extent to which this is ‘long-lasting’ depends on them themselves. The longer they stay with their husband, the longer these rights continue.
est in the claims of their husbands and therefore support these. In short, in Oudda the entry into the new niche has always resulted in the assertion of rights. The expression of those claims, however, often only comes after encounters with cattle keepers and their animals. For some owners, notably those who have not (yet) started working on Jiksa fields, the asserting of rights started even before the invasion. They underpin the claims of their fellow villagers who invaded Jiksa as soon as these ask for witnesses and, in addition, on any occasion vis-à-vis outsiders.

Partly instigated by the lamido's wish to increase (or maintain) his territory, the claim over boundaries was added. For the farmers this was still an assertion of rights after or at the same time of invasion and based on a desire for land. All those who own Jiksa lands but did not start fields there participated in the visit to Kubadje to show and discuss the original boundary position. So for them it was not the entry into a new niche that led to an assertion. Certainly in the case of both lamibe their claim has nothing to do with an entry into a new area or the perception of land scarcity now or in the future.

The adverse party never thought of claiming their settlement region. They regarded it as theirs, they paid taxes and let their herds graze there. This implicit ownership of the land had to be made explicit the moment it was threatened by field-clearing farmers. Now they express their rights towards entering farmers in (accidental) encounters, towards visitors and, via their lawan, towards the authorities.

8.2.3 Similarities between the cases
Most of the time people choose to invade new land on which they (think they or want others to believe they) have certain legitimate rights. In the three cases it only occurred very rarely that new land without claims was entered. For example, some Tupuri from the Diamaré villages or from the Tupuri heartland chose to search for fields further away. After the State-organised movements to the Benoué area in earlier days, there are still Tupuri who go to the south to join their ethnic brothers or start fields on their own. But even there they say they have some rights, namely the rights of a general Cameroonian citizen to use the surface of his country.

People want to have more certainty about actual and future rights of access to and use of land. They want others to acknowledge their rights, to make sure there is no need to go through the whole process again and again, every time with the risk of losing the game. Of course, the local actors know perfectly well that any rights may be challenged again in new circumstances, but they at least want a certain basic security when basic circumstances remain the same. And, although a process of modernisation is recognised by (at least) the younger generation and although, at the same time, several actors acknowledge rising insecurities, for them the basic circumstances have not changed.

In none of the studied areas is the active asserting of rights to the land a continuing process, which was already going on long before the actual threat to the 'ownership' of the land or the other reason to assert rights to land became apparent. Most of the time people just use a certain area or, while not using it, consider the right to use it as generally accepted. Only when this use right is (or seems to be) violated by other users do they deem it necessary to state a claim.

52 If they were not hindered in doing so by, for example, disability
53 Most probably, the fact that this Fulbe hamlet fulfills a role in the territorial strategies of the lamido of Mogode makes it easier for the Fulbe lawan to maintain access to this lamido despite his uncooperative behaviour with regard to taxes and modernisations that the lamido wants to be implemented
Once the threat has been recognised (for example, some farmers in Dzambou have seen the process of establishment of forest pasture reserves elsewhere in the Mandara mountains and feared that their region would be the next target), the process of asserting the rights to land can take years. These years are filled with moments of assertion interchanged with long periods of doing nothing. Of course the ‘empty’ periods are not spent totally idle and some of the activities will help the ascertaining process later. Once a (temporary) solution has been found, the claiming negotiations can stop for the time being. They will flare up again when deemed necessary, but that is not the same as continuous assertion).

Access and use rights are not always connected to ownership. Nevertheless, it seems as if the different users, to be sure of the contested areas, claim their rights in the ownership realm - personal or group ownership - not over use or access only. At first the ascertaining of rights is an ad hoc and personal enterprise. Although mostly some deliberations of the collectiveness of the rights are passed beforehand. Later, when the threat to the rights continues, more time is spent on the mobilisation of social networks.

Mostly, both the new users and the present users only base their arguments on traditional tenure rules and history. They claim their rights by addressing the other users, or the authorities or both, or even addressing third parties. Deciding whom to address in a rationally calculated process. It is then important whether or not the new niche is indeed entered. Who is considered as ‘enemy’ or as potential ally and which arguments will be used. For example it is useless to express arguments concerning administrative boundaries only towards local opponents.

In short, the assertion of rights is aimed at the (preferably personal) ownership of the area (based on first comer or first clearer rights), often backed up by (perceived and as such mobilised) claimed historical land allocations. All types of capitals can be invested to increase the possibility of gaining the right to the land (for ever). In the natural capital domain this means the use of low value land or natural resources other than land such as trees or water resources. If actors were to have the possibility to capitalise high value land, they would not experience the necessity to ascertain rights to new land.

On the other hand, it is possible to invest in natural capital to try to ascertain rights therein. As has been said, entering a piece of land is a kind of claim. Subsequent maintenance and amelioration of that piece of land would be strong reinforcements of this claim. Because in all cases the new land is entered because of its high quality. Investment in additional quality would have

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56 Although Berry’s statement (1993) is true, “that the negotiability of rules and relationships is one of the fundamental characteristics of African societies” (Juul and Lund 2002a: 5), that does not mean that these negotiations are always and at all times being executed. Maintaining or increasing one’s social position in general does not mean that that is always related to the assertion of property rights (to land, in an agricultural society), as is suggested.

57 I deliberately use the term ‘authorities’ to denote one of the two entities that an actor can address. With this term, I choose not to use the term ‘State’ as the single unit that may be thought of when using the term ‘authority’. Apart from the State that in itself is a bundle of institutions, all represented by different persons (or groups of persons). Non-State authorities also exist.

58 The idea of using low value land to invest and gain high value land can be seen in the proposals of several inhabitants to change the position of the pasture towards the infertile fields. However, this type of investment has to be a collective one (non-pasture field owners also have to be involved to make the new pasture big enough and continuous) and therefore can only work via investment in social capital. In reality an investment as such has not (yet) be made. In addition, it is only feasible when the conflict does not involve the (State) goal of forestry.

59 In communities where access to water wells is not open to all (e.g. not for visiting cattle keepers). Access to land can theoretically be bartered for access to water. In the cases studied, this is not an issue.
been a sign of an ascertaining activity. However, apart from the necessary clearing of the fields, in none of the three cases were any quality-improving measures implemented.

In the human capital sphere, education and information are good starting points on which to make a stronger claim. One knows what to say and when, what one needs or what others’ rights are. Small groups of actors use those amongst them with special capacities of persuasion to act as their spokesmen. This kind of ‘intellectual’ capital does not run out when it is used. Indeed, both in Oudda as well as in Dzambou these factors play a big role. In the Diamaré as well, djaoros and other chiefs are sent out to assert claims. They are chosen not only because of their high human capital, but more so because of their social position and therefore their social capital.

In addition, even physical strength and health are factors which can be brought to bear. These two qualities can, however, be lost if, for example, they are used in a fight and the actor is wounded or when the user is arrested and put in prison. However, this did not occur in the three cases. Strength and health are used in the clearing of the new land, and in the building of other capitals that may support the assertion of rights.

In the economic realm, investment of capital to assert rights would mean buying or renting the desired new land, preferably with official ownership or long-term user right (from officially registered owners) papers. This was not done in any of the cases. It was not possible because of the excessively complex and expensive registration procedures. The (probable) donations to authorities can be seen as economic investments in the socio-political domain. These socio-political investments in turn can (perhaps) be capitalised with a certain amount of pressure.

Plenty of other investments are made with socio-political capital. For example, previously formed family and friendship bonds are used to persuade people to help in the lengthy argumentation vis-à-vis other users or authorities, to bring about shared cultivation in the disputed area, to try to involve politicians of one’s own party (although rarely), etc. Indeed, in all three cases, group formation and the building of social identity (via a collective past, for example) were used as important strategies towards assertion.

All types of arguments are used. These are based opportunistically on modern law, neo-traditional law or the customary law of the own ethnic group. In addition, the most powerful allies possible are sought, sometimes through bribery, while other allies are mobilised who have

61 I refer again to the Fulbe of Gadjiia who did ‘improve’ their territory as a deliberate ascertaining activity (they even used the approach to improvements that they themselves do not consider to be such, namely cutting trees, clearing bushes and develop water wells, all this only to fit in the State rules). See note 34 and Chapter 5.

62 Given the more or less traditional composition of society, with its focus on wealth and lineage, social position is not always (and perhaps almost never) the cause of substantial human capital, such as wisdom or knowledge.

63 As described in Chapter 6, one of the village representatives in the Baba Dehi case risked this treatment, after he opposed the changing of the position of the pasture reserve boundaries. The sub-prefect of Mogode accused him of rebellion.

64 In the uncontested Oudda territory, the far side of the pasture in the north-east is the source of discords about the exact location of the boundary. Recently settled farmers in Kordraveshi (see Fig. 7.3) can produce field ownership papers signed by the lumido in parts of the bush, of which the cattle keepers say that it is within the pasture zone. Offspring of former clearers have sold their family fields to those newcomers and managed to get the lamido to sign (with the help of social capital, that is, good relationship with the lumido or his noblemen, or with the help of ‘gifts’). The law drawn up by the Fulbe was initially enforced by the colonial powers (albeit adjusted to their own ideas) and just after independence.
the same interests and who therefore do not need to be bribed. The arguments and allies are used to deny or otherwise ignore adversaries' arguments. A deliberate choice is made as regards which actor is addressed in the rights asserting process. Sometimes not even the adverse user (as in the Oudda boundary problem) is selected but rather a strategically more opportune party. This can be seen as a social-political investment in witnesses, and perhaps even allies.

Sometimes the assertion of rights is not a reaction to the entry into the new fields, but instead the invasion may be a way of asserting rights. "You see I need it now and they are, in fact, my own fields." A kind of circle reasoning is used based on the idea of "Otherwise I would not start using them." In the Diamaré bush, the Tupuri try to establish a matter-of-fact situation in their relationship with the herders and the authorities who support them65. Although authorities sometimes have an interest in continuing the conflict situation and do not react unambiguously to claims to land, most land-users act rationally by not continuing (or even not starting) to involve those authorities. "They only make you pay, and they never help you to secure your land", they say. In the context of the actors' strategies it is more important to persuade the adverse users.

Sometimes, the assertion of rights is not preceded by an entry into a new niche. There are actors who start their claims long before or totally separately from an invasion. In certain families or neighbourhoods (especially in the Mandara Mountains Plateau with the long history of ancestors who cleared bush areas) a certain socio-cultural pressure exists of not giving up the ancestors' fields66. Even without a perception of scarcity, even when you do not use those fields, you cannot offend your ancestors and deny their efforts by forgoing their lands.

In general, rights assertion is a long-term and weary exercise. Moreover, not all claims of rights to the land are successful. In all three cases, the process has not ended. Ongoing ascertaining efforts, using different methods but still without definitive results, make the actors feel more and more frustrated.

When the State has direct interests in the land, the party with the same or corresponding interests has more chance of winning its case. It can use the State's arguments and will be backed by the State (like the 'Fulbe' of Dzambou). State representatives do not adopt certain positions nor do they act according to expressed positions when they have no direct stake in (or via) the land and only try to continue the conflict to make it possible to gain more as conflict mediators (without really solving anything in the long term). Also as far as local inhabitants are concerned, the financial motive - but then via legal regulations - may be the sole reason for trying to assert land rights. Especially in the Dzambou case, certain actors try to assert rights to land only to gain direct monetary benefits from the State indemnities. Once they have succeeded they will quickly withdraw. If their approach does not work, another strategy and another goal can be chosen.

No assertion of rights to (the use of) newly entered land means that the actor accepts that his use is only temporary. He hopes to prolongate the period of use, but leaves it more or less to the circumstances outside his control. Sometimes the lack of assertion is due to uncertainty regarding the wish to prolong the period of residence. Rarer still is non-assertion because of a

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65 See also Lavigne Delville (2000: 103): "... presenting the authorities with a fait accompli tends to stand a good chance of success".

66 This can also be seen in the Tupuri heartland, although not all sons react like this. In contrast, in the densely populated northern part of the Mandara Mountains (the Mafa region) high outward migration can be seen, sometimes with the total abandoning of ancestors' fields (see Van Andel (1998) and Zuiderwijk (1998)).
combination of a wish to stay and a kind of laziness or reluctance to stand up for this wish. In almost all the non-asserting cases, fear and the perception of own weakness towards the other party and towards the (unreliable) State play a role. The traditional or culturally embedded ideas that authorities should always be respected can also influence decisions about (even low-level) ‘revolt’. Acceptance of State legitimacy is often exacted on the basis of fear of force (violence) by State institutions. On the other hand, misuse of power positions can lead to the circumvention of authorities by actors and subsequently to a decrease in legitimacy, as the Diamaré case shows.

In short, in all three cases, the small DtV as indicated by the violent events (section 8.1) is caused by the fact that the local legal system of ancestral and primordial rights does not give clear-cut rights. The traditional system is vague and the vagueness increases where different customary systems collide. Conflicts over land cannot be solved by means of the traditional rules, especially not when tension rises. Customary law in the new settings therefore requires case-to-case adjudication at a higher level. However, the motivations of adjudicators do not lead them to find solutions. They earn a kind of salary for every case, they can gain extra by outplaying the opponents, so these try to outpace each other in payoffs, and they are sometimes even party in the case.

In addition, the capacity of adjudicators is small. It is not clear to them which law system should be applied: the statutory system or the customary system. In the case of the latter, an additional decision needs to be taken as to which of the pertaining customary systems should be applied. Next to that, the legitimacy of adjudicators is not clear. Should the lamido or the sub-prefect have this role and in the case of additional boundary disputes, which lamido or sub-prefect? The evident corruption does not help to increase the legitimacy of decisions of adjudicators. Parties know that such an authority can be bridled and that each decision can be changed depending on the money offered.

Thus, the small DtV is caused by uncertainty about land rights and conflict resolution patterns, even for those without direct stakes in land. In all cases, more frequent land right assertions, being as such a sign of land tenure insecurity, also increase the tension level. The conflict becomes more and more manifest without there being any obvious solutions.

8.3 Entry into a new niche

1. Description of entry into a new niche.
2. a. Is it caused by land scarcity?
   b. Is it caused by other factors?
   c. Why do not all actors use the non-entry escape route?
3. What are the similarities between the three cases?

8.3.1 Description of entry into a new niche

One of the causes of the wish to ascertain the right to the land is the fact that new land is
entered (see box 2 of the VoE diagram). The investment in the entry makes people try to hold on to the new niche and not lose those lands again.

Case 1: Baba Deli
After decades of using only nearby fields. Dzambou inhabitants sought the empty bush of the unofficial Baba Deli pasture zone in order to cultivate. Neither they, nor their fathers and sometimes not even their grandfathers, had ever used this area apart from when they cleared the dense forest that existed there two generations ago, after which they delineated their ‘own’ territory with stone lines on the soil or stone markers on tree branches.

At first only a very small proportion of the inhabitants started to use the fields of the ancestors in the pasture reserve. Some only use the fields of other traditional owners (via renting or borrowing) that are not owned by their own (extended) family. A high proportion of those who entered are young men. The number of new users increased slowly, but up until the time of the research the surface of agricultural fields in the originally empty bush zone did not exceed a third of the whole.

Case 2: Kolara-Kobo
In the case of the Diamaré, the entry into a new area consisted of both field-clearing and settlement. People came from the nearby region or from the Tupuri heartland further away. Most of them started the new fields after they themselves, friends or family members had first visited the area to consider the possibilities. Sometimes, in the first years of settlement, risks were spread by sending a son or a wife while the rest of the family continued farming in the region of origin. In other instances, a pattern emerged of moving closer every couple of years, from far away to a surrounding village first and then to the actual bush. Most of the time it took several years at least from the first time people had inspected the bush until the actual settlement. The step itself was considered over and over again. Costs, benefits and risks were calculated. All settlements were preceded by the clearing of areas for fields in the dry season before the year of settlement. The average age of settlement household heads was significantly lower than that of villages of origin.

Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa
The villagers of Oudda only resorted to the Jiksa-Kubadje zone when they (or their husbands) had ancestral claims there. Over the last 10 years, the use of Jiksa fields increased when a growing number of farmers considered that they had used their other fields long enough. Young men in particular started to clear the bush of Jiksa and began fields there.

Some of the inhabitants of Oudda started new fields in other areas of the village that (until the end of the research) were not contested by others. For these new users these areas contained the customary rights of: “cleared by one’s ancestor”. Because Jiksa users consider the Jiksa area to be cleared by ancestors too, they do not see any difference with the position of fellow villagers who are able to start using old fallow fields without any interference”. It may

"As stated earlier, in Chapter 7. some farmers start to clear anew fields of ancestors in Oudda areas that have been allocated as pasture by the former lamido. These actions are considered illegal by all parties involved. The offspring of those ancestors do not have rights there and they do not claim rights either. apart from cultivating as long as nobody stops them. The moment somebody complaints to the lamido, they leave and they never try to get reimbursement for cattle damage to crops."
be the case that they clear another field, but the field as such is not new. In their view no change of boundaries from their region of origin has taken place.

8.3.2 Land scarcity or other causing factors? Why do not all actors choose non-entry?
The (perception of) scarcity of fertile land or other causes leads to new land being entered. But why do people not choose for strategies other than entering. Is the entry a Thünián action into the outer ‘frontier’ zone, because the pressure on the inner zone increases due to the nearness and growth of a market centre? Why do inhabitants not choose for the Boserupian intensification trajectory?

Case 1: Baba Deli
Some of those that entered Baba Deli pasture did so because they considered the time ripe to start using the now fertile fields of their ancestors. All users said they did so because of a lack of fertile fields elsewhere. However, the data in Table 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 (chapter 6) show that this is only true for 65 % of them. Thirteen household heads out of twenty-three had indeed no good fields and two households with good fields outside the pasture had a low total surface area at their disposal. For the other 35 % of users, an anticipation of a future lack for the actor himself or his offspring might be a reason to enter the pasture reserve.

Seeing the activities of the authorities to set up more and more pasture forest reserves on the Mandara Mountain plateaux, some people started using fields in the pasture zone to show to the State representatives that the land was somebody’s property. This was probably\(^{7}\) done with the aim of persuading the State to choose another area and so not to become the victim of a fait-accompli when in the future these fields appear to be necessary for the family, or with the aim to become candidate for the law-based compensation fee.

For several families, and especially their younger male members, the reason to invade the new area was based on the idea that it was family property. They saw no reason why they should not start using those fields. Especially when they could see a decline in the number of fields per family member in the rest of the village together with the fertility of some of the fields that had been used for a long time, they thought it normal to clear fields which had been left fallow for a long time and which had once been created by their ancestors. The idea of investing in other fields instead was ridiculous and would mean spending money on rent without long-term gains regarding the field quality or tenure.

Although there are still plenty of fallow fields in the village, the land security picture in Dzambou as a whole is not promising (see Table 6.3.5). For individual farmers the situation is even worse because there are few options open to them to leave. Mostly, the younger, more educated men with greater ambitions are aware of the grim future ahead of them. In response to this, they not only try to invest in all sorts of capitals apart from the land of their ancestors, but include those fields into their considerations and actions as well. They have learned of other options, but also of the rising monetary value of land. In addition they, like the other inhabitants, do not see any need to leave an area solely for pasture. They perceive a future lack of arable land but no future lack of pasture.

\(^{7}\) Some of the users who started after the State activities had begun mentioned this motive while sometimes it was suggested by others (non-users)
Case 2: Kolara-Kobo

In the Diamaré, the entry of Tupuri is certainly based on a lack of (fertile) land in the regions of origin and an insecure situation in general (see Table 5.3.11). There it is very difficult to implement agricultural improvements. People try to search for other modes of existence but that is not easy either. New users are poorer both in economic and social terms than the average people in their villages of origin. Investment with and in capital other than natural is almost impossible. If they want to have a prosperous life and at least an equal number of possibilities for their offspring, they have to go to new areas. They say. This means an investment in (the enlargement of) natural capital, but not in the area of origin and not in the quality of natural capital already possessed. Although the Diamaré entails a risk in the sphere of precipitation shortages, the area is not totally new and it is a very extended one. In addition, those new users who own ploughs wanted to use them and therefore had to quit their region of origin because there the available surface is far too small to make efficient use of ploughs.

In the social realm, new users did not occupy very high positions in their villages of origin. Ambitious young men may have chosen for relocation because in new settlements the hierarchy has to be rebuilt and they may end up at a higher position. Sometimes, although not in the exact area under study, Tupuri migrants have left their village of origin because of social problems there. In a new settlement, personal histories are not known or do not count.

In the Tupuri heartland, village chiefs complain about the out-flux of people, although the majority still remain. Many of those who stay explain that a real Tupuri does not leave the area of his ancestors alone. Some have direct obligations vis-à-vis an old father or uncle. Yet, more negative attitudes also make people stay, such as a lack of the praised 'Tupuri-braveness' to go out in the wild and perform heroic deeds. These people remain fatalistically in the over-crowded heartland villages, waiting for bad things to happen. Sometimes these household heads do not even try to use all the options offered by the direct surroundings. Yet, of both remaining categories, but especially of those who stayed out of cultural and social motives, several people try to make the best of it by investing in new social arrangements and mutual cash facilities.

Case 3: Kubadje-Jiks a

The same applies to Oudda as in Dzambou. Here again the total land surface area available is sufficient for all inhabitants, but the general livelihood security situation is not that positive (see Table 7.3.7). Investment in long-term family property and thus security is the norm. Hiring does not generate any long-term gain, other free areas still remain insecure and claiming ancestral land means re-securing the old claim. In the African system of fluid property rights (Berry 1993; Juul and Lund 2002) investing in a strong position for negotiations is a necessary activity (Peters 2002). Especially strong (young and healthy) and future-oriented people (the young and ambitious) will therefore choose the strategy of assertion with regard to

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\[71\] Each new settlement has to have at least a djaoro and his first counsellor, sometimes also a djaksiri (see chapter 5). First arrivals are important

\[72\] Van der Ploeg (2001).

\[73\] Differences in personal characteristics regarding explorative and brave behaviour already existed in former generations. Whether or not this indolent and/or cowardly behaviour has increased over the years is not clear. Even when the percentage of persons with such a character remains the same, the increase of the population means that the absolute number of them increases.

\[74\] For details thereof see chapter 5.
ancestral fields by using them. Even a short-term cost-benefit analysis can make people choose to clear their ancestral fields. Why spend money on hiring other fields when your own are only a couple of hours walk away?

Although Oudda does not show specifically that the young, educated men are the ones that enter the pasture area, like in Dzambou, the Jiksa users certainly have a more open mind than their fellow villagers towards ‘modernities’. This is shown for example by their willingness to use school for their offspring as an option to improve living conditions. Because of this more modern world view, the economisation of society also plays a role in safeguarding ancestors’ fields.

In Oudda the opportunistic move towards buy-out prices from the State does not play a role. Here the inciting position of the lamido of Guili is important, at least for the moment of entry. Moreover, the collective claim to the area and thus the support of other inhabitants and the village chief makes farmers start their new fields at this special moment.

Only a minority entered the pasture reserves both in Oudda and in Dzambou. Not even all owners of land (according to customary rights) did so, although some of them did mention a shortage of fertile land. Some of the wives of Jiksa field owners refrained from invasion out of fear and a calculation of net loss. Some actors considered the pasture fields to be too far away. In Oudda some people even mentioned their unwillingness (out of empathy and out of fear) to disturb the settlement of Kubadje with all the negative impacts thereof.

Like those who asserted their rights, most other inhabitants had some resources in several domains of capitals and tried to capitalise on them. Almost everyone invested in the (quality of) natural capital. In general everybody tried to invest in ways of countering the decline in the fertility of their fields other than just extending the quantity of natural capital. In addition, both new users and non-invaders did not see the use of the new fields as a totally different method, but just as a normal capitalisation of (dormant) natural capital they had already possessed for a long time.

8.3.3 Similarities between the three cases

Everywhere the majority of actors wanted to improve their economic position and their general level of food security. Mostly they did not resort to the use of new land in such faraway, unused areas. Not all of those who did changed their place of residence as well. In the Mandara Mountain plateaux farmers did not change the location of the compounds and travelled backwards and forwards to the new fields. Although this was a long journey, it was possible to reach the agricultural area within a short enough time to make cultivation possible. In the Diamaré, distances were much greater” so the decision also had to take into account the setbacks of an actual move.

For all actors, the entry into the pasture area was a move to more outlying zones compared to where they had been farming before. However, Von Thünen’s theory “does not apply here”. They were not driven from their former fields by richer actors who started to be interested because of

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74 Even when the in-between step of temporary settlement in a village adjacent to the bush was made, the distance to the new bush fields was considered to be too far, although it was theoretically possible to start off very early every day to reach those fields for cultivating. However, in those temporary villages the migrant had no or only weak social ties.

75 See chapter 2

77 Also Njomah (2004) concludes that Von Thunen’s theory is only applicable to two out of twenty research sites in the Far North province of Cameroon
the increasing value of land due to nearness (or better accessibility) of a (growing) market centre. Those who stayed behind were not motivated by the possibility to make more money out of their land. On the contrary, land had not really been commoditised. Had the original zones had better access to markets then that could have served as an escape route, giving possibilities for intensification. Yet, the Boserupian route\textsuperscript{b} was not possible because of a lack of infrastructure for both the supply of input and off-take of output. Moreover, individual investments did not offer a way out since most actors did not even have enough money to hire fields.

Furthermore, the Boserup route is not applicable because that theory applies within a limited area\textsuperscript{c} in which one group has to feed its members. In the cases studied, the boundaries of the areas of confined groups had not yet been reached. Like Boserup, they do not reckon with the occupation of the same area by other groups, who also only focus on their own group interests. So, it seems as if in each case two groups consider the pressure on their territory not yet so high that it will force them towards intensification. Additionally, Boserup’s agricultural transition takes time\textsuperscript{d}. For the case studies, the change into the high-pressure situation within the bounded area will come about too abruptly. “... external changes may sweep rapidly over a group, giving them insufficient time to adjust their internal structures to avoid the sub-optimal outcomes.” (Ostrom 1990:21; see chapter 2 of this thesis). Suddenly, when they start using seemingly empty bush, farmers are confronted with other users and thus pressure.

Although theory suggests that in times of increasing pressure on resources either transition or involution are the possible answers, the dismissal of the Boserup route in the studied cases did not lead inevitably to the downward spiral of Malthus. Because at least one of the parties still had the opportunity to use new surface in the early phases. Malthus’ negative scenario does not apply here. People are not desperately doing more and more of the same with declining results, instead they are doing the same in an expanding territory.

Indeed, those who made the new clearings defined the land as either theirs (Mandara plateaux) or ‘free’ (Diamaré\textsuperscript{e}). “The area was empty”*: ‘empty’ when the ancestors started clearing or ‘empty’ when the present settlers started to clear. To define this emptiness, the new users used arguments based in their own (ethnic) customary rules and, when this seemed convenient, in State laws. The (different) traditional rules of other users were ignored and others’ interests denied.

None of the studied new users chose the most fertile land as the spot to clear or settle. In the two Mandara cases the choice was limited by the location of ancestors’ activities. If the great-grandfather had cleared a strip of land on a steep hill, on a rocky place or where the basic soil composition was worse than the general composition, the new user had to make do with it. In the Kolara-Kobo bush settlers chose areas adjacent to vast areas of karal fields and preferably on fertile vertisols, but not necessarily on former camp sites, where the year-long accumulation of manure had made the soil very rich\textsuperscript{f}. Tupuri villages extend over larger areas than nomadic camps, so often such camp sites, lying next to a river, were not appropriate

\textsuperscript{a} For a brief explanation of the theory of Boserup (1965) see chapter 2

\textsuperscript{b} This is, between other things, implicated by measurement of percentages of “total area” (Boserup 1965: 30) that can be used under a certain type of agriculture

\textsuperscript{c} See, e.g. Tiffin \textit{et al} (1994)

\textsuperscript{d} Although, even here a kind of historical communal ownership was voiced

\textsuperscript{e} The cases of Van der Ploeg (2001), Wassouni (pers. comm) and Mortiz (forthcoming), referred to in section 8.2.1, case 2, relate to settlement on camp sites and therefore on reducing camp possibilities for nomads.
because half of the village would risk being inundated during the rainy season. The first settlers counted on future growth of their settlement and actively tried to persuade others to join them. Also the other parties did not seek the most fertile lands per se. In all three cases, especially the access to cattle routes was problematic because the herdsmen wanted to herd their cattle without disturbances. Fields and settlements that blocked the road resulted in crop damage and therefore conflicts. Only occasionally was a camp site involved. But then again the agitation of the nomads did not concern the site's extremely rich soil, but rather its strategic position and the age-old habit of using it.

In all the three cases the actual new users are younger than the average age in their region (of origin), because the heavy work of clearing requires extra health and strength. Why these young men do not use their extra capabilities to reach other goals is not totally clear. They cope with the long distances to the fields, to the outside world and to water locations, quarrels with cattle keepers, an increased risk of losing livestock, etc. Those who resettle also lose general options in the health and education domain. The investment in a new area requires a special mindset based partly on biological-psychological properties and partly on the interpretation of reality together with that of own capacities. The interpretation of the actual and future situation of land scarcity is no different from that of other villagers who do not start new fields in contested areas. However, the view of circumstances and influences, as well as which strategy will lead to success, is different. Together, all these factors mean that their cost-benefit analysis favours invasion. Especially for poorer people, short-term considerations only relate to the combination of reasonably nearby ancestral fields, there being no other free areas available and those fields that are available being for hire. Hiring, however, will not generate any returns in the longer term. Other free areas will remain unavailable. Thus, especially for future oriented people (= the young and ambitious), who have an eye for the long term, it is time to re-assert the ancestral fields. It helps a lot if those people are strong enough to clear large parts of the bush and to walk long distances or even, perhaps, to resist others. That means that in general they have to be young and healthy.

On the Mandara Mountains plateaux, those who choose to use the new fields also try to invest in other options, such as the education of children. They may even combine the two strategies because they see that on a yet longer time scale (a perspective generally only accessible for the rich, the elite), the security of those ancestral fields cannot be guaranteed versus the State, that claims more and more reserves.

Although, on the one hand, actors tried to use their new fields without disturbing others and without arousing authorities, on the other hand they mostly had to secure support from the authorities, at least to stress one's case in contrast with that of the adverse users. Indeed, several times, the invasion of the new niche was used as a (hopefully) "fait accompli" towards the authorities (and the other users).

8.4 Land scarcity

1 Description of land scarcity.
2 a. Is it caused by negative impacts on land, by access rules or by both?
   b. Is it caused by other factors?
c. What are the basic factors causing the negative impacts on the land?

3 What are the similarities between the three cases?

8.4.1 Description of land scarcity
Going backwards in the VoE diagram, one of the goals related to using a new piece of land was to counter the rising shortage of fertile land, with this safeguarding the long-term assertion of food and livelihood security (for the family). The land shortage can be a real threat or only ‘real’ in the perception of the actors.

Case 1, Baba Deli and Case 3, Kubadje-Jiksa
Unlike the situation in more densely populated parts of the Mandara Mountains, in the Mandara Mountain Plateaux, neither Bana nor Kapsiki villages as a whole in the areas studied suffer from land shortage. In terms of the VoE diagram (Box 1): they do not suffer from a low personal Environmental Use Space with regard to agriculture (see the second sections of chapter 6 and 7). Several individuals, however, complain about a lack of fields and some, indeed, do not dispose of enough surface area with sufficiently fertile soils to make a living. In the case of Oudda and Dzambou the percentages of people who entered the new zone without (access to) enough proper fields elsewhere were 56 and 65 percent respectively (see chapter 7.4.1 and 6.4.1). At the same time, other subsistence possibilities were also absent.

Added to this is the fact that in the longer run, and given the increase in the population, the number of fields outside the pasture area will not be sufficient to continue the tradition of long-term fallows. To maintain this extensive way of agriculture a pasture area will also be necessary. As has been stated, this situation of ‘not enough fertile fields’ has already been reached by some actors.

Case 2: Kolara-Kobo
For the new users of the Diamaré the situation in the places of origin is even worse. In general the available surface for villages of origin is just sufficient for all inhabitants together. Kolara seems a bit better situated with its mean field surface per person of 0.36 ha, but it is still not very much. Here again the motives of the settlers were almost always expressed in terms of ‘searching for land’ and ‘curbing the hunger of the family’. Before the move, they had access to less than a sufficient field surface area (0.16 ha per capita) and more than half of them explained that their fields were not fertile enough.

As shown in chapter 2, the lack of Environmental Use Space for an actor is made up of a combination of access (and use) possibilities with regard to land and negative impacts on the land caused by population pressure, affluence of this population and available technology to counter (or that increases) the negative effects of the other two factors. The size and type of impact of these last three factors is determined by the vulnerability of the physical basis of the land. All factors can be and are influenced by institutional rules and regulations at various levels.

8.4.2 The factors causing personal (fertile) land shortage

Case 1: Baba Deli and Case 3: Kubadje-Jiksa
Both in Dzambou and in Oudda land is divided very unequally over the different households.
For example, in Oudda, walking from the compound of one new user to that of another means crossing vast stretches of fallow land. However, these fields cannot be used by the families of Jiksa new users, as they are the property of others. It is also more and more the case that those others ask for money if somebody else wants to use their land.

Although the general fertility of the mountain plateau is not overwhelmingly good, and vulnerability for erosion and drought is high, at the moment the situation is satisfactory, especially when the fields get the chance of recovery after several years of use. Looking at the whole area, the total population density is not high with the average field surface area per person being more than that which is considered sufficient in this climate zone81. Technology is not a factor of great importance here. Ploughing may disturb the soil but, on the other hand, it can improve productivity. The cultivation of groundnuts as a cash crop may improve soil quality because it is nitrogen binding.

Thus, it is not the scarcity of land in general that matters, but the scarcity thereof for certain actors and specifically for those individuals that entered new areas. It is the unequal distribution that obliges farmers to resort to the bush area of Jiksa or Baba Deli. Re-partition among the families is unthinkable. Some Dzambou inhabitants suggest that they would accept the exclusion of the Fulbe quarter from the pasture reserve if the richer field owners there were to give away some of their other fields (those in the direction of Sir, for example84) or some of their yields.

**Case 2: Kolara-Kobo**
Unequal distribution of land plays a role in the Diamaré case as well. Moreover, the heartland is suffering from a general land shortage which is affecting (almost) everybody. In some areas this is less pressing because the inhabitants have already chosen to change their way of life more thoroughly. For example in Sirlawé the pressure is less because of a higher out-migration of highly educated young men to non-agricultural jobs. However, this is not always possible and, according to interviews, it is taking place less frequently at the moment than in the past. According to the Tupuri custom, not all sons inherit land. So, in some families, individuals do not have access to any fields because they have too many brothers. Nevertheless, the inheritance is mostly divided among a number of sons and the total surface area per owning son diminishes over the generations.

Thus, some families have less land surface area than others. In addition, some families consist of more (male) individuals than others. These two negative factors can also exist within one family at the same time. In such cases the individual scarcity can reach high levels. The institutions that regulate the property rules are based in custom and history, but change over time. Although, in the past, the Kapsiki did not live in a system of private property as far as land was concerned (Van Beek 1978, 1987), it appears that they registered anyhow the activities of their (great-)grandfathers and the resulting cleared areas. In this way they ascertained their family rights to land. In the event of conflicts over land this information was indispensable. Even a generation ago, this was leading more and more to the active claiming of title deeds. The use

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81 See Dietz et al (2001) and the two chapters of the cases (chapters 6 and 7).
84 This would not help all families in need of fields, because only a minority of inhabitants of the Fulbe neighbourhood had access to other fields. The fact that most do not, is one of the reasons why they cannot move.
of another family’s land became more difficult. All the inhabitants of a certain neighbourhood, and sometimes inhabitants outside that neighbourhood, knew where the fields of their own family and that of others were situated. Whether or not the family rights led to more individual private property rights depended on the rules within the extended family. No village authority was able to interfere in the process. Expropriation of these rights could only take place by way of allocation by the legitimate local (regional) authorities and only for communal benefit. If the legitimacy of that authority is accepted, its decisions become law.

The traditional rule of first-comer and first-clearer also applies to the Tupuri. The ancestor who cleared the most also provided his offspring with the most extended arable surface area. The very first arrival had some special rights to allocate certain areas as ‘not to be cleared’ (holy bushes, etc.), but normally first-comers rushed on competitively in order to clear as much as possible”. In several settlements in the Diamaré the djaoros (who were the very first to arrive) decided to put a limit on the maximum clearing of certain soils. For example, recognising the limitations of transplant-sorghum fields in the bush, new families could only clear a certain surface thereof, so as to guarantee future settlers some hectares as well.

Apart from the more biological and chance-based factor of the number of offspring of such first-clearers, the dedication and bravery of the ancestor as regards entry into possibly dangerous areas, as well as the hard clearing work as such, determined the actual property of (individuals within) families. In principle, thus, the unequal distribution of fields is not due to original power disparities or the appropriation of land by elites. First-comers became the elite and (mostly) big land owners at the same time. Until recently, in the areas studied the State did not have anything to do with the allocation of lands to different individuals of the actor groups currently involved. In the Diamaré areas formerly situated in the Pilot Project zone (most of the study area) both the groups studied were excluded during the project period. Only local cattle herders had permission to use the area and neither agriculturalists nor nomadic pastoralists had rights to the land. Now, after the opening up of the Pilot project area, local cattle herders do not have any more access rights than other cattle keepers.

As has been stated, on the mountain plateaux the population density is not yet a cause for concern. However, certain families have so many members that this has limited the access possibilities for several individuals. There are no effective institutions for diminishing the high population growth. The State Family Planning policies have not resulted in any decrease of births in the studied regions.

85 Interviews May-June 2001 and January 2004 with Tupuri respondents in the Heartland and in Kolara-Kobo.
86 This refers to factors in the physiology of the parent couple and the risk and factual occurrence of diseases and death. In fact the social position and wealth of a house father also plays a role. For example, greater wealth means the possibility of more wives and therefore more children as well.
87 The family of the village chief (the one who now governs the agglomeration of the three most eastern neighbourhoods) in Oudda is the owner of extended areas of fields, because their forefather was already chief here and in the past village inhabitants were obliged to help for several days (or weeks) per year with agricultural work on the chief’s fields. Part of this work consisted of the clearing of new areas. Actually, this family loans out fields to everyone who wants to use them. These are mostly villagers without any fields of their own. The chief himself acquires most of his income from trade in cloth.
88 Successful measures for birth control which are accepted worldwide, like more education for girls, have not reached the mountain plateau. In the Tupuri areas this has been implemented slightly more effectively. Lots of young Tupuri women explain they want fewer children (that is no more than 5 or 6 rather than an infinite amount).
Although people may wish for a more affluent life, reality makes them only try to maintain their usual level. In years of abundant rain, some people indeed dare to dream about a better life but often such dreams are dispelled a year later when the rainfall is again insufficient. Except for a technology-related wish for more surface area, based on the use of ploughs, the desire to maintain or increase one's wealth does not cause the personal lack of Environmental Use Space.

The use of ploughs is an ambiguous factor. On the one hand it is the reason why people want more surface area in order to make effective use of the equipment. On the other hand, it makes it possible to work more efficiently and effectively on the fields and, thus, generate a higher yield. Looking at it from yet another angle, ploughs may raise yields at first but in the longer run they may cause a more rapid exhaustion of the soils (if no measures are taken). Other new technology, either with positive or negative effects, is mostly not at the disposal of the actors.

8.4.3 Similarities between the three cases
In all three cases several individual actors suffer from a lack of fertile land because of the division of fields over the families and the number of farming people per family. Some families, even when they initially had access to extended areas, have since become very large and are having to share the area between too many individuals. Land inequality was not caused by elite land capturing (see Homer-Dixon 1999). However, in the Diamaré, the pressure on the land is also increasing because of an increase in use by rich urban-based cattle owners.

The higher pressure on the land for certain families, caused by the access rules of the different ethnic groups in all three areas, may be combined with the vulnerability of the physical basis for both erosion and quick fertility loss, especially in times of drought. This enhances the diminishing actual access of individuals to enough and sufficiently fertile fields.

General (modern) technology designed to increase the fertility of these small surfaces is not accessible for most of the inhabitants of the villages studied, let alone for those that resorted to entry into new niches.

In some of the neighbourhoods, some (groups of) actors try to counter food-insecurities by way of social, collective initiatives. When broadened to include not only stocking systems of money and food, and when implemented in whole villages and in the most effective way possible, these initiatives may, on the one hand, lead to better and more equal access rules, and therefore more equal security in relation to food. On the other hand, it may result in improved management of the land in general\(^8\). Such new institutions can be seen as a feedback-loop from Box 1 of the VoE diagram to the 'Box 0' zone before it.

The use of other options to counter the lack of Environmental Use Space and a subsequent lack of food are mostly blocked for all those that choose to enter a new niche.

Yet, in all three cases, the overall scarcity of land was at an intermediate level. Nevertheless, fallow land could be found and options to start using 'new' land (although partly in use by others) were available. None of the three cases suffered from a total occupation of the land, as is the case in other parts of Far North Province\(^8\).

\(^8\) For example, initiatives to set up or participate in rural information circles on how to improve agricultural practices.
\(^8\) For example, the area of the Mafa in the northern Mandara Mountains (see Zuiderwijk (1998) or Van Andel (1998)).
8.5 General conclusions

8.5.1 A pattern or only complexities?
If the different steps in the VoE diagram are examined, it is clear that different actors use different tactics each time to safeguard the goals formulated in an ‘event’ box. On each occasion, only a minority follow the horizontal arrow towards the next box (see Fig. 8.6). Moreover, the motivations for using an action that is expressed in a box turn out each time to have other sources (as well) - at least for some of the actors - than the goal formulated in the former box. For example, the assertion of rights to land is not always an effect of the entry into a new niche, let alone a diminishing of Environmental Use Space. The assertion of rights to land is directly related to a more general complex of insecurities, that is a lack of other options. Sometimes people who stay where they are nevertheless try to assert their rights to new lands. Often, the perception of land scarcity leads to actions other than the invasion of new lands and the assertion of the rights involved.

Nonetheless, as can be seen in the three cases, a causal link between violent outbreaks and environmental scarcity does exist. However, this link is not always apparent and does not apply to everybody. In the areas studied it is a minority pathway. For those choosing violence, the scarcity is sometimes seen as an actual threat. Sometimes it is seen as only a potential threat. Then, actors want to be sure that such a threat will not become real for them and their families.

*Figure 8.6 Participation in Violence Profile (PiV)*
(the percentages are arbitrarily, but reasonably, chosen to illustrate that the Cascade to Violence is a minority route for each Box)

Local history has had a major influence on the perception of the legitimacy of each step of the VoE diagram and the activities necessary in order to respond to the perceived tendencies. At the same time, the actual situations and cultural ways of viewing the world (together with manipulation of perceptions) also influence people’s perception of history. Whether or not an
actor will take a step also depends on the backing of ‘his’ narrative by the rest of the community (and how big or how influential that group is). This can also be manipulated or, more positively, managed.

When earlier steps in the Cascade are deemed legitimate, and are indeed taken, the step to violence may be engendered by a feeling of hopelessness and ‘standing alone’ with one’s own interests or those of the small group to which one belongs, in opposition to the other party. In that case the DtV described in section 8.1.5. is small. Here again, legitimacy perception and the justification of violence are important parameters. Except in pure one-off emotional outbursts, resorting to violence can only be done when the actors feel they are supported somewhat by co-members of the same group or village. These may be, or perhaps preferably are, people without direct interests in the cause itself. This moral support is, among other things, what is sought in the earlier phases of the conflict. What people need is not so much others to fight with them but people who will support their conflict (this is, for example, one of the important roles that women have in wars). Within each society the percentage of people actively involved is always (at least slightly) lower than of those who consider the action legitimate. Within a society, those members of the same group that support the action are considered - by the performers of that action - to be of the same sub-group, distinguishing themselves from the rest of society. While manipulating such considerations, clever leaders may organise the back-up by others on the waves of a small DtV, especially when the culture involved already values the use of violence and when it contains devices (methods) to imply and incite others.

Figure 8.7  PtV under the influence of emotions or norms

![Figure 8.7](image)

However, a converse effect of culture may also be seen. Not all factors are aggravating. Two different phenomena, for example, inhibit the actual use of violence. One is based on morality and the other based on fear. Both are culture and character dependent, interplaying between the autonomy and the interpretative frames categories of De Groot and Kamminga (1995) and strongly influenced by the manipulations of leaders. Moral notions set the threshold for ‘violence is justified’, ‘we want violence’, and thus for actual violence (see Fig. 8.7b). Moral notions are set by leaders and can be manipulated.

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91 Examples are songs with provocative texts, stories about heroes whose examples have to be followed (although, again, these may be invented or made up by leaders, even over longer time spans (see Chilver [1996]), or stirring drums.

92 See chapter 2
notions regarding violence can also change quickly when people are confronted with actual violence and the shock of casualties and losses, as can be seen by the Kapsiki who baulk from violence since the violent days of their ancestors. In such an event it is possible that the justification of the violence is lower than the percentage of people who actually use it (Fig. 8.7b, line U). In general, justification by a big enough group is important to start or continue violence. Of course the feeling of ‘it is justified’ is influenced by the strength of frustration and vice versa. On the other hand, a general feeling of ‘violence is legitimate’ can still result in non-violence when participants do not dare to fight (see Fig. 8.7a). Although not explicitly evident, in all three cases this seems to play a role with regard to intervention from the State and, as far as some actors are concerned, with regard to the strength and mobilisation speed of the adverse party.

In general, it is possible to say that a lack of legitimate conflict resolution mechanisms and the feeling of actors that there is too much arbitrariness and unfairness in a context of over-all rising insecurities, may engender a small DtV. This then, can combine with personal insufficiencies regarding livelihood to make individuals resort to violence. Such a shortage of conflict resolution mechanisms also causes a rising neglect of other people’s interests, which makes the step to contending and violence smaller. The legal insecurity is partly due to the combination of an unclear and outdated customary law system, sometimes even opposed by another hostile customary law system (as in the Diamaré-case), and an evenly unclear and ambiguous formal law system. This mix changes the much praised African fluidity into a system of manipulation by the powerful and leaves the poorer endowed with less or almost no other options than the one of despair.

In the cases studied women are not opposed to their own spouses or other men of their own group, nor are only they opposed to other user groups, as reported for example in North-West Province by Chilver (1989). They and ‘their’ men suffer equally from the growing competition over land. In addition, with the production of sorghum by man and wife together, subsistence production is not solely the women’s responsibility. As is the case almost everywhere in Cameroon, women do not have an official say in ‘political’ matters. All this, together with a lack of organisation, causes women in all three cases to wait for action of the men. They do, however, have influence on the general tension level of their societies by way of speaking

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93 The much noticed ambiguity of tenure systems in Africa (Berry 1993, Bruce 1988), and the fact that all arrangements are always negotiable (Juul and Lund 2002) regularly leads to situations of excessive uncertainty. Especially the weak are frequently the victim of the fact that powerful actors set the conditions and outcome of such negotiations.

94 Not only in the natural resource domain.

95 In the rural areas of Cameroon (and in lots of other places) this is directly related to access to land.

96 See, e.g., Broome (1993).

97 Blaming the pluralistic legal system as such ignores the fact that with clear definitions and with clearly defined boundaries and competences (all deemed legitimate by the actors involved) different legal systems may be exercised perfectly well on top of and next to each other.

98 In situations of power equality or where power holders can be checked by the rest of the group (because the system may be fluid, but not totally unclear), fluidity may lead to lots of small skirmishes, but these are easily manageable.

99 Chilver (1989) describes several women’s uprisings in NW Province from the end of the 1950s onwards (violent and non-violent) when their possibilities to use land and produce food crops were hampered.

100 In NW Province women were organised into ‘action groups’ both based on Bamenda customs and on the help of elite women from the women’s wing of the ruling political party (Chilver 1989).
together and with their husbands, brothers and fathers about experienced problems\textsuperscript{101}, and by enticing their men folk into forceful action.

The use of violence can be a strategic act to gain access to important resources (being material or immaterial) or it can be an emotional outburst of frustration. As Moore (1978: 50) already said, "... people arrange their immediate situations by means of processes of situational adjustment"). This means that not all actions are aimed at the regularisation of social reality. Many times actors "act in irregular ways" (Leach et al 1997: 50).

The violent events in the cases studied are all highly triggered by an emotional response to an acute threat. At the same time they give rise to future-oriented rational deliberations about whether or not to use the violence again. Repeated incidents thereby gain in rationality and strategic content. The learning effect increases. The actors have learned that violence, other tactics, or even a combination of the two may or may not be successful and they have also established which type of violence pays off or not. A series of incidents, together with the in-between periods of other types of actions, can in and by itself cause peace or war. In such cases of longer-enduring conflicts structures of justification (narratives) and structures of strategy in a more material sense (e.g. allies) develop. In the terms of section 8.1.4: such deliberate strategies influence the position of the tension line and thus the width of the DtV. Of course, the arguments used in the narratives are also part of the strategies\textsuperscript{102}.

Not all the actors present choose either the route towards violence or that towards the peaceful assertion of rights. There are differences between actors because their perceptions of the problem are different, their positions in the social fabric are different and they choose to invest in other capitals - again with the help of other capitals - partly because the endowments with capitals is different per person and partly because they regard different capitals important than their co-actors do. It is worth mentioning the example of the (interpretation of the) relationship with the State and the way the State-role is perceived to have an effect on both the land tenure issue as well as the general position of the actor\textsuperscript{103}. Of course the factual activities of the State (or its representatives) play an important role in those perceptions. If the relative strength of "fuelling" factors for an actor (or for a group of actors) reaches a certain threshold, acute threats can trigger violence.

In addition, there are innumerable factors that inhibit the unwinding of the cascade of the VoE diagram. It seems as if actors prefer the non-violent route and that only the "circumstances" make them choose to follow the cascade of violence. Although they have to take account of the ever-present risk of counteractions by jealous fellow villagers who are envious of success (an ever-returning issue in discussions with farmers in all three case studies)\textsuperscript{104}. most

\textsuperscript{101} For example, the woman of Oudda who was threatened with a stick by one of the Fulbe cattle keepers after crop damage by the cattle of Elhadj Ngoura told her story to anybody who would listen and this gave rise to highly indignant reactions in all the "outer" neighbourhoods of Oudda (see Chapter 7).

\textsuperscript{102} The more powerful people are, the easier they can manipulate the narratives, and the easier they can use the ambiguities in the land rights system to their own benefit (see, e.g., Peters 2002).\textsuperscript{103} Both the relationship with and the role of the State can deliberately be invested in long before the actual fights, dependent (again) on possibilities, long-term views and position of the actor. This is what the inhabitants of the Fulbe hamlet in Baba Deli seem to be doing.

\textsuperscript{104} Platteau 1996: 62-63) also mentions the lack of agricultural investment possibilities in Sub-Saharan Africa due to, first and foremost, the shortage of economic and technological infrastructure and, second, even if all these necessities are present, "people are discouraged from improving their lands because of jealousy on the part of the chief and other villagers."
of the time, and if enough other economic possibilities are available, people do not try to start fields in new niches. A rational calculation then tells them that the effort of bush clearing and the risks of expulsion by current users or the State, together with some other setbacks (that are always present), make the costs of entry too high compared to the benefits.

However, social and cultural rationality may lead actors away from strict economic deliberations. More ethical considerations, like the obligation vis-à-vis ancestors (and their fields) and the principle that "land ought to belong to the sons of the village" (Platteau 1996: 46), often play a role in the claiming of land. In the three cases this motivation - that is also connected to the role of land as a device of meaning and a source of identity formation - certainly mixes with the economic drives to ascertain land. Nevertheless, although the struggle for land is indeed connected to feelings of belonging both to the land itself and to the group that is thought to have the right to use it, the cases show that those feelings do not per se connect to ethnicity. For example, geographical positioning or the basic way of life may be a more important factor.

Yet, even after the entry into a new niche, the assertion of rights to that land appeared not to be the standard route. Sometimes new areas were only used for a short time and sometimes new information or new perceptions on old information made people assess their costs and benefits differently. This, then, leads them to refrain from claims: sometimes they even did so after a former decision to stick to the assertion of the rights to the land.

It has to be added, though, that the three cases are situated at a specific position in the hierarchy of ‘pressure because of land scarcity’. Because the advice of ES critics not to study ‘evident’ cases (see chapter 2 and 3) has been followed, the scarcity level is ‘only’ intermediate. Whether the conclusions given will hold when the land pressure is really high remains to be seen. Nevertheless, a preliminary reaction may be that, then too, the level of other insecurities, the role of the State and cultural or individual attitudes towards violence are very important.

In short, apart from the support of general wisdom regarding the tackling of a broad range of insecurities of individual actors and groups to prevent violence, the study can not and does not result in one concise causal theory that works for the three cases or (even less so) for (all) other cases. Indeed, security specialists can still not rely on quick fixes to prophesy situations hoping to prevent outright violence. Because mono-causal linkages could not be found, it can only be deduced that, to improve the grip on conflict situations, partly intuitive notions and insights should be built on the basis of a variety of theories and concepts, fed by case-studies and, thus, an increase of experience. Specific conflicts have a chance to be resolved only by on-the-spot mediators, who, on the one hand, base their actions on full-grown experience and a wide range of knowledge and (not too strict) theory, and, on the other hand, are open-minded enough to keep the specificities of the conflict under study into focus.

8.5.2 Revisiting mainstream Environmental Security notions
In contrast to Environmental Security’s straightforward, one-way connection between environmental scarcity and social effects, such as migration, constrained economic productivity and elite rent-seeking (Homer-Dixon 1999: 134) which can only be mitigated by “second-stage interventions” (id), or else will automatically lead to “social segmentation and weakened institutions” (id), the present study shows a more complex, forward and backward moving,
mutually influencing pattern in the diagram. It is never the former action or situation alone that causes the unwinding of the rest of the Violence Cascade. Thus, in the cases studied, it is never land scarcity on its own that gives rise to violence. Indeed, just as the violent encounters influence subsequent strategies, each action described in an ‘event’ box of the VoE diagram does influence subsequent actions, but more often than not the event boxes are not decisive.

It is the whole complex of insecurity resulting from all the domains that plays a role in the decision-making of actors. The societal circumstances that may trigger violence already exist and are not the result but rather the cause of environmental scarcity.¹⁰

Homer-Dixon’s ‘lack of ingenuity’, for example, may inhibit a proper development of agriculture because of the absence of necessary infrastructure and technology. This then leads to the scarcity of Environmental Use Space. In the same vein, low economic productivity means that land scarcity is felt sooner and more acutely. The cause of the local lack of ingenuity, however, is not the environmental scarcity but (mostly) another societal failure. Perhaps the capture of the State by elites to use its strength for their own benefits (and not the capture of natural resources¹⁰) and the subsequent neglect of weaker people’s interests lies at the basis of this local ingenuity shortage and subsequent violence. Even without ‘capture’ by elites, “state intervention is indeed a major source of farmers’ insecurities” (Platteeuw 1996: 74), as we have seen in at least two of the case studies. Instead of causing violence, the breakdown of the power of the State may then lead to better arrangements if it is accompanied by an empowerment of civil society.

Another important influencing factor is the performance of conflict resolution from very early conflict phases up to the violent phase. Improper institutions are not only a product of growing scarcity. Again contrary to ES notions¹⁰, the reverse also applies. For example, a lack of management of land tenure issues may lead to resource scarcity for several actors. The breakdown of community rules and regulations in the wake of the rising influence of statutory law (and the connected tendencies towards privatisation¹⁰) has increased the insecurities with regard to resource access for the weaker members of society, such as women¹¹. The lack of conflict resolution has an additional impact when these actors claim what they consider to be ‘their’ part. In the three cases it is especially the local-level shortage of equal sharing and justice that engenders the environmental scarcity. With the lack of conflict resolution mechanisms, resorting to violence seems more effective when it comes to safeguarding one’s share.

Both faulty State involvement and a deficient justice system make people seek other means of safeguarding livelihoods in cases of general insecurities and scarcities. Indeed, in all three cases, the lack of ingenuity (this is the means of improving ‘Bebbington’s capitals’ for individuals and societies), as Homer-Dixon depicted, hinders the necessary agricultural transition according to Boserup’s model. Nor has such a transition come about via the nearness of a mar-

¹⁰ The fight over access to locally abundant resources (such as minerals and diamonds, for example) causes local farmers and herders to suffer from increasing shortage of access to (their) land (see, for example, Moyroud and Katunga (2002) over the struggle for coltan in East Congo).
¹¹ Homer-Dixon (1991, 1994 and 1999) speaks of ‘elite rent seeking’ with regard to scarce natural resources.
¹² For example in Homer-Dixon’s model (1999 134).
¹³ Even if agricultural transition had been successful, Boserup (1965 92) already warned that it would lead to a loss of land tenure security and a resulting “vast amount of litigation [with] each step on the road to private property in land”.
¹⁴ As can be seen in all three cases: free access is denied more and more (see also Goheen 1989a 375).
ket that engenders the build-up of, for example, infrastructure and intensification (Von Thünen’s theory). According to Homer-Dixon in such cases the Malthus-road will inevitably come into existence. However, the cases studied have shown that motivation is higher for a non-Boserupian route that cannot be called Malthusian either. Migration, entering a new niche and doing more of the same at another place, is what happened.

The pressure (experienced) made people use their inventiveness to search for the right arguments, allies and moments for the assertion of rights to these new lands. Even the right methods were invented, via experiments by young men with, among other things, politics, out-migration to job options further away, but also with violent defence of ancestors’ fields.

Normally, explorative behaviour by youngsters helps societies to realise the necessary innovations. The curiosity and experimental mood of young men and women has a long-term function at collective level. Ideally, the establishment of a society decides what will be implemented of all those experiments. Increased insecurities and rising scarcity means community elders do not now prohibit the explorative actions of younger members of the group with regard to violence. The use of violence is therefore not a sign of societal breakdown but a deliberate choice for a constructive strategy that even enhances (or is brought about by) stricter community cohesion.

Of course negative societal circumstances may be aggravated or felt more heavily by actors if environmental scarcity adds to the general insecurity. However, which action will be practised next depends on all the factors that have an influence on individual actors. This is shown by the fact that all the actors behave differently. They all perceive and experience the influencing factors differently. Contrary to the inevitable pathways in Homer-Dixon’s model, that suggest majority actions, in all three cases only a minority of scarcity-experiencing (or perceiving) village inhabitants chose to invade a new niche, after which a smaller group tried to assert the rights to the area entered and only a very small group resorted to violence (which did not even have much to do with the scarcity felt). Because the path to violence is only taken by a small proportion of those who are affected by scarcity, it is very difficult to predict which factors will cause big enough groups to use violence.

The societal differentiation that took place in each step of the VoE diagram in the cases studied (see Figure 8.6) finally resulted in very small-scale, quickly suppressed violence because only minorities followed the cascade. If ‘society as a whole’ had followed the steps of the VoE Cascade to violence and had supported those actions (thus, in the case of less societal differentiation) then the violence in Box 4 would have reached a higher level.

Therefore, contrary to the notion of Homer-Dixon that societal segmentation leads to violence, the phenomenon observed seems to point towards the necessity of strong community feelings and displays of loyalty, without which actors refrain from violence. As stated in chapter 2.4, niche differentiation makes it possible for people to live peacefully alongside each other. The role of social divisions is much more complex in violence causation than is conceptualised in ES so far. Indeed, as Collier and Hoeffler (2002: 23) noticed: neither a very much fragmented society nor a totally undivided society risks real civil war.

Segmentation that is situated somewhere between total homogeneity and maximal fractionalisation, with “ethnic dominance”, generates the greatest risks. In such situations the position of the tension line may rise quickly for several reasons.
The focus of ES on frustrations and grievances as a cause of violence caused other basic factors that may influence the position of the tension line and, thus, the choice of violence to be neglected. In section 8.5.1., the importance of culturally and personally based factors, such as moral notions and fears are discussed. ES has not yet studied the aggravating effect of a 'culture of violence', nor the inhibiting effect on violence of a non-violent leader standing up in the wake of a conflict, who is able to shift the general moral code (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi).

Indeed also fear is not (yet) discussed in the Environmental Security domain. It certainly relates to the basic biological-physiological mechanism that Sandole (1993)119 mentions in his list of causes of violence. Yet. Sandole declares that these mechanisms have a triggering role while I have shown here that they can also have an appeasing role. Indeed, in the enrolment of the VoE pathway, fear is a paradoxical factor. Worried people who quickly fear a loss of possibilities and who are distrustful vis-à-vis others and the authorities may be prone to quick actions and the rapid invasion of other niches. However, fear will withhold people from violence in the later phases of the VoE diagram. However, as is depicted in Figure 8.7a, such people may support the narratives of those who (want to) use violence. With that they raise the tension line and ensure a small DtV.

Last but not least, the position of the tension line may be high wherever people feel their metaphysical needs, their psychic needs, are being threatened. So far in ES the focus seems to be on economic causes of the outbreak of violence. But, as is said before, this is only part of the whole explanation. Especially in struggles over land, the role of that land as a bearer of meaning can make actors fiercely defend their rights to it. People can bargain or even beg when it comes to physical needs, but identity is indispensable to human beings.

8.5.3 General conclusion regarding the VoE diagram
The use of the Violence-or-EscapE model in the exploration of three different cases has shown that, next to striking similarities, there are considerable differences between the cases. At the same time, the general patterns that emerge, especially when analysing at the detailed level of the diagram, show the usefulness of a descriptive model. A certain level of generalisation about a cascade of causing factors and definitive outcomes is possible. Sufficient proof has been provided that the steps in the VoE diagram are not only helpful, but also provide a framework by which a general pattern can be discerned.

The model designed for this study can be used to guide investigations: for prevention (early warning or discerning moments of effective intervention and the direction thereof) and/or for a posteriori insight. It is advisable to note detailed descriptions of each case studied, while following the steps of the VoE diagram, as was done for the three cases of the present study. Subsequently, the analyses of the events described have to be guided by the explanatory models, like the “A versus Non-A” models described in chapter 2. As has been shown, this means that, while combining the different theoretical notions within one research-diagram, it is almost impossible to ‘forget’ influencing factors. With this it is more encompassing than the well-known Homer-Dixon model (1991, 1999).

119 See Chapter 2.
At the same time, it is possible to compare different cases because the format used by way of the VoE diagram is very strict. Yet, as is recommended by George (1979), it is not so rigid that it does not permit case-specific observations.

In general, the VoE diagram has stood the test of an encompassing model that is designed to describe completely a chosen part of reality, to help understand that reality. The completeness is aimed at by incorporating both the violence cascade and all non-violent pathways, and the general pattern of influencing factors on all levels. Notions, such as those developed in sections 8.1.4 and 8.5.2, have to be born in mind, like other theories of the A-non-A type that have been used. However, the study makes clear that some enhancements to the VoE diagram have to be made to increase the completeness, without losing clearness. For example, especially the Baba Delii case has shown that an extension after Box 4 is relevant. After a violent event, stronger assertion may take place involving more violent means, and therefore with more chance of escalation (see Figure 8.1). The feedback loop to the beginning of the diagram is not enough.

Another observation concerns the difference in value of the arrows depicting the route from event box to event box and those depicting the influencing and ‘other’ factors. Superficially, they reflect the same: actions noted in the event boxes and the ‘other factors’ can both be causes of the event focused on. However, other and influencing factors are a conglomerate of different perceptions, institutions and secondary (or tertiary) actors’ activities, while the ‘event’ boxes depict actions by the primary actors.

Although claiming rights without entering the new niche was mentioned while discussing the structure of the model in chapter 2, the general possibility of relationships between boxes that do not follow directly in line of the VoE diagram, which circumvent the boxes in-between as it were, is not visible either in the VoE diagram. For example, Box 1 can lead directly to Box 4, without the interim steps of entry into and assertion of rights of new lands. All escape boxes can still lead to subsequent event boxes in the direct Violence Cascade. Actors that perceived a diminishing Environmental Use Space and chose to invest in other economic possibilities were later able, via an increase of knowledge about State law and citizen rights (e.g.), to reconsider their decision not to claim land. It is even possible that they fuel identity claims and fund violence.

Thus, to keep the diagram ‘simpler than reality’ and therefore make it a useful model, both the fact that steps between boxes can (and mostly are) split up into smaller steps, and the fact that in some circumstances and by some actors some steps are not taken at all (the ‘jumping over’ boxes), are not visually depicted in the VoE diagram. When analysing influencing factors, however, such details will come to the fore.

In short, the diagram has been shown to be useful for both individual case studies and for comparative exercises designed to result in an enhancement of the theory. As a result, the research has produced a general, rough pattern that becomes visible when searching for linkages between resource scarcity and violence. In addition, the research has shown that the “easy cascades”, like the one modelled by Homer-Dixon (1999), are faulty most of the time. Several connections show a reverse pattern to the one depicted in the Homer-Dixon model. Each step is in reality influenced by many more factors than are shown in those diagrams and many elements referred to in the diagrams have their influence in many more situations than just the one depicted.