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Living territories to transform the world

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Diversity of actors and alliances in processes of territorialization

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PROCESSES OF TERRITORIALIZATION AND NEW TERRITORIALITIES

The terms territory, territoriality and territorialization are often used interchangeably and without uniformity across the geographer community (Vanier, 2009) to designate relationships between individuals or within collectives for the access to the management and control of physical resources (natural, infrastructural) or intangible ones (cultural, heritage, etc.).

We define the territory here as a space appropriated by a society with the conscious feeling of this appropriation (Brunet *et al.*, 1993). It is an arena for the exploitation and management of resources and thus brings together, in a sometimes conflicting, sometimes harmonious way, a set of institutions and actors between whom power relations are established with a view to controlling access to space and resources. In theory, the use and management of natural resources are regulated in a given territory by an entity in charge of doing so. This entity therefore controls humans and resources within the boundaries of that territory (Sack, 1986). It may be an authority that is customary (village), decentralized (municipal), deconcentrated (meso level), central (the State) or even a private group which the central government has authorized to govern a given space, in accordance with resource management rules.

In practice, with the exception of situations in which the central authorities retain most of the control over land and the management of natural resources or, conversely, those where the processes of decentralization or privatization are well advanced, these different types of entities coexist, in charge of more or less delimited territories and using more or less established methods of governance (Bassett and Gautier, 2014; Gautier and Hautdidier, 2012). This superposition of territories in the same physical space results in subtle games that actors play to secure their rights of access to space and resources, in a context in which several territorialization processes coexist and in which new territorialities emerge.

The processes of territorialization thus encompass these interactions between actors. By the process of territorialization, we mean the creation and maintenance of

portions of space within which certain practices are permitted on the basis of explicit or implicit allocation of rights, of control and of managerial authority (Peluso, 2005). The territorialization of a space aims to impose rights or to circumvent those of other competing actors, or, failing that, to rely on different methods of governance associated with different types of territories depending on the interests of the actors. The power games between actors for access to space and the resources in it are therefore an essential part of the processes of territorialization.

Finally, territorialities are defined as the socio-spatial relationships and alliances resulting from the methods of resource management, actions, practices, motivations, intentions, personal histories and cognitive representations leading to the construction of territories or to their reshaping (Gonin and Gautier, 2016). These processes are the result of alliances or conflicts between assemblages of agents (Li, 2007), driven by their interests, arguments and discourses, which reflect the issues of powers and practices, and lead to a redefinition of the rights of access to resources. The actors thus use rules of governance established within the framework of territories or form alliances between themselves to establish new territorialities (Gautier *et al.*, 2011). The game of socio-spatial relationships and alliances between actors is thus essential for consolidating territorialities, reshaping them or creating new ones, as an example from south-western Burkina Faso shows.

THE EXAMPLE OF CASHEW PLANTATIONS IN SOUTH-WESTERN BURKINA FASO

Among the alliances formed between different types of actors in a process of territorialization, those established between local actors are most frequently encountered in our field studies. The main example we will present here is that of the process of territorialization at the village level in south-western Burkina Faso around smallholder cashew plantations (Audouin and Gazull, 2014). The State indicated its willingness to develop this sector, first in 1960 by the introduction of seeds from Dahomey (now Benin) and then by the creation in 1980 of plantations with the objective of boosting production and encouraging local processing. Despite the best intentions of the government, smallholder cashew plantations, started with seeds from these government plantations or from individual initiatives of pioneering farmers, remained marginal until 1995. Subsequently however, cashew cultivation has increased substantially since the arrival in West Africa of Indian raw nut buyers who saw the potential of production in the region to meet the growing global demand for cashew nuts. The expansion of cashew cultivation was initially carried out by local actors belonging to the founding lineages of the villages and with secure access to sufficient land. In contrast, in some village territories the expansion of cashew cultivation has been reinforced by returning farmers who had migrated to Côte d'Ivoire and had gained experience in growing perennial crops for export and who have been allocated land by the local customary authorities. These alliances between migrants and customary authorities made it possible to form cashew production clusters that present attractive economies of scale to export enterprises. These plantations at the village level have now been replicated throughout the south-western part of the country (Cascades and Hauts-Bassins regions), thus increasing its commercial appeal.

This process of territorialization through the cultivation of cashew nuts is therefore based on alliances between farmers and village customary authorities, with the benevolence of the State which chooses not to oppose these farms, even if the cashew tree durably marks an appropriation of non-cadastral land that still belongs to the State. The cashew sector is now well on the path of being structured through producer organizations that are coming up at different levels (municipalities, region, nation) and which are capable of interacting with the central government and processing companies. However, this process also has negative effects on the territorialities of other actors. At the local level, in some territories, the poorest households (recent migrants or older households not belonging to the founding lineages) find themselves excluded from these processes because the right to plant is denied to them. Women are also on the losing side in this process of territorialization. Only a very small number of them benefit from the seasonal activity of artisanal or semi-industrial processing of nuts which covers only 5 to 10% of the nuts harvested. Most importantly, the expansion of cashew plantations to the detriment of scrublands result in the loss of the women's access to the vegetation areas which represent a safety net for them during the lean season. They can no longer collect wood and Non-Timber Forest Products, for ensuring their direct or indirect food security (Koffi *et al.*, 2016). Finally, the regional routes followed by Fulani pastoralists during transhumance are blocked by these plantations and conflicts often erupt in areas in which they had become accustomed to grazing their livestock in the dry season (Audouin and Gonin, 2014).

INTERPLAY OF TERRITORIAL ALLIANCES BETWEEN ACTORS

In the example of the cashew nut sector, local alliances redefine territorialities and rights of access to space and resources. In particular, they exacerbate the inequalities of access to resources between actors in the same village and between different actors of the sector. The losers in these territorialization processes are the actors with the weakest entitlements – understood as the totality of things that an individual can obtain according to the rights he holds (Sen, 1999). They are therefore obliged to come up with new adaptive strategies to compensate for the loss of their rights to access the land and natural resources associated with cashew plantations. This may lead them to circumvent the new rules of access by planting trees, either without authorization or in a neighbouring village with more flexible rules, by diversifying their activities to compensate for restrictions on land access, or by attempting to become part of the alliances of dominant actors behind this redefinition of territorialities.

The same type of alliances between actors whose aim is to redefine the conditions for access to land and resources is found in Burkina Faso and more generally in the sub-region. Similarities can thus be found between the example of cashew cultivation and the globalized shea nut supply chain (Rousseau *et al.*, 2016) or regional woodfuel chains (Gazull and Gautier, 2015). In these cases, it appears that assemblages of actors aiming to create development territories can produce what appears to be a success on a global or national scale, but which often leaves a certain number of actors more vulnerable or less well organized on the margins of the process and the development that it generates. While it is understandable that these processes are tolerated and even

encouraged by the central, decentralized or deconcentrated State, the public policies that accompany them must remain vigilant. The secondary effects engendered locally by power games can indeed reshape territorialities and make the actors excluded from these alliances more vulnerable and often less concerned about preserving their environment. Given these observations, research for development must be able to guide and accompany the various actors of the territorialization process in progress (administrative authorities, producer organizations, local authorities) in order to anticipate these changes in a perspective of inclusive sustainable development.

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