

Social infrastructure for decentralized NRM governance

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How will the land be shared?



Land Use Change in Madiama: 1952 to 2002

Land Use	1952	2002	Percent Difference
	Percent	Percent	
Bare soil	10.3	12.3	2.0
Brush/brush land	31.7	5.0	-26.7
Cultivation	17.1	56.7	39.6
Park agroforestry	1.0	11.3	10.3
Riparian vegetation	1.0	1.3	0.3
Road/settlement	2.4	1.7	-.07
Pasture	31.7	2.7	-29.0
Denuded area	2.0	6.0	4.0
River/water	2.9	2.0	-0.9
Stone quarry	0.0	1.0	1.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	

Two sets of rules for resource tenure

Rural land is “owned” by the state. Usufruct is determined largely in terms of demonstrating productive use, i.e., cultivation.

However, village chiefs continue to manage village resources according to customary rules, local knowledge, and power relations.

This creates what is called “legal pluralism”.

The coming of decentralization has served to assure that the responsible enforcers of land tenure laws and customary rules are all locals, more likely to be in routine contact.

How can secure and enduring natural resource tenure be established?

There are two broad possibilities:

1. The state forcibly removes customary land tenure relations and installs national law.

this has only occurred when resources become highly valued as in irrigated lands or urbanized areas.

2. Dialog among members of civil society develops a consensus over resource tenure rules which supplants customary and national systems.

However, analysis suggests that civil society doesn't really exist for these rural populations.

The development of civil society has been targeted by the international donor community as a means to democratic governance and a foundation for economic development.

civil society - an associational sphere intermediary between the individual/family/household and the state.

Put into practice, this generic definition often masks quite different perspectives on its existence and qualities.

Various analysts have drawn a range of conclusions concerning civil society in Africa:

Mamdani (1996) argues that rural populations in Africa are not part of civil society, but rather reside within subordinate customary regimes where civil rights are not applied, giving rise to what he calls the bifurcated state.

Alternatively, in characterizing civil society in Africa, Guyer (1994) and Docking (1999) have noted the important role international non-governmental organizations are beginning to play.

CSOs should have the following characteristics:

1. They must be autonomous from the state and customary authorities.
2. Individuals must have the right of entry and exit on a voluntary basis.
3. Membership should be inclusive.
4. Decision-making processes democratic and transparent.

The customary village associations so often used by development agents (both government and NGO) do not meet any of these standards.

Village associations are characterized by village and clan solidarities and serve as an interface with the village chieftaincy.

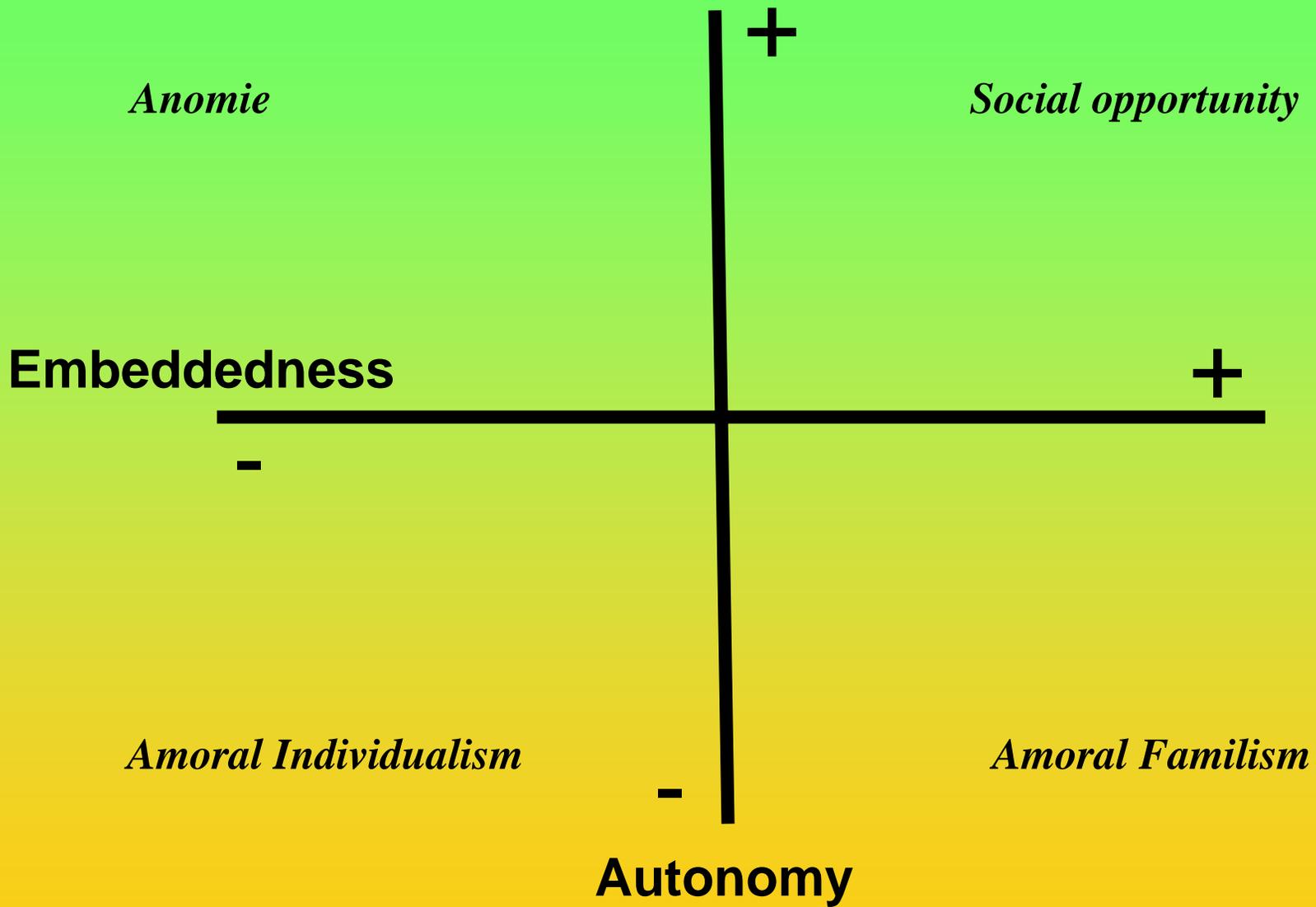
The chieftaincy is a local governance structure without distinction between legislative, executive, and judicial roles.

It is this authority, not free association, that has served to mediate relations between the State and villagers.

Our working hypothesis was that the social infrastructure of CSOs increases the chances that previously unassociated people can:

- build mutual trust and respect
- stimulate open debate
- increase their networks of social relations
- expand the circulation of information
- bring about more considered decisions

The objective of this infrastructure development is to multiply the bonds and networks between different groups (i.e., social capital).



(adapted from Woolcock, 1998)

In the SANREM CRSP–West Africa research and development program, we tested a methodology to **reduce NRM conflict and increase rational management** by building a new **network** of relations in the rural world, between:

- neighboring villages
- ethnic groups
- socio-professional groups
- population and technical services
- all elements of rural civil society

We are not the only ones who have been exploring this frontier. Local NGOs have also been experimenting. Two types of approach have been used:

- One targeting the process for establishing conventions of co-management between various resource users
- The other targeting human capacity and social infrastructure development

Indeed, one cannot do one without the other.

Our approach has favored the latter.

Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee (NRMAC)

- a multi-village organization
- built from village level committees under the direction of village chiefs
- taking into account all production systems and socio-professional categories
- recognized by the Commune Council as an auxiliary committee for NRM
- serving a valued purpose in the eyes of the local population and a mechanism to access technical services of the State

Legitimacy of the NRMAC

customary legitimacy: use of village chiefs in the transmission of messages

respect for traditional practices

***state legitimacy:
and legality*** involvement of Commune officials in the creation of the committee

Commune Council resolutions implemented by the committee's actions

public legitimacy: involvement of villagers in the selection and election of committee members

Training the committee has received

Conflict management and consensus building

Holistic Management of pasturelands

Soil fertility management

Financial management

Lobbying

Training of Trainers



Major Accomplishments of the NRMAC

Mobilized the establishment of co-management agreements (still in progress)

Implemented a tree planting campaign

Organized two villages to conduct an experiment in holistic pasture management

Resolved conflicts between villages, and between villagers

Improved the climate for inter-village cooperation

Lessons Learned

1. Including all stakeholders is necessary, but difficult.

Assuring participation of women, youth, pastoralists, and other minorities in activities and decision making poses many challenges. Participation should also include customary authorities, government officials, technical service agents, local NGOs etc.

2. There is no single model for building social capital and developing local management agreements.

The process must be iterative, allowing for adaptive learning over years to bring all stakeholders together in an informed and voluntary manner. Building trust between groups is a time-consuming process.

Lessons Learned (con't.)

- 3. Project and partner personnel need to be well-trained to encourage open debate, foster consensus, and guide without leading.*

Respect for and recognition of local know-how is essential. This is as true for local leaders as for NGO and government agents. Training programs in conflict resolution and consensus building have made major contributions.

Lessons Learned (con't.)

4. *Power relations and stakeholder interests need to be carefully taken into account.*

If the interests of any stakeholders, whether socially powerful or not, are ignored, full implementation of collective endeavors will be compromised.

5. *Development agents must create synergy between the public and private sectors at the local level.*

Networks of local associations across communities supported by local officials can facilitate the mobilization of viable, locally defined initiatives.