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Expansion of PHP plantations in the Njombe-Penja council: An window open to land disputes and territorial conflicts

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Abstract
The municipality of Njombé-Penja has experienced a mixed local land policy since the establishment of large-scale agro-industrial enterprises such as PHP. The implementation of PHP's activities since the 1970s has given rise to a wide range of land-related issues, resulting in numerous land problems observed around the boundaries of these plantations. The availability and accessibility of land, owing to its fertility and the favorable geographical and environmental conditions prevailing in the physical environment of the Njombé-Penja municipality, provide opportunities for PHP to expand its plantations over large areas of land, thereby fueling land and territorial conflicts. This study examines the nature of the land and territorial conflicts observed in relation to the expansion of PHP plantations in the Njombé-Penja municipality. The hypothesis tested in this study suggests that the expansion of PHP plantations has contributed to the emergence and intensification of land and territorial conflicts in the Njombé-Penja municipality. This research was conducted using a geographical research methodology based on the hypothetico-deductive and systemic approaches, field observation, documentary research, data analysis, and interpretation. The qualitative data used in the study were collected through in situ observations, as well as structured and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were obtained through stratified sampling in order to gain a better understanding and analysis of the issue under investigation. The results show that the expansion of PHP plantations has had adverse effects on the Njombé-Penja municipality, as it has contributed to dividing families rather than promoting the development of the municipality, in view of the various land-related issues and conflicts that have emerged since the establishment and expansion of the plantations.

Keywords: Plantation expansion, land conflicts, territorial conflicts, PHP, Njombé-Penja municipality

Introduction

Land is the backdrop to almost all development dynamics. Indeed, land serves not only as the foundation for all human activities but also as a link between the living and the dead. In all peasant cultures, the relationship between people and the land is of paramount importance. However, the development of the market economy has given land a market value that first took hold in European societies, then gradually spread to African countries, initially through the slave trade and later through colonization. Thus, land allocation, its use, its sale, its purchase, and its taxation have become significant issues. In recent years, land-related conflicts have been observed in the Njombé-Penja district. Certain land-use practices (establishment of agribusinesses) and land use patterns (among different actors) lead to conflicts between agribusinesses and the surrounding communities, between communities themselves on the remaining land around agribusinesses, and between communities and the state. These conflicts can even escalate into territorial disputes. The objective of this study is to demonstrate how the expansion of PHP's plantations generates numerous land conflicts, including territorial disputes. The theoretical approach underlying this study is based on the dynamic socio-spatial interactions that contribute to understanding the evolution and expansion of PHP's plantations, in order to better analyze the visible conflicts. This reflection gives rise to thematic trends that organize our work around the factors of conflict (1), the typology of land conflicts observed around the plantation perimeters (2), and visible territorial conflicts (3).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical approach on which this study is based is based on theSpatial Modeling and Resource Access Theory, developed by Ribot and Peluso (2003). Spatial modeling, often carried out using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), allows for the visualization and analysis of land conflict dynamics around plantation boundaries and even beyond, encompassing territorial conflicts. Resource access theory, developed by Ribot and Peluso (2003), provides an analytical framework for understanding the mechanisms through which various actors, such as agribusinesses, local communities, and public authorities, access, control, and exploit land and natural resources. Unlike an approach focused solely on property rights, this theory explores access as an actor's capacity to benefit from a resource.

1. The spatial framework of the study

Located in western Cameroon between 4.5° and 4.0° North latitude and 9.6° and 9.8° East longitude, the Moungo region stretches from the coastal lowlands of Bas-Moungo to the slopes of the Melong Plateau, encompassing the volcanic peaks of Mount Koupé, Mount Nlonako, and Mount Manengouba. It includes several districts, notably Njombé-Penja, the administrative capital of the district. It is bordered to the north by Loum, to the east by Nkam, to the south by Njombe, and to the west by Tombel. It covers an

area of 3,200 km². Its terrain is rugged, with an average altitude ranging from 200 to 250 meters, and it is almost entirely connected to the western mountain range, particularly Mount Koupé near Loum. The region is inhabited by a diverse population whose economy is primarily based on agriculture. The area has approximately 30,000 inhabitants, spread across the city's neighborhoods and the Bouba Mission district. Coexistence between the different ethnic groups is not always harmonious due to various conflicts, particularly land disputes, which create significant challenges. Figure 1 below better illustrates the boundaries of our study area:

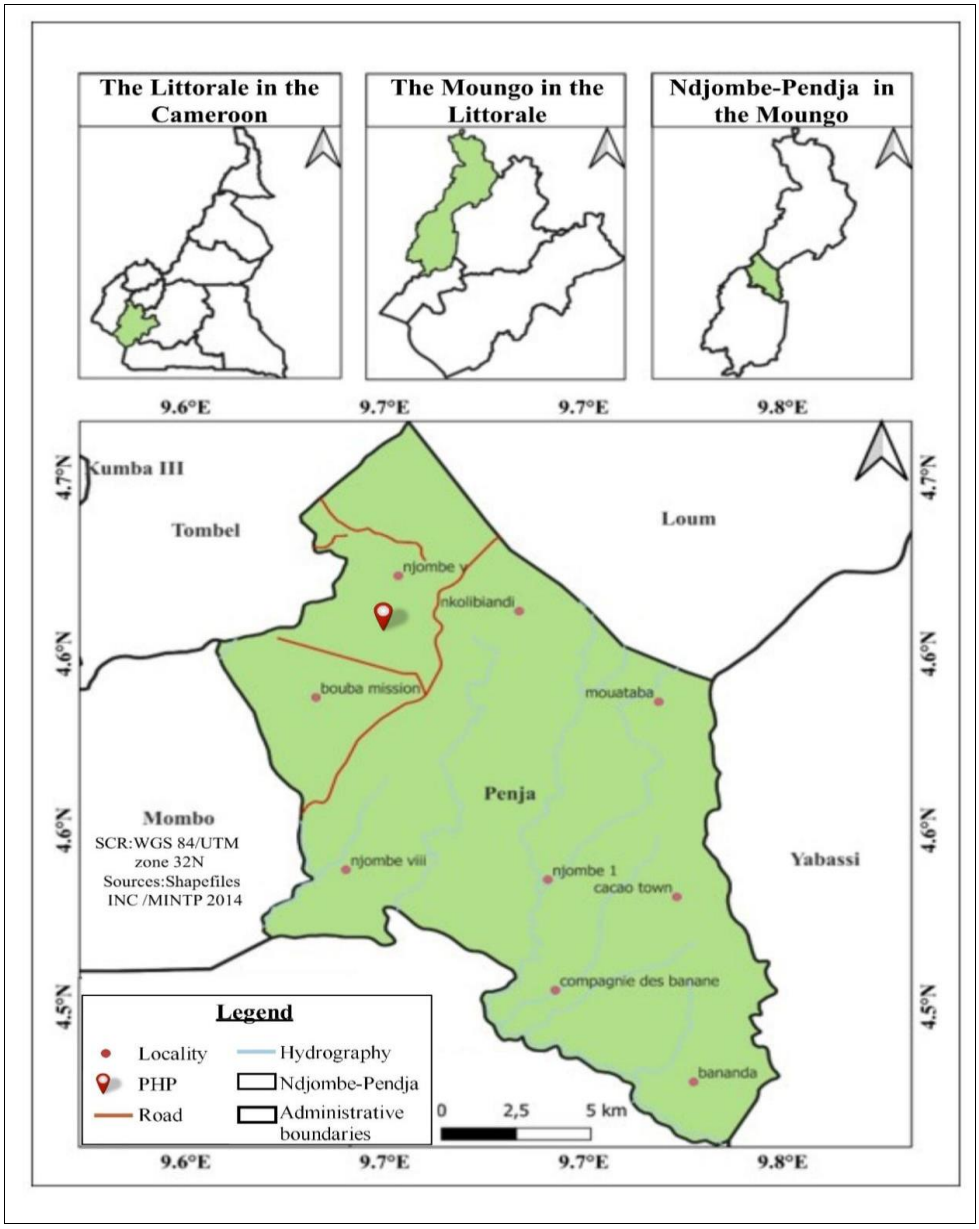


Fig 1: Location of the study area

2. Materials and methods

▪ Method

The fieldwork that enabled this research allowed for the implementation of classic scientific research models: the hypothetico-deductive and systemic approaches. The hypothetico-deductive approach stipulates that reasoning is applied based on one or more hypotheses. This approach moves from the general to the specific. It consists of formulating initial hypotheses about a given problem, verifying them throughout the work, and then confirming or refuting them at the end, after analyzing the results. This is the essence of the hypothetico-deductive approach. The systemic approach, on the other hand, is based on the analysis of the interactions within a system.

The literature review was initially conducted at the Ndjombé-Penja Town Hall, where we used data from the 2015 and 2018 Local Development Plans (PCD). We then consulted with direct stakeholders, such as PHP (the state-owned agricultural production company), local community groups, decentralized local authorities, and indirect stakeholders, including decentralized state services like the departmental delegation of the Ministry of State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure (MINDAF) and the Departmental Directorate for Agriculture, Rural Development and Rural Development (DADDER). This allowed us to better explore and analyze existing land disputes around the plantation areas and identify territorial conflicts. Through the libraries of the University of Yaoundé I and the University of Douala, we reviewed previous research on land issues and

environmental challenges surrounding PHP's plantation areas.

- **Materials**

The data used in this study consists of data from secondary sourceswhich provide documents (articles, dissertations, theses) consulted in specialized research laboratories dealing with the issue of agricultural land around large plantations in Cameroon and remote sensing data. Then primary data from direct observations, interviews with resource persons including twelve (12), focus groups (06), as well as questionnaires (210) administered to households living near the PHP.

3. Treatment

THEThe quantitative survey data will be analyzed and entered using CSPro 3.3 software and converted directly to SPSS formats. CSPro (Census and Survey Processing System) is a data entry software for censuses and surveys. Once these images were downloaded, Landsat Tool software was used to generate the formulas necessary for processing in ENVI 5. ENVI 5 software was used for the actual image processing to assess the evolution of vegetation cover in Nkongsamba from 1960 to 2020, and ArcGIS 10.8 software was used for creating the map layouts.

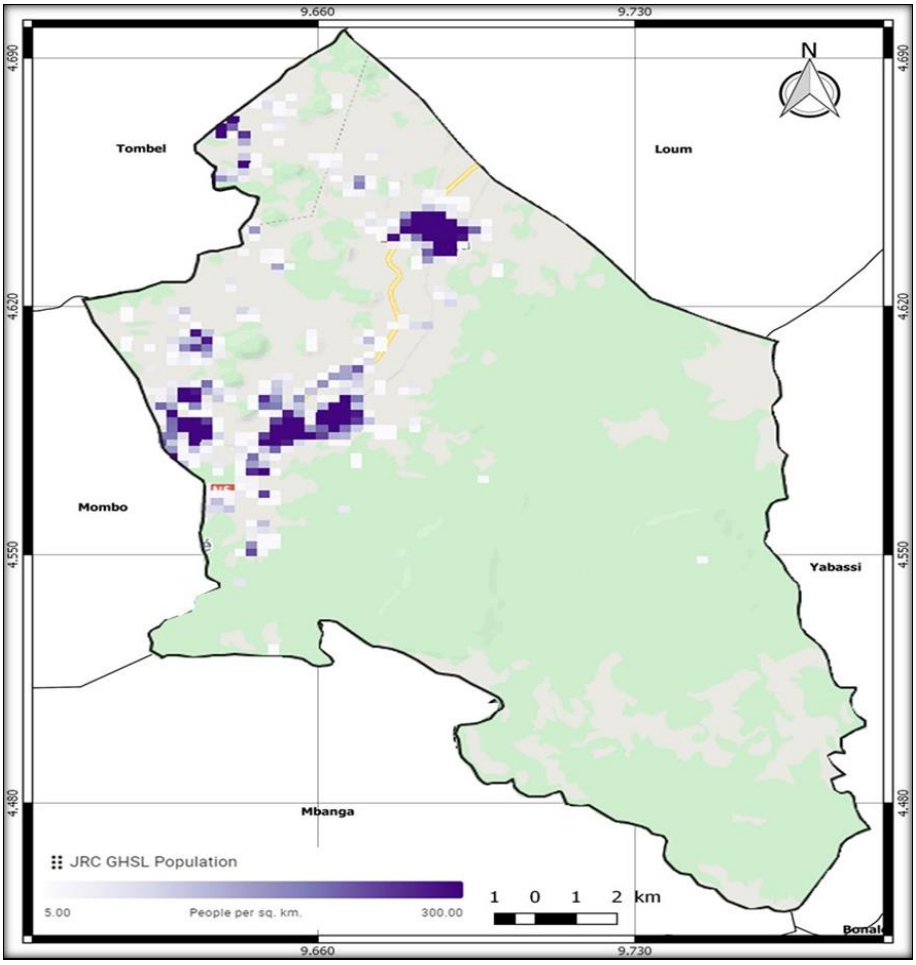
Main results and discussion

Factors contributing to land conflicts around the large plantations of Njombé-Penja

In Cameroon, state-owned land is a source of numerous land disputes between users, who consider themselves owners, and the State, the managing authority with the power to grant various commercial rights over these areas, including the power to assign property rights, either to itself or to third parties. The reasons for these land conflicts are manifold. The areas now cultivated by large plantations were once vast stretches of fallow land farmed by local populations. Indeed, the agricultural investments observed in this municipality have contributed to increased pressure on the land and paved the way for all kinds of land conflicts.

Exponential population growth in the villages.

Demographics have influenced land practices in the Njombé-Penja district through population growth and its corollaries: the expansion of cultivated areas and the resulting demographic pressure on land. Indeed, figures show that between 1973 and 2021, this municipality experienced considerable population growth (Figure 2).



Source: Projections and field investigations 2026

Fig 2: Evolution of the population of Njombé-Penja between 1973 and 2021

The high population density observed in the Moungo region in general has made access to land even more difficult for the indigenous population. As a result, many areas previously underutilized by local communities have been acquired by outsiders, who have developed them and obtained land titles.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that population growth in the areas where these plantations are located is difficult to predict, and the arrival of numerous workers and their families constitutes an additional factor increasing pressure on the land, exposing the regions in question to the risk of serious localized conflicts, the proliferation of which could be a source of instability at the national level in the years to come. Field data have also shown that these populations present in Njombé-Penja are not exclusively Cameroonians (Table 1).

Table 1: Nationality of respondents in Njombé-Penja

		Nationality			Total
		Cameroonians	Central African	Chadians	
Neighborhood	Bonandam	15	1	1	17
	Bouba 1	42	0	3	45
	Bouba 2	23	0	3	26
	Bouba Mission	59	2	6	67
	Mbomé	7	1	0	8
	Mouatchom	28	0	4	32
	Moutaba	13	0	1	14
Total		187	4	18	209

Source : field surveys

Upon reviewing this table, it becomes clear that the population growth in Njombé is also linked to its cosmopolitan nature. Firstly, field data shows that in addition to Cameroonians, who represent nearly 90% of respondents, Chadians (8% of respondents) and Central Africans (2% of respondents) were also found. This undoubtedly demonstrates that the presence of these plantations is a powerful draw for people seeking better living conditions. Regarding the Cameroonians specifically, it should be noted that we encountered populations belonging to diverse ethnic groups in the study area. They are predominantly Bamileke, Beti, Sawa, and others (Table 2).

Table 2: Ethnic groups of respondents in Njombé-Penja

		Ethnic groups				Total
		Bamiléké	Beti	Sawa	Others	
Neighborhood	Bonandam	9	2	2	2	15
	Bouba 1	24	6	12	0	42
	Bouba 2	10	7	6	0	23
	Bouba Mission	30	15	10	4	59
	Mbomé	3	2	2	0	7
	Mouatchom	15	3	9	1	28
	Moutaba	8	2	2	1	13
Total		99	37	43	8	187

Source : 2025 Field Survey

Several ethnic groups are represented around the large plantations of Njombé-Penja. It should be noted that the Bamileke from the Western region alone account for 52.95% of those surveyed. How could it have been otherwise? This group, due to their dynamism, has always been considered a veritable influx of newcomers. Besides the Bamileke, there were also Sawa (22.9% of respondents) from the Littoral region, Beti (19.78% of respondents) from the Central region, and a few from other regions. In any case, the reasons for settling there are varied for each group. These reasons are modeled in Figure 3 below :

Summary of observations

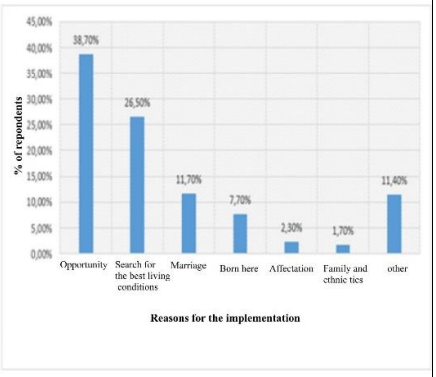
	Observations :					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N :	Percentage :	N :	Percentage :	N :	Percentage :
Implementation reasons	209	100,0%	0	0,0%	209	100,0%

a. Group of dichotomies tabulated at the value 1.

Reasons for implementation frequencies

		Answers		Percentage for observation
		N :	Percentage :	
Reasons for the implementation in the area	Family and ethnic ties	6	1,7%	2,9%
	Search for the best living conditions	93	26,5%	44,5%
	Opportunity	136	38,7%	65,1%
	Marriage	41	11,7%	19,6%
	Affectation	8	2,3%	3,8%
	Born here	27	7,7%	12,9%
	other	40	11,4%	19,1%
Total		351	100,0%	167,9%

a. Group of dichotomies tabulated at the value 1.



Source: 2025 Field Survey

Fig 3: Pattern of settlement in the village

Upon examining this figure, we observe that, regarding the reasons for choosing villages to settle near large plantations, 38.7% of respondents believe that the presence of these plantations offers numerous job opportunities. Faced with rising unemployment, these populations simply seized the opportunities available to them. Alongside them, 26.5% of respondents believe they ended up there in search of better living conditions. This is another reason that suggests the proximity of large plantations has significantly impacted the socio-economic environment of Njombé-Penja. For others, 7.7% of respondents, Njombé-Penja is their birthplace, unlike 11.7% of respondents, mostly women, who justify

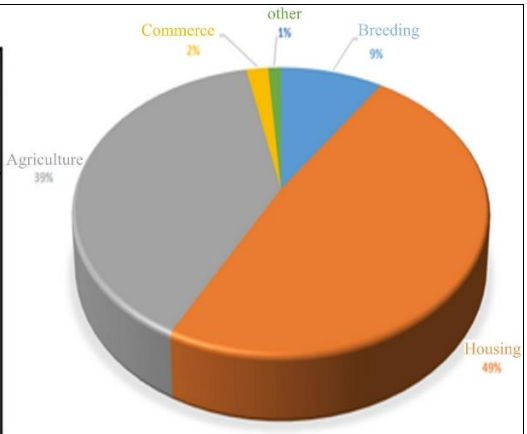
their presence by their marriage and the settlement of their husbands.

A growing awareness among villagers of the importance of land.

For a long time, according to statements recorded in the field, land has never received so much attention in the commune of Njombé-Penja. Indeed, with the gradual emergence of large plantations occupying vast areas of arable land, the population is beginning to realize the importance of land for their own activities. This awareness is triggered by the reduction of arable land. Yet, for these respondents, land is the foundation of several activities (Figure 4).

		Answers		Percentage for observation
		N :	Percentage :	
Development of plots	Breeding	40	46,96	19,10%
	Housing	209	37,97	100,00%
	Agriculture	169	8,98	80,90%
	Commerce	17	3,82	4,06%
	other	10	2,24	2,39%
Total		418	100,00%	200,00%

a. Group of dichotomies tabulated at the value 1.



Source: Field Survey 205

Fig 4: Land development in Njombé-Penja

Around the large plantations of Njombé Penja, land is primarily used for housing (49% of observations). People are therefore settled in the vicinity of these large plantations. 39% of respondents also practice agriculture, 9% raise livestock, and 2% are involved in trade. Given all these land-related issues, the population, faced with land scarcity, is increasingly at the heart of conflicts of all kinds. The large plantations consume vast amounts of land, and land reserves are gradually dwindling.

Relative ignorance of communities

In general, this study, like those that preceded it, highlights the opacity surrounding land management in Cameroon. It questions the legal framework surrounding the allocation of land and mining concessions and analyzes the conflicts that arise around these operations due to the communities' lack of information regarding the contractual clauses binding these companies to the State. Based on the information gathered in the field, we believe that the vast majority of the population's lack of information explains certain aspects of the land conflicts recorded around these large plantations. Furthermore, the average level of education among respondents in Njombé-Penja (Table 3) is predominantly secondary.

Table 3 : Education level of respondents

		Education level			Total
		Primary	Secondary	Superior	
Neighborhood	Bonandam	3	13	1	17
	Bouba 1	12	33	0	45
	Bouba 2	13	13	0	26
	Bouba Mission	21	39	7	67
	Mbomé	3	5	0	8
	Mouatchom	9	23	0	32
	Moutaba	4	10	0	14
Total		65	136	8	209

Source : 2025 Field Survey

As can be clearly seen in this table, the surveyed population in Njombé Penja has an average secondary education level (136 respondents, or 65%). In addition to those with a primary education level (65 respondents, or 31.1%), over 96% of respondents have a lower level of education, ranging from primary to secondary. Given the relative complexity of land laws in Cameroon, we can say that this average level of education does not truly allow these respondents to fully grasp the intricacies of the laws in force in their villages. Only 4% of respondents have attained a higher level of education.

Further analysis reveals that some of the conflicts observed between local communities and the developers of these large plantations stem from a lack of information. For example, these communities believe the large plantations are established entirely illegally, given that their land is being progressively taken for these plantations. This is not the case for communities with higher levels of education, who have a better understanding of the legal principles surrounding the establishment of these plantations. It is therefore unsurprising that even on the ground, opinions on the land issues encountered vary (Table 4).

Table 4: Problem encountered on the plot according to the level of instruction

		Problem encountered ?		Total
		No	Yes	
Education level	Primary	0	65	65
	Secondary	23	113	136
	Superior	8	0	8
Total		31	178	209

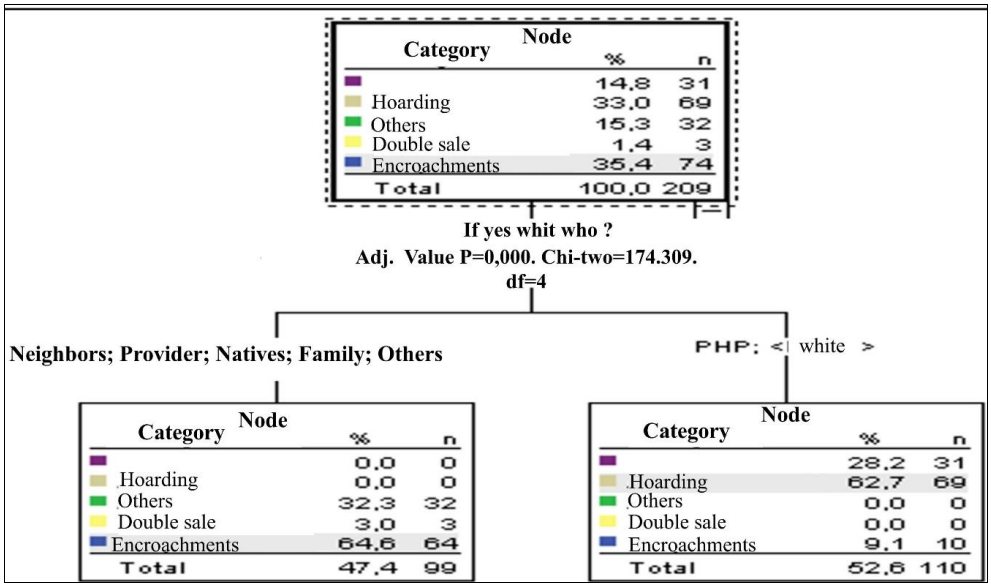
Source : 2025 Field Survey

As expected, nearly 85% of respondents reported having encountered problems on their land at least once. However, as mentioned earlier, these problems are almost exclusively found among those with secondary or lower levels of

education. Those who reported never having experienced any issues were precisely those with higher levels of education and therefore knew how to prevent potential problems on their land. Among other measures, obtaining a land title for the plot is one example.

Typology of land conflicts surrounding the perimeters of industrial plantations

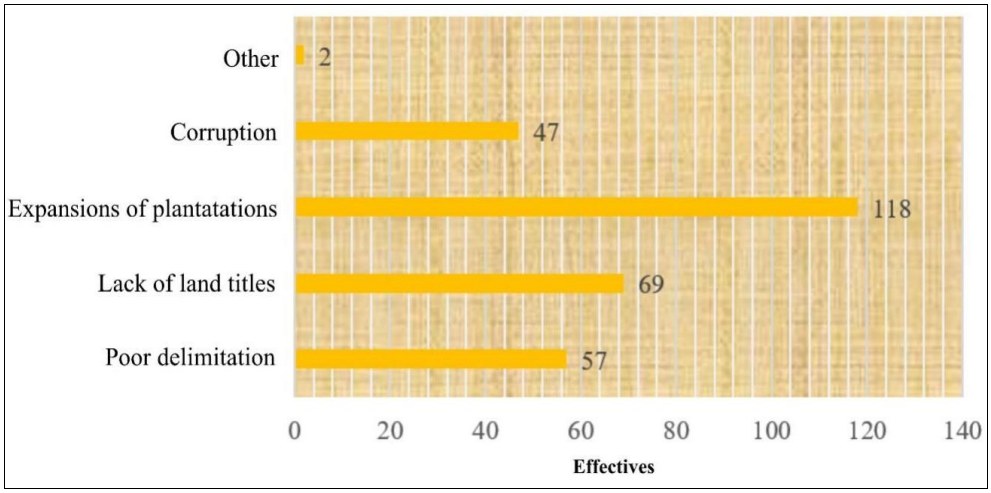
The expansion of PHP's plantations has led to numerous land disputes observed around the perimeters of these large plantations. In Njombé-Penja, conflicts occur at several levels, both internal (indigenous communities) and external (population-state, including agribusinesses). Figure 5 below provides a simplified overview of these land disputes in Njombé-Penja.



Source: 2025 Field Survey

Fig 5: Nature of land-related problems

Based on this model, the first observation that emerges is that land disputes depend on the actor involved. Indeed, it can be seen that, in 64% of cases involving neighbors, land providers, family members, and others, the problem arises in terms of encroachment. 32% of cases relate to other issues such as inheritance misappropriation, hostility towards local communities, and other related problems. However, simply hearing the word "PHP" (Plant Production and Production) led 69% of respondents to believe that this agribusiness is appropriating their land daily. These land disputes stem from various sources and hinder the region's development and food self-sufficiency. Figure 6 below highlights the main causes of land conflicts observed around the perimeters of large plantations.



Source: Field survey, August 2025

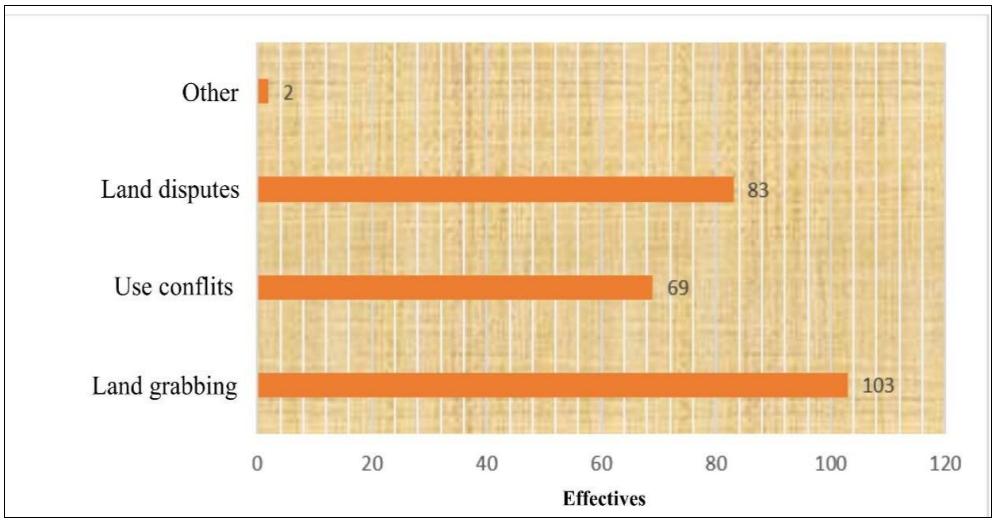
Fig 6: Main causes of land conflicts around the perimeters of large plantations

Analyzing the data in the figure above, we observe that the primary cause of land conflicts surrounding large plantations is the expansion of these plantations themselves. Indeed, the expansion of PHP's plantations dispossesses the local populations who own the plots. According to nearly 72% of the surveyed population, the local populations—specifically those working on PHP's plantations—are the source of these conflicts. They claim that they are the ones who relay information within PHP about areas or villages that still have accessible land. PHP then bribes these individuals, who in turn bribe their own people. It is important to note that the quid pro quo for such an offer is integration as a temporary worker within the company and the payment of a land royalty proportional to the area ceded.

"After the land transfers, PHP resorts to force and intimidation and no longer honors its commitments, despite the existence of written evidence," asserts one resident.

Conflicts between PHP and local populations

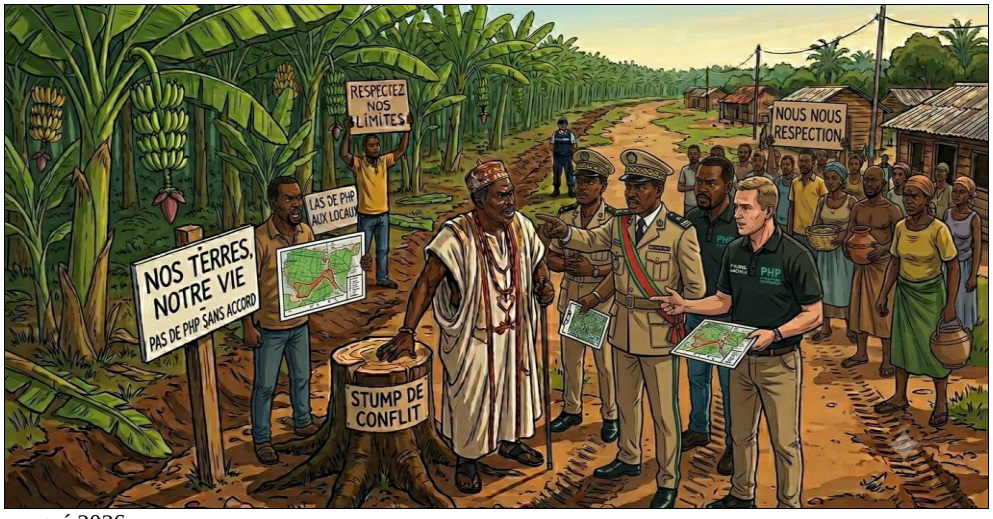
Since the establishment of agribusinesses in the Njombe-Penja district, local communities have complained about the lack of fertile land, and what little remains is subject to various conflicts. Land grabbing has been a long-standing problem for the people of this district, as confirmed by traditional and local authorities, elites, and the general population. Since the food and financial crises of 1929 and 2008 in Cameroon, land grabbing has become widespread. Land grabbing has become widespread today, exacerbated by the food and financial crisis of 2007/2008. A new land rush is underway worldwide, leading to a proliferation of land grabbing situations. Land pressure has become particularly intense in the Moungo region due to the observed land rush. This department, covering an area of 3,723 km², is an agricultural zone with fertile land. The large area of land occupied by PHP (26,000 hectares) is causing numerous conflicts with local communities. Figure 7 below illustrates the nature of these land conflicts between local communities and PHP in Njombé-Penja.



Source: Field survey, August 2025

Fig 7: Nature of land conflicts between PHP and local populations around the perimeters of large plantations

Observing the data in the figure above, it is clear that most land conflicts involve land grabbing. Indeed, the local population identifies land grabbing as the primary source of conflict around the perimeters of large plantations. Following land grabbing, conflicts over land use are the second most common, followed by disputes over plot boundaries. It should be noted that these conflicts over land use stem from persistent and complex tensions involving local communities, the PHP (Public-Private Partnership), and the State, which the population considers the main instigator of the conflict. According to nearly 66% of those surveyed, the State is the source of the land problems faced by the Njombé-Penja commune. They assert that since the establishment of the OCB (Office of the Community of Benin), the State has forced them to relinquish their plots through false promises of land royalties and benefits they would receive from the proceeds of plantation products after the sale. Figure 8 below illustrates a land conflict situation related to boundary violations involving the PHP and the local populations.



Source: Ndzana Essengué 2026

Fig 8: Land conflict situation in Bouba-Mission

Figure 8 above illustrates a land dispute in the village of Bouba-Mission. The residents are desperate, claiming that PHP has encroached on their land. They argue that Bouba-Mission is no longer in the Moungo region, but in the

southwest, specifically in the Tombel district, where PHP has forcibly entered with the complicity of some neighboring communities and local authorities to seize the land. Nearly 34% of those surveyed consider their grievances legitimate, and they also demand that the agribusiness respect territorial boundaries, while recalling, as can be read on...

THE land disputes betweenpopulations and state

Land disputes between local communities in the Commune of [Name of Commune] and the Cameroonian state are fueled by disagreements over land acquisition, the lack of consultation with communities during the granting of leases, resulting in environmental and social impacts, and the inequitable distribution of benefits. The communities denounce expropriations carried out for the benefit of PHP (Public Plantation Company), often without prior consultation, depriving them of land essential to their livelihoods. Furthermore, they accuse the state of also being responsible for land grabs observed around the expansion of plantations, without any compensation.

Intra-family conflicts arising from the expansion of PHP plantations

The intra-family land disputes observed in the commune of Njombé-Penja arose following the expansion of large plantations. These conflicts are often marked by tensions related to inheritance, the distribution of family land, and contested sales. The lack of official land titles exacerbates the situation, making it difficult to legally identify owners. In many cases, disputes erupt after the death of a relative, when several heirs claim the same plots without a clear division having been established. Younger generations also come into conflict with their elders, particularly when the latter refuse to relinquish part of the family estate, thus fueling protracted quarrels. Another recurring problem is the sale of land without consulting other family members, which sometimes leads to confrontations. Furthermore, there is the issue of land grabbing by certain family members.

Conflicts between indigenous populations and landowners

Land conflicts among indigenous peoples illustrate a dynamic where tensions are not limited to oppositions between communities and agribusinesses, but are also deeply rooted within families and lineages. These conflictsare diverse and include in particulardouble sales of plots of land without the consent of the rights holders, land scams, where individuals deceive others about land ownership or value, Encroachments where neighbors redraw boundaries to their advantage, boundary disputes, and the misappropriation of inheritances by family members. Added to this is land grabbing, sometimes perpetrated by influential figures from the same community.

Inter-community conflicts

Growing land disputes surrounding large plantations in the Njombé-Penja commune have profoundly altered local land dynamics, leading to tensions within communities. Among the most significant intra-community conflicts, inheritance disputes are central. The establishment and expansion of agro-industrial plantations have increased land values, exacerbating inheritance disputes and fraudulent practices aimed at appropriating plots intended for rightful heirs.

This is how, in certain villages such as Mbalbong and Mouataba, inheritance disputes manifest themselves in various forms. Influential members of families or clans use their power to seize land without respecting customary inheritance laws. Figure 9 below illustrates the main land conflicts surrounding the perimeters of large industrial plantations in the Njombé-Penja commune.

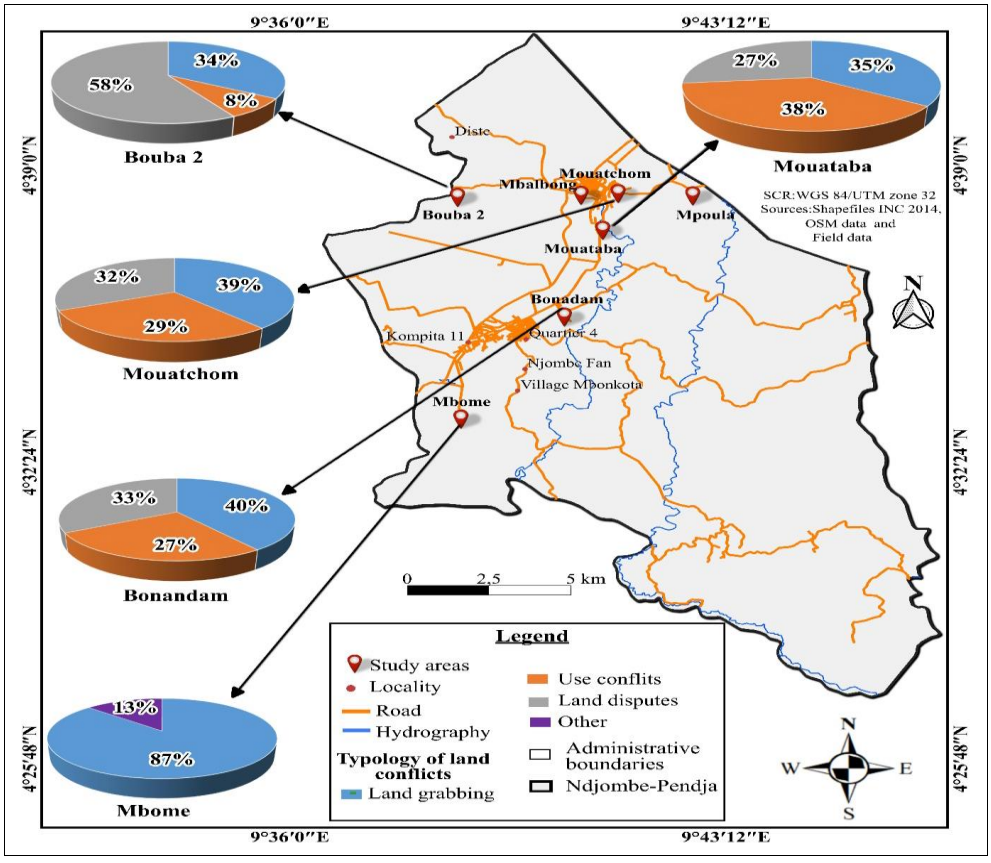


Fig 9: Main land conflicts present around the perimeters of large plantations in Njombé-Penja

Beyond inter-family and intra-family conflicts, and many others observed around the perimeters of large plantations, the most recurrent land disputes are land grabs, which are particularly prevalent in the villages of Mbomé, Mouatba, Bonandan, and Mouatchom. Conflicts over land use are also significant in the villages of Boanandam, Mouataba, and Mouatchom, and are minimal or almost nonexistent in the villages of Mbomé and Bouba 2. Conversely, more land disputes are observed in the villages of Bouba 2, Mouatchom, Mouataba, and Bonandam, and none in Mbomé. This clearly demonstrates that the Njombé-Penja commune faces significant land-related challenges that exacerbate land-related problems in this large agricultural region. Figure 10 below highlights the intensity of conflicts around perimeters in industrial plantations.the signs reading "our land, our life, no PHP without agreement".

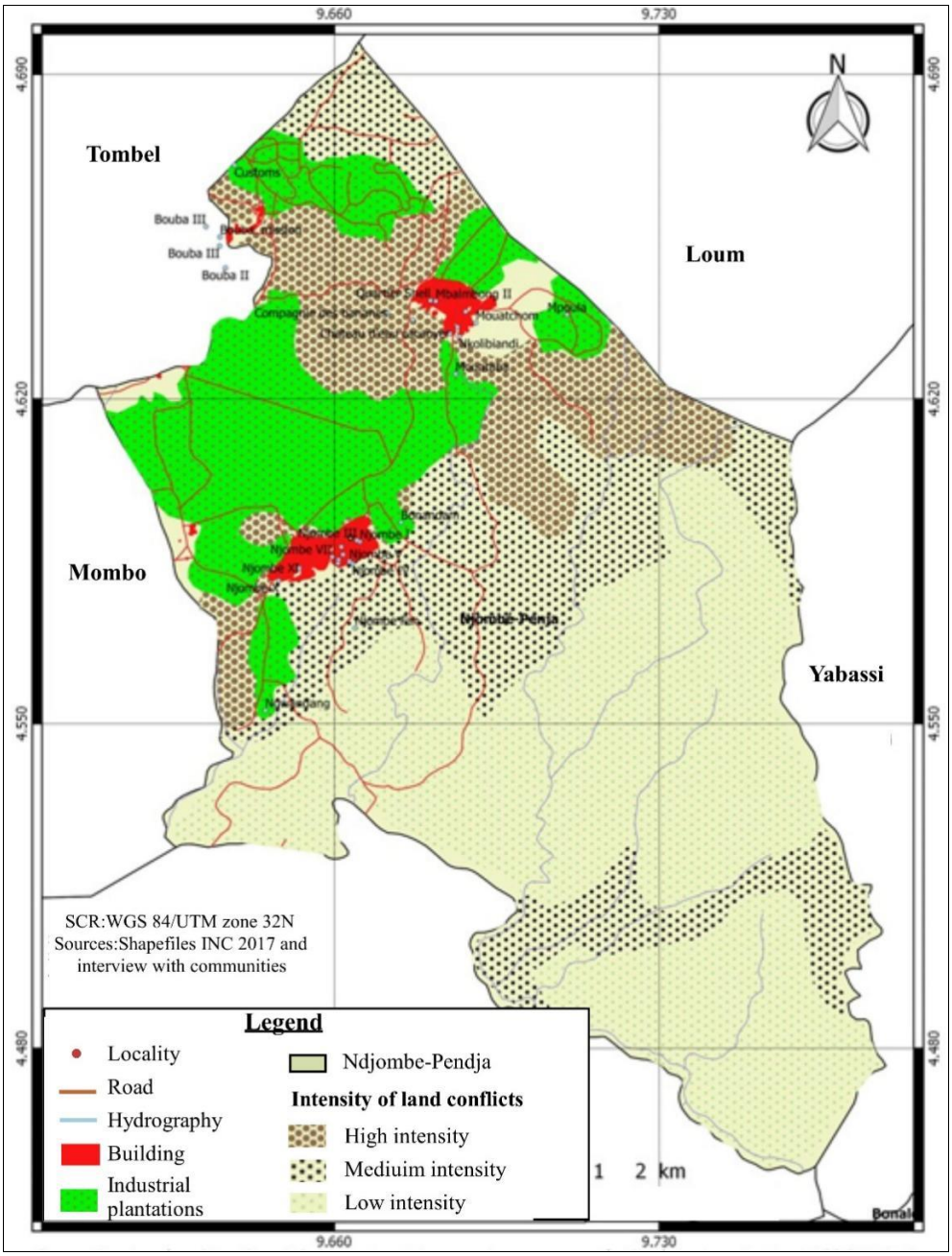


Fig 10: Intensity of land conflicts around the perimeters of industrial plantations

Observing the data in the figure above, it is clear that land conflicts are concentrated around the perimeters of large plantations and even extend beyond their boundaries. These conflicts are particularly pronounced in villages such as Bouba 1, 2, and Bouba Mission, which border both the Southwest and Moungo regions. Local residents report encroachment and land grabbing by PHP, which has exceeded its territorial limits. Furthermore, conflicts are of medium intensity in villages such as Mouataba, Mouatchom, and Mbomè, where PHP occupies 70% of the land. Most of these conflicts involve encroachment and PHP's failure to comply with its terms of reference or commitments regarding the payment of land royalties. Finally, the areas where land conflicts are of low intensity are Njombé-Penja and Bonandan. The low intensity of land conflicts in these areas is linked to the fact that these two villages alone concentrate the majority of the local influential elite. According to the residents, they have secured over 65% of the land, while the PHP (Penjamin Plantation Company) only occupies 15% of the land in these

villages. These land conflicts have led to the displacement of a significant portion of the population who, having lost their land, have been forced to leave their villages to either neighboring communes or villages, or to the economic capital, Douala, located 80 km from Njombé-Penja. Furthermore, the intensity of land conflicts also stems from the loss of cultural identity for local communities, who are losing their sense of identity because they are excluded from their own land. This is the case for villages like Mpoula, Mbomè, and many others, which have lost their sense of identity due to the expansion of plantations. Hence the question: can we live without the land, the foundation of our existence?

Territorial conflicts

PHP's expansion beyond its well-known "natural boundaries"—namely Njombé-Penja, Mandjo, Loum, and Mbanga, located in the Mounga department—has given rise to new forms of land conflict. These are territorial disputes that arise after the company decides to expand its operating areas. Land issues are growing in the Mounga department due to the alarming cries of local populations expressing their frustration with PHP's land pressures and, moreover, its failure to comply with the terms of its agreement. The discovery of fertile land near the agro-industrial sites is pushing the company to deploy other mechanisms to acquire more land. Thus, the company, established in Mounga and bordering the Southwest region, is acquiring significant areas of land in Tombel. Information gathered during our field investigations indicates that PHP now owns significant areas of land in the villages of "Bouba Mission" and "Bouba 1," which are located within the territory of the Tombel commune. However, according to the authorities of the Njombé-Penja commune, these villages belong to the Njombé-Penja commune. Furthermore, local residents claim that PHP has occupied over 1,200 hectares since 2010, cultivating crops such as white pepper and bananas. Nearby are rubber plantations owned by the CDC, which also claims ownership of the land currently occupied by PHP within its territory. Figure 11 above illustrates the land disputes in the communes of Njombé-Penja and Tombel.

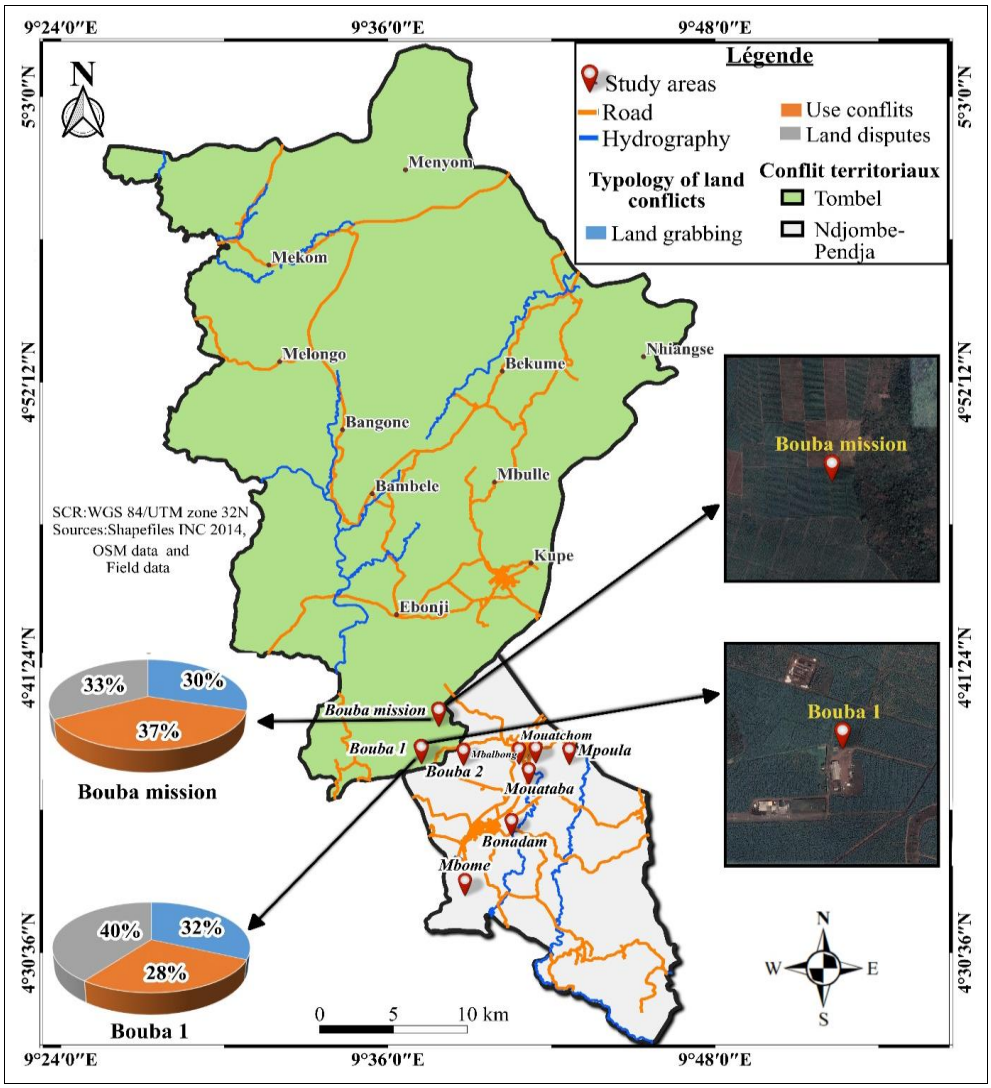


Fig 11: Illustration of territorial conflicts in the study area

When examining the data in the figure above, it becomes clear that territorial conflicts are rampant in the area. Beyond these territorial disputes, other types of conflicts exist, including land grabbing, land-use conflicts, and land disputes, which, according to nearly 25% of respondents, have arisen since the establishment of PHP. These respondents justify their stance by stating that these forms and types of conflict did not exist before, even after, the

local population ceded some of their land to CDC. This increasingly problematic situation, given the growing land stakes around the perimeters of large plantations and the arrival of new landowners, prompts reflection. This could trigger further problems, even divisions, that will be difficult to manage if nothing is done to reduce conflicts. To address this, the local population proposes various solutions.

Discussion

The result (1) of this study highlights the factors contributing to land conflicts around the perimeters of large plantations in Njombé-Penja. The analysis reveals that the exponential population growth around these plantations, the expansion of the plantations themselves, the increasing knowledge and awareness of land tenure among local communities, and their relative ignorance explain the presence of land and territorial conflicts in Njombé-Penja. This also supports the idea of Nnomenko'o (2020) [9], who provides an in-depth analysis of customary and modern land practices developed around industrial plantation perimeters, highlighting their consequences on local social and economic dynamics. Customary practices, based on ancestral traditions, are often marginalized in the land concession processes for agribusinesses, which exacerbates pre-existing tensions. Ngoa (2012) [3] highlights that in certain regions, such as Njombé-Penja, resistance also relies on strategies of civil disobedience, like refusing to leave the land or mobilizing around traditional customs and rituals to assert land rights. However, these strategies often face major legal, economic, and political obstacles, as they conflict with development projects supported by the state and private companies. Ebéné and Mouelle (2023) analyze indirect exploitation practices, where agribusinesses temporarily cede plots of land to local producers but retain strict control over essential resources, such as access to water or agricultural inputs. These practices allow for land use for local production while maintaining agribusinesses' dominance over the generated income and the agricultural value chain. However, these arrangements generate significant conflicts, notably a blatant inequality in the distribution of economic benefits, where local producers are often underpaid compared to the profits of agribusinesses. The results describe the typology of land conflicts observed around the perimeters of large plantations. Several categories of land conflict emerge. These include, among others, conflicts between PHP (Plant Production and Production) and local communities, conflicts between communities and decision-makers, inter-family conflicts, and many others. In response to this situation, Mfeuwou and Hassan (2024) had already highlighted the informal practices of land negotiation and sharing between agribusinesses and local communities, where land is allocated or shared through unwritten agreements or social arrangements based on trust or local traditions. Although these practices sometimes allow for temporary coexistence between the parties, they become problematic in the absence of clear legal guarantees. The resulting conflicts include disputes related to uncertainty over land use rights, where local communities feel vulnerable to reinterpretations or challenges to initial agreements. This view is shared by Tatchouang (2003), who notes that land policies often favoring large agribusinesses lead to a disconnect from the needs of local communities, thus exacerbating tensions. Conversely, civil society organizations, such as those mentioned by Tatchouang (2003), strongly condemn land grabbing by large corporations and advocate for greater recognition of the rights of local communities. Result (3) highlights the territorial conflicts visible in the commune of Njombé-Penja. It emerges that these territorial conflicts arise from PHP's desire to expand its agricultural land holdings. This creates tension between PHP and the communities of Njombé-Penja and Tombel. Nguiffo and Djeukam (2002) [7] already noted that this land-use tension, which pits the needs of local communities against the objectives of industrial plantations, generates legal conflicts that document protracted disputes concerning the validity of land titles or the delimitation of concessions. Furthermore, some of these tensions have escalated into violence, creating a climate of fear and instability, as reported by several authors, including Nguiffo and Djeukam (2002) [7]. The literature also highlights the diversity of actors involved in these land conflicts. Nguiffo and Djeukam (2002) [7] analyze the ambiguous role of public authorities, who oscillate between supporting industrial investments and regulating conflicts. It emerges that these territorial conflicts stem from PHP's desire to expand its agricultural land. This creates tension between PHP and the communities of Njombé-Penja and Tombel. 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Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyze the land and territorial conflicts observed surrounding the expansion of PHP's plantations in Njombé-Penja. It emerged that several factors, including exponential population growth around the perimeters of the large plantations, the expansion of the plantations themselves, the increasing knowledge and awareness of land issues among local communities, and the relative ignorance of these communities, explain the presence of land and territorial conflicts in Njombé-Penja. Conflicts of use were observed between local populations

and PHP, conflicts between populations themselves, intra-family disputes, inter-community disputes, and even inter-family disputes within the commune. These growing land disputes are the result of land-related issues arising from competition for access to land around the large industrial plantations, which pits the various stakeholders against each other. Further afield, the expansion of PHP's plantations is generating not only land disputes but also territorial conflicts between two communities—the Southwest and Moungo communities—and two agribusinesses—PHP and CDC. PHP is now encroaching on CDC's land, specifically in the villages of Bouba 1 and Bouba 2, which belong to the Tombel commune in Southwest Cameroon.

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