



SESSION ABSTRACT

Hunter-Gatherer Resilience

Organizer: Jean-Pierre Nguede Ngonu (University of Maroua)

E-Mail Address: nnguede@gmail.com

Abstract: Hunter-gatherers give the concepts of space, temporality and mobility a particular meaning (Nguede, 2009). However, in recent decades, their environment has undergone a radical transformation: intense exploitation of timber, creation of protected areas, implementation of mining projects, opening of numerous forest roads, intensive hunting or development of export agriculture. The ecological balance is deeply disturbed, and sometimes broken. According to Froment (2012), this situation is intensified by the political crisis and the disengagement of the nation state. Hunter-gatherers suffer the repercussions and watch helplessly as their most vital resources disappear. This is particularly distressing in landlocked and isolated areas, mainly where groups of villagers live who find themselves excluded from development while seeing the inequalities between them worsen. What is resilience for hunter-gatherers? What are their capacities to bounce back to build a new life in a context where modernity calls into question their economic and social organization based on the principle of redistribution and solidarity? This session looks at the socio-environmental mutations of hunter-gatherers, becoming farmers, wage-earners and soon city-dwellers. There is a relative urgency to study these phenomena before the leveling linked to globalization erases the specificities of these societies, which represents an important heritage from the cultural point of view. The notion of resilience, stemming from clinical psychology, and here applied to anthropology, is an approach to the cultural adaptability of these vulnerable peoples. The session questions the capabilities of hunters to cope with mutations, using the tools of anthropology. The resilience of hunter-gatherers extends to their emancipation, that is to say their awareness of the transformations that their living space is undergoing by adapting to this new context that is the Anthropocene (Descola, 2011) and the emerging ontologies demanded by globalization. By responding to the new fractures and weaknesses of these societies in a context of accelerated spread of crises (socio-environmental), as well as according to the themes of intervention (agriculture, environment, education, etc.). This session focused on hunter-gatherers puts research from various backgrounds into perspective.

Keys words: hunter-gatherer, resiliency, vulnerability, ecological balance

SESSION SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 28, 2022 | Slot 2 | Room 3

Eric Stephane Mvaeberne: The voting rights of indigenous peoples. The cases of the hunter-gatherers of Abong-Mbang in Cameroon

Karsten Legère: The bleak future of a Tanzanian HG community

Salomon ESSAGA ETEME: Health resilience among the Bagyeli Pygmies of the Ocean Division (South Cameroon): a complex adaptability to modern agro-industrial health care Centres

Nga Cécile Carine & Jean-Pierre Nguede Ngonu: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERWEAVING OF THE BAKA HUNTER-GATHERERS RESILIENCE IN SOUTH-EASTERN

Jean Baptiste Adaram: Summary on the Baka pygmies

Norbert Witt & Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt: Cultural Food and Food Sovereignty as Means for Survival – Can Canada's Indigenous Peoples Reach Food Security within a Culturally and Legally Different Environment?

SESSION PAPERS

The voting rights of indigenous peoples. The cases of the hunter-gatherers of Abong-Mbang in Cameroon

ERIC STEPHANE MVAEBEME

Voting in African states is a constitutionally protected right. This means that this right is highly protected. However, indigenous peoples are unable to exercise this fundamental right because they live on the margins of society. The hunter-gatherers of Abong-Mbang cannot vote because they do not have a birth certificate. This is the only way to obtain a national ID card with which one can become a voter. This means that they cannot participate in the vote because they have neither an identity card nor a voter's card. In addition, the body in charge of the elections accentuates their marginalisation by not approaching the hunter-gatherers

This is an opportunity to discuss the participation of indigenous peoples in the designation of the rulers in our societies.

The bleak future of a Tanzanian HG community

Karsten Legère

The conference paper deals with the situation of the small Akie HG group in Central Tanzania that was studied for ten years (2009-2019). The Akie are a Southern Nilotic community which has split off from Kenyan Okiek probably 200 years ago. The Akie are known to be guardians of a life in harmony with nature and their neighbourhood. Only a few Akie live and interact together in groups of their own in the periphery of villages (Kitwai A, Gitu, Chang'ombe), while others are scattered in a large area as individuals. The Akie groups are concerned of the loss of the territory that has

traditionally been theirs, where they have been foraging, hunting, collecting honey, scooping water, etc. The expansion of their neighbours and the influx of strangers have initiated among the Akie the painful, destructive process of being forced to change their life style. They don't have land rights that are guaranteed by local authorities, must pay a fee when honey collecting, can't hunt as usual, because poachers and hunting tourists kill game, and more. In the Akie neighbourhood pastoralists graze their cattle; virgin soil is turned by farmers into fields where.e.g. maize or beans are grown. The Akie are powerless, being overruled by ongoing changes that are not controlled and administered on their behalf. Earlier this year some Akie groups were victims of clashes and fighting between farmers and pastoralists. As a consequence the majority of them were hiding in places away from home. Meanwhile, the government has succeeded in getting the situation under control, but the Akie have not seen any improvement in their living conditions, for example in terms of land rights. Accordingly, the paper will illustrate the complicated problems outlined above.

Health resilience among the Bagyeli Pygmies of the Ocean Division (South Cameroon): a complex adaptability to modern agro-industrial health care Centres

Salomon ESSAGA ETEME

The Bagyeli Pygmies of the Ocean Division in the South Region of Cameroon are part of the group of indigenous peoples of Cameroon according to the International Labour organisation convention n°169. They are basically nomads, living from hunting, fishing and gathering. In addition to the sedentarisation policy conducted by the State of Cameroon since the 1960s, the Bagyeli camps in the Ocean Division, over the past two decades, have been invaded by agro-industrial plantations and forestry activities. Almost all land areas, including places of residence are occupied by these activities. The related regulations deprive them of their traditional therapies due to rigorous forest access restrictions. On the other hand, each of these companies, in its specifications, is responsible for building Health Centres to which the Bagyeli would have free medical attention. Nevertheless, the observation is that they do not visit these Health Centres enough, or almost not at all in some cases. The ethnographic interviews carried out with their communities and health professionals show that they are not comfortable frequenting these environments to be treated by health professionals with whom they do not identify themselves. Moreover, when the Bagyeli frequent mixed environments such as churches or schools, they are always stigmatized as dirty, slaves and subhuman by the Bantu. The imaginary they therefore have of these Health Centres is that of settings that are not made for them. However, they no longer have access to the forest and to traditional therapies, which makes their health resilience processes complex.

ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERWEAVING OF THE BAKA HUNTER-GATHERERS RESILIENCE IN SOUTH-EASTERN CAMEROON

Nga Cécile Carine, Jean-Pierre Nguede Ngonu

Putting into perspective certain ethnographic intertwining of resilience in ecologically vulnerable societies with the practices that are at the heart of shaping the construction experience is the theme of this article. I show how the concept of resilience applies among the Baka one of the three hunter-gatherer communities of Cameroon who lived

in the forest, today forced to settle on the edge so that they do not witness the human activity growing. The concept of resilience is traversed through observations in the village of Moangue, the transversal readings of the predecessors, then attention is drawn to the origin, the multidisciplinary use, the limits and the appropriation among the Baka. Some cultural mutations may appear on the surface without question a fundamental attachment to the forest and some ancestral values. However, different exogenous pressures (such as settlement, globalization) and endogenous (such as attitude of individuals, transmission) which determine the degree of progress of the various mutations should not be underestimated, as they are a threat to development. Traditionally, anthropological studies have always been conducted in uncharted territory with the idea of bringing something new, at heard of the research. It is in this logic that I subscribe in order to avoid bias, subjective apprehensions to leave room for the objectivity.

Summary on the Baka pygmies

Jean Baptiste Adaram

The Baka pygmies are an ethnic group inhabiting the rainforests of southeastern Cameroon, northern Republic of Congo, northern Gabon and southwestern Central African Republic. There are also pygmies in Rwanda, eastern DRC and Uganda.

From an anthropological point of view, pygmy designates the populations, often hunters/gatherers and living in the African equatorial forests, characterized by their small size, estimated between 1.20 m for the smallest and 1.50 m for the largest. Their small size may have been due to adaptation to the forest environment or simply to genetic drift.

These culturally rich groups of hunter-gatherer-fishermen are now facing increasing precariousness and their culture is under threat. These are explained by the anthropic pressure on the resources which, considered as a cultural heritage by these peoples. Industrialization, the proliferation of commercial initiatives, diseases, deforestation and forced sedentarization", are the causes of this threat. In this sense, JPN Ngonzo in his article "Resilience of the Baka of Cameroon: a contemporary challenge", shows the different problems faced by the Baka pygmies. Despite this difficult situation, the Baka pygmies develop and multiply a series of strategies to adapt to modernity. In his same article, JPN Ngonzo presents the endogenous (pygmies) and exogenous (Cameroonian government and NGOs) strategies put in place to deal with this situation.

Formerly nomads, today sedentary, the pygmies practice subsistence agriculture to ensure their vital needs. Not all these initiatives undertaken by the State and governmental and non-governmental organizations are bad. The observation of this fact leads us to wonder about the nature of the help given to the pygmies. Do these development actors really have the will to help them? If so, they must involve them in the development programs that concern them.

Cultural Food and Food Sovereignty as Means for Survival – Can Canada's Indigenous Peoples Reach Food Security within a Culturally and Legally Different Environment ?

Norbert Witt & Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt

Considering the co-author's Mushkegowuk-Cree heritage, this paper is presented like a story told by two voices, starting with the excerpt of a newspaper article on the

murder of two Metis hunters who tried to secure food for their family during the COVID-19 crisis. Though the definitions of the terms *food security* and *food sovereignty* are taken from *official* websites, the interpretations offered in the story base on Indigenous (Mushkegowuk) perspective and prepare the audience for a comparison of the western/mainstream narration of food sovereignty movements as struggle for social control in opposition to the neo-liberal/corporate food regime, and the Indigenous understanding of food being sacred. The possibility to consolidate the different worldviews in the struggle towards the same goal, *feeding the people*, is seen within the legal realm of the country, the treaties and how they are interpreted. Yet, there are problems in the equal application of the law, as cases involving non-Indigenous people as perpetrators and Indigenous people as victims show. Reconnecting to the beginning of the story, the narration ends with a conclusion that, while the laws (still in the making by Supreme Court decisions) would protect Indigenous people in their pursuit of gaining food sovereignty based on their values and their spiritual worldview, a still widespread colonial attitude towards Indigenous worldviews and law interpretation poses an obstacle that cannot yet be overcome.