Local Strategies of Conflict Resolution in Guinea-Bissau
A Project Proposal in Legal Anthropology

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Abstract

The proposal aims at looking into local strategies of conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau and their articulation with the respective legal systems of conflict resolution on a national and, possibly, international level. Furthermore, it seeks to find out the conditions under which local strategies of conflict resolution could possibly be integrated into the national legal system on a constitutional basis.

The proposal adopts an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, seeking, thereby, comparison with neighbouring countries in West-Africa. It furthermore intends to build up scientific cooperation and international networks of scientific research in order to improve academic training in Guinea-Bissau.

Over the last two decades, non-state political orders appeared on the political stage in Africa (McIntosh 1999). The proposal starts from the assumption that these orders have to cope with the "violence problem", as any kind of political order has, if it is to last. Modes of conflict resolution must be developed, particularly in the case of violent conflicts, besides or parallel to conflict resolution modes by the state. As a matter of course, we put it that it is the ability to cope with the "violence problem" and to employ regular strategies of conflict resolution that decides about the future of those informal political orders besides the state.

In studying "local strategies of conflict resolution" and their articulation with legal systems of conflict resolution on a national and international level, the proposal wants to contribute to a number of fields within the social sciences:

- legal anthropology, in particular to questions about the nature of interdependent relationships between systems of conflict resolution on the local, national and possibly international level,

- possibilities of integration of local strategies of conflict resolution into national legal systems,

- social science theories of power and political order and the sociology and anthropology of violence.

Generation of the project

In 2004, Birgit and Idrissa Embaló from the National Institute for Studies and Research of Guinea-Bissau (INEP)[2] worked out a draft for the Volkswagen-Foundation Initiative "Knowledge for Tomorrow - Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa: Violence, its Impact, Coping Strategies and Peace Building". INEP then was invited to take part in the VW Foundation workshop "Violence, its Impact, Coping Strategies and Peace Building" which took place in Uganda in September 2004. INEP applied for a project within the Volkswagen initiative and established a research partnership with Bayreuth University, namely with Georg Klute, professor of Anthropology of Africa.

The Volkswagen-Foundation accepted a pre-proposal for a project on local conflict management in Guinea-Bissau which was used as the basis of a preparatory workshop, funded by the foundation, in February 2006 at INEP, Bissau. The workshop allowed to establish direct contacts between the German and African partners and to develop the final project design which was submitted to the Volkswagen Foundation and positively evaluated in July 2006. The research is directed by Georg Klute, Bayreuth University; it will probably start in October this year.

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[2] INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa) is a highly sophisticated research institution in Guinea-Bissau which is well known at home and abroad. It has been working with great success for more than twenty years, mainly in the fields of anthropological, social, historical and political science research. No institution of this kind exists in other Lusophone African countries, although they are all much larger and equipped with firmer structures of Higher (University) education. Going largely back to the personal engagement of the INEP director and colleagues, it has been possible to build up the institution in great parts after the enormous destruction it suffered in the war 1998/1999.

The research proposal articulates two positions: The first one is specific to Guinea-Bissau, referring in particular to its "state fragility" (Forrest 2003) and the remarkable vitality of local actors and institutions of conflict resolution. The second position addresses theoretical debates about the future of informal polities within or beside the African State, and more generally, theories of power and political order.

Theoretical background

In the last fifteen years, Africa has experienced deep changes resulting in new social and political settings almost everywhere on the continent. These have led to an increasingly heterogeneous political situation. At times, these changes are explained as part of the global change due to the end of the cold war and the break-down of the socialist block. At other times, specific African causes are put forward. In a certain sense, these processes fragmented organised state structures and administration or caused their collapse. Significantly, the adjectives to qualify resulting structures of the African state have been consistently negative: "Failing", "failed", "weak", "soft", "incomplete", "collapsed", "greedy", or "criminal", are some of them (Bayart 1989, Bayart / Ellis / Hibou 1999, Fatton 1992, Chabal / Daloz 1999). The term heterarchy, as opposed to hierarchy, seems appropriate to describe resulting differentiated distributions of power-foci in many African countries (Chabal / Feinman / Skalnik 2004; Bodarenko / Grinin / Korotayev 2004).

During the same period regional or transnational political actors emerged (Copans 2003) who attempted to, and sometimes even succeeded in expropriating state sovereignty and administration through processes of informal 'privatisation' (Klute / Trotha 2004). Some of the new actors on the complex African political scene seem to be well known "old fellows", even if they had been rather marginalized for some decades in the African independent state: chieftaincies and so-called traditional authorities now reappear on the regional and national political stage (Oomen 2002; Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1994, 1996, 1999). Some political actors, however, wear new faces. These new actors include ethnic militia, economic and military entrepreneurs, transnational smugglers and last but not least agents in international organisations of development aid or conflict management.

Very often, the (re)-emergence of non-state political actors and non-state forms of power is confronted with the "substitute argument": As state structures seem to be weak or even absent, non-state political actors can step in. The substitute argument, however, could be too simple and obvious. Instead of taking the aetiology for granted that weak state structures are substituted by non-state political orders, one should thoroughly investigate the specific conditions which facilitate, or hinder, the emergence of local rule besides or parallel to the state.

In fact, the emergence of non-state political orders may not only refer to the weakness of state structures. Rather, it may also indicate a particular vitality of sometimes very innovative, sometimes revitalised neo-traditional forms of social and political power on a local level

(Bellagamba / Klute 2006). This is not to say that contemporary fractures and crises do not create spaces which indeed promote the emergence of forms of power beside and at the margins of the state (Das / Poole 2004). But what has to be stressed is the remarkable vitality of local political orders in many parts of Africa.

It is neither, of course, known whether these informal (non-state) polities are not just ephemeral, nor whether they will disappear as soon as the state regains power and re-establishes its former structures. But if they are to last, they have to cope with the "violence problem", which lies at the heart of the formation of any kind of political order (Trotha 1997a). As the monopoly of violence in many African states hardly exists, not only the state, but all existing informal polities have to cope with violent conflicts. Modes of resolution of conflicts must be developed, above all the resolution of violent ones, besides, or parallel to, or in articulation with, conflict resolution by the state.

Violent conflicts can be usefully understood as important indicators of the malfunctioning of any given social order (Elwert / Feuchtwang / Neubert 1999). The more institutionalised and established the society, the less likely it is to be under stress from violent forms of conflict. This is why the proposal focuses on conflict resolution. In other words, the present project is not concerned with conflicts as such. Rather it is interested in conflict resolution (and institutions of conflict resolution) of those conflicts that are or threaten to become violent. The research will thus draw from the following assumptions:

– Under the present conditions of the postcolonial West African state and the vanishing influence of the Western state model processes of conflict resolution, which occur at the local level, seem to be of crucial importance (Klute / Trotha 2004).

– Local power groups may use mediating services in order to establish power positions or even (non-state) informal polities. Very important in this regard may be attempts at justifying power through the arbitration and mediation of violent conflicts.

– Legal pluralism is particularly marked in weak states, resulting in active forum shopping. Forum shopping does not only occur on a local, but also on a national and possibly international level.

– Local, national and international legal systems of conflict resolution are articulated. One has to describe this articulation and to look into the nature of the relation between the various interdependent levels.

– In heterarchical settings, violations of legal norms are sanctioned irregularly only. This is why the legal and the political sphere visibly overlap; power and law appear to be extremely related. In weak state settings, chains of violence are difficult to interrupt.

In this respect, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Can the re-emergence of chieftainship rule in a modern context (Skalnik 2004), or even the development of a new kind of indirect rule be observed (Skalnik 2006)?

2. Has the model of the (Western) nation-state come to an end? Has its appeal decreased? Will the coming of heterarchical orders and the decline of monoarchical ones, e.g. the centralised state (see e.g. Young 2004), be noticed in the nearer future?

3. Can phenomena of "fall-back-activities" in conflict resolution, e.g. pre-state types of conflict resolution be observed (Eckert 2004; Klute 2004)? In these types of conflict resolution, elements of conflict settlement are more prominent than the application and imposition of (legal) norms.

4. Is it possible to integrate local non-state forms of conflict resolution into the constitution of the modern state (see f. ex. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal / Zips 1998)? Can Guinea-Bissau follow the example of some Francophone (Baumann 1997 / Ebert 1997) and even more Anglophone countries (Baumann / Brehme / Ebert 2002)? How may conflicts which are difficult to cope with in face to face situations possibly be integrated?

5. Is it possible to envisage a further improvement of institutional arrangements found in other countries as the "house of chiefs" (Wegemund 2002; see also Bako-Arifari's proposition 1998) and quota for chiefs in legislative bodies, or to use their moral authority in installing chiefs as "centres of public debate" in order to find resolution to violent conflicts (Trotha 1997b)? Can interethnic conflict resolution or even knowledge about respective strategies be observed? Is it possible to integrate local strategies of conflict resolution into the national legal system?

6. What about universal human rights or minority rights of marginal or powerless groups? Are "traditional" forms of conflict resolution "anti-democratic" (Mehler / Ribaux, 2000) or at least not democratically legitimized (Hazdra 1999)? Or are discursive forms of traditional arbitration and mediation consistent with democratic principles (Zips 2002)?

7. And finally: will the fragmentation of state order in Africa and elsewhere lead to a transitional period of a "state of nature" and the violence of all against all in the Hobbesian sense?

Political History & State Fragility in Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau became independent in 1974 after a protracted guerrilla war. The first independent government with a Marxist orientation was toppled in a military coup in 1980. President Vieira, the coup leader, ruled the country in an authoritarian way for almost twenty years. He first held to a socialist ideology, and later switched to economic liberalisation and democratisation.

By June 1998, Vieira's style of government was marked by nepotism, corruption, lack of concern for the population's well-being and economic stagnation. An army general himself, he grossly overestimated his popularity when he decided to dismiss the army's chief of staff, Ansumane Mané, causing thus a mutiny within the armed forces and taking the conflict to the streets of Bissau. Vieira then asked for military support from Senegal and Guinea Conakry, but after one year of military siege and physical and moral destruction of the capital, he sought refuge in Portugal where he lived until his return to Bissau in April 2005.

The armed conflict of 1998/1999 resulted in the destruction of great parts of the capital, and the break-down of major parts of the public infrastructure. It also opened up the way for the domination of the army by the ethnic group of Balanta, whose role had previously been curtailed by Vieira.

Between 2000 and 2003, Guinea-Bissau was ruled by Koumba Yalá, the first Balanta to achieve such a position. While initially the population had been enthusiastic, it grew increasingly dissatisfied with the inability of the government to meet economic and social expectations. More importantly, the political system was unable to provide a platform for a peaceful public debate about the country's future. The government then was toppled by the army in September 2003. Under the pressure of the international community, the army agreed to a neutral transitional government with the task of preparing parliamentary elections as quickly as possible.

A mutiny in October 2004 once again exposed the fragility of modern political structures while at the same time further polarising Guinean society along ethnic lines. Moreover, it illustrated that outbreaks of political violence and armed conflict appear to be part and parcel of daily life in Guinea-Bissau.

Meanwhile, elections were held in July 2005 which former President Vieira won, even though legally he should not have run. The Supreme Court had allowed this to happen in a decision that raises important issues over the independence of the legal system. Since his inauguration Vieira has dismissed the democratically elected government (March 2004) and replaced it with his own team.

This brief analysis of the post-colonial political history of Guinea Bissau shows that periods of latent crisis tend to degenerate into violent political conflict ending in change of government, mostly through military coups (Adebayo 2002; Djaló 2000). Indeed, the weak modern political structures have been unable to tame the armed forces' drive for power, to prevent unequal distribution of political influence and positions among the large ethnic groups and to integrate so-called "traditional authorities" (régulos) in processes of decision making of the modern state (Carvalho 1998). Guinea-Bissau appears not to have applied those remedies to violence yet, which William Zartman has called "traditional cures" (Zartman 2000; 2004). Indeed, it is to be doubted whether modern political structures in Guinea-Bissau have been able to provide adequate conflict resolution mechanisms.

Generally, Guinea Bissau tends to be depicted as a paradox: Its small geographical size contrasts with its extreme ethnic diversity (Forrest 1992). Moreover, the present political diversity seems to be even more heterogeneous than the ethnic one. Joshua Forrest, the Harvard historian of Guinea-Bissau, argues that state fragility in contemporary Guinea-Bissau is indeed more pronounced, in particular if compared to Anglophone and Francophone neighbours. This can be traced back, on the one hand, to the fact that neither the colonial state, nor the independent state ever fully managed to impose state rule over the whole country; Guinea-Bissau differs in this respect from its neighbours, at least in terms of degree. Acts of extreme violence against the local population at certain periods during colonial times appear to only indicate this weakness. On the other hand, Forrest argues further, local political and social structures in Guinea-Bissau remained particularly vital. State fragility can only be fully appreciated by examining the "indigenous social context" in which the state in Guinea-Bissau evolved (Forrest 2003).

Guinea-Bissau shows some of the typical elements of war affected societies (Baechler 1998): The country suffers from poor state performance, and its leadership has ruled without sufficient democratic legitimacy for a long time. Interest groups, parties and the military are likely to end conflicts through the use of violent means.

Particularly remarkable is the fact that local structures remained comparatively strong despite a long lasting liberation war and attempts at national integration by the liberation movement as

well as by subsequent regimes (Jao 1996). While Guinea-Bissau has been undergoing a formal process of modern state-building, many of its inhabitants live *de facto* in traditional rural environments. Today, approximately 50% of urban dwellers are of rural origin. Although the socialist regime tried to replace the intermediary structure of administrative chieftaincies (*régulos*) through village committees consisting of members of the political party PAIGC[3], the *régulos* never fully disappeared.

Social Research on Guinea-Bissau

The state of research on Guinea-Bissau is not very encouraging. While the liberation struggle and its leader, Amilcar Cabral, are strongly reflected in literature, the literature on the current political and economic development and the society in contemporary Guinea-Bissau is rather sparse; the most important are: Cardoso / Augel (1996), Forest (1992 and 2003), Galli (1987), Kasper (1995), Lobban / Mendy (1997), Lopes (1987), Meier (1993), Rudebeck (2001), and Schiefer (2002).

As a small Lusophone country within a Francophone dominated West African coastal region, Guinea-Bissau is in relative isolation and is mentioned less often in general scientific debate than its more prominent neighbours (Senegal and Mali). Although the lack of statistical data is a well known problem in Africa related research, in the case of Guinea-Bissau even essential statistical data are hard to come by.

The main ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau are Balanta (23%), Fula (24%), Mandinka (12%), Manjako (11%), and Papel (10%) (Forrest 1992). Monographs and articles from the colonial period onwards focus on anthropological topics, such as ethnic origin, rituals of mourning and other social phenomena. It is of interest for the present research project that some deal with power relations and hierarchical structures (Carreira 1947; Cardoso 2002; Crowley 1990; van der Drift 2000; Gable 1990; Giesing 1993; Handem 1986; Hawthorne 2000; Jao 1989, 2000, 2002; Moreira 1948; Saraiva 1999). On the other hand, there is no historically oriented work about inter-ethnic relations and inter-ethnic conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, as it exists for example with regard to the relationship between Fulbe and Mandingas in Mali (de Bruijn / van Dijk 1997).

What is equally missing is thorough research on questions of ethnic identity and politics. One of the few publications on the subject is Lopes' (1982; see also: Cardoso 1989; Crowley 1990, Liberato 1992; Salazar 1991). Lopes argues that nation-building in Guinea-Bissau was a failure

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[3] PAIGC = *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné-Bissau e Cabo Verde*, the ruling party from 1974 until 1999.

right from the start. Instead of opening public administration to all ethnic groups, the new administration took over colonial structures and the same administrative personnel, mainly "Creolos".

There is some literature dealing with the relationship between "traditional power systems" (sometimes referred to as "traditional authorities") and the modern state (Carvalho 1998; Djalo 1997; Fernandes 1993; Fraunlob 2002, and Jao 1996). Although all of this literature is very relevant to the present research project, none of it addresses the "violence problem" or deals explicitly with conflict resolution on the local level and the articulation of the various legal systems.

"Traditional" & "Modern" Conflict Resolution

After the military conquest of Africa, the colonial powers attempted to install modern state structures, including European legal systems, in their respective colonies (Zips 2002). The transfer of legal systems from one society to another is referred to as "legal reception" (Luts 1997) in juridical theory. The term "legal reception" can, however, be misleading insofar as it suggests the installation of a single legal system by the colonial conquerors (legal centralism) and the integration or even eradication of existing (legal) "customs" of the conquered. It also assumes that only codified laws, sanctioned by the state, should be considered as legal systems. The reality of the post-colonial state, however, shows a different picture: several legal systems seem to exist side by side, a state of affairs legal anthropology tries to come to terms with through the notion of "legal pluralism" (Griffiths 1986, Merry 1992b).

Legal pluralism, however, might be too wide a notion. It assumes that legal systems are equivalent as a matter of principle, i.e. that state and "non-state" laws are equal, projecting in this way the idea that social actors could choose freely between various legal systems in order to settle conflicts and to achieve "their rights" (forum shopping; Benda-Beckmann 1985).

Spittler, for example, argues that the apparent peaceful character of contemporary non-state forms of conflict resolution in Africa (and elsewhere) only makes sense with reference to the "violent Leviathan", i.e. the modern state: (local) people try to settle conflicts peacefully before the mighty and violent State (Leviathan) and its agents step in (Spittler 1980a). While Spittler's argument corresponds fully to inductive, actor-centred approaches in modern legal anthropology that privilege analysis of conflict cases and dispute settlement (Roberts 1994) as opposed to (deductive) studies of sets of legal norms, it appears to suggest fixed relationships

between legal systems in a given society: the legal system of the state dominates all others. One could ask, however, if this is also true in weak state settings (see e.g. Le Roy 1985).

Hanser & Trotha took up Spittler's argument in order to further develop main methodological approaches in legal anthropology (extended case study of conflict cases, Schott 1988; Moore 2000) into extended analysis of institutions of conflict resolution (Hanser / Trotha 2002). They stressed the interdependency of these institutions, following nonetheless Spittler's thesis that the legal system of the state dominates all other institutions of conflict resolution. The interdependency idea was transferred from the local and national to the transnational level. Merry was the first to argue that transnational, as opposed to (classical) international, institutions of conflict resolution might play a prominent role in the future (Merry 1992a). Neubert pointed to the role transnational networks of NGOs do already play in this respect (Neubert 1997).

The articulation of legal systems and institutions of conflict resolution must be described for each case and the nature of the respective relationships between the different levels has to be analysed (see also Bierschenk / Olivier de Sardan 1996). In this project it is argued that the nature of the relationship is not fixed from the very beginning, but has to be determined in research. Particularly in weak states the relationship between state and non-state legal systems or institutions of conflict resolution may be one of equality or of varying character. Some local actors might even try to monopolise arbitrating and mediating services as these represent chances to accumulate power (Klute 2004a; see also Popitz 1992).

Confronted with decreasing capacities in conflict resolution and active "forum shopping" in postcolonial states, some authors clamour for the integration of "traditional authorities" or "traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution" into the state's legal system in order to use the "moral authority" of "traditional leaders", particularly in conflict settlement (Englebert 2002; Rothchild 1996; van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal / Ray 1996; Skalnik 1996). These authors refer mostly to institutions that had been installed by the colonial powers as "administrative chieftaincies" (Beck 1989), without always clarifying that "traditional legitimacies" had been modified at least in part through their integration into the structures of the intermediary colonial state (see also Klute 2004b).

In some Francophone and even more Anglophone African states "traditional authorities" have been institutionally integrated in political decision-making and (legal) conflict resolution (Baumann / Ebert 1997; Baumann / Ebert / Brehme 2002; Ray 1998). In postcolonial Lusophone Africa there is hardly any formal integration, though recently there have been some attempts in this respect, particularly in Mozambique (Artur / Weimer 1998; Buur / Kyed 2006).

The integration of "traditional authorities" has led to controversies within the academic community. While some stress that "traditional authorities" do not have democratic legitimacy (Mehler / Ribaux 2000; Hazdra 1999) or are at least rather sceptical (Fisiy 1995), others are quite enthusiastic (see above). These authors differentiate between Western and non-Western or African types of democracy and claim that the integration of African elements will even strengthen and consolidate democratic regimes (Zips 2002; van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal / Zips 1998). They further argue that African discursive- and communication-based forms of decision-making and conflict resolution contain genuine democratic elements, in particular if compared to formal and functional restrictions in Western type democracies (see f. ex. Zips 2002).

In this context, the notion of Palaver as forum for public debate has recently been interpreted as the locus of extended participatory political dialogue and self-reflection in African societies. This point of view appears to be based on the observation of the South African reconciliation process (Bidima 1997; du Plessis 2004). It is further argued that palaver is a democratic and participatory means aiming at reaching consensus in order to re-establish harmony. In other words, it does not exclude those who committed an offence, but rather seeks compensation and rehabilitation of the accused (Bidima 1997). The Palaver strategy, it is said, can easily be transferred from face-to-face situations to nation-wide problems or conflicts (see also Bujo 2000), which, in the opinion of the present research project, has to be proven in practice. In any case, the idea of an African type of democracy, based on consensus achieved through "palaver", seems to be rather romantic. It may hide power relations as well as power interests. The research on local conflict resolutions in Guinea-Bissau has to delve deeper into the participatory elements of Palaver, if they exist, and their dimension in this West African country.

Coping with Violence and Local Conflict Resolution in Guinea-Bissau

Politics and political violence on the national level have been studied mainly by INEP (Cardoso 1997, 2001; Rudebeck 2001; Soronda 2000). However, only some literature deals with the political elite of the country and processes of decision making (Cardoso 1996). Meanwhile, research on one - if not the main - actor of the outbreaks and escalations of political violence in contemporary Guinea-Bisau, the armed forces, is missing due to the lack of even elementary data.

Outside the capital, so-called "traditional authorities" dominate. Though intensively articulated, relationships between the "traditional" and the "modern" foci of political power in the country have been rather tense since the colonial period. While the colonial administration installed the régulos as intermediaries, using them as it did in order to gain control over the rural population, the revolutionary party, PAIGC, stigmatised traditional leaders as collaborators and traitors; some were even put to death after independence.

In the 1990s and with the beginning democratisation process, the régulo system was partly re-established (Embaló 2001). The shift in the official political line may be mainly explained by the influence the régulos exerted as opinion-leaders within the respective local groups; the various political parties tried to make use of this influence.

Research on local conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau is almost non-existent. Idrissa Embaló from INEP was able to show that significant local strategies of conflict management are still in use among two of the main ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau, Fulas and Mandingas. Most noteworthy are Embaló's findings that there actually exists interethnic co-operation in conflict management, i.e. conflict management takes place on a local, and not on an ethnic basis. He identifies three strategies, namely that of universal advantage, i.e. the work of one person - independently of his ethnic identity - brings about advantage for the whole local community, that of mutual advantage, i.e. abilities of particular members of one ethnic group are respected, supported and asked for by both sides, the purpose of which apparently is integration, and the strategy of palaver. In cases of conflict, "local courts" under the leadership of régulos are held. Everyone has the right to speak extensively about the conflict and also about subjects not directly related to the topic. Giving everyone enough time is as important as the act of speaking itself. People get the opportunity to express opinions frankly (see also Bidima 1997). The longer people speak and the more participants share in the debate, the more possibilities can unfold to solve "problems" (Embaló 2004).

Methodological approach & research design

While generally employing dynamic research approaches and methodological flexibility, the present research project will draw particularly from the extended case study, e. g. analyses of conflict cases (Schott 1988; Moore 2000), and its developed form, the extended analysis of institutions of conflict resolution (Hanser / Trotha 2002). This last approach will not only allow to perceive legal systems "as processes" (Sally Falk Moore, 2000) and focus on the creativity of social actors (forum shopping, Benda-Beckmann 1985), but it will also enable the research team to follow

cases of conflict resolution from the local to the national and possibly international level. Moreover, it will be possible to grasp the articulation of various legal systems, particularly with respect to resolution of violent conflicts, in order to explore the interdependency of the various systems and the nature of their specific relationships.

The project will have four (4) research units on the basis of two criteria, namely interdisciplinarity and academic rank (junior & senior researchers), each working at different spots. Therefore a methodological and chronological framework of research is proposed that is broad enough to include the various disciplines involved and their respective methods. Hopefully, this framework will help to coordinate interdisciplinary team research which is not yet very common in the Human Sciences and, for this reason, is all the more difficult to honour.

The methodological approach and project design have been chosen in such a way as to achieve two goals:

1. to assure comparability of data collected by the research team within Guinea-Bissau as well as by partners in the sub region (Mali, Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, and Gambia);
2. to allow cross-checking of collected data.

Cross-checking is assured by:
- long standing experiences of INEP in interdisciplinary team fieldwork
- interdisciplinary composition of research team, thus benefiting at maximum from different methodological perspectives of the various disciplines involved (anthropology, sociology, economy, history, law, and religious science)
- mix of methods in empirical social science research, applying quantitative as well as qualitative methods of data collection in order to cross-check data (triangulation)
- adoption of cross-perspectives on cases of conflict, their respective history, and conflict resolution through:
- interdisciplinary composition of each research unit
- use of various empirical approaches in the tradition of the respective discipline

Comparability is assured by:
- focusing on cases of conflict, their respective history, and processes of conflict resolution
- regular presentation and interpretation of collected data on a monthly basis by each research unit and feed-back of the whole research team at INEP

- re-interpretation of first interpretation and re-analysis of particular cases by research units that did not collect the data

- visits of African and European research partners to various fieldwork spots

- 2 exploratory visits of all members of the research team to all spots of research (beginning of phase I and phase II of field work, respectively)

To cut across disciplinary boundaries, all research units, irrespective of the disciplines involved, will adopt the djumbai-approach (Camará, Samba Tenem / Pedro da Costa / Idrissa Embaló / Fodé Adulai Mané / Paulina Mendes / Raul Fernandes Mendes / Daniel Rodrigues / Caterina Viegas 2006). Methodologically, djumbai is inspired by grounded theory. It adopts an inductive approach, starting from empirical data, and consists mainly in observed conversations including interactive elements. It was developed by INEP in practical fieldwork and has been approved by a number of academic and development oriented researchers alike as a method appropriate to African realities.

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