

# Mauritania Technology Fosters Tradition (TFT)

## Participatory Research Mapping (PRM)

### (1) Customary rights and PRM (En)

v 1, May 2004

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#### Introduction

Presents TFT as a research agenda, with a set of theoretical overviews / statements and hypotheses. Takes the TFT Concept Note as a point of departure, elaborates on it, operationalizes it, and makes it more concrete in terms of actually data to be collected and field work.

#### Present research

The physical output is maps. But this is not enough to achieve success. In addition, it is important to work with public sector (national, regional and local levels), traditional authorities, look at institutions, strive for institutional reform. TFT operates in a very complex political institutional, ecological, cultural and ethnic landscape. To achieve its goal it is necessary to develop a process which is multi-faceted enough to deal with the problems as they arise.

#### Customary rights

Customary rights are also referred to as “customary law” or “traditional law”, and are part of the broader terms “traditional knowledge”, “indigenous knowledge”, “traditional indigenous knowledge” and “traditional ecological knowledge”.

Customary rights are values concerning what is correct and accepted in a particular culture. Customary rights usually include norms for how to adjudicate in disagreements over who has the right, that is, conflict management. In TFT we are only concerned with customary law as it applies to the area of society or culture concerned with natural resource management.

Customary rights “exist” in the sense of being known by people. They are usually not written down. Thus, they are communicated orally, both intra-generational and inter-generational. While all members of a culture may know the customary rights that apply to natural resource management, all cultures will usually have designated persons whose responsibility it is to be the caretaker of this traditional law, in one or more of the following capacities: (i) mental storage of the law, (ii) arbiter in conflicts, and (iii) judge in conflicts.

What we call “customary rights” will in all likelihood be called something else by the members of any one culture (that is, if a generic name is available). For this reason, in order to get at the customary rights pertaining to natural resource management it is not possible to simply go and ask the first and best people “what are your customary rights in the area of natural resource management?”. There are important issues here of how to approach and interact with people, and these are covered in the separate document “Methodology”. For the present purpose it is important to know that “customary rights” is an English language term, and that we have to both use other terms (that we may have to learn first), and as well as approach the issue more indirectly. Even when we receive an answer to a question asked on customary rights, we cannot necessarily be sure that the local people understood the question correctly (and it is not necessarily certain that inquiring whether they understood will change things).

For these reasons, given the abstract and mental domain in which customary rights is located, and the methodological problems of getting at that knowledge, it is important to approach this research question indirectly, and also to use other means of getting at these data. This is where PRM enters.

## **Data**

The research area

Consists of a number of selected wetland areas (ghaats and tamourts) and the overall / total catchment (or bioregion) area in which they are located. That is, the TFT will study both levels. While the selected wetlands are the primary focus, selected data on the bioregion will also be collected (and mapped), partly to present a context for understanding the selected wetlands, and partly to scope the extent of the current problems, and assess the need and potential for further work.

### **The PRM component specifically**

#### *Participatory Research Mapping (PRM)*

PRM is actually a special approach within the larger approach of Participatory Mapping (PM). It comes out of recent emphasis on participatory approached in doing development work, that is, in emphases on involving local people to the extent possible in the complete development intervention, from planning, via implementation and monitoring to evaluation.

PRM (and PM) recognizes that a lot of the knowledge that people have (ourselves included) are mentally or cognitively based, and it employs visual means to get at this knowledge. Such visual means are sometimes used alone, and sometimes in conjunct in with others methodologies and tools. These visual means are maps (sometimes called sketch maps).

#### *Customary rights and PRM*

For our work PRM will function as an additional help in getting people to understand what we mean with our questions on customary rights. PRM will also function as a quality control on the data we collect. The data on traditional rights to resource use will be collected through the questionnaire “Customary rights”.

Three other Questionnaires will be administered, namely “Household survey”, “Toponymy”, and “Resource use”, of which the two latter ones are most important in this connection. They will all be administered prior to the Questionnaire “Customary rights”. This means that, when we administer Questionnaire “Customary rights”, we will have all the information in the two Questionnaires “Toponymy” and “Resource use” available, and we can use it to ask further questions of clarification as well as control.

For example, if a person says that we have the right to grass our animals at X location during months Y and Z, we can go to Questionnaire “Toponymy” and look up that particular name, and maybe other information about it. It could even be that the name provided was not recorded in Questionnaire “Toponymy”. In the same way, we could go to questionnaire “Resource use” and find out what the person said about where and when he grazed his animals.

## **Training**

The local staff will be trained in administering the questionnaires, and they will, in turn, hire and train local enumerators (that is, people residing in the villages in question).

## **Fieldwork**

Collection of the data will be done over a longer period, through a series of repeated visits to the villages in question. The questionnaires will be administered in the order they are numbered, that is, first the Socio-Economic questionnaire, followed by the Toponymy questionnaire, and, finally, the Resource use questionnaire (the last questionnaire, Customary Rights, will likely not be necessary – for more information see below).

## Forms / Documents

### *Customary rights and PRM (no. 1)*

*Comment:* Aims to locate the PRM component within the overall TFT. Background to and explanations for why and how PRM is a useful way of learning about traditional customary rights. It is intended to provide a brief introduction to TFT's PRM component.

### *Overview of tasks (no. 2)*

*Comment:* Covers the period May-November 2004. References to specific documents, including guidelines, overview documents and questionnaires, that are prepared in connection with PRM, are referred to under specific tasks (see tasks nos. 1, 4, 11, 12, 19?).

### *Methodology (no. 3)*

*Comments:* Contains fieldwork and participant observation methodology in general, and in PRM in particular. To be used in the task "Training" (see document "Overview of tasks", item no. 1). The documents "Customary rights and PRM" and "Layers of data and knowledge" are relevant for this document.

### *Layers of data (no. 4)*

*Content:* Types of layered data (or 'territorial overlaps') to be collected from the study areas, among others for the purpose of preparing maps. Sources of data are listed for each layer (the TFT staff, especially the Surveyors, are not listed).

### *Questionnaire 1 (no. 5) – Socio-economic*

Contains also census questions. For more specific information see the Guidance to this questionnaire.

### *Questionnaire 2 (no. 6) – Toponymy*

Toponyms are descriptors of place that fix location cognitively, as well as on maps. In other words, toponyms are place names, or names of places. For more specific information see the Guidance to this questionnaire.

### *Questionnaire 3 (no. 7) – Resource use*

Based on the toponymy data collected by means of questionnaire 2. In this questionnaire, respondents are asked to explain which resources they utilize, their character, and where they are located. For more specific information see the Guidance to this questionnaire.

### *Questionnaire 4 (no. 8) – Customary rights*

As more detailed information on the traditional property rights structure is becoming available, it seems likely that it will not be necessary to administer this interview schedule. The reason for this is that it is, within the traditional property rights structure, is agreement as to who owns the resources, namely specific tribes, or fractions of tribes. Within each tribe, the ownership is vested in the leader of the tribe, or faction of the tribe, in question. People utilizing the resources, be they members of the tribe and clan that claim ownership or not, have use rights and not ownership rights.

There are a couple of uncertainties and questions remaining on this issue, following the above argument. First, there are, in places, disagreement between tribes as to who owns an area and where the borders between neighboring tribes are located. Second, there are, in places, disagreement between factions within particular tribes as to who owns an area. These issues do not, however, affect the present access that local people have to utilize resources in the disputed areas, and likely will not do so in the immediate future.

For these reasons it may be useful to prepared maps of the formal and disputed borders between neighboring tribes. Likewise it may be useful to prepare maps of any disagreements between factions within anyone tribe.