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Governance and resource management in native and migrant communities on Gabon coast

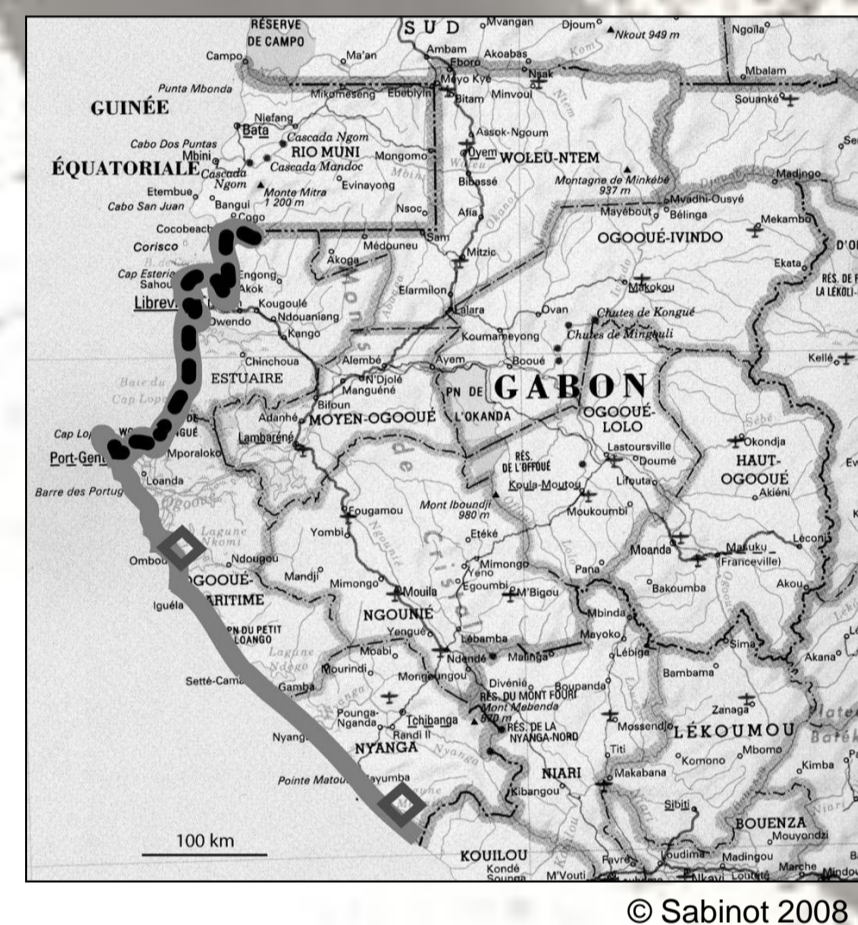
Introduction :

Along the Gabon coast, communities of native and migrant fishermen live side by side and have to share natural resources. Moreover, they have to consider international decisional processes related to conservation and resource management that are growing. Consequently, at the rate of migrations, of the modifications of legislations and power relationships at an international, national and local level, numerous changes in practices and in management of maritime and coastal spaces are carried out, both concerning natives and migrants. This poster presents how coastal communities deal with this complex environmental management that demands to consider local, national and international positions and interventions, conducting progressively to a new management of maritime and coastal spaces.

Multicultural context on Gabon coast

History of migration. During the colonial and slave trade period, populations of Europe began to come in Gabon, importing their way of life, their tools and practices. During the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a wave of migration of fishermen from West and Central Africa, notably because Gabonese do not go fishing offshore but only in fresh and brackish waters. Moreover, many companies from Europe, Asia and America settled on the coast during the last decades, employing Gabonese and migrants.

Coastal population. On the coast there is a majority of foreign fishermen. Most of them come from Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and Senegal. They brought their knowledge and know-how with them, along with their social and fishing regulations. They have to negotiate their practices with other fishermen communities who share the same spaces, while abiding by the national rules.



West-African migrants on Gabonese coast

Natives of
 — Benin
 - - - Nigeria
 ◆ Senegal



Local management. Oyster diving is an activity closely linked to the invisible world. During the last decade, it has evolved a lot.

Local, national and international management

Each community has to adapt herself to the way in which the environmental management has evolved in Gabon, because of multiculturalism and because of the globalization of resource management.

Today environmental management is due to local, national and international positions and interventions.

Local management

→ places and times of fishing are managed by the Gabonese *river mouth guardian* whereas *Mamy wata* is the most important water spirit for Beninese

National management with regional delegation

→ *Service des pêches* - fisheries unit that impose the registration of all fishermen

Local, national and international institutions and NGOs

→ for managing "conservation" and "development"

National management resulting from international recommendations:

→ in particular through the establishment of National Parks

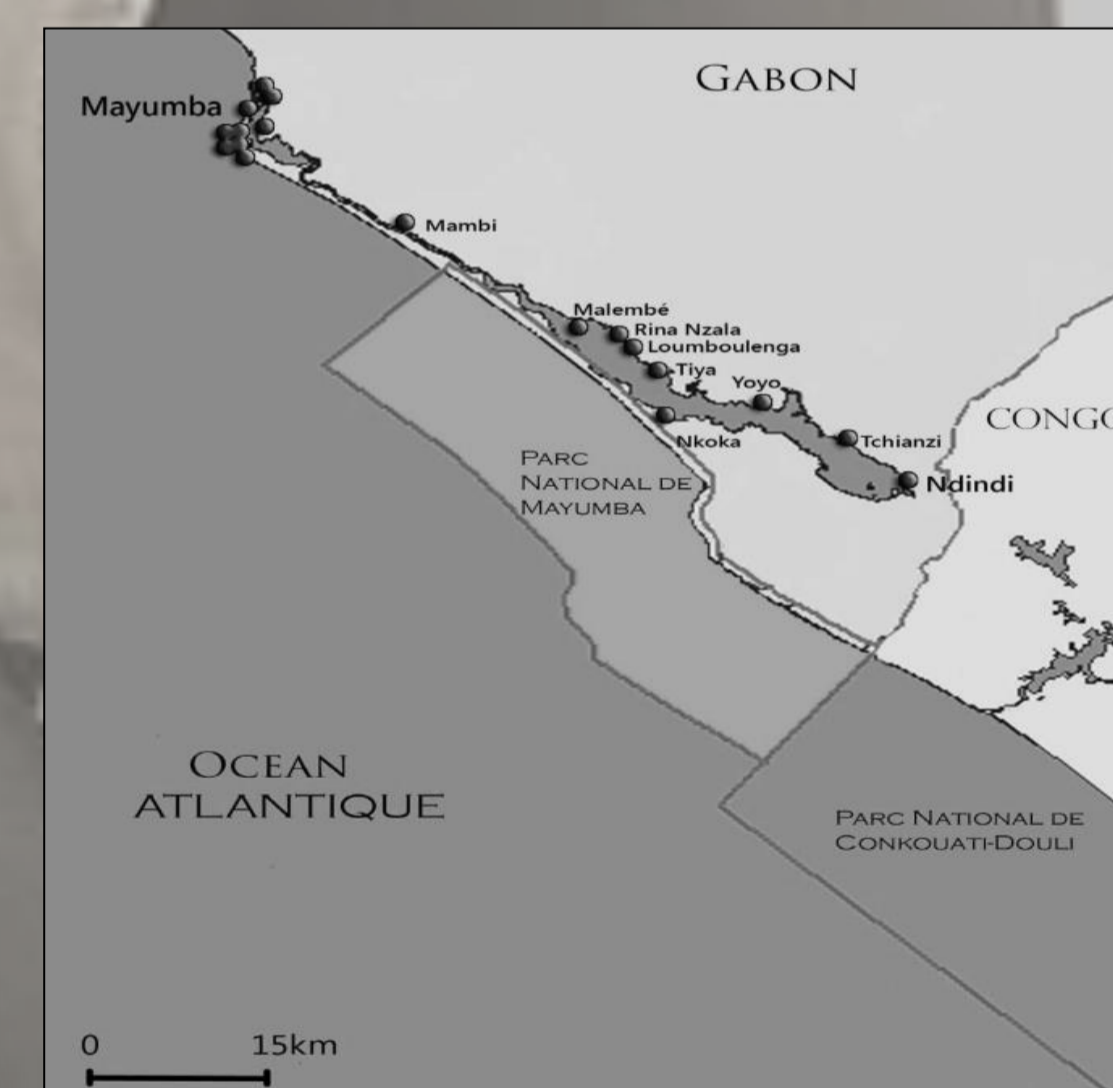
Socio-environmental construction of coastal space

In this multicultural context, maritime, fluvial and lagoon spaces have been differently sensitive to the modifications of ecological, political and technical contexts. A particular "littoral space" has been progressively built from interrelations between communities, strongly linked to their knowledges, know-how and relationships tied with environment.

Moreover, the implementation of many protected areas in the country has begun to change forestry and fishing management and to influence power relationships.

At different levels we can notice how all the contacts and migrations influenced the construction of coastal space. The toponymy is one of the illustration of the multiculturalism: history of Gabonese communities, but also Congolese, colonial and missionary history contribute to naming places.

Today the coexistence of environmental managers is one of the principal characteristic of the place. Around Banio lagoon, there are: Gabonese guardian of the river mouth; Beninese spiritual chief; regional fishing unit; ecoguards of the Park; and the omnipresent international rules for preservation of species. In this place each community has been able to compose with the different scales of resources management and they share space and resource as well.



Area : 870 km² - 336 mi²
 • 810 km² coastal sea
 • 60 km² beach, dune and coastal vegetation

Example of Mayumba National Park

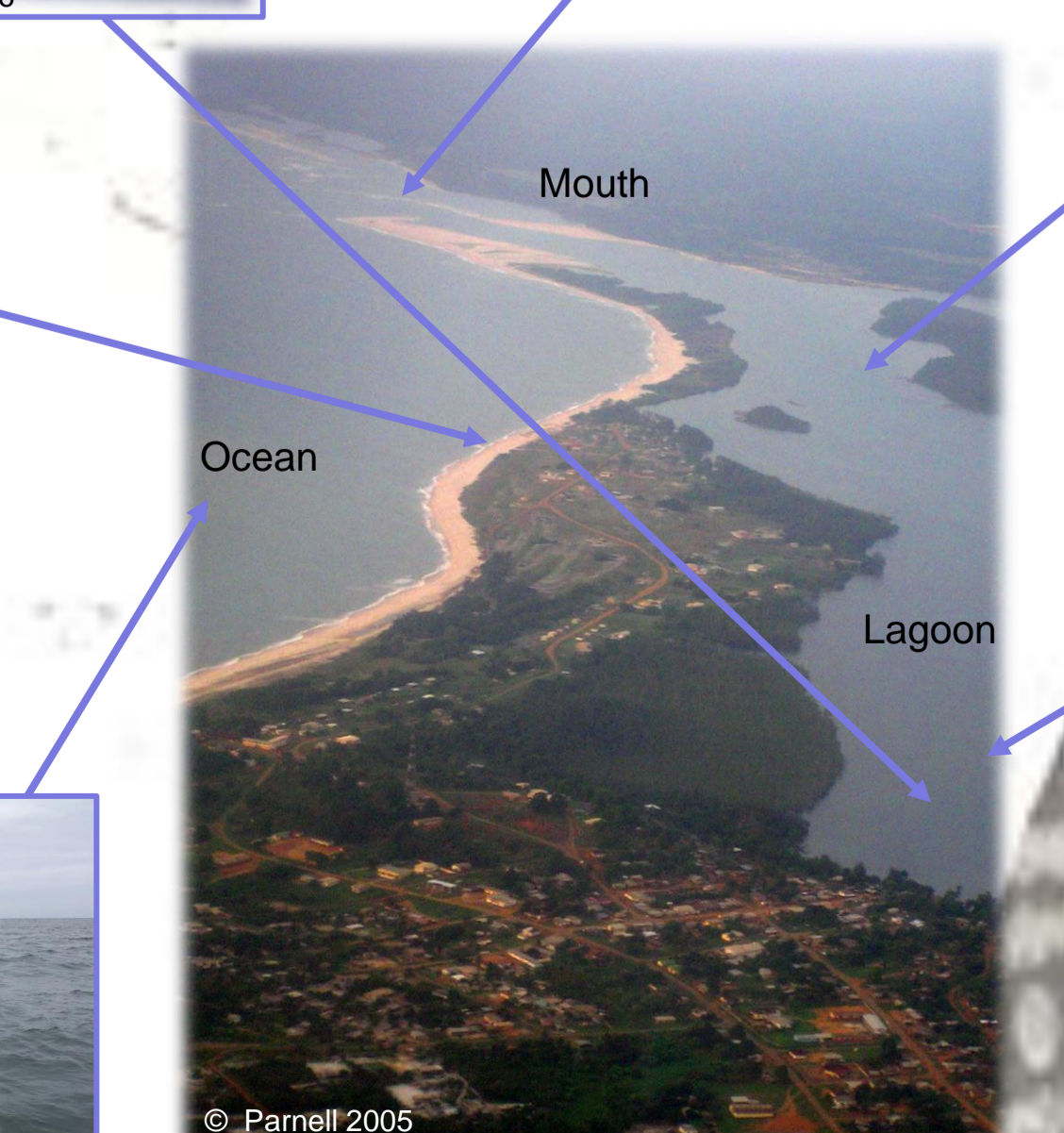
Since 2003, with funding from the Moore Foundation and USAID, WCS has been assisting the Gabon National Parks Office to manage a number of these protected areas and to plan strategically for eco-tourism development in the country.

- Permanent work since May 2004
- establishment of an infrastructure for the park management
- hiring of eco-guards
 - to patrol the beaches to protect turtle nests
 - to detect illegal fishing boats
 - to detect oil pollution

Angling in the lagoon and at the river mouth - Gabonese



Beninese pirogues on Mayumba beach



Crabs fishing in the lagoon Beninese



Catfish fishing in the lagoon Senegalese



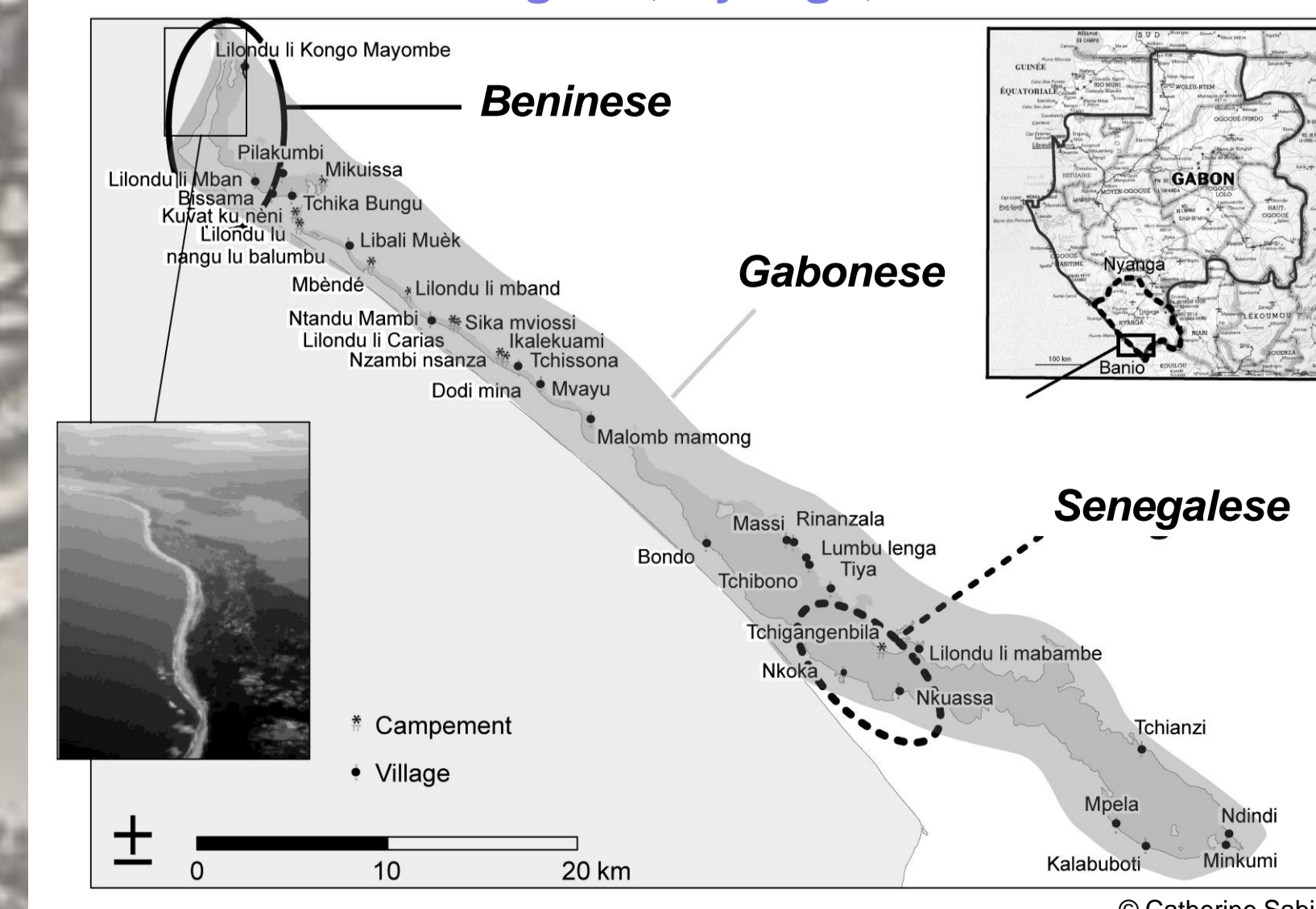
Salted fish



Offshore sharks fishing - Beninese



Banio Lagoon, Nyanga, Gabon



Places are shared between communities

- According to migrant and local habits:**
 - Beninese are settled at the mouth of the lagoon
 - Gabonese are living in camps along the lagoon
- According to national law:**
 - sea is allowed to foreigners for fishing
 - lagoons and rivers are reserved to natives
- According to local politicians:**
 - sea is allowed to foreigners for fishing
 - rivers are exclusively used by Gabonese
 - lagoons are shared between Senegalese and Gabonese