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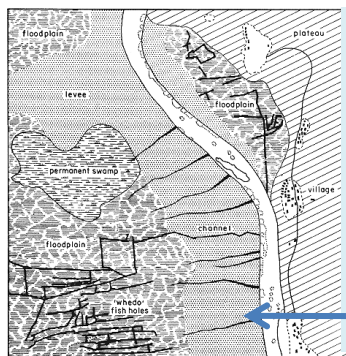
Background

JOLISAA intends to study local innovation processes involving smallholders in 3 African contexts. In the seventies, researchers developed interest in a fishing system in floodplains – the hwedo fishponds. Then research faded out but the fishing systems endured. For most Benin extension agents nowadays, “the hwedo” fish pond system in the Oueme floodplain is unproductive, archaic and about to disappear. At the same time, agro-fishers still spend fair amounts of money to purchase small plots in those floodplains and build new hwedos. In order to make sense out of these contradictory perceptions, we conducted investigation on the ‘hwedo’ system.

Methods

2010-2012: The team reviewed literature, conducted interviews with resource persons and interviewed stakeholders in 3 areas selected in the Oueme delta for their different hwedo densities; first results were discussed with representatives of main stakeholders’ groups

The hwedo agrofishing system



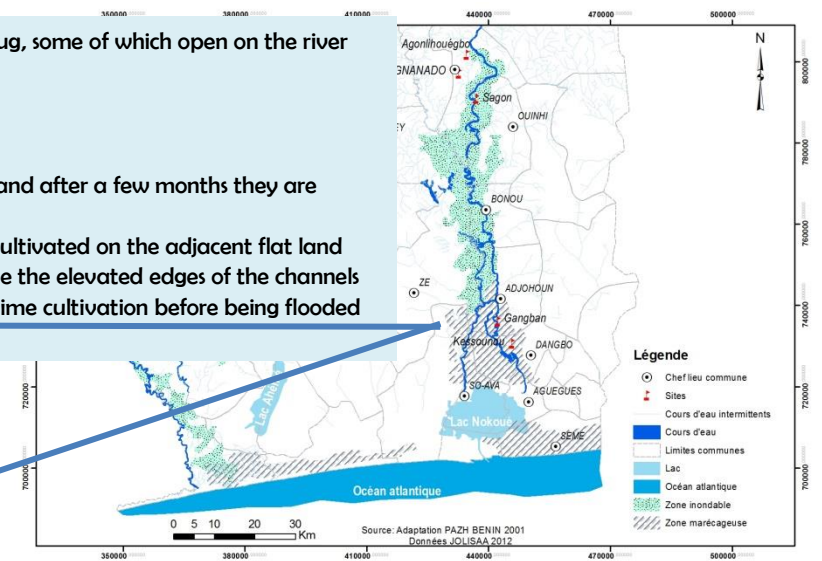
Channels have been dug, some of which open on the river and some not.

By water recess

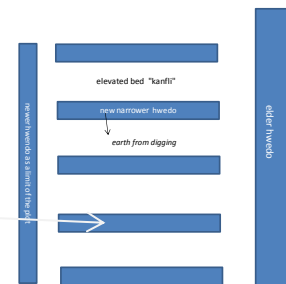
- Fish are trapped and after a few months they are harvested
- Earlier crops are cultivated on the adjacent flat land prior to flood while the elevated edges of the channels are stand longer time cultivation before being flooded



A dense net of small channels are dug for drainage and irrigation
 On the higher beds built, crops longer cycle are cultivated, especially chilies
 On the adjacent flat land, as before, maize is grown

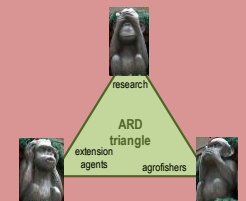


Recent adjustments in the system



Challenges

- Farming systems & farmers’ adjustments are “invisible” to research and extension
- Ways to improve them further (climatic disorders, plant pests and diseases and fish overharvest) are little explored.
- Research on, and with, agro-fishers, is pretty scanty.
- Input intensive aquaculture is more attractive to projects than open-ended joint research on local agro-fishing systems.



Lessons

Joint research about such fine-tuned systems should be conducted with local stakeholders in order to improve them as a whole. Joint research would show local, national and international decision makers how performing and resilient hwedo systems are and may be. Knowledge about hwedos is shared among farmers in other parts of the valley with a less developed fishing and lowland farming “tradition”. Such farmer to farmer knowledge exchanges and enrichment should be better promoted. Training of students should give them the ability to analyze such complex systems.

References

Floquet, A. et al., 2013. Le hwedo dans les systèmes agro-piscicoles de la vallée inondable de l’Ouémé au Bénin, Abomey-Calavi, Bénin: JOLISAA UAC.

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