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## A Situation of "Working Misunderstanding" in the Encounter between French tourists and Burkinabè Inhabitants

Associations and NGOs of "tourisme solidaire"<sup>1</sup> or "tourisme responsable" set up forms of alternative tourism based on the discovery, the meeting and the local development. These forms of tourism have common bases: contribute to the development of the hosts. "Tourisme solidaire", and this particularly in the countries of the South, is thus at the junction of interaction logics related on the tourist meeting and the "development" which have like characteristic to make meet social actors resulting from very diverse worlds. Their professional statutes, their standards of action, their competences, their cognitive resources and symbolic systems, their strategies differ considerably (Olivier de Sardan 2002: 758).

The context of the encounter within the framework of an "tourisme solidaire" experiment in Burkina Faso involves several actors: tourists, a French NGO of development (Tourisme & Développement Solidaires (TDS), to see framed), an "external guide"<sup>2</sup>, the villagers of Doudou. These villagers can be classified in three categories: personnel of the tourist camp (guides, organizers, manager, etc), inhabitants being in specific liaison with the tourists (craftsmen, groupings, teachers), the other inhabitants of the village (mainly of the farmers who do not speak French). These actors, who have different objectives and logics endeavour to live a common practice: "tourisme solidaire". To bring into play a situation of development in a burkinabè village (formed by TDS) thanks to the benefit generated by the welcome of French tourists ("recruited", prepared and framed by TDS), the various actors may find it beneficial to make last this collaboration and to reinforce their position.

The benefit (economic, political, cultural, symbolic) of this collaboration make that all the means are good to maintain it, "it does not matter the results in progress, that they are good or bad and especially if they are bad" (Galvin 2004: 51). This situation can to be qualified of "working misunderstanding", according to concept of Marshall Sahlins (1981), insofar as it generally implies several actors, who have different objectives and logics, who agree on a common practice which brings to each advantage, to the detriment of the finalities of the concerned practice. Within the framework of the studied tourist meeting, this expression wants to reflect the situations produced by the ideology of "tourisme solidaire" and in which visions, practices and knowledge are opposed (Galvin 2004: 51). A participating observation in a burkinabè village (Doudou, in gourounsi country) during a stay of eight French tourists in January 2004 during ten days, clarifies

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of them are gathered within the Union nationale des associations de tourisme (UNAT). The latter gathers principal associations and non-profit institutions of French tourism (55 national members and 490 members in areas) and includes a score of associations of voyages specialized in "tourisme solidaire". We leave this concept of "tourisme solidaire" in French, because it was created by French associations, and its translation in English does not have the same significance inevitably.

<sup>2</sup> The "external guides" are young burkinabè coming mainly from Ouagadougou, recruited and trained by TDS to accompany the tourists but also to be used of mediator between the villagers and the tourists in the event of problem or as conflict. They must also take care that the « charte du tourisme en village d'accueil TDS » is applied and return account with TDS through a report.

the diversity of the actors, their logics and their objectives within the framework of an “tourisme solidaire” experiment.

We in addition described and analyzed the encounter’s situations between tourists and natives (see on this subject Chabloz 2004, 2006 and to appear) and shown that the majority of these situations were based on the misunderstanding (La Cecla 2002: 127). These misunderstandings which are related to the stereotypes and come mainly from the reciprocal ignorance, hide others, more subtle, which are created or reinforced by the ideologies and the speeches related to “tourisme solidaire” and conveyed by NGO of development TDS. In this contribution, we will describe a single situation of meeting which we can describe as "working misunderstanding": the meeting assessment of end of stay. Its objective is triple: to allow the tourists to express themselves on the positive and negative points of their stay and to obtain answers on behalf of the personnel of the tourist camp, to offer a space of dialogue with all the interlocutors implied in “tourisme solidaire”, to allow the other villagers to know how the stay occurred.

This meeting assessment of end of stay is part of logics of “tourisme solidaire” according to which the benefit brought by the tourist stay are used for the collective development of all the village. Consequently, all the villagers who wish it, must be able to be informed in the more possible "transparent" way about the stay proceeded, and all must be able to exchange on the aspects of the tourist stay which function or which could be improved. This meeting assessment takes a particular importance for the tourists because the latter could not or did not want to be expressed during the stay on the "difficulties" which arose. Indeed, except "the business of the dugouts"<sup>3</sup> which gave place to an open conflict between tourists and guides, the other sources of tension were not explicitly evoked. The tourists observed are mainly disenchanted during the stay for different reasons (some have the impression that tourism supports the "richest" villagers whereas they had come to help poorest of the villagers, other tourists estimate that they are seen only like one resource by the personnel of the tourist camp and that the "authenticates" encounter with the villagers they had hoped did not take place, others still realized that their desire to feel useful was not filled, other tourists consider it regrettable that the activities envisaged with the craftsmen did not take place, etc). They intend to expose their dissatisfaction during the meeting assessment of end of stay which is traditionally programmed the last day. Taking part to this meeting —on January 14, 2004 around a table in the open air located in the tourist camp—, tourists, guides, organizers, persons in charge for the tourist camp, the « external guide », but also a great number of villagers (not speaking French) who remained upright in the vicinity. This meeting should have proceeded before the dinner but was deferred because of Doudoulais. Atmosphere is very tended, the majority of the tourists are dissatisfied with the end of their stay and wish to express it, and they feel that Doudoulais grumble at having to begin the meeting. An organizer arrives for saying to the tourists that everyone awaits them in front of the camp to begin one dances’s evening , but the tourists answer that they await the beginning of the meeting. At the end of a rather long time, the majority of the protagonists are finally found around the table. An organizer arrives with its guitar while playing and singing.

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<sup>3</sup> After an expedition in dugouts, the guides wanted the tourists to pay the paddlers. The tourists refused, asserting that they had not been informed as a preliminary and that all the expeditions were supposedly included in the tariff of the stay.

The tourists appear disconcerted: they would like to begin the meeting but it is impossible to get along with the music. The « external guide » plays his part of mediator and intervenes: "that would be although the meeting is done in calms". The manager of the tourist camp answers "yes, yes, the meeting will start. But initially, everyone should feel at ease, that will last a small moment and after one stops ". The music still continues during ten minutes during which environment around the table becomes increasingly tense. When the organizer stops playing, the treasurer of the camp and wife of the ground's chief speaks in Lélé ; a guide translates into French "I thank all the population here. We are very happy because we are at the end of the stay and even if we could not do something good, everyone is healthy this evening. In the name of the ground's chief, thank you once more ". Then the manager asks a guide (implied in a conflict with a tourist about commissions taken by guides on the market during the stay) in which language will be made the speech. The guide answers "in French". The manager smiles and says: "He is afraid to interpret my words". The manager finally makes his speech in Lélé and the guide translates into French.

Manager starts then speech. He thanks God that everyone is healthy and excuses in advance for all errors which could have been made by the personnel of the camp—but in fact, which were not— (buckets of the bathroom not filled enough, women who would have badly prepared the *tô*, diseases of the personnel which would have prevented them from making their work, etc), to conclude while asking the tourists to speak "before going to have fun the festival and to say itself goodbye". A tourist thanks the assistance "in the name of the group" for their welcome and approaches points of detail which could be improved, for example, the lack of racks in the boxes, the heaps of stones which obstruct the passage in the court. Another tourist tackles the question of the lack of meetings with the women of the village. The manager answers that "the women did not approach the place where the men were. It is cultural, but one is arranging itself ".

Then, the guide which acts as translator reminds that the *griots* await the tourists to start to play, but TDS's representative (a 23 year old young woman lately engaged came on a journey of recognition) speaks on the disrespect of the program relating to the meetings with the craftsmen. Another guide gives for explanation to the absence of the craftsmen some funeral, some deaths occurred in the village. Another tourist evokes that the expenses committed by the camp for the tourists were too significant, like the price of the toilet paper, the too high number of guides (four guides for eight travellers): "It was our travel's motivation to make possible to village's people to benefit from our money, which is a large participation. For people who really need our money ". The manager answers only on the "material" aspect of the question by specifying that certain groups of tourists require toilet paper of good quality, as well as imported butter and jam. The meeting finishes and the tourists are invited to join the villagers outside the camp for the evening dances. All the tourists are brought out frustrated of this meeting and had the feeling that all had been staged in the way that they do not feel in position of really saying what they thought of the stay.

A tourist: "What displeased to me, it is that they don't care at all of what we think, they do not want to know or they think we have certain feelings which they want to confirm. I was petrified. I never was in this situation. I often dealt with people who handled in the political meetings, but never at this point there. I could not say any more. The children of the village were around."

Through the description of the interactions which took place during this meeting of assessment of end of stay, it is possible to better understand how is built a “working misunderstanding”. On a side, the tourists are very mainly dissatisfied with the end of their stay for very precise facts which already were evoked above and come to this meeting with the intention to express them. On the other side, the members of the personnel of the tourist camp who perceive this dissatisfaction on behalf of the tourists, but who also have for some their own reasons of dissatisfaction, give the impression that they don't want this meeting takes place. When they realize that the meeting is important for tourists, they do all to differ it (they defer it after the dinner, they take a long time to settle, a musician comes to play of the guitar). When the meeting finally starts, the manager excuses himself by advance for possible errors that in fact were not being committed by the personnel of the camp, which it destabilizes the tourists. Only three tourists out of seven speak to mention with a great precaution certain benign problems. This problems however are not in the centre of their dissatisfaction. The others seem "petrified" and do not intervene. Only two major points of dissatisfaction with the tourists are evoked: a tourist expresses, but in a diverted way, its disappointment in connection with the use of the money of tourism which it hoped to see going to poorest from the village, and TDS's representative reproaches the non respect of the program relating to the visit to the craftsmen. On these two subjects, it is interesting to note that the answers of the members of the camp are partial. The manager does not answer about the too high number of personnel for this stay and the guide gives explanations to the absence of the craftsmen, without revealing the true cause of it (we will learn thereafter from the « external guide » that the craftsmen were not present because they were wearied to pass from time with the tourists without financial counterpart). Thus, this meeting assessment of end of stay did not answer the double finality which was theoretically reserved for it: to expose the problems in order the next stays improve the problems and inform the other villagers about how the stay's events play out for this group. This double finality falls under the ideology and the speeches of “tourisme solidaire” which recommend the information, the transparency and the dialogue (which are found besides in the "charte du tourisme en villages d'accueil TDS", tripartite contract signed by the tourists, TDS and the villages). This situation can thus be described as "working misunderstanding". It implies several actors who have different objectives and logics and who agree on the practice of "tourisme solidaire" which brings to each advantages. The personnel of the tourist camp is not a homogeneous population: certain guides did not have interest that the meeting takes place or that it reveals certain events of the stay such as the dugouts's incident, the commissions taken by them on the market, etc, which could they may lose their place within the tourist camp. The manager, who in addition occupies an important position in the village (representative of the most influential family in the village from the religious point of view [Protestantism ], economic and political) did certainly not have interest that the other villagers are kept of the dissatisfaction with the tourists. TDS's representative present during the stay did not have enough experiment to directly approach the points which annoy. The « external guide », who is supposed be used as mediator in the event of problem was very consensual during the meeting: "I am glad to learn that the travellers are more than satisfied. Glad to learn that the guides take into account the suggestions of the travellers. It is necessary to do the best each time, and that there is no lassitude ". We

could observe that the role of the « external guide » in Doudou is delicate: it is indeed summoned by the guides in an implicit and unequivocal way to intervene the least possible. Another « external guide » with a very marked character and who often intervened in the relation between tourists and guides during precedent stays in Doudou was kept in the background by the personnel of the tourist camp. The interest of the « external guide » in Doudou is thus not to enter in conflict with the personnel of the tourist camp under penalty of seeing himself rejecting by them and to complicate his working conditions. As for the tourists, their way of approaching the discussion or of choosing to keep silent watch that they also chose the consensual way and that they took part to return this meeting—which could have been a true space of dialogue—in a very consensual protocolar exercise. They did not dare to enter in conflict with the personnel because of the reserve of Doudoulais to organize the meeting and because of the speech of the manager which destabilized them, of the presence of the other villagers around the table (and in particular of the children). Their interest was certainly not to expose themselves and preserve an illusion of the « Entente Cordiale » for the hours that it remained to them to pass in the village. Through the interactions's observation, which take place during a meeting's situation registered in practice of "tourisme solidaire", we see there that various protagonists's visions, logics and interests are opposed and lead to a working misunderstanding, because those are not expressed during the meeting, and so that leaves think of the external people that the practice of "tourisme solidaire" "occurs well", but with the detriment of certain finalities of this practice : namely information, transparency, dialogue and the possibility of improving of the dysfunctions in the tourist stay.

Framed:

#### Tourisme & Développement Solidaires

The ngo of development Tourism & Développement Solidaires, created in 1998 is also an association of tourism, which takes as a starting point the experiments of integrated tourism undertaken in Casamance in the years 1970, but also of the experiments in rural tourism in France. It is integrated in particular in networks of associations of tourism (unat), equitable trade (Plateforme du Commerce Équitable pfce), and of development (Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement crid). The step of tds consists "to make tourism a lever for the development of Africa and to offer to our travellers an immersion in the life of a African village". The concept of "tourisme solidaire et équitable" of tds rests on the idea that the Villages of reception tds receive ten to twelve people maximum, who during ten days live at the rhythm of the inhabitants of a village of Burkina Faso or of Benin. They are the villagers who, formed by tds, occupy themselves of the organization and management, and ensure the reception, the meals, the nights, animation, etc. tds counts four villages in Burkina Faso and two in Benin and wishes to extend its concept to other villages and areas of the world.

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