Chicoco Maps Our Cities

An interview with Anne GIRARDIN, CADASTA FOUNDATION

480,000 people live on the waterfront in Port Harcourt and face the threat of demolition by the Rivers State government. Forced evictions and demolitions in 2009 by security forces led to the relocation and the death of community members. No plans exist to compensate or relocate residents of informal settlements and the mass demolition of these neighborhoods is impractical. How can you evolve from evictions to a partnership-based development ?2

Editorial team at XYZ : Anne, you are coming back from Nigeria after an unusual and interesting mission. Can you tell us more about it ?

Anne Girardin : *It was a Cadasta Foundation mission**3**, for a CMAP (or Community Mapping) local NGO, today known as Chicoco Maps.*

XYZ : What does chicoco mean ? Is it a local name ?

Anne : *Yes. Chicoco designates the mud formed by marsh creeks and mangroves, a mud now enriched with heaps of rubbish, plastic waste and industrial residues from this city of over a million inhabitants. Communities, including fishermen, that live on the banks of the Bonny River build on the chicoco, tamping it down and pouring concrete slabs over it.*

XYZ : I suppose we can talk about a health issue but also a land issue. What are the authorities doing ?

Anne : *Nothing to anticipate the situation. But if the authorities decide that they want to regain the occupied lands, they launch operations of expulsion and destruction of these neighborhoods. This has happened several times already.*

XYZ : What has happened since ?

Anne : *Michael Uwemedimo, an Anglo-Nigerian who has witnessed the exactions of 2009 and was supported by Amnesty International, decided to testify and filmed the scenes of destruction. It is the beginning of Chicoco Cinema that has propelled militant activism into the community, through filming and broadcasting. With the same aim in mind, Chicoco Studios were then created, where young people formed music groups, music being so important in Africa. Finally, Chicoco Radio saw the day, a channel that makes the voices of community members heard and supports their demands.*

XYZ : Mapping is still far away !

Anne : *We are getting there; two years ago, thanks to funding from the World Bank, Chicoco Maps Our Cities started on the three neighborhoods of Darick, Amatari and Ibiapu, with a small mapped area on the background of satellite images. In Utrecht, I met Michael at LANDac, the International Conference on Land Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development, and spoke to him about the actions undertaken by the Cadasta Foundation in the areas of land data acquisition and management, as well as their Web and mobile tools designed to help users collect, manage and store land rights data. This has led to our collaboration.*

XYZ : You are now in the Chicoco Maps phase. How is it going so far ?

Anne : *Several communicators, actors and artists from Chicoco Cinema, Studios and Radio have become mappers. Previously working on KoBoToolbox, on their mobile phones and on satellite image prints, they are now focusing on fully digital Cadasta tools while simultaneously enjoying external GNSS antennas (improving the ones of the mobile phones).*

XYZ : What are the next steps ?

Anne : *We have to make a list of what is important. What do the inhabitants feel about their land rights; are they owners, tenants, squatters ? Are they removable ? Which leads us next to Chicoco Advocates Our Rights, now being set up.*

XYZ : For you, what was the major highlight of this mission ?

Anne : *Do you know Emem Isang, who wrote in XYZ**4**? She is now Surveyor General (Director of Geomatics and Cadastre) of the neighboring state of Akwa Ibom. With her Rivers State counterpart, they were sensitized to Chicoco and learned that young artists and musicians that are mappers are not the criminal thieves that the authorities denounce only because they do not know them.*

XYZ : This mission is the icing on the cake !

1 Chicoco Maps Our Cities

2 https://cargocollective.com/jeffforbes/The- Human-City-Project-Nigeria

3 XYZ155, *Cartographie pour la réflexion sur un périmètre à irriguer dans le Sud Kivu,* Girardin, A. & Pichel, F.

4 XYZ 151, L*es femmes, la terre et le foncier ; un assemblage qui prend forme au Nigeria,* Girardin, A. & Isang, E.

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