

Cooperation and Co-Existence Between Farmers and Herders in the Midst of Violent Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Ghana

Kaderi Noagah Bukari, Papa Sow, and Jürgen Scheffran

Abstract: Despite periodic violent conflict between farmers and Fulani herders in many parts of Ghana, cooperative relations between them remain strong. They are “cultural neighbors” who cooperate both in times of violent conflict and during periods of no conflict. Cooperation between them is expressed through everyday interactions, cattle entrustment, resource sharing, trade, friendship, intermarriages, visitations, exchanges, communal labor, and social solidarity. Borrowing from theorizations of cultural neighborhood and everyday peace, this paper uses specific case studies from Northern and Southern Ghana to illustrate the enactment of cooperation between herders and farmers in areas of violent farmer-herder conflict.

Résumé: Malgré des conflits violents périodiques entre les agriculteurs et les éleveurs Fulani dans de nombreuses régions du Ghana, les relations de coopération entre eux restent fortes. Ce sont des « voisins culturels » qui coopèrent à la fois en période

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de conflit violent et en périodes de paix. La coopération entre eux s'exprime à travers les interactions quotidiennes, l'élevage de bétail, le partage des ressources, le commerce, l'amitié, les mariages mixtes, les visites, les échanges, le travail communautaire et la solidarité sociale. Empruntant aux théorisations du voisinage culturel et de la paix quotidienne, cet article utilise des études de cas spécifiques du nord et du sud du Ghana pour illustrer la promulgation de la coopération entre les éleveurs et les fermiers dans les zones de conflit violent fermier-éleveur.

Keywords: Cooperation; Co-existence; Farmer-herder Conflicts; Cultural Neighbors; Everyday Peace; Ghana

Introduction

In Ghana, one wakes up every day to news of violent clashes between local farmers and Fulani herders, as seen in headlines such as “Two farmers shot dead by Fulani in Agogo”¹ and “Two killed as Fulanis clash with residents in Sekyere Odumasi.”² These headlines are widely disseminated throughout the country, and estimates put the number of people killed in Agogo alone at over forty since 2000. These conflicts are an annual occurrence, especially during the dry season (from December to March). Destruction of crops is one of the main causes of this violence, along with resource scarcity exacerbated by changing climate, cattle rustling, and the killing of pastoralists' cattle. However, these violent attacks have been escalated by the politicization of farmer-herder conflicts, contestation for fertile lands, and the lack of comprehensive ranching laws in Ghana. Much has been written and debated about these farmer-herder conflicts (see Kuusaana & Bukari 2015; Tonah 2006), and discourses and public opinion have focused on the violent aspect of the conflict. Fundamental questions, however, persist: First, are conflicts really that frequent between farmers and herders? Second, are farmers and herders in all instances engaged in violent conflicts? And third, how can one explain cases where farmers and herders co-exist, cooperate, and are in fact cultural neighbors?

Farmer-herder conflicts have a long history throughout West Africa, where the main pastoral group, the Fulani (also called Fulbe), have periodically engaged in violent and often fatal altercations with farmers (Bassett 1988; Bassett 1993; Moritz 2010; Benjaminsen et al. 2009). Despite these instances of violent conflict, there are many more instances of intergroup cooperation across Africa. For instance, in East Africa one can find examples of cross-cutting ties of intermarriages, friendship, social ties, land rentals, and economic and resource exchanges among the Maasai and the Kikuyu of Maiella and Enoosupukia (Kioko & Bollig 2015), Pokot and Turkana (Bollig & Österle 2007; McCabe 2004), and Maasai and Kalenjin (Berntsen 1979). In West Africa, Hagberg (1998) similarly found that despite persistent conflict, farmers and herders still engage in social and economic cooperation.

Permanent relations between Fulani pastoralists and the local people in Ghana only date to the early twentieth century (Tonah 2005; Oppong 2002). In many parts of Ghana these relations were slow to develop, with the exception of the northern part, where there were already temporary relations before colonialism which subsequently became permanent. As Fulani pastoralists settled permanently in Ghana, they established various forms of interactions with local people. They have, for instance, engaged in exchange with local communities, rendering services such as cattle entrustment and the use of bullocks to plough farmers' land, and helping with farm labor. They have established friendly relationships with community members, shared social solidarity, and cooperated in the use of resources (land and water). Strong social networks between the Fulani and local chiefs, cattle dealers, government officials, politicians, and landowners in host communities have also been established, all of which lay the groundwork for determining conflict or cooperation.

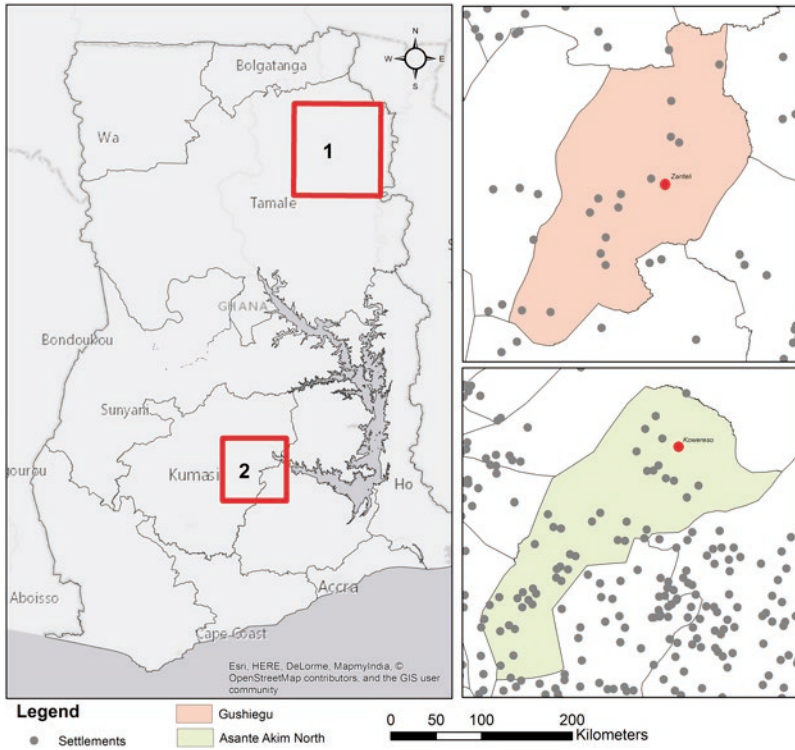
In many situations, farmers and herders can be conceptualized as cultural neighbors. Being ethnically, socially, and culturally different, and despite violent conflicts, they co-exist side by side in the same communities and engage in many forms of economic and social interaction. Cultural neighborhood describes two groups that are ethnically and culturally different but live in the same community or geographical space and engage in peaceful interactions such as trade, whilst occasionally engaging in competition and conflicts. We argue from a conceptualization of cultural neighborhood and everyday peace that despite violent conflicts, these Ghanaian farmers and herders co-exist and cooperate in many ways. To this end, we examine various conditions and forms of co-existence and cooperation between farmers and herders.

Methods of the Study

This study was carried out in Kowereso in the Asante Akim North District in Southern Ghana and in Zantile in the Gushiegu District in Northern Ghana (Figure 1). These two communities were selected because in these locations Fulani herders cooperate and co-exist peacefully with farmers as cultural neighbors. This peaceful interaction allows for a comparative and theoretical analysis of the different historical timelines of Fulani integration into south and north Ghana.

This study was conducted between June 2013 and February 2014, using ethnographic interviews, narratives, participant observations, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Farmers, Fulani, cattle owners, traditional chiefs, community leaders, government officials, and community members were included in the sample to help provide an in-depth understanding of farmer-herder cooperation. The breakdown of the 294 interviews is shown in Table 1. Issues discussed in these interviews include reasons for conflicts between farmers and herders, history of farmer-herder relations, ways of cooperation between farmers and herders, elements of cultural

Figure 1. Map Showing Study Communities



neighborhood in communities, and how everyday peace is built. A total of four FGDs were conducted—two with Fulani herders and two with cattle owners (two in each of the study areas). The FGDs were useful in foregrounding many issues and contributing to the overall quality of the discussions.

Table 1. Information on Interviews Conducted

Respondents	Numbers	
	Agogo	Gushiegu
Farmers	43	44
Fulani Herders	36	38
Cattle Owners	8	15
Traditional Chiefs	16	16
Government Officials	6	9
Opinion Leaders	3	6
Community residents/households	25	28
Total	137	157

Conceptualizing Cooperation

This study is situated theoretically within conceptualizations of everyday peace and cultural neighborhood. Cooperation is a process by which actors build mutual relationships, adjust their goals and actions, and adapt towards common positions to achieve mutual benefits and stabilize their interaction (Scheffran et al. 2012). In processes of cooperation, groups come together not only to address disagreements among and between themselves, but also to achieve mutually beneficial arrangements such as are common in farmer-pastoralist modes of cooperation. There could be cooperation among groups when there is conflict or when there is no conflict. For instance, examples of cooperation between farmers and herders include: pastoralists paying compensation for crop damage; traditional leaders settling violent conflicts; entrustment of cattle; finding lost cattle in times of cattle rustling; and even resolving conflicts amicably among themselves without resorting to the police, in particular regarding cattle raiding (see Glowacki & Gönc 2013; Unruh 2005; Cleaver 2001). Positive cooperation with the members of the community where Fulani settle is based on their relations and social networks with cattle buyers, butchers, traders, chiefs, and landowner groups, all of which enable them to build stronger networks.

Embedded in farmer-herder cooperation is the theory of everyday peace which, according to Mac Ginty (2014), is a bottom-up approach to peace building involving routinized practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict. These routinized norms and practices involve coping mechanisms such as avoidance, everyday social practices of coexistence and tolerance, reciprocity, and unspoken pacts whereby actors agree to abide by the same ground rules (Mac Ginty 2014).

Also important in pastoralists' cooperation is the concept of *cultural neighborhood*, which was developed from long-term comparative anthropological fieldwork to describe inter-ethnic relations between ethnic groups of southern Ethiopia, where cultural and ethnic diversity are part and parcel of inter-ethnic communication (Gabbert 2014:15).

...Cultural neighborhood is a community that traverses ethnic boundaries. Cultural neighborhood denotes a "community of place" [...] that is as much a spatial fact as a mode of interaction. Essential features of cultural neighborhood are patterns of social and spatial organization like common habitats, intimate acquaintance and mutually intelligible customs and modes of communication as well as knowledge about the "Other" [...].

Cultural neighborhood is not just about living in the same geographical space and having knowledge of each other. Knowing a neighbor entails close-knit contact and total understanding of the needs, likes, and dislikes of your neighbor, based on several years of cohabitation, interaction, contact, and communication. Gabbert (2014) maintains that cultural neighbors

could be friends and allies, who cooperate in peaceful ways, or enemies, who are respected for their strength and virility and engage in conflicts. In cultural neighborhood, the two groups could engage in inter-marriages; bond friendships as institutionalized friendship; trade; co-residence and adaptation; and cross-cutting ties such as kinship (Gabbert 2014).

In the case of Ghana, farmer-Fulani pastoralist relations provide examples of cultural neighborhood. As two groups who are ethnically and culturally distinct, farmers and herders have engaged in long-term relations spanning almost a century. They engage in conflict as well as bond friendships, trade, co-residence, and adoption, cross-cutting ties and on rare occasions, inter-marriages. Cultural neighborhood thus involves knowledge of each other developed through long years of close contact. Whether friends or foes, the groups under consideration know and respect each other while also cultivating their differences. Farmers and pastoralists have developed spatial and close-knit social contacts and knowledge of each other's history through long years of interactions, which enables them to predict the actions of their neighbor as well as the neighbor's reactions to the actions of the other that touches the border area between their territories. Another central element of cultural neighborhood is communication. For instance, how are conflicts openly resolved, and who are the actors taking a leading role in resolving them?

Results

This section discusses the empirical findings of this study, beginning with a discussion of violent farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana. We then focus on case studies of cooperation between farmers and herders in Kowreso and Zanteli, followed by an in-depth discussion of the cases, showing levels and examples of cooperation between farmers and herders through the lenses of everyday peace and cultural neighborhood. We then examine the question of how cooperative interactions are achieved during violent conflict, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

Violent Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Ghana

This study is situated within the larger context of farmer-herder relations in West Africa, which involves issues of land, politics, and larger conflicts. Understanding farmer-herder conflicts requires a holistic approach dealing with the processual drivers of conflict (Moritz 2010). Relations between farmers and herders in West Africa changed following colonialism, becoming more about competition and violence, due to changing modes of production, urbanization, demographic pressure, and decreasing availability of pastureland (Wilson 1984). Bassett's (1988, 1993) study of conflicts between Senufu farmers and Fulani herders in northern Cote d'Ivoire demonstrated that farmer-herder conflicts are not just about ethnic hatred, resource scarcity, and crop damage, but that the conflicts are also due to political policies and

issues of land. Bassett (1988:455) states that “although it can be argued that the stress of crop damage alone is a sufficient condition for tensions between the two groups, it cannot alone itself explain why the Senufu are driven to murder Fulani herders.”

Conflicts between farmers and herders in Ghana developed from a period of non-contact with sporadic conflicts to regular contacts with increasing conflicts involving multiple actors. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the few conflicts that existed between farmers and herders were mainly centered on crop destruction and cattle rustling. Particularly in southern Ghana around Agogo, these contacts and interactions with the local people were slow to develop. Contacts between farmers and Fulani only began in Agogo in the 1970s, when Fulani occasionally migrated from Burkina Faso through northern Ghana or Nigeria through Benin and Togo to Agogo. Conflicts during this period were few and hardly violent. However, the early 1980s and 1990s saw violent confrontations due to increasing numbers of herders and cattle in Ghana. These reports of violence were widespread both in rural communities and the Ghanaian media.

In our study of farmer-herder conflicts, local farmers noted that violent conflicts between them and herders have doubled, as evidenced by the deaths of more than forty farmers in Agogo between 2000 and 2015. Herders similarly cited an increase of aggression and violence towards them. While the number of herders killed is not known, claims suggest large numbers of over forty. In the case of Gushiegu, violent farmer-herder conflicts have been rarely fatal, except in August 2011, when fourteen herders were killed by a group of Konkomba farmers. Farmers and herders in Gushiegu also have a history of tensions revolving around cattle rustling and crop destruction. A cursory look at farmer-herder conflicts from 1988 to the present finds local communities often complaining of attacks on them by Fulani herders, as well as reports in the media about these events. From 2006 to 2016, the Ghanaian media have reported over one hundred cases of tensions and violent confrontations between farmers and herders. Agogo alone was the focus of more than half of these stories. Between January and March 2016, more than ten people, based on media reports, lost their lives in violent conflicts. Phone interviews with farmers and herders also confirmed more than fourteen deaths and killing of over six hundred cattle in the same period. However, official statistics of farmer-herder conflicts tend to present lower figures (Table 2) which are generally not up-to-date due to lack of accurate data or irregular and unreported conflicts. The Ghanaian state often responds to complaints through the deployment of a security task-force called Operation Cow Leg (OCL). However, there are no media reports written about the many situations in which farmers and herders co-exist and cooperate peacefully and resolve conflicts amicably. Peaceful cooperation, unlike conflict, is seen as a “non-event” and therefore not studied by researchers (Rogers 1999). Hence, this study examines exclusively farmer-herder cooperation in the midst of “increasing” violent conflicts.

Table 2. Reported Cases of Farmer-Herder Conflicts (2009-2013)

Cases Reported	Number	
	Agogo	Gushiegu
Deaths	12	14
Injuries (gun shots/cutlass wounds)	16	12
Destruction of Property (burning of houses)	N/A	19
Crop Damage	300	N/A

Source: Extracted from Ghana Police Records (Agogo), interviews with police and government officials (August 2013)

Everyday Peaceful Cooperation between Farmers and Fulani Herders

Although farmers and herders cooperate more frequently than they actually engage in violent conflicts, conflict is much more often reported and discussed both by the media and by the populace.³ Cooperation between the two groups has been a long and enduring hallmark of their relationship, present even during times of violent conflicts. Particularly in Northern Ghana, historical cooperative relations extend back for centuries, when transhumant Fulani occasionally would migrate to northern Ghana in search of resources. As these migrations continued, cooperative relations and interactions grew stronger, with cattle from the communities being entrusted to Fulani herders, or Fulani with their own cattle seeking permanent residence in communities.⁴ As Meier et al. (2007) note, pastoral interactions occur at multiple geographical and temporal nodes, with the interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors adding complexity to the dynamics that are punctuated by both cooperation and violent conflict.

Farmers and herders enact cooperation mainly in three ways. The first is the way in which peaceful co-existence and co-dependence are based on mutually beneficial and symbiotic relations, involving cross-cutting ties and routinized processes of social interactions that are regularly repeated. The second way is the peaceful resolution, mediation, and settlement of conflicts, where third parties intervene through actors and institutions. The third way is represented by social order, where there is stability and normalcy in social interactions (absence of violence in the community). Everyday practices of co-existence include entrustment of cattle into the care of Fulani, Fulani using bullocks to plough farmers' land for planting, and Fulani helping with farm labor.

Cattle rearing has been a long tradition in northern Ghana and fits well within the cultural milieu of Fulani pastoralists. This tradition has helped to build strong relations and exchanges between cattle businessmen, local chiefs, and farmers who own cattle. They cooperate mainly in the use and sharing of resources, particularly land and water usage. There are usually freeholds of land given to Fulani by communities for settlement and farming in Zantile. The Fulani cattle are allowed to feed on left-overs (crop residues)

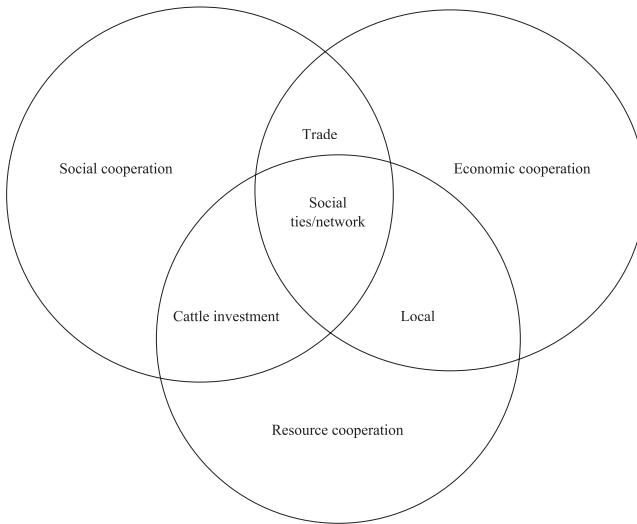
from the farms and drink from water sources such as rivers, streams, dams, and dug-out bow-holes. In Kowerese, there are exchanges of goods, with farmers giving food crops such as plantain, watermelon, and vegetables to herders in exchange for milk.

Trade relations are well-developed between farmers and herders, who share markets and sell and buy from each other. Women traders in particular have good relations with herders, who purchase basic food items such as salt, sugar, and bread from them, whilst herders or their wives sell milk, eggs, and fowl to market women and community members. Women traders are therefore affected disproportionately when violence between farmers and herders soar. A trader who sold bowls of maize and salt to one of the Fulani respondents remarked that:

In fact the herders have always bought things from us the traders [...]. I have befriended many of them and they often come here to buy from me. When the violence broke out last year (2012) and Fulani could not come into the town center, it really affected me because most of those who buy from me are the herders. A good number of them are very sociable and often joke with me here [...]. (Interview with Trader, Agogo Town Center, September 22, 2013)

As the interviewee observed, violence hinders mutually beneficial herder-community trade relations. Fulani herders are regularly present at cattle markets selling cattle to butchers and businessmen. In the Gushiegu Cattle Market, Fulani often constitute half of the traders present, and their interactions with others remain cordial. Fulani settlements in communities afford many relationships with different kinds of people. The Fulani develop personal friendships with butchers, chiefs, elders, and farmers, in which gifts are exchanged on regular basis. These friendships are characterized by visitations, involvement in communal labor, material support, and social solidarity towards their host communities. The term *aboach* (meaning “my good friend”) was often used by traders and others in their remarks concerning the herders. A high level of social solidarity between Fulani and community members in Zanteli is represented by reciprocal participation in naming ceremonies, funerals, weddings, and festivals (see Breusers et al. 1998). Fulani contribute both financially and socially to these ceremonies. Additionally, the two groups pray together in the same mosques. Their cooperative relationships also involve economic dimensions such as material support, loaning of money and food (see also Pelican 2012), and even occasional marriage ties. Absence of cordial relations with herders and the difficulty of caring for their cattle and transacting trades efficiently made community members in Toti and Sugu (in Gushiegu) lament the forced movement of Fulani from their communities after the Fulani were attacked in 2011.

Situations of everyday cooperation between farmers and herders are illustrated in Figure 2, exemplified by forms of cooperation such as trade, cattle entrustment, and land leases/releases. Everyday cooperation is categorized into three types: social, economic, and resource-oriented. Social cooperation

Figure 2. Nature of Farmer-Herder Cooperation

includes inter-personal relations such as friendships and exchanges, social visits, and social solidarity. Economic cooperation deals with matters relating to production, goods and services such as trade, payment of compensation, material support, and the loaning of money and labor (employment to herd cattle). Finally, resource-oriented cooperation relates to the use of natural resources such as the sharing of resources, including land leases and deals. The intersections between all these three types of cooperation are social ties/networks which influence and provide the impetus for cooperation. From Figure 2, trade, for example, intersects with both social and economic cooperation, because interpersonal relations are needed to build economic ties. Cattle entrustment enables farmers and pastoralists to cooperate socially in interactions and visitations and to demonstrate social solidarity. Land is seen in both resource cooperation, which is provided for herders to settle, farm and rear their cattle, as well as in economic cooperation, where Fulani herders get their source of labor (employment) from cattle entrustment through economic payment by landowners and chiefs.

In all, farmers and herders are engaged in routinized forms of everyday peace and cooperation which includes avoidance, reciprocity, ensuring social order and cultural norms of peacemaking/cooperation, such as showing respect—for example, greetings, social ceremonies, and social solidarity (Mac Ginty 2014; Mac Ginty & Richmond 2013).

Cooperation in the Midst of Conflict

Despite ethnic boundaries, cultural differences, and conflicts over issues such as crop destruction, in most instances, Fulani herders are friends and

allies within their host communities and cooperate in peaceful ways with local farmers. As cultural neighbors living side by side in the same communities, they know and respect each other for their strength and virility, engaging in effective modes of communication in conflict resolution and mediation.

In Kowereso (Agogo) and Zantile (Gushiegu), elements of cultural neighborhood are evident. In Zantile, for instance, while herders have at times engaged in conflict with farmers, they also cooperate and negotiate compensation payment. In this interaction, the involvement of chiefs, elders, and the police are important in maintaining cooperation during outbreaks of violence. Also, cross-cutting ties are conspicuous between the two—both are Muslims and have similar methods of cattle rearing. According to Breusers et al. (1998), although in certain local settings relations between Mossi and Fulbe are strained, it does not necessarily mean that in all cases relations between the two are conflict-ridden. The authors maintain that there are other settings where these tensions seem almost absent. Thus, despite periodic violent conflicts, there exist many examples of cooperative interaction between Fulani and their neighbors in Kowereso and Zantile.

Example 1 - Kowereso: No Violence in the Midst of Conflict. Kowereso remains a unique case in the midst of violence between farmers and herders in Agogo. Farmers in Kowereso view their relations with herders as better than the relations in other communities in Agogo where conflicts are often violent and relations are antagonistic. Kowereso is a farming community that has vast and fertile lands comprising forest and savannah woodland vegetations as well as a number of water bodies including the Kowere River. These conditions make this area suitable for both agriculture and animal rearing, and hence attract a high migrant population of both farmers and herders. About 90 percent of the inhabitants of the community are migrants from northern Ghana who came to the area in the early 1970s to engage in farming. Fulani pastoralists are also situated within the community with their cattle. The community is thus ethnically diverse and has two chiefs—the main chief of the community (*Odikro*) installed by the *Agogomanhene* and the *Zongo* chief representing the migrants.⁵ Most Fulani herders, like migrant farmers, get short-term land leases from landowners for rearing their cattle, although others, according to the community chief, are illegal squatters.

While in almost all the other communities studied in Agogo the attitude of the residents towards the herders was negative and antipathetic, farmers in Kowereso emphasized that they maintain cordial relationships and friendships with the herders. They noted that, unlike other communities where farmers and herders have attacked and killed each other, there has never been a single violent conflict or fatality in the community. One farmer stated that:

[...] we hear stories of them killing other people in some communities, but we have had no single death here [...]. The reason is that we do not want any trouble with them and so they respect us and we also do. [...].

In case of crop damage, a committee helps negotiate a settlement. And here, we know all the Fulani grazing their cattle. (Interview with 39-year-old Farmer at Kowereso, June 23, 2013)

In Kowereso, Fulani herders would often come to the village to purchase items like sugar, bread, and food, and sit in the community for a while, chatting heartily with community members before departing. Two female traders stated that it was not uncommon for herders to come to buy things from them and sit down to have conversations. There were also examples of sharing between the community and the herders. The herders provide the local people with milk, whilst the farmers give herders food items whenever the herders request them. It was observed that the herders and their cattle were located not far from local farms—about two hundred meters. Three farmers whose farms were closer to the cattle noted that crop destruction by the cattle is rare. For instance, one of the farmers explained that:

I must confess that there have only been few stray cattle that have moved into our farms to destroy crops. Sometimes, the herders come over here to collect cassava, yam, vegetables and fresh maize from us. We have also gotten milk and sometimes meat from them during the Muslim festivals. We talk regularly – daily greetings, talk about our various jobs and personal conversations. I can say that so far our relations are going on well and I have not heard or seen any violence here [...]. One nasty thing happened some time ago. One of the ‘strange’ Fulani whose cattle strayed and destroyed one of my colleagues’ farm almost destroyed our relations. Fortunately all the Fulani here supported us and the problem was resolved. You know the *Yalingonji* Fulani are normally the problem and for the Fulani here they are just very friendly.... (Interview with Farmer at Kowereso, June 20, 2013)

The transcript above shows that the farmers have established personal relations and understandings that bind their relationships and prevent violence, even when there may be grievances. The crop destruction by the temporary migrant herders (*Yalingonji*) which almost ruined their peaceful co-existence was resolved when both the sedentary herders and farmers understood and agreed that it was not the settled herders who were the cause of the problem, but rather the *Yalingonji*. This is what defines cultural neighborhood: The two groups transverse ethnic boundaries and understand each other’s differences and mode of communication, develop intimate contact, and communicate in times of disagreements (Gabbert 2014).

Whenever conflicts arise between the herders and farmers, the latter are paid compensation for the destruction of the crops. Both farmers and herders noted that they are generally able to reach compromises and resolve contentions over crop destruction. When the farmers and herdsmen/cattle owners are unable to resolve the conflict between them, the unit committee members come in to settle the issue. An interview with a unit committee member, a farmer himself, revealed that members of the community know the herdsmen and their cattle owners, and therefore it is easy to reach

amicable settlements of disputes that arise as a result of damage to crops. As Cleaver (2001) and Leach et al. (1997) argue about the role of institutions in resolving farmer-herder conflicts, the unit committee is an informal institution for negotiating and preserving the overall harmony between farmers and herders. Comprised of elected community members who are part of the local government structure, the unit committee in Kowereso has also become an important institution for the resolution of conflicts between farmers and herders. However, the committee has no power to enforce its decisions with regard to compensation payment.

In a nutshell, elements of cultural neighborhood include the fact that Kowereso is comprised of *Akan* and *Kassena-Nakan* ethnicities as farmers and the Fulani as herders. Fulani herders have lived in the community since the 1970s; formal relations developed in 2006, and herders interact daily with community members. Also, despite occasional conflicts over crop damage, the two groups have yet found ways to resolve and avoid conflicts. They share food, trade together, and negotiate over crop destruction through the unit committee. While one section of the community complains about crop destructions, these complaints do not degenerate into violent confrontations. Their relationships take the form of individually-built relations/friendships, conflict avoidance, and the paying of compensation. Farmers and herders live ambivalently between peace and conflict (see Roth 2001).

Example 2- Zanteli: Farmers and Fulani Herders Co-exist Peacefully. Zanteli is the capital of one of the eight area councils of the Gushiegu District Assembly, about seven kilometers from the district capital, Gushiegu.⁶ A major link to important towns, villages, and other districts east of the GDA, the community is a *Dagomba* settlement and almost all households are engaged in farming of yam, maize, millet, and/or groundnuts. Land in Zanteli, just as in all *Dagomba* settlements, is owned by chiefs in trust for the community. According to farmers and Fulani, the community has attracted many herders and cattle owners because of its peaceful nature and high level of acceptance of and respect for Fulani. Also, the area has vast and relatively fertile lands for cattle compared to other communities in the GDA. Fulani and farmers said they live peacefully and have for many years had no conflicts or petitions for herder evictions, which are commonly seen in other communities. Herders have bond friendships and daily interactions with the local people.

The four Fulani households interviewed, having stayed in other communities before, attest that Zanteli is unique in the sense that there are no violent attacks or harassment from community members, and peaceful co-existence between Fulani and the community has lasted for many years. Farmers in FGDs believed that cooperative relations with the Fulani are a result of successful communication between them. One of the farmers stated:

We learnt a lot of lessons from the previous Fulani who were here. After they left, we resolved that when a Fulani arrives in the community, proper channel of communication between us was going to be established whereby

issues are made very clear to them. For instance, there will not be any “criminal” Fulani behavior in relations to cattle rustling, destruction of crops and Fulani will accept responsibility of paying compensation in case of destruction. We both (Fulani and farmers) understand this and this has largely guided our relations. The Fulani are very understandable and do not engage in any nefarious activities. (Interview on October 9, 2013)

This statement emphasizes that mutually agreed informal rules and guidelines for regulating community-Fulani relations are important for ensuring peaceful co-existence and social interactions. The community’s “laws” for regulating the conduct of herders also help to maintain cooperation, in contrast to relationships with the previous herders, who were not regulated by any laid-down conventions (called “unspoken pacts” in Mac Ginty’s 2012 conceptualization of everyday peace). Examples of these by-laws in Zantile include no movements of cattle in the night to prevent cattle theft, and herders must accept responsibility for crop damage and pay compensation should it occur. Chiefs have played an important role in maintaining cooperative interactions in the community; the elected assembly member of the area believed that the historical development of peaceful relations with Fulani was a result of brokerage by the chiefs. He maintains that chieftaincy remains an important traditional institution for fostering and maintaining social interactions, societal order and harmony in Zanteli. Chiefs, as managers of community lands, have final say in the acquisition and distribution of land and in matters regarding dispute settlement. They mediate disputes and determine compensation payment by cattle owners to farmers who generally accept their judgment. It is preferable that chiefs resolve their conflicts instead of the police. Unlike other communities where chiefs themselves are seen as a source of conflict, both herders and farmers in Zanteli trust and respected the chiefs’ decisions.

Fulani herders in the community also see their relationships with the village as mutually beneficial and cooperative. One herder describes his relationships with the community:

For my past 21 years here, I have peace and cooperative relations with the community mainly because... I obey community laws, respect them [...]. I have become part of the community and engage in communal labor, pray with the local people in the mosque, share water with them at the boreholes and trade with them. It is same with the other three groups of Fulani in the community. We have resolved together to obey laws of the community and not engage in what the previous Fulani were doing. During both *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid Ul-Adha*, we and the local people celebrate together and exchange food and meat. Gifts are exchanged between us. My wives trade with the community women and go to help them during funerals, naming ceremonies and weddings. We are like a family here. [...]. And both of us being Muslims have made this easy. (interview with Fulani cattle owner, Zantile, October 13, 2013)

The Fulani herder in this interview stressed the importance of religious bonds in fostering cooperative interactions within the community. Thus, belief in

Islam is a cross-cutting tie for forging cooperation and co-existence and sharing among cultural neighbors. The two groups worship regularly together in same mosques and have a feeling of “religious brotherhood,” which Stewart (2009) notes is important in mobilizing people for cooperation as opposed to violent conflict. The belief in Islam forges a religious bond in Zantile which contributes to peaceful relations between farmers and herders. This is similar to de Bruijn’s (2000) studies in central Mali, which emphasized that Islam creates bonds and forges peaceful co-existence between local farmers and Fulani herders. This was not a factor in Kowereso, where religion did not factor into community relationships. In that location, the religious background of Akan and some migrant farmers in general is Christian, whereas other migrant farmers and all the Fulani herders are Muslims. Migrant farmers in Kowereso instead emphasized cultural bonds such as their similar approach to cattle rearing and their shared northern background.

In sum, Zantile clearly shows elements of cultural neighborhood. Firstly, whereas farmers belong to the Dagomba ethnic group, the herders are ethnically Fulani. While the community overall is predominately Dagomba, there are four Fulani houses (each with a number of households) in the community. These two groups have lived together peacefully for over twenty years. Secondly, the two live side by side (cohabitation) in the community with daily visitations. The Fulani live in and are part of the community. Thirdly, they communicate daily, share water sources and markets, have daily interactions, trade, exchange commodities such as land, engage in cattle entrustment, and share cultural similarities. Both ethnicities are united by religion (Islam), which plays a significant role in maintaining cohesion despite their cultural differences and occasional conflicts over cattle theft and crop destructions.

Forms of Co-existence and Cooperation as seen in the Examples

Cooperation across Differences

The two examples of Zantile and Kowerese demonstrate that despite the spate of violence resulting in deaths and injuries, peace and cooperation between the two groups are still possible. Farmers and herders cooperate in many ways, as summarized in Table 3. Herders, for instance, claimed they could not live in Abrewapong (Agogo) and Jingboni (Gushiegu) due to a lack of cooperation between herders, farmers, and community members. The building of trust, shared values (such as religion and socio-cultural norms), and respect for each other have helped to sustain cooperative relations between the two groups in the locations examined here. These cases also indicate that effective communication is key to building good cooperative interactions. Reciprocal relations (exchange, friendship, visitations) are important for communication between the two groups. This is why Deutsch (2006) highlights effective communication as necessary for openness, trust

Table 3. Summary of Farmer-Fulani Cooperative Relationships

Form of cooperation	Specificities
Sharing of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chiefs give out land to herders to settle and rear their cattle – Cooperating with landowners in land leases despite community evictions, refusal, and opposition to land leases – Allowing cattle to drink from dug-out bore-holes – Allowing cattle to eat left-overs/residues from the farms after harvest
Friendships and exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Visitations to each other's homes – Everyday greetings – Conversations – Sharing jokes – Sharing gifts – Eating and sharing meals – Exchange of food—milk, meat, vegetables, and other food items – Material support – Loaning of money to each other – Entrustment of cattle to herders and the provision of food items, clothing, and money for the upkeep of herders
Communal labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helping in community activities and projects – Financial contribution towards community projects like bore-holes and their repair – Helping in farm labor like ploughing and harvesting
Payment of compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Most effective mechanism for reaching compromise after crop destruction
Unit committee in conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Helping mediate conflicts between the two – Determine payment of compensation including the amount (in Kowereso)
Institution of chieftaincy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The highest authority for building cooperative interactions – Settle and adjudicates in disputes – Determines the payment of compensation including the amount
Worshipping together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Praying in the mosque together – Cooking and sharing food during religious festivals – Travelling together in bigger towns to say Friday prayers (in Zanteli)
Social solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attending each other's funerals, naming ceremonies, weddings, and festivities
Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial contribution towards social gatherings – Petty trading such as sale of food items to herders – Sale of milk – Sale of animals such as cattle, sheep, fowl, and eggs to community members

building and friendly attitudes, sensitivity, common interests, and mutual benefits, ultimately fostering cooperation between opposing parties.

These two example communities demonstrate that despite obvious ethnic, cultural, and personal differences, local farmers and herders have been able to forge economic, social, and religious relations that transcend these differences. Toru's (2010) treatise on trans-ethnic ties between the Daasanach of Ethiopia and their neighbors such as the Turkana, Hmar, Nyangatom, Kara, and Arbore reflects similar trans-ethnic cross cutting ties, which include co-existence, trade, bond friendship, similar culture of cattle keeping, shared religion, and exchange between local farmers and herders. Cross-cutting ties help to prevent the escalation of conflicts and ensure preservation of social order (Toru 2010; Bates 1983). Trust is also necessary to maintain cooperative relations. This is complicated by conflicts in other areas and prejudicial stereotypes about Fulani, especially regarding cattle theft and robbery (see Bukari & Schareika 2015).

Cooperation in Resource Use

One area of cooperation between farmers and herders is the use of resources, especially land and water. Land leases to pastoralists are the most common form of resource cooperation. Particularly in Zantile, herders are given land on a freehold basis to settle, herd their cattle, and farm once they settle in a community. Before herders arrive in a community to settle, they will have already established ties with a cattle owner. As they arrive, the cattle owner takes them to the chief, who has previously been informed about the herders. Land is then allotted to the herders for settlement and rearing of their cattle. The herders are also allowed to farm on the land around their settlements.

The Fulani reciprocally send gifts to the community through the chief and occasionally give cattle for community sacrifices and festivities. In the case of Kowereso, cooperation in relation to the land is more at the individual rather than communal level. Following community objection to land leases, chiefs no longer lease out community lands to herders. Rather, herders cooperate with individual landowners for land deals. These individual cooperative interactions are informally arranged and are in "secrecy" as a landowner put it. Another stated: "our cordiality with Fulani cattle owners is solely based on our lease of land to them. I have few herders whom I have leased my land to."

There are many grounds for sharing of water by both farmers and herders. Rivers, streams, lakes, and dams are used both by farmers and herders for domestic chores, dry season farming and also for watering livestock. Cattle are always at the Bulugu Dam to drink while community members also come to fetch water for drinking, washing, and domestic chores. Uniquely, dug-out bore-holes are shared by both the community and the cattle. In Zanteli during the dry season, herders' cattle are allowed to drink from bore-holes. Community members pump out water from the bore-holes for the cattle when herders come with them. This practice is approved by the

community, since the dry season presents challenges to herders in finding water. Bollig (1998) mentions similar reciprocal exchanges during stress (drought) among the Pokot pastoralists of northern Kenya, where a history of exchanges of livestock, pasture fields, and water, along with transfers of other commodities and strong emotional ties have helped to maintain good relations during these droughts, in spite of hostilities with other pastoral groups.

Role of Compensation

One of the means of enhancing cooperative interactions between herders and farmers is compensation for crop destruction, which is basically cash payments by cattle owners to farmers, following bargaining to reach a price for payment. In cases where there are no other cooperative avenues between the two, compensation payment has served to prevent conflict escalation and help maintain peaceful relations, as seen in Kowereso. In most communities in Agogo (Abrewapong, Mankala, Matuka, Kasanso, Onyemso, and Bebuso) where violence between farmers and herders is high, compensation is important in the de-escalation of violence and in helping to encourage dialogue. Generally, compensation is both an escalation and de-escalation “tool” in farmer-herder relations, in that its payment strengthens dialogue, while failure to pay may escalate conflicts. If compensation is insufficient or too high, violence could erupt. There are four main ways through which compensation payment is made:

1. *Self-negotiation*: Farmers and cattle owners/herders discuss the extent of crop destruction and come to an agreement on the compensation to be paid.
2. *Mediation by a committee*: As seen in Kowereso, the unit committee spearheads dialogue between farmers and herders/cattle owners and determines the appropriate compensation to be paid.
3. *Adjudication by community chief*: This involves adjudication and determination of payment by chiefs and elders of the community.
4. *Determination by the police*: The police also mediate on occasion between farmers and herders to ensure payment for crop destructions.

Points two, three, and four involve third party mediation and are utilized when the farmer and herder cannot reach an agreement on the compensation or when the herder/cattle owners refuse to pay. The police are drawn into compensation payments when conflicts have escalated after the unit committee or chief is unable to mediate the payment, or if the herders/cattle owners refuse to abide by the agreed compensation payment following mediation. To reiterate how negotiations for compensation are reached, a farmer in Kowereso explained the process of negotiation:

When conflict involves crop destruction, the farmer needs evidence of the specific Fulani herder whose cattle destroyed his farm. Without the farmer or others in the community physically seeing the herder, he cannot lay claim to crop damage payments. Should the farmer be able to identify

the herder, he contacts the cattle owner. When the cattle owner accepts responsibility, negotiation starts. In the process of negotiation, the farmer and cattle owner do an assessment of the damage. The farmer then gives the cost of the crop damage and the two bargain to come to compromise. If there is a deadlock in the negotiations, the case is taken to the unit committee to mediate and determine a cost to be paid to the farmer. (Interview with farmer, Kowerso, July 20, 2013)

The process of negotiation itself is fraught with disputing claims and counter-claims. In a recorded conversation between a Fulani herder and a tomato farmer, the two engaged in a heated argument over the destruction of the farm and failure of the herder to pay for the damage despite the unit committee's determination of compensation payment. A member of the unit committee then intervened and mediated for a truce.

In case the conflict is taken to the chief, it is the chief who determines the payment. The senior elder (*Wulaana*) to the chief of Zamashagu narrates how a conflict involving crop damage reported to the chief was settled:

Just this farming season (of 2013), a Komkomba farmer in the community reported to the chief that Fulani cattle destroyed his maize farm and didn't want to take responsibility for the damage. When the chief was informed, he sent for the Fulani and asked him about the damage. According to the Fulani, it was a small boy herding the cattle but the boy denied that he destroyed the crops. Other farmers, however, said it was the boy and therefore the Fulani man's cattle. He finally accepted responsibility and I and two other elders went to assess the farm and reported to chief. The farmer was then asked about the cost of the crops damaged and he stated it was a two and half acre maize farm. The farmer said the damage was GHS700 (EUR 175). The Fulani asked that the amount be reduced for him and it was finally agreed that he paid GHS400 (EUR 100). Up till date, he is yet to pay. He promised to give the money, but has not yet. We are still waiting. If he doesn't pay and chief comes back (accordingly the chief was not around), we will summon him again. (Interview with Wulaana Zamashagu, November 26, 2013)

Thus compensation payment involves processes of negotiations that comprise institutions such as the traditional system (consisting of the chief), the community (unit committee), and formal state institutions (the police). Actors position themselves to gain favorable benefits from the negotiation process. Overall, the successful negotiation of compensation helps prevent escalation of conflict, whereas its failure can create conflicts.

How Cooperative Interactions Are Achieved in Violent Conflict Situation

Cooperation contributes to the resolution and settlement of conflicts among farmers and herders, as supported by local actors (traditional chiefs, community elders, cattle owners, opinion leaders, farmer associations) and government officials (the police, assembly members, and agricultural officials).

These parties can help to prevent the escalation of violent conflicts, brokering peace between conflicting parties through negotiations, mediations and the signing of peace accords (Glowacki & Gönc 2013).

Central government, local authorities, traditional authorities, security agencies, local committees, farmer associations, and local groups play an important role in managing farmer-herder violent conflict de-escalation and resolution. Whenever conflicts occur, the state enforces peacekeeping through police and military deployment to evict Fulani herders. Local authorities are responsible for security in their areas of decentralized administration; the Agogo district liaises with the national government for the deployment of security forces in the area. The police and military were deployed to end violence in Gushiegu following the August 2011 attack. Operation Cow Leg (OCL) was first used in April 1988, when violence between farmers and Fulani herders in many parts of Ghana escalated (see Tonah 2002). Since then several OCLs have been undertaken in 1989, July 1999, June 2000, 2010, and 2012–2016 across the country, with the aim of expelling and evicting all illegal herders from Ghanaian lands in an attempt to end the violence. However, despite the actions of security agencies, the OCL, evictions, and forced removal of Fulani herders, continuing violent confrontations question the effectiveness of these methods.

Many of the respondents believed that state measures responding to conflicts are not effective, as violence keeps recurring. Younger farmers in particular see the core issues (destruction of crops and competition for land) as still unresolved, since the underlying causes of conflict between farmers and herders are rarely investigated by state and local authorities. The farmers question the existence of any concrete plan/policy by the Ghanaian state/government for comprehensive conflict resolution, due to the politicization of conflicts and the vested interest of politicians, state officials and others, particularly in Agogo. These authorities are either using these conflicts for political capital, or else some of them own cattle and thus want to protect their herds. Farmers claimed that cattle owners who are not residents of Agogo are politically connected to high level government officials, and therefore their herds are protected by these authorities. Livestock ownership is embedded in the political and economic interest of businessmen, politicians, chiefs, community elders, state and local officials, and farmers who are the real owners of the cattle. The fact that most of them are absentee owners makes it difficult to include them in discussions for finding solutions to farmer-herder conflicts. The former Member of Parliament (MP) of the Asante Akim North Constituency (Agogo) in 2016 has, for instance, accused the then ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) of supporting herders and cattle owners for political purposes. The MP himself (a member of the then opposition New Patriotic Party—NPP) has been accused by both Fulani and cattle owners of politicizing these conflicts for political capital. Thus state and local officials, politicians, and chiefs are often not trusted as mediators since they are seen as contributing to the escalating violence and lacking “political will” to decisively help in resolving conflicts (see Elfversson 2013).

Discussion

Several authors argue that farmer-herder relations in West Africa have become more violent (Davidheiser & Luna 2008; Hussein et al. 2000), questioning whether relations in the past were symbiotic (Moritz 2006). Breusers et al. (1998), for instance, argue that farmer-herder relations cannot be seen as dichotomous relationships between two bounded ethnic groups, and that relations between Mossi farmers and Fulani herders are multi-stranded, not just that they meet in multiple settings. Our theoretical analysis and case examples, however, demonstrate that farmers and herders can create amicable relationships where interdependence makes it plausible, beneficial, and necessary for them to cooperate and build peace. At the same time, as two opposing cultures, there are occasional outbreaks of conflicts, although these conflicts do not in any way hinder interactions between the two groups. The existence of cooperative relations between two groups does not necessarily mean that they are always on good terms and do not have conflictual relations (Rogers 1999). The long-term cooperative relations between farmers and Fulani that developed in northern Ghana in pre-colonial times have continued to the present, in spite of these occasional conflicts.

In the examples discussed, the roles of local institutions (the unit committee) and of traditional rulers (chiefs) are important in ensuring cooperation with regard to compensation payment to appease farmers for crop destructions. There are some differences in the two case sites. Elements of cultural neighborhood are more pronounced in Zantile than in Kowereso. This is due to the historical contacts of farmers and herders in northern Ghana which began many years earlier than in southern Ghana and helped to build strong relations between them as typical cultural neighbors. Also, the levels of violence in both cases differ. Agogo has seen more violent attacks than Gushiegu. In terms of numbers, there have been over forty deaths involving pastoralists and farmers in Agogo, as opposed to sixteen deaths in Gushiegu. In addition, cooperative interactions with herders are stronger in Gushiegu than they are in Agogo. Relationships that exist between farmers and Fulani herders in Agogo exist mainly at the individual level between farmers and few local cattle owners and their herders rather than encompassing the whole community.

Moreover, actor roles in cooperation in the two examples differ. Zantile has witnessed the active involvement of all actors, including chief, elders, farmers, cattle owners, assemblymen, and residents in helping build and maintain everyday relations between farmers and herders. On the other hand, in Kowereso some actors have been skeptical of relations with the Fulani because of their violent conflicts in other communities. Their mistrust of the Fulani is influenced by past killings of farmers who were friendly with herders but who were killed when disagreements ensued. They cite the killing of Kojo Bila on January 14, 2012, who had maintained friendly relations with the Fulani herders and often hosted them in his house. Nevertheless, after a minor disagreement with the herders, the Fulani killed him and ran away.

Of considerable importance also is the local dynamic of cooperation between farmers and herders which is very much dependent on social networks and ties between farmers, community residents, and leaders on the one hand, and herders and cattle owners on the other hand. A cattle owner with good relations with the community and farmers will not have his herders attacked, even when crops have been destroyed. Farmers would negotiate with the cattle owner for compensation payment or simply forgive. Interestingly, climatic conditions and struggles among actors over resources in Agogo and in Gushiegu differ sharply and have influenced social relations, particularly with regard to conflicts in the two sites. Whilst the case of Agogo has seen resource abundance (especially the fertility of land) and conducive climatic conditions playing a role in farmer-herder relations, particularly with respect to conflicts, Gushiegu has conversely experienced stress and scarcity of resources as relevant factors influencing conflict. Finally, whereas the unit committee forms an important part of the system for conflict resolution and cooperation in Kowereso, that entity is absent in Zantile.

Conclusion

Overall, we have discussed cooperative relations between Fulani herders and farmers from cultural neighborhood and everyday peace perspectives. Both groups interact daily, are friends, share resources (land and water), and trade together, in contrast to media and national discourses, which focus on violence and conflict. Our theoretical approach adds to a better understanding of the dialectical nature of farmer-herder relations, where conflict and peace/cooperation shape their relations for better or worse. Adding to the ethnic dimensions of farmer-herder relations in which ethnic boundary-making, cohabitation, and longevity of co-residence are important in the type of relations that farmers and herders build, this study expands our understanding of peace and conflict studies in which two feuding parties are constantly engaged in different levels of interactions of amity or hostility.

Our study is the first that explicitly investigates the conditions and forms of cooperation between farmers and herders in Ghana. Cultural neighborhood calls for a “hybridity of peace” through intra-group negotiations, avoidance, reciprocity, adaptation, recognition of differences, and reconciliation. A bottom-up approach to cooperative peacebuilding could resolve violent farmer-herder conflicts through local forms of dispute resolution and reconciliation, building proper communication among actors in farmer-herder conflicts, and the introduction of informal localized norms/rules. Cooperation transcends and also depoliticizes the conflicts that often divide herders and farmers and offers a favorable ground for the recognition of communities. We offer a unique look at cooperation from the bottom-up grassroots levels of everyday community practices, including local forms of dispute resolution and reconciliation, proper communication among actors in farmer-herder conflicts, and the introduction of informal localized norms/rules in promoting cooperation.

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Notes

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4. Based on interviews and FGD with community elders and elderly people.
5. The term refers to settlements of people from northern extraction or Muslims from other African countries.
6. Area/Town Councils are sub-units of the district/municipal/metropolitan assemblies in Ghana which consist of a number of villages/settlements grouped together but whose individual settlements have populations of less than 5000.