

Cocoa change from Europe (2)

Envisioned by Coco Caravan and chocolate consumers

Created at the Cacao House, Stroud, UK, October 2024

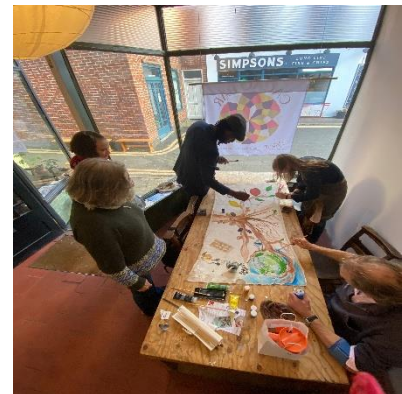


In the TCforBE project we are working with stakeholders in the cocoa value chain from the Dja landscape in Cameroon to Europe, using creative thinking and innovative problem-solving to explore different imaginaries of how the value chain can be more equitable and have more positive impacts on biodiversity.

We collaborated with the artist [Mekouti](#) from Cameroon, staff and chocolate consumers of [Coco Caravan](#) Vegan Chocolate in the UK. The staff and consumers heard stories of how the trade began, how its conducted now and they were shown photos and artwork with different visions of people living in the Dja area of Cameroon and working in cocoa and chocolate. The consumers and staff then painted their visions of how the cocoa chain to European could more ethical and biodiverse in the future. This was done whilst eating and drinking chocolate freshly and specially made by chocolatier Jacques Cöp and Patricia Brien. The chocolate was made from cocoa beans bought by the TC4BE team from Dja.

The artwork made by consumers and staff emphasizes that cocoa should be seen holistically, as part of intertwined human, spiritual and ecological systems which bring together people and places. This is shown by the many symbolic figures of people, and the verdant plants and different animals in the artwork – such as the owl and snake in the tree. The owl in British culture represents wisdom and knowledge, which the participants felt was important to stress, that knowledge of the value chain from Cameroon to Europe is needed to be able to share the benefits. During the discussions with the Cameroonian TC4BE team they discovered that owls in Cameroon have very different symbolism, being a sign of death, fear and of evil spirits.

The people and swirling clouds on the right represent connections between the different cultures of producing and eating chocolate, notions of sharing and caring were seen as important. The Cocoa House staff and its consumers thought that responsible trade, fair prices, and warm, inclusive, open, and accepting community, able to embrace different views, is important. Chocolate is the center of this community and acted as bring people together - shown in the painting by a large tree with wide open branches. Chocolate is a product that is loved and brings warmth and friendship. Many consumers did not know much about Cameroon but did have ideas about how chocolate was produced. They wanted to know more! This quest to know how cocoa becomes chocolate is represented by the eyes on the left and right - seeing into different places and cultures. The drum at the bottom right represents the symbolic nature and rituals involved in chocolate production and consumption, and its ancient history. This long history and cocoa's origins in Latin America was much also talked about, shown in the dreamlike colours of pink and blue. The health and nutrition aspect of cocoa, especially when it is eaten as dark chocolate and not over consumed, were also seen as positive. Although chocolate was mentioned as being addictive!



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Cocoa change from Cameroon

Envisioned by artists, researchers, cocoa farmers, and chocolate consumers in Cameroon.

Created in Yaounde, Lomie, Somolomo and Meyomessala, Cameroon from February 2023 and ongoing!

In the TCforBE project we are working with stakeholders engaged in the cocoa value chain from the Dja landscape in Cameroon to Europe. We are using creative thinking and innovative problem-solving to explore different imaginaries of how the value chain can be more equitable and have positive impacts on biodiversity.

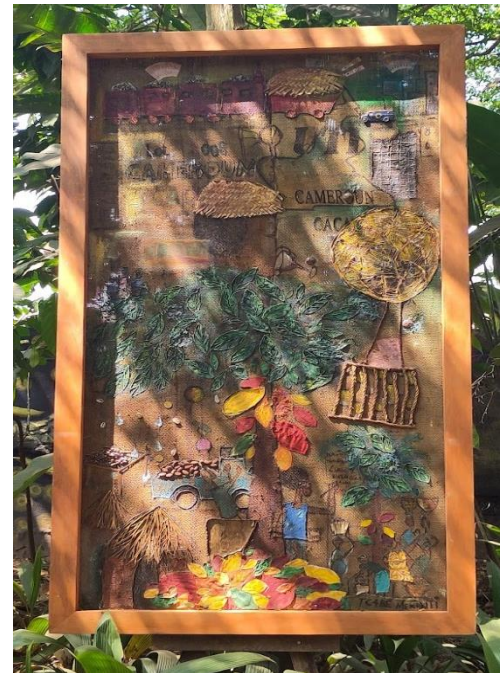
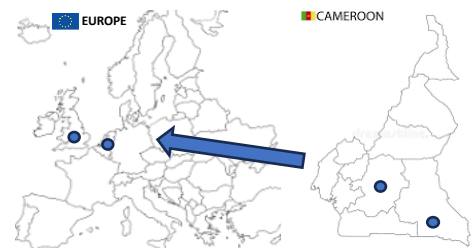
We collaborated with the artist [Mekouti](#) from Cameroon, researchers from University of Dschang and Wageningen University & Research, cocoa farmers, cocoa cooperatives, traders, and chocolate consumers in Cameroon. After hearing stories of the trade, how its conducted and ends up in Europe, they provided their own visions in words and in photos, drew themselves, or asked the artist to paint their visions of how the cocoa chain from its origin in the Dja to European consumers is now, and how it could be in the future.

This artwork is created on a reused jute sack showing a map of Cameroon, imprinted with UTZ certified cocoa logo. This was seen as an enticing vision, with certified sustainable cocoa becoming the production norm in Cameroon, as well as higher prices paid that reflect the extra work it takes to farm meeting good agricultural practices. Such practices are shown in the artwork- starting on the bottom where farmers are seen tending, harvesting, and drying and transporting cocoa.

The rain drops reflect a vision of a suitable climate for growing cocoa and living in, partly created by maintaining cocoa in agroforestry conditions, shown by the cocoa tree amid other trees in the center of the artwork. The clay masks and cowrie shells interspersed with the raindrops, show the cultural heritage that cocoa represents for many farmers, having been passed on through generations and offering potential for future generations. In the bottom right, you see a farm reading a farm manual, showing the knowledge, both local and scientific, that is needed to increase production, combat climate change, and increase income. The image of a forest shows a wish for cocoa to continue to be associated with forested areas, given their importance to many farmers, as well as nationally and globally. A Both men and women are shown throughout the artwork, highlighting that cocoa can be farmed and processed by both sexes and that more gender equity in the activities and benefits is desired by many stakeholders.

The hot air balloon in the center right, rising towards a gleaming bar of chocolate and other locally processed cocoa products, like the cocoa wine drunk by the farmer in the center of the artwork, symbolizes the hopes and dreams of many for more profitable, and more diverse sources of income from cocoa farming.

At the top the cocoa is transported by train and road to the global north, with the EU symbol emblazoned on the blue van. Most farmers didn't know where or how this happened, but imagined more profitable and shorter value chains, where more products are also consumed locally, generating more revenues at home - shown by the different currencies of bank notes.



Cocoa change artwork Cameroon exhibited 21 May 2024, Presidential Palace, Yaounde, Cameroon



Cocoa imaginary artwork created during the photovoice imaginaries exercise Lomie, Cameroon

Cocoa change from Europe (1)

Envisioned by [Victoria Artworks Studios](#) artists, [Fire Mountain Chocolate](#) and chocolate consumers

Created in Stroud, UK, October 2024

In the TCforBE project we are working with stakeholders in the cocoa value chain from the Dja landscape in Cameroon to Europe, using creative thinking and innovative problem-solving to explore different imagineries of how the value chain can be more equitable and have more positive impacts on biodiversity.

We collaborated with the artist [Mekouti](#) from Cameroon, artists from Victoria Art Works studios and chocolate consumers, who after hearing stories of how the trade began, how its traded now and seeing different visions from Cameroonians in the cocoa chain, worked together to paint their own visions of how the cocoa chain from its origin in the Dja to European consumers is now, and how it could be in the future. We then presented the artwork to Paul Bup, director of [Fire Mountain Chocolate](#) making bean to bar chocolate sourced from Cameroon, who provided further inspiration to add details to the artwork.

On the left the word *history* emphasizes how after the artists knew more about the fascinating but bitter history of cocoa, this helped them imagine a more promising *future*, shown on the right.

In the bottom center of the artwork is a cocoa pod, broken open to show its flavorsome beans. Many of the consumers didn't realize chocolate came from such huge and colorful pods (like the orange one to the left) and was covered with a delicious sweet-sour flesh! The pod is held by a person with many hands, symbolizing the extent to which cocoa farmers conduct manual labour, and that the final chocolate product is the result of the activities and processes performed by many people and enterprises, which are all interconnected, shown by the many colorful dotted pathways. These couplings are however not well known to most in the chain and are vague. Some pathways are more connected and clearer- showing the vision for the future where consumers know where the chocolate they eat comes from and how it's made, also the impacts on the persons producing it.

In the center are winged dollar signs, symbolizing how important it is to local and international economy, that it has a high and rising monetary value and that it is considered a heavenly product, one that is loved for its texture, taste, its symbolism, and its ability to bring people together.

The shopping bag bottom right colorfully wrapped bon bons, show how chocolate is an everyday product consumers buy, but it has dark sides- for health (represented by the overweight persons to the right) but that it also contains many ingredients that make chocolate healthy and nutritious - symbolized in the pink clouds at the center top.

The rich, varied background full of plants, flowers, trees, mushrooms, and insects shows a vision that if cocoa is grown in complex agroforestry conditions, it could help maintain and increase biodiversity in the forested landscapes its produced in. The many hands also symbolize respect for nature, and support, so that farmers can earn a decent living income and not have to encroach on nature.

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