

(Rosen 1977). As a researcher, I was not testing a hypothesis about the defendant's guilt. Understanding that was a mental job throughout my entire involvement with the case.

Concluding Thoughts

Serving as an expert witness does, indeed, fulfill the role of making anthropology more relevant. For someone looking to serve in this capacity for the first time, the task can seem daunting and confusing. I described my experience in

Ultimately, whatever our testimony is will have implications beyond what we are accustomed to: not just theoretical or practical, but also legal.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the fifty individuals who completed the questionnaire so that she may address the question of co-sleeping behavior. She also thanks Heather Crabbe, Esquire, for the opportunity to serve in this important role as expert witness.

“Ultimately, whatever our testimony is will have implications beyond what we are accustomed to: not just theoretical or practical, but also legal.”

the hopes that it gives others an idea of what they are getting themselves into. The first step in having a positive experience as an expert witness is to ask the right questions. It is imperative to obtain clarification on what exactly is expected of you as an expert witness, and if, indeed, you feel qualified to fulfill such expectations. This includes educating others on what anthropology and culture mean to us and to educate yourself on the procedures involved. Although the case I worked on did not end up in court, I had read about court procedures and strategies that opposing lawyers use to attempt to discredit you.

The second step involves answering the right questions. Remain objective, and do not try to determine anything beyond what you were hired to do. I felt qualified to answer the question posed by the defense lawyer, not because I had read about or observed co-sleeping behavior among Mexicans, but because, as a researcher, I possess the tools to seek the information necessary to answer the question. I took greater care than ever in how I designed the study, collected the data, analyzed it, and presented my findings in the report I submitted.

Notes

¹In this article I do not address the numerous considerations regarding the cultural defense itself. For an analysis, see Renteln (2004).

²UCINET is software developed for social network analysis that nonetheless can accommodate cultural consensus analysis (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002). Alternative software includes ANTHROPAC.

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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN MARAGOLI, KENYA: REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY

By David L. McConnell,
Jan Kees den Bakker,
Samuel Amukono Kidini,
and Joyce Adisa Bunyoli

Over the past two decades, participatory development programs that emphasize local control and decision-making have become more common around the globe. Such initiatives respond to the thought-provoking critiques of the discourse and practice of “development” that have emerged since the 1990s. Critics have argued, for example, that the development industry promotes a paternalistic attitude that sees Western standards as the benchmark against which to measure the “Third World” (Escobar 1995), privileges donor priorities over local needs, and uses aid to grow government and NGO bureaucracies rather than directly assisting community members (Ferguson 2006). It sees recipients of aid as an undifferentiated mass of underdeveloped subsistence farmers (Lewellen 2002). Participatory development programs are one response to the need for a new paradigm in community development that empowers locals while avoiding the pitfalls of “philanthropic colonialism.”

Yet participatory development initiatives are fraught with their own set of tensions. “It Takes a Village...” is a powerful metaphor for social solidarity, but it assumes a unity of mind and purpose in African villages that rarely exists today. Like rural communities elsewhere in the world, Kenyan villages harbor socioeconomic, religious, gender, clan, and educational divisions that lie just beneath the surface of routine social interaction. In addition, while the legacy of colonialism and missionary work has certainly given rise to discourses of resistance, many Kenyans are quite comfortable using

the very language and categories of “development” that were produced during the colonial era. Moreover, the widespread practice of giving and receiving *kitu kidogo*, or bribes—which then-Senator Barack Obama decried as approaching crisis proportions in a 2006 speech at the University of Nairobi—makes Kenya a particularly challenging site for grassroots development.

In such a context, what are the specific challenges and promises of participatory development programs? More generally, is there a viable role for applied anthropology in rural development in Africa given that the initial naming and structure of the “field” itself was a product of the colonial regime of Great Britain in the late 1800s (Baba and Hill, 2006)? In this article we reflect on the lessons for practicing anthropologists that we have learned from an ongoing Kenyan-American-Dutch partnership in running a small non-profit known as the Maragoli Community Development Foundation (MACODEF). We argue that practicing anthropologists can play an important role in community development programs even in highly charged postcolonial contexts, as long as organizational goals and structures support collaboration, partnership, and local decision-making.

Situating Maragoli

For the past ten years, our non-profit organization has been working in two villages in the Maragoli region of Western Kenya. As a sub-community of Kenya's second largest ethnic group, the Luyha, most Maragoli people live in area of about 200 sq. km. just north of the equator and northwest of Lake Victoria. Known to neighbors as “The Rocks” for its lush but boulder-strewn landscape, the area receives ample rainfall to support a variety of subsistence (maize, beans, bananas) and cash crops

(especially tea) as well as livestock (cattle, goats). Because many men have migrated to urban areas in the search for wage labor, women and widows often bear the lion's share of the burden of providing and caring for their children (Abwunza 1997; Mutongi 2007). Most families take advantage of eight years of free primary schooling, where the medium of instruction is English, but fewer than half complete secondary schooling, where school fees are required. The stark economic stratification of the country as a whole (10 percent of the population owns 80 percent of the wealth) is noticeable, even in villages in Maragoli. Vihiga County, where our projects are located, has a 62 percent poverty rate, well above the national average (Otomwa 2013).

The impact of British colonial administrators and American missionaries on Maragoli life has been substantial, so much so that schools and churches are now the signature institutions in most villages. Yet as Kenda Mutongi (2007) has shown in her historical ethnography, *Worries of the Heart*, the initial reaction in the early 1900s to Quaker missionaries was of fear and resistance. They were thought to be cannibals and to have the ability to turn people into mermaids. Nevertheless, over time, the missionaries taught “lessons in practical Christianity,” which meant that converts had to master not only a new theology but also ethical and economic codes, including habits of hygiene and architecture (square houses built in straight lines since righteousness literally implied right angles). Mutongi shows how, on the one hand, the cultural practices of the economically powerful missionaries became targets of emulation by local people, but on the other hand, how converts took practices from their own culture and blended them into complex syncretisms. Though the missionaries viewed bridewealth, polygyny, witchcraft, circumcision, and ancestor



Members of Stakeholder Groups Carry Stones for Construction of a New Community Resource Center

vation as "heathen practices," none of them has been stamped out. In fact, Mutongi suggests that the strength of the cognitive and cultural traditions of the Maragoli people played a major role in allowing them to ward off the more adverse effects of colonial rule. This capacity to borrow and adapt outside influences has important implications for development efforts.

Beginnings

The MACODEF was formed in 2003 as a partnership between a small group of community members in Vigetse and Vigna Villages and nine American, Dutch, Japanese, and Kenyan individuals who had lived and/or taught in the two villages in the 1980s. Mid-career, these former volunteers were motivated by the idea of giving back to the communities that had shaped them at a formative time in their lives. They formed a board of trustees whose primary purpose was fund-raising, but, from the very start, principles derived from the field of

practicing anthropology set the tone for the goals and structure of the initiative in several important ways. Like other participatory development initiatives (see Mohan 2002), our mission statement prioritized "projects conceived and implemented by the Maragoli people themselves," and our local board of governors, comprised of a cross-section of community members, took on the key role of overseeing project selection and implementation. We also decided to focus on a small geographic area (population 3000) and to take an integrative approach, funding locally adapted and complementary projects in education, health care, environment, agriculture, and micro-enterprise. In these ways, we built on Chambers' (1983) ideas of "reversals in learning" and "reversals in management" to ensure that the voices of community members, not those of local elites or international trustees, would primarily shape the conceptualization and implementation of projects.

Our organizational structure is bare-bones. A project coordinator (co-author

Adisa) and an administrative assistant are the only paid positions, while the local board of governors, chaired by co-author Amukono, is essentially a volunteer body. Local board members do receive honoraria when they sit for a board meeting, as is the custom in Kenya, and for special work assignments, but the most important criteria for joining the board is community-mindedness. We are thus aligned with what Lamphere (2004) identifies as the tradition of collaboration, in which academics and professionals do not take on the role of experts, but, rather, are supporters of change that emanate from within the community. At the same time, decisions are usually made after close consultation between the trustees and the local board. E-meetings, weekly email exchanges, Skype sessions, and reciprocal visits have also been crucial to the exchange of ideas. Our decade-long partnership has taught us that collaboration and participation are powerful tools for practicing anthropologists who work across gradients of privilege and power.

Local Meanings of Development

Given our emphasis on local decision-making, we ask, "What kinds of projects have community members proposed?" Perhaps most striking is what has not been requested. We have seen no proposals for funds to promote traditional healers, no applications to ensure that the "one boy, one knife policy" during circumcision could be realistically implemented, and no requests for micro-loans to assist in the memorialization of the ancestors. In aspiring to "likeness" with real or imagined Western standards, community members in large part see development as improving their access to material goods, formal schooling, and a higher standard of living. While such a view of development can be interpreted as the absorption of imperialist values and the corresponding negation of local cultural traditions (Ntarangwi 2003), it can also be read as a powerful claim to membership in the emerging global order. In this latter view, held by many in Africa,

development is a means to modernity, "a global status and political-economic condition that some people and places have and others...don't" (Ferguson 2006:187).

Instead, the projects proposed by community members and approved by the local board all targeted basic human needs such as health care, education, a clean environment, and a means of livelihood. For example, our local board first prioritized improvements to the two village primary schools and one secondary school. At the top of the list of health-related projects were a rural health clinic and the creation of AIDS support groups. To address environmental concerns, community members proposed and implemented four projects: the rehabilitation of community springs, installation of rainwater harvest systems, constructions of new latrines, and tree planting. They also recommended a sustainable agriculture program with subsidies for seeds and fertilizers and training on composting and erosion control. In several cases, such as providing solar cooking, lighting, and sanitary napkins for schoolgirls, the ideas for projects were raised by trustees, but then discussed and approved by the local board.

Challenges and Responses

Overall, village residents say that the implementation of these projects has noticeably improved their quality of life. Still, the achievements have not come easily. A closer look at four key challenges and how we have addressed them reveals that participatory development projects must be understood not only as "a claim for equal rights of membership in a spectacularly unequal global society" (Ferguson 2006:175), but also in relation to local politics, customs, and worldviews.

The Meaning of "Grassroots" Development

The first challenge faced by our local board was that elites in the community looked for ways to take over the management of MACODEF. The top-down model of development, which

was promoted first by colonial leaders and perpetuated by post-Independence Kenyan leaders from Jomo Kenyatta on down, has the wealthy and the educated leading the way on all development projects. Most villages in Maragoli have several "big men" who were among the first from the area to obtain university education and plum government jobs. Since few of our board members were university trained, they were accused of incompetence, of favoring one clan over others, and of positioning themselves to seek political office. In one instance, MACODEF officials were reported to both the local police and the Kenyan NGO Coordinating Board and accused of engaging in fraudulent activities. Once it became clear that MACODEF was not just giving lip service to grassroots development, a few elites and local politicians felt threatened and began to belittle and sabotage activities. The dilemma faced by our local board in this particular instance reflects a more general problem encountered by many practicing anthropologists: how to respond when the undue influence of powerful individuals on policy and program direction is suddenly thrown into relief.

Our local board of governors has responded to this challenge in a number of ways. First, it has refused to engage in the practice of "eating" a portion of grant funds (see Wrong 2009), even though this has opened board members up to accusations of not being "team players." Second, several steps have been taken to insure transparency: disbursement of funds is always done publicly; all checks must have two signatories; our treasurer submits quarterly and end of year financial reports; and the accounts are audited annually. Third, great care has been taken in the composition of the board itself. We have tried to maintain gender equity and to insure diversity with respect to age, clan affiliation, occupation, and socioeconomic background. Finally, the MACODEF board of governors has worked hard to avoid outright confrontation with local elites even as they insisted on preserving their autonomy in decision-making. In the final analysis,

the success we have had in combating this ongoing challenge is largely due to strong leadership at the local level, and its ability to steer a course between projects that address the needs of the most vulnerable in the community and those that enhance "the commons," projects such as rehabilitation of community springs, tree planting, and construction of a rural health clinic and a community center.

The Wazungu Effect

A second set of challenges has stemmed from the widespread association of MACODEF with *wazungu*, or foreigners, and hence with wealth. Because fund-raising is done overseas, mostly in the United States and in the Netherlands, community members believed that our non-profit must be awash in money. As a result, they watched local board members closely to see if there was evidence of increased prosperity. This perception was not illogical since many INGOs working in Kenya, including the UN, have pay scales that are completely out of step with the local economy. In reality, though, MACODEF has had no permanent office, no vehicle, and until 2011, not even a laptop. When it became clear that our project coordinator and local board members were not receiving undue compensation for their work, respect for MACODEF increased, but, paradoxically, led to a dearth of volunteers for the local board.

One important vehicle for combating mutual misconceptions has been the formation of a Wooster in Kenya program that brings students from The College of Wooster (where co-author McConnell teaches) and community members and donors from Wooster, Ohio, to Kenya every other year. The centerpiece of the two-week trip, which is embedded in a semester-long class, is our stay in Vigna and Vigetse Villages. We actively work against framing the trip using the language of "mission," "outreach," or "saving the poor" (see Stambach 2010) and instead emphasize that students must take on the position of learner. We set up homestays and educational sessions



Parents Donated a Portion of their Increased Yields of Maize and Beans for a School Lunch Program

in the village that allow community members to be teachers and mentors. When students participate in project activities, we stress that their "service" is not indispensable, but is more a form of "accompaniment" (see Lamphere 2004:432). And because the program works in tandem with MACODEF, we have been able to insure that the sum we raise for community projects is roughly equivalent to the cost of the program itself. Most importantly, the program nurtures long-term friendships, thus humanizing the categories of foreigner and African from the standpoint of community members, students, and donors.

Winners and Losers

A third challenge has come in the form of how to avoid inadvertently creating winners and losers. While the perception that some community members are benefiting from projects more than others is impossible to avoid altogether, our local board decided early on that they would try to fund a wide range of

existing community groups: women's groups, revolving credit associations, schools, churches, disabled groups, widow's groups, and youth groups. They also established an Emergency Fund to make sure that the most vulnerable in the community had a safety net; this fund has been used to provide medical care for the critically ill, to rebuild homes destroyed by termites or rain, to purchase beds for elderly widows who had slept on the floor their entire lives, and to purchase canes or wheelchairs for the disabled. Like many other non-governmental organizations, MACODEF also prohibits its board of governors from engaging in political activities. The capacity of local leaders to be community-minded, fair, and even-handed—and to be perceived as such by others—is an important factor in the success of participatory development programs.

Over a ten-year period, we have funded more than 35 local groups, creating a broad spectrum of community members who benefited from

MACODEF funds. Almost organically, a structure of "stakeholder groups" emerged, each of which has a leadership structure, is registered with the government, manages a bank account, and sends a representative to regular meetings with the MACODEF board. Through these stakeholder meetings, the local board has been able to keep its finger on the pulse of the community and to make sure that projects are locally adapted and culturally appropriate. Perhaps the greatest lesson we have learned that is of relevance to practicing anthropologists is that inclusivity in conceptualizing and implementing projects is crucial to creating "buy-in" from community members.

Sustainability

The final and perhaps greatest challenge has been trying to ensure the sustainability of our projects, which in our view is the ability to continue projects for a long period of time without needing to pump in outside money and without harmful side effects. One mindset that decreases the chances of sustainability is referred to both in the development industry and locally as "the dependency syndrome". The widespread practice of giving handouts to curry favor, fostered both by colonial agents and some post-Independence Kenyan politicians alike, has created a situation where people wait for money to come from elsewhere, depriving them of responsibility. Culturally, it is also the case that becoming indebted to someone is viewed less as a contractual obligation than as entering into a relationship, a kind of generalized reciprocity that might be repaid at some point in the future. In this context, the least effective of our initial projects were micro-loans to the very poor, many of whom had a hard time with repayment because they used the funds for more pressing matters or chose not to repay. As a result, we have tried to target our micro-loans at those who have a steady form of income and have used small grants as "seed money" for projects to help those at the very bottom of the economic ladder.

Facilitating ownership of projects, on the other hand, is key to ensuring sustainability. To encourage responsibility for projects and to ensure that community members experience them as their own, new stakeholder groups are required to volunteer for a period of time before receiving MACODEF funds. In addition, our local board has asked stakeholder groups not only to propose and oversee their own projects, but also to make monetary or in-kind contributions equivalent to 10-20 percent of the cost of the project. This practice has worked well with solar lights, for example, as recipients are more likely to take care of an item if they have a personal investment in it. Thus far, school lunch programs at two primary schools have continued without donor money because kitchens with high efficiency stoves were built and parents have been willing to contribute maize to the schools from their increased yields, which were facilitated by our sustainable agriculture project.

In spite of these attempts to build sustainability into our projects, the fact that donors are almost exclusively located outside of Kenya remains a key structural imbalance. As we move forward to ensure that projects outlast the monetary involvement of international trustees, designing income-generating projects within Maragoli and finding other sources of funding within Kenya are high on our list of priorities. To date, we have tried to focus on projects that will provide long-term benefits to the entire community. Because services are provided for everyone, these projects have the benefit of not creating winners or losers, but their services may also be subject to cutbacks or complete cessation when outside money no longer comes in.

To be sure, negotiating the first ten years has been a trial-and-error process, and the trustees have made several key errors along the way. For example, a proposal to name our scholarship fund for AIDS orphans in honor of a well-respected educator in one village ended up exacerbating an existing rivalry between two clans. An introduction of a professional photographer to the

community turned sour when he misled people about his intentions. Similarly, the local board of governors has navigated several crises, including a robbery of the treasurer as she returned from the bank as well as an internal division on the board that emerged over how to spend funds when a well did not produce water as anticipated. In all cases, the key to resolving these issues has been open communication and reli-

forms are, in fact, largely unavailable to them" (Ferguson 2006:21). To be sure, this view competes with a more strident, anti-imperialist discourse that places the blame for African poverty squarely on the shoulders of the neocolonial oppressors. Yet most people in Maragoli want more involvement from the United States and other global powers, not less. Indeed, in MACODEF's case, pressure is now coming from other villages and

“Because the relationship between applied anthropology and development has long been an uneasy one, it is perhaps understandable that anthropologists have been reluctant to wade into the messy world of policy and practice. . . . an important niche exists for participatory development programs based on applied anthropological principles of local control, small scale and culturally adapted projects, and long-term engagement and reciprocity.”

ance on the leadership of the local board to find appropriate local solutions. We believe a key reason these channels of communication have remained open is our rejection of hierarchical models of evaluation and performance appraisal in favor of encouraging reflection based on trust that has been established over time (see Crewe and Axelby 2013).

Conclusion

Academic critiques of international aid to Africa often ignore the fact that the concept of development has become very important for Africans themselves, so much so that "much of the critical literature on globalization seems oddly out of place in Africa because Africans can hardly feel they are being dominated by being forced to take on the goods and forms of a homogenizing global culture when those goods and

from district officials to expand the area in which we work.

Because the relationship between applied anthropology and development has long been an uneasy one, it is perhaps understandable that anthropologists have been reluctant to wade into the messy world of policy and practice. Yet in spite of the frequently heard mantra "trade, not aid," the growth in the non-profit sector in Africa, including a new wave of short-term evangelical missionaries (Gifford 2009), shows no signs of abating. Our experience working together in Maragoli, Kenya, shows that even within a highly charged postcolonial context, an important niche exists for participatory development programs based on applied anthropological principles of local control, small scale and culturally adapted projects, and long-term engagement and reciprocity. We have

not always reached the goal promoted by our board of *iliviluka*, the Maragoli term for a pro-social, collective wealth that is the antithesis of the free-for-all capitalism, which increasingly defines Kenya and the global system. We have, however, formed a viable partnership for community development and learned much about each other on our journey together.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge support from the Faculty Development Fund for Advancing Strategic Priorities at the College of Wooster, which enabled presentation of a draft of this article at the 2014 "Africa in the New World Order" conference at Kisii University in Western Kenya.

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FIRE AND ICE: TALKING ABOUT CARBON IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

By Janet Chernela

Introduction

A fundamental challenge in conversations made at the frontiers of globalization is the degree to which international representatives and local interlocutors understand one another. Decisions made at such "glocalized" sites of interaction (Brenner 1998) may hinge on issues of communication about which we know very little. Yet social scientists, who have made important contributions, analyzing the conditions required to improve communication in settings such as doctor-patient interactions (Cicourel 1987; Kleinman 1980, 1995), have paid little attention to similar challenges involving interactions between representatives of environmental or development organizations and local, including indigenous, spokespersons. The matter is especially crucial in forming contractual arrangements where approvals are sought, yet the criteria necessary for assessing comprehension are lacking. The problem is particularly salient in communications about carbon sequestration and climate change where there is ample opportunity for misunderstanding.

This paper considers an Amazonian chief's assessment of his own understanding of a conversation between himself and an NGO representative regarding a proposed carbon sequestration project for his village. By using the chief's own evaluation of the success or failure of the communication, taped by filmmaker Rebecca Sommer, this paper analyzes several processes through which speakers incorporate and employ novelty. It explores the work involved in isolating new information and recontextualizing it through trial and error in exchanges that allow a speaker to fine-tune and master his understanding, thereby expanding frontiers of knowl-

edge and building what has been called a "common" or "middle" ground.

The conversation provides an opportune case to illustrate both the challenges and solutions entailed in the transfer of new information. It points to the important role of applied anthropologists in the development and implementation of projects. In a situation where interacting parties represent different communities, with differing historical, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, the role of applied anthropologists is particularly relevant in ensuring that proper conditions for communication are met.

Common Ground

This article, written nearly 20 years after the landmark 1995 article by Beth Conklin and Laura Graham on Amazonian ecopolitics, returns to the issue of a "middle ground" to explore the processes by which it is built. In their critique of arrangements between indigenous peoples and international environmentalists, Conklin and Graham (1995:695) write, "Where Amazonian Indians and environmentally concerned outsiders interact, we see the emergence of what historian Richard White calls a middle ground—or the construction of a mutually comprehensible world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange." Conklin and Graham (1995:696) expressed concerns that such a middle ground is "rooted in contradictions between the realities of Amazonian Indian societies and the ideas about Indians." Forged on erroneous assumptions, the authors conclude, communication between indigenous groups and outsiders is precarious.

This essay takes a different view. While I concur with Conklin and Graham that international and local spokespersons may not share the same assumptions, values, and sets of meanings, I believe this situation to be a starting point for interchange. A

"middle" or "common ground," from this viewpoint, is never static; it is a contingent, revisable, and cumulative achievement. In other words, a "middle" or "common" ground is not found; it is *constructed* over time.

The terms "middle ground" and "common ground" refer to the sets of shared beliefs and suppositions about what people regard as true or assume they know (Stalnaker 2002). Basing their views on developments in the philosophy of language (Grice 1957, 1989) and studies of naturally occurring speech, linguistic anthropologists have pointed out that speech is a collaborative process in which participants must coordinate and cooperate with one another in order to reach understanding (Goodwin 1979, 1981; Hanks 1996). These authors and their followers view understanding between speakers as a dynamic project that undergoes constant development and refinement (Clark 1992, 1996). Yet, despite their importance, we know very little about the processes, strategies, and resources employed to expand speakers' knowledge and create common ground.

In this article, I use the case of a carbon sequestration project proposed for the Yawalapiti and other indigenous peoples of the Parque Nacional do Xingu in the southeastern Amazon. I explore naturally occurring speech to illustrate the problems posed by new information and the resources brought to bear in response. Based on selected streams of talk, I identify several processes employed in the acquisition and assimilation of new knowledge: (1) recognition; (2) comprehension assessment; (3) comparison with existing knowledge; and (4) recontextualization, experimentation, and play.

REDD

As governments agree that carbon sequestration is an inexpensive and

efficient way of reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions, the role of indigenous peoples in maintaining standing forests for their own livelihoods is being reevaluated in terms of the services they perform. Means are being sought to compensate those who maintain standing forests; Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) is one such scheme.

In the Copenhagen Accord that marked the completion of the 2009 United Nations Climate Summit, member states formally recognized the role played by forest peoples in maintaining standing forests. Since that time, state parties, international organizations, and financial institutions have advanced efforts to reduce carbon emissions by providing financial incentives to forest communities to reduce or "avoid" deforestation. One mechanism to accomplish these goals is the initiative known as REDD, which incorporates the conservation of forests, sustainable resource management, and enhancements of forest carbon stocks.

Brazil, Carbon, and Indigenous Lands

When it comes to carbon storage, Brazil is the world's most important supply-side player. It holds 60 percent of the vast Amazon basin (4.2 million sq. km.), the largest remaining tropical rainforest in the world. That, combined with its past rates of deforestation, positions Brazil as a principal candidate to benefit from international programs aimed at rewarding reduced deforestation. In its evaluation of potential earnings from avoided deforestation, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations places Brazil in the lead among countries, ranking it 2-3 times higher than any other contender.

A substantial amount of Brazil's forests lie within territories belonging to indigenous peoples who have occupied them for generations. Existing efforts to maintain standing forests have been more effective in indigenous territories than in any other type of protected

area, with the result that biomass on indigenous lands accounts for a full 30 percent of total carbon stocked in Brazil (Saatchi et al. 2007). Indigenous lands, which exceed all other types of protected areas in Brazil, are protected by federal mandate as well as the active monitoring presence of the indigenous inhabitants. For these reasons, among others, government agencies, scientific researchers, financial investors, conservation organizations, and indigenous peoples are carefully considering the implications for carbon sequestration projects in indigenous territories. Although the international frameworks for commoditizing carbon credits are not finalized, many proposals for carbon storage plans are already underway (Chernela 2011; Toni, Ferreira, and Ferreira 2011).

Communication

Reduced deforestation projects entail two broad sets of parties defined by their roles and responsibilities. The first of these are the "proponents," parties responsible for designing and implementing projects. The second set of parties, known as "stakeholders," includes the owners or holders of forest reserves who enact the terms of the project. Although stakeholders occasionally initiate REDD proposals, this tends to be rare.¹ More commonly, proponents are government entities, institutions, for-profit firms, or not-for-profit organizations, while stakeholders tend to be forest dwellers.

All rights, responsibilities, and risks of the participants must be understood and agreed upon by both proponents and stakeholders before entering into contractual arrangements. In order for such an arrangement to be successful, the parties must understand one another and ensure that they have done so to the satisfaction of all. It is incumbent upon the project proponents to ensure that all relevant information is adequately and fairly supplied to the stakeholders. In the case of indigenous peoples, an evolving body of normative instruments known as "Free, Prior, Informed, Consent" (FPIC) requires that they

participate in "consultations" regarding any actions that may affect them. Such "consultations" involve conversations between project proponents and stakeholders in which they exchange information and, theoretically, enter into decisions jointly. Most of the time, however, consultations consist of a few face-to-face visits in which one or more proponents present an already designed project to an assembly of stakeholders. Such presentations, involving elaborate scientific, technological, and financial discourses, allow for a minimum of stakeholder interaction. This approach lacks the necessary conditions to ensure understanding and may even promote misunderstanding.

A fundamental challenge is that the two entities that must arrive at an agreement, the proponents and the stakeholders, are members of different cultural and speech communities whose values, assumptions, and goals may differ. This is the point to which Conklin and Graham (1995) speak. Project proponents are usually members of First World urban communities where the discourses of climate change and scientific reporting are in wide circulation. As designers of projects involving global carbon markets, they are interlocutors in the evolving international conversation involving carbon credits, carbon sequestration, and REDD protocols—areas of highly specialized knowledge that are not widely shared outside of the First World. Indeed, even within educated pockets of the First World, knowledge about these matters is unevenly distributed.

Yet, the future of forest dwellers may depend upon their fluency in the international conversation. If participants are unacquainted with the highly abstract and specialized discourses of global financial markets or greenhouse gases, misunderstandings between project proponents and stakeholders may easily arise. Here, the attention of applied linguistic anthropologists can help address potential difficulties by bridging communication gaps through cultural and linguistic means.

The Xingu SocioEnvironmental Carbon Project (XSEC), now in the proposal development stage, is a highly

complex REDD project involving the lands of over 25 indigenous groups (Chernela 2011; Schwartzman et al. 2013). The multiple-partnered project², proposed by five NGOs (three of them international and two Brazilian), aims to secure compensation for reductions in deforestation through the voluntary carbon market and, if formalized, through an internationally recognized REDD market. If the optimal plan is accepted, it will total 22 million ha and constitute the largest corridor of protected forests in the world—an area 12 times the size of Yellowstone National Park and six times the size of Switzerland (Schwartzman and Zimmerman 2005; Schwartzman et al. 2013; Zimmerman, personal communication, April 15, 2013). It will affect over 10,000 indigenous peoples.

The XSEC process entails many levels of participation, requiring negotiations of understanding and agreement at each juncture. Knowledge that flows through XSEC levels entails numerous challenges with multiple opportunities for miscommunication. To avoid these pitfalls, NGO representatives visit villages when possible, but such trips are infrequent and of short duration. The situation is conducive to misunderstanding, as we will see in the example taken from 2010.

Fire and Ice: The Conversation

The portion of speech shown here is excerpted from an interview conducted and taped by Rebecca Sommer in 2010 in the village of Yawalapiti in the Xingu National Park. The video, in Portuguese with English subtitles, was posted by the filmmaker, a party in the conversation, on her website and on YouTube (see Sommer 2010). About 250 Arawakan Yawalapiti live in the vicinity of the Kuluene affluent of the Xingu River. In the recording, Chief Aritana describes a visit by an NGO representative to discuss the participation of his village in the proposed XSEC carbon sequestration project. The conversation provides a pertinent example of both the challenges and possible solutions involved in the transfer of new information.

I have selected three excerpts from Chief Aritana's conversation to illustrate the problems posed by new information and the resources brought to bear in the exercise of confronting and assimilating new knowledge. These entail: (1) recognition, (2) comprehension assessment, (3) comparison with existing knowledge, and (4) recontextualization and experimentation. (I have heuristically separated these items, which more typically appear in combination.)

(1) Recognition. The first example illustrates the initial phase of uptake in which a listener recognizes a segment of speech as new and therefore salient. In this example, Chief Aritana registers his unfamiliarity this way [translated from the Portuguese,] "Let me see if I remember what it's called...carbon. They call it carbon. We don't know anything about it. We don't understand what is carbon" (Chief Aritana in Sommer 2010). In this example, he identifies the new item and presents it to the filmmaker with an implicit invitation to comment or add information. The process of separating the new from the old and assessing one's comprehension, although not always explicit, is essential in building common ground (Clark and Brennan 1991).

(2) Comprehension Progress. Throughout the conversation, Chief Aritana closely monitors his level of understanding. In the excerpts above and below, he identifies specific challenges.

(3) Background Check. The stream of talk also illustrates the way a listener considers the novel utterances against a background of existing knowledge. I will illustrate and discuss this in combination with #4.

(4) Recontextualization and Experimentation. It is important for a listener/speaker to have the opportunity to try out new expressions by submitting them to experimentation in different contexts. Strategies 3 and 4 are shown together in the following complex segment:

Let me remember.... This burning [from cutting forests] goes into the air and causes a lot of heat. He even showed the [pause, makes a circle with his arms] how do you call it? The globe, showing the ice,

this is happening, even showed a white bear. Where ice is melting, the white bears are endangered.... They don't have any place to live, the ice is going to end! That's why we should preserve our forest (Chief Aritana in Sommer 2010).

In this segment, Chief Aritana recontextualizes his newly found knowledge, reproducing and reassembling it in a different conversation. This experimentation is fundamental to the processes of understanding and assimilating novelty.

When he recapitulates the logical connections between preservation, forests, and melting ice caps, Chief Aritana shows that he has well understood the justification for preserving the forests provided by NGO representatives. He illustrates the processes involved in making sense of new information. He identifies the new material and assesses his degree of comprehension. Then he submits the information against that which he already knows. Here, analysis suggests an interesting aspect of the processes involved in understanding, as Chief Aritana submits the newfound information to an existing schema of relationships.

According to the principles of Saussurean linguistics, signs exist in two kinds of relationships to one another: syntagmatic, where each sign performs a different function, and the other paradigmatic, where one sign may be replaced by another. The case of the "white bear" serves to illustrate a successful communication because novel ideas "made sense" in terms of prior conventions and knowledge.

The processes displayed by Chief Aritana in assimilating new knowledge can be understood in terms of a configuration in which the relations between subject and object remain the same while the signifier (name of object) and the "signified" (its meaning as indicated by a name) are in alternative, paradigmatic relation to one another. In other words, the items are interchangeable from a single membership set. So, for example, a white bear's survival is threatened when the ice it lives on is disappearing in the same way that fish

may be stranded when a river dries up. In this case, the relationships—we may refer to them as “a syntax of ecological relationships”—were ones with which he was familiar. Into that syntax, he need only substitute the terms “white bear” and “ice.” The case of the “white bear” serves to illustrate a successful communication because novel ideas are “made sense” of in terms of prior knowledge. The example illustrates some of the fundamental ways common ground is created and expanded through shared experience and language.

Since it is unlikely that Chief Aritana has had firsthand experience with ice sheets, or white bears, the case shows an important step in building common ground: the assimilation of entire scenarios beyond the recipients’ firsthand knowledge by virtue of prior knowledge not about the lexical elements, but the *relationships* among them. This reach of language beyond experience is one of its most important and defining roles. The set of phrases illustrates the assimilation of new information and allows us to theorize about the process. We can surmise that the connections in the “story” of climate change make sense to him because he understands the principles behind it: namely, the relevance of habitat to survival. He has only to extend this to the “white bear” whose habitat—polar ice—is diminishing and therefore threatening the bears’ survival.

A final example illustrates a failure in communication. In the excerpt shown below, Chief Aritana stumbles on the word “reforestation,” later substituting it with “replanting.” He returns to the matter later when he expresses confusion and doubt about “burning.” Both have to do with making gardens and the constraints that could be placed on cutting and burning gardens by the terms of a “Reduced Deforestation” project. Here, the source of discomfort is that the new process does *not* appear to make sense in terms of prior experience:

... We, Indigenous People, have been living here a long time. We burn... where we fish, hunt, or open a small garden. This is the Indian way. We burn small

gardens to plant. We cut and burn the garden and then plant. And now the NGO wants to prohibit it all! This is not acceptable because we have to live also. We have to plant. He said that we can’t burn anymore. Can’t! This left us wondering.... We are accustomed to this. We burn for fishing, hunting, to make things. I don’t know why they want us to change this.... Every time we open a garden, we plant, we put in manioc. After a few years, we collect it [and] in a few years, it grows back! The forest grows anew. In a few years, you can go back to that same place. It was always done this way. (Chief Aritana in Sommer 2010)

In this stream of talk, Chief Aritana appears to be familiar with all of the signs and their meanings, but finds himself at odds with the underlying assumptions and the logic deduced from them. He brings his own experience and knowledge to bear to refute what he regards as a flawed argument. The example illustrates the difficulties that arise when new information conflicts with the listener’s own knowledge. It should be evident from these examples and the issues at stake that ample time and talk is necessary so that new information can be subject to checks against prior information and so that mutual questioning and differences in reasoning can be aired. Through dialogic processes such as these, a common ground is built.

The building of common ground is a complex and laborious process, requiring ample opportunity for to-and-fro exchange among speakers. Though travel to remote areas may be time-consuming and expensive for project proponents, the cost of communication failure is greater still. The role of applied anthropologists in this endeavor is an important one that has been largely overlooked.

Conclusions

Carbon sequestration, then, as a topic of conversation at the local/

global interface, provides a timely and relevant context in which to consider how novel ideas are introduced and assimilated among local populations. We have suggested several steps in the process of incorporation. A listener must identify new information, first distinguishing it from the old, then make sense of the new by finding analogy in a prior framework. The new material is submitted to play and experimentation in which the “novice” is alerted to his/her level of mastery through cues from the interlocutor. By this means, the recipient gradually builds the new concepts into an already existing foundation of prior knowledge. If the new knowledge makes sense within the existing schema, the assimilation process is facilitated. When the novel concepts or information are at odds with prior information and convention, complications arise.

Interactions that occur at the boundaries of understanding define the frontiers of knowledge and, to that extent, shape the future. It is at these sites, where learning occurs, that processes of knowledge sharing and building common ground take place. As a discipline that has been concerned with the articulation between local habitus and global phenomena, anthropology has been remarkably neglectful of the interchanges and knowledge flows occurring at critical nodes in the local-global encounter. Parties engaged in knowledge exchange would greatly benefit from the insights and interventions of applied cultural and linguistic anthropologists.

Acknowledgements

A version of this paper was first presented in the session “Teaching the Anthropology of Climate Change in the 21st Century” at the 2013 meetings of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA). I wish to thank organizers L. Jen Shaffer and Patricia Hammer as well as Shirley Fiske for the opportunity to participate in that session. I would also like to thank Rob Riker and Anita Puckett, editor of *Practicing Anthropology*, who read this paper and provided important feedback.

Notes

¹A notable exception is the Suruí Forest Carbon Project in the state of Rondonia, Brazil (Chernela 2011; Toni, Ferreira, and Ferreira 2011).

²The Xingú SocioEnvironmental Carbon Project is being proposed by a consortium of five NGOs: (1) *Instituto Socioambiental* (the Social and Environmental Institute, or ISA); (2) *Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazonia* (The Environmental Research Institute of Amazônia, or IPAM); (3) Conservation International; (4) Environmental Defense Fund; and (5) International Conservation Fund of Canada.

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