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Translating the sustainability transition: the creation and implementation of a translocal environmental project, from Paris to Madagascar

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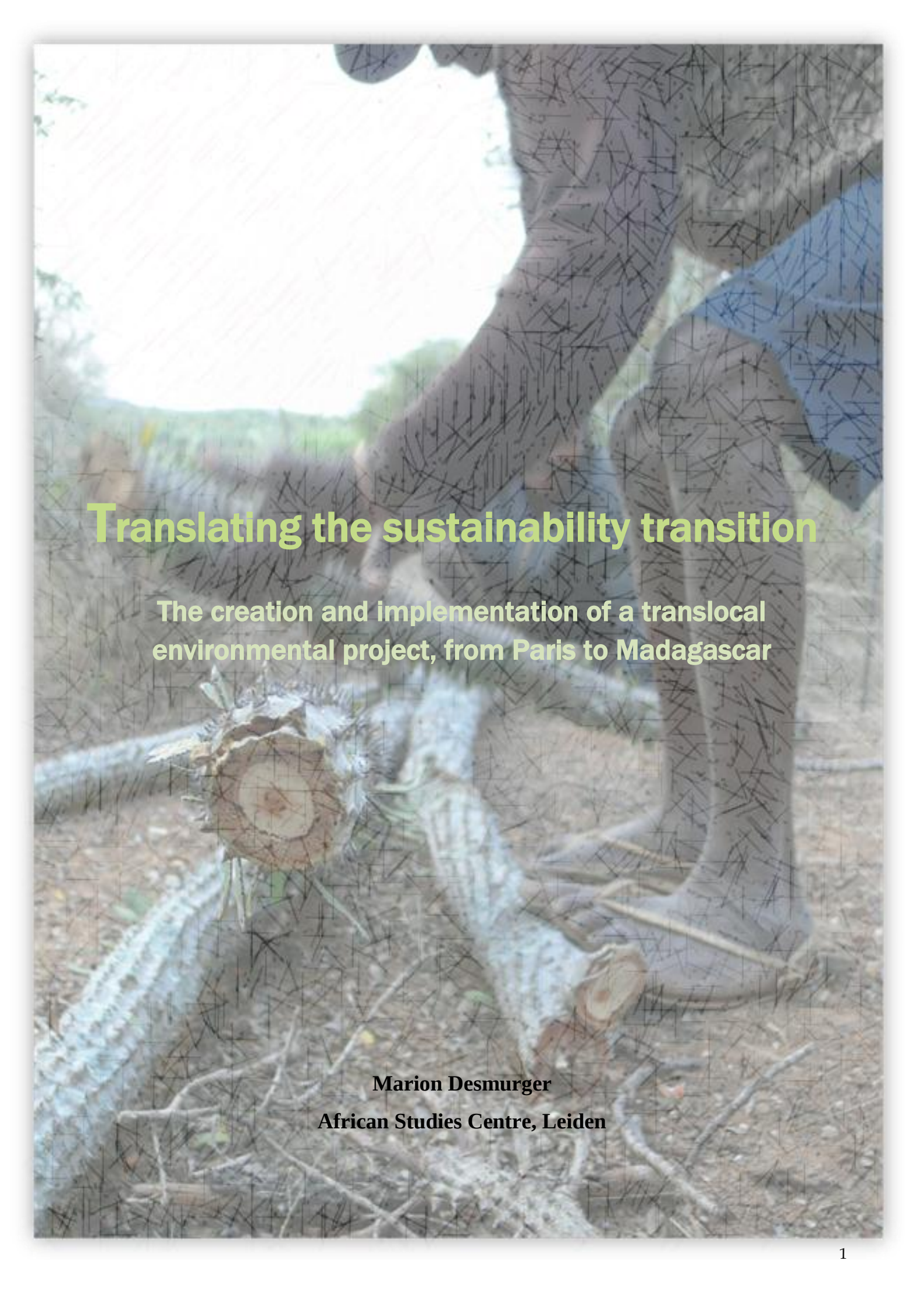
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A photograph of a person using a chainsaw to cut a tree trunk. The person is wearing a blue shirt and dark pants. The background is a dry, open landscape with some greenery in the distance. The title text is overlaid on the image.

Translating the sustainability transition

**The creation and implementation of a translocal
environmental project, from Paris to Madagascar**

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UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN

AFRICA STUDIES CENTRE

Research Masters in African Studies
Masters Thesis

“Translating the sustainability transition”

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Thank you,

Merci,

Dankjewel,

Misaotra betsaka!

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASOS	Socio sanitaire et Organisation Secours
ANGAP	Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées
CARE	Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe
CIRAD	Centre International de Recherche en Agronomie et Développement
CoBa	Communauté de Base
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GCF	Gestion Contractualisée des Forêts (Joint Forest Management)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MNE	Multinational enterprises
MNP	Madagascar National Parks
NAP	Nouvelle Aire Protégée (New Protected Area)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ONF	Office Nationale des Forêts
PAM	Programme Alimentaire Mondial
PHCF	Programme Holistique de Conservation des Forêts
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

INTRODUCTION

In January 2011, I was invited to attend a conference organised by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conference was called “Tropical Forests: starting points and new challenges - which orientations for French actors?” In the year 2011, talking about forests was very much in vogue: the United Nations declared 2011 the international year of the forests and in December, world leaders gathered at the Durban Summit to discuss climate change and tropical forests’ protection. The conference in Paris was attended by a wide range of actors, from environmental campaigners to bank managers, international organisations’ spokespersons to scholars, journalists, directors of transnational corporations and representatives from foreign Forest Service Departments. Because I had read articles and watched TV reports about such conferences, I was aware that in the past two decades, there had been a strong incentive from governments and civil society groups to open the floor for discussion to as many “stakeholders” as possible. What I didn’t get from such reports, however, was the question of language: during those meetings, who was saying what? What was the environmental campaigner speaking about? How was the banker or the international organisation’s spokesperson reacting to it? How were those actors coming from different sectors and with different interests communicating with each other? Being in the conference room on that particular day, my conventional assumptions about environmental politics were highly challenged. When Mr. Simon Rietbergen was invited to come on stage and give his presentation, I looked at the stage in front of me and wondered: “would I have seen this ten years ago?”



Conference on Tropical Forests, source: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Rietbergen works for the World Bank. He is responsible for supporting and implementing the institution's forestry programs. The person who was inviting him to the stage – and acting as the moderator for the discussion – was Mr Martin Perrier, the Director of the Office National des Forêts International (ONFI). The desk on which Mr. Rietbergen had put his documents had a board on which one could read: “Gouvernement Français – Conférence sur les Forêts Tropicales” (*French government - Conference on Tropical Forests*). On the screen behind him was displayed a rather large picture featuring a quote from Gandhi and a black and white panda logo [see picture below]. The previous speaker must have simply forgotten to close his PowerPoint presentation. So maybe it was just a coincidence that, looking at the stage, I could see a World Bank representative giving a speech for the French government with a WWF logo in his back.



WWF image displayed during the conference, source: WWF

“Live simply so others can simply live”

Talking about the previous speaker, here was another interesting observation: Jochen Krimphoff is WWF-France Assistant Director for International Programs. In the beginning of his speech, he presented himself as one of the founders of a consultant group named “Conservation Alliance” which aims at providing business and financial advice to conservation NGOs. Keywords in his speech included: finance, investment and return on investment. For twenty minutes, Jochen Krimphoff lectured about trust funds, endowment fund, sinking fund, revolving fund and insisted on telling the audience that the US\$ 810,000 of capital gathered by the Conservation Finance Alliance had “resisted the 2008 financial crisis very well”. Of course, no one should ever believe that a NGO does not have to deal with a minimum of financial management to run its programs and remunerate its employees on the basis that is it non-for-profit. The point, to me, is not so much that Jochen Krimphoff was so

persistent on linking finance with biodiversity but, instead, that his mastering of corporate language seemed equal, if not higher, to the banker from Société Générale – who was much more cautious about using such a language. Each actor was tapping into the register of the other, sometimes with discomfort, as in the case of the banker, sometimes with a lot of confidence, like Mr Krimphoff, WWF Assistant Director for International Programs. A mental photograph of the stage gave the following picture: the juxtaposition of a diversity of actors and symbols that was extremely powerful and ... new. When did WWF spokespersons start talking about finance and bank managers lecturing about forest protection, like the spokesperson from Société Générale who presented his company as a “promoter of sustainable development in the tropical timber sector”? Undeniably, what I witnessed during this conference reflected a broader shift in environmental politics, the most notable and visible being the change in NGOs relationship with private companies.

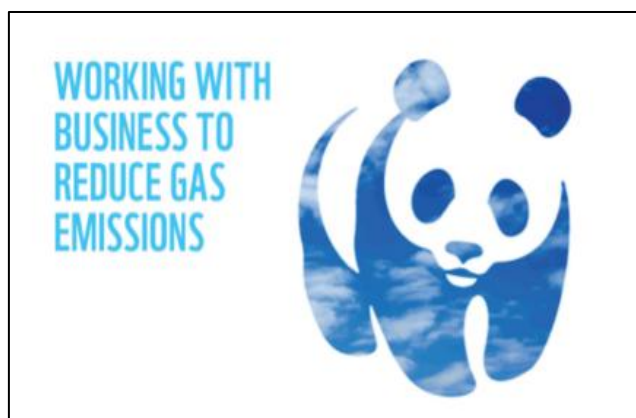
Nevertheless, the question that I shall ask here is not: “are such types of alliances desirable?”, which would require judgments rather than analysis, but instead “how do such partnerships come to exist, what do they result in, how are they perceived, and what do they rely on?”

Bankers, NGO workers, researchers, government representatives, private companies and financial experts drinking coffee together to discuss the future of tropical forests: was this the new norm for environmental politics? When and why did it start? Did anyone object to such a change? What surprised me the most was not the fact that government actors, bankers, conservationists and business experts were talking to each other but, rather, that they all seemed to be using the language of the other. This “hybridity” of discourses and performances got me lost: who was who? Why was the WWF agent talking about finance and the banker from Crédit Agricole promoting tree plantation in the Congo Basin? What could explain that one of the key speakers of the conference was the representative of a transnational company lecturing about “forests and global private investments”? Is it purely because, as many would argue, forest conservation recently became a bankable and profitable activity? Or are there other factors driving companies to seat behind a WWF logo?

Incontestably, this shift in NGO-private companies relations is also a shift in expectations. As academics, journalists and citizens, we have grown accustomed to a certain way of talking about the environment. And so have we grown accustomed to hearing certain actors or institutions speak about the environment too. Reading newspaper articles and seeing

demonstrations in the streets, I had personally grown accustomed to environmental NGOs and civil society groups teaming up together against private companies and corporate greed. In such a context, corporate capital and profits did not seem to go well with environmental protection and the safeguard of tropical forests. On a professional level, I had also met with grassroots organisation leaders, “indigenous” groups, and citizens who very often identified transnational corporations’ activities in their country as a threat to their everyday life.

But the field of environmental politics is now at a transitional phase. The “sustainability transition” referred to in the title of this thesis describes this very particular moment when, on the one hand, certain civil society groups are calling for action against corporate “greenwashing” while, on the other hand, a growing number of NGOs perceive it is time to open room for communication, discussion and partnership with the business world. The latter standpoint is often based on research indicating that greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution together with the production of fifteen specific commodities are the greatest threats to environmental NGOs’ priority “hotspots” – the places NGOs actively try to safeguard. According to Jayawickrama (2011: 2), domain manager for Humanitarian and Development NGOs at Harvard University Hauser Center for Non-profit Organizations, “100 corporations touch 25 percent of those fifteen commodities, which include palm oil, soy, cotton, sugarcane, timber and seafood. Given this concentration, WWF’s theory of change [working in partnership with corporation] argues that, if it can positively influence the way these commodities are produced, traded and financed, then global markets for these commodities can be tipped toward sustainability,” Jayawickrama explains.



WWF poster. The panda stencil reveals an image of the sky to convey the idea of clean air, source WWF.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that even though the number of NGOs extending their hands to private companies is growing, the practice of creating partnerships with the corporate world remains debated and contested. As I witnessed during my fieldwork in Paris and Madagascar, considerable tensions exist between NGOs when it comes to answering the following question: what is the best approach for an environmental organisation to make companies more accountable for their carbon footprint? For some, partnerships with transnational corporations are considered “pacts with the devil”. For others it is a “change of paradigm necessary to guarantee sustainable development” [interview with WWF-International Communication Officer, January 16, 2012]. Interestingly, and even within NGOs keen on opening their doors to the corporate world, there is still a feeling that “we shouldn’t be completely naive about it, we have to be very cautious with companies that have a whole army of communication officers to green themselves and sometimes do so through unjustified means,” Program Officer for the French Foundation GoodPlanet warns [interview, January 17, 2012].

On the corporate side, the idea of partnering with NGOs seems to make much more unanimity. In contrast to environmental organisations which often refuse alliances with private company for ideological reasons and fear losing credit in the eyes of their general public, the only factor likely to stop a private company from teaming up with a NGO is limited financial capacity to afford it. For companies that do have the finances to go into partnerships with NGOs, there is a strong belief that receiving bad press about their involvement in “sustainable” projects is part of the price a corporation should pay in order to build the relationships likely to be indispensable during the sustainability transition, Elkington argues (1998: 39). The reason companies are willing to pay this price, as the January 2004 edition of *The Economist* clearly states, is because “Greed is out. Corporate virtue, or the appearance of it, is in”. Sustainability is very much in vogue to the extent that “being sustainable” is no longer just a competitive advantage for companies but, additionally, a norm in contemporary business strategies. As Crook (2005) explains in a column for *The Economist*, “it would be a challenge to find a recent annual report of any big international company that justifies the firm’s existence merely in terms of profit, rather than ‘service to the community’ [...] Big firms nowadays are called upon to be good corporate citizens, and they all want to show that they are”. It therefore no longer comes as a surprise to see that the vast majority of “big international companies” have a Sustainable Development division as well as a CSR agenda. This change in paradigm has led James Leape, Director General of WWF

International, to tell a business audience in Geneva in 2008 that “sustainability is no longer just a matter of corporate social responsibility, it is a fundamental business proposition [...]. We are talking about a new bottom line” (WWF, 2008)¹.



“The downside of CSR”, source: IDRAC

The “sustainability transition” referred to in the title of this thesis defines a period that started with the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, a turning point in the development of global environmental politics. Since the 1970s, the environment has become a burning topic on the agenda of many international institutions and governments. There has been a “greening” of global organisations, from the World Bank to transnational and local civil society groups – which now frame their struggle in “environmental” terms in order to be heard. But if the talk is about sustainability, do people and institutions really trust the message, across different sectors, interests and scales?

The purpose of this thesis, in addition to shedding light on recent partnerships between NGOs and private companies, is to answer the following questions. How is a project that was built on a specific conceptualisation of the environment (how it ought to be managed and by whom) received in different settings? How does the project, together with the ideas and practices linked to it, travel across people, networks, cultures and distances?

¹ See http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?146704/Sustainability-no-longer-just-CSR-says-WWF-chief

Most of the research published on the topic has sought to answer the latter questions through the lens of “discourse analysis”. The discussion initiated by French philosopher Foucault on the role of discourses in wider social processes of legitimacy and power in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) has incontestably significantly contributed to the understanding of global environmental politics. The point that such analysis might be missing, however, is that ideas result in practices. A project like the one analysed throughout this thesis is not simply the product of diverse ideas, discussions and ways of speaking about the environment, it is also the result of a set of practices, attitudes and reactions towards the environment. When ideas about the environment start travelling, a reality becomes constructed. It is therefore useful to go beyond discourse analysis in order to demonstrate that ideas eventually become practices which, in some cases, may have considerable effects on social relations and political settings. New laws are created, people with different interests start teaming up together – and as a result, disconnect themselves from past alliances – conferences are held, private companies set up internal department for Sustainable Development, Corporate Partnership branches are created within NGOs, forests users become environmental agents with new tasks and responsibilities, access to forest resources becomes regulated, communities resist or, alternatively, fully engage in conservation projects ... All in all, it is important to stress that in a context of globalisation, ideas are constantly manufactured, processed, adopted and readapted over time and space.

This raises two points. The first one is about translation and legitimacy. If a project is created in Paris based on a certain definition of “sustainability”, what does it entail to be “sustainable” for someone living in the South-East of Madagascar? Taken as a whole, and bearing this question in mind, his thesis seeks to shed light on the continuous *voyage* of the PHCF, from its creation to its implementation. The question that shall therefore be asked is: how is “sustainability” translated when the project is implemented in a protected area in Madagascar? If two NGOs and a private airplane company teamed up together to create an environmental project in the name of “sustainability”, how did the idea and practice of sustainability travelled to Madagascar? Even though NGOs and private companies might have the capacity to forge alliances through partnerships, they have no guarantee that the ideas and practices conveyed by the project will be legitimate and accepted in different settings. So what are the strategies put in place to enable legitimacy and access to the project location?

The second point is about governance and authority: if a multiplicity of actors becomes involved in environmental politics and, similarly, if projects and “sustainable” practices are developed across state boundaries, who is the authorising agent? Who allows ideas to become practices? The shift in environmental politics and the change in NGO-private companies relations, as we will see in the first chapter of this thesis, are two processes undeniably linked to a broader re-arranging of tasks, roles, and commitments between the state, companies and civil society. In other terms, there is a wider trend of re-organising state-society relations as well as local and global governance.

Research question

Taking an environmental project implemented in Madagascar as a focal point for analysis, this thesis seeks to answer the following question:

How is a translocal project for forest conservation created, negotiated and legitimised from Paris to Madagascar, and how does this project translate once implemented in a specific spatial, social, cultural, environmental and political setting?

Research methods

Multi-sited fieldwork

My interest for this topic grew out of the long-lasting discussion over the “global versus local” debate. The question of the “global” is raised in many domains, and particularly in those related to the environment. It is often argued that there is a “global environmental knowledge” or that there is “globally accepted” definition of environmental sustainability agreed upon by a number of institutions and civil groups that have built policies and actions based on that very definition. But while such analysis might be useful to deconstruct discourses, it nevertheless blinds us to the discrepancies, tensions, frictions and negotiations occurring when two powerful yet, interest-wise, strongly opposed forces encounter. Similarly, it avoids the question of authority and legitimacy: if a number of actors are now part of what we call “global environmental politics”, who is the authorising agent defining the problem and its solution? As Tsing suggests in her acclaimed book *Friction* (2005: 58),

“analytic tools with which to think about the global picture are still rudimentary. Many ethnographers find themselves with data about how a few people somewhere react, resist, translate, consume, and from here it is an easy step to invoke distinctions between local reactions and global forces, local consumption and global circulation, local resistance and global structures of capitalism, local translations and the global imagination. Yet we know that these dichotomies are unhelpful. They draw us into an imagery in which the global is homogeneous precisely because we oppose it to the heterogeneity we identify as locality. By letting the global appear homogeneous, we open the door to its predictability and evolutionary status as the latest stage in macronarratives,” the author explains.

In other words, the purpose of this thesis is to question the notions of “the global” and “the local”: who is local, who is global? Can such characteristics actually be strictly defined?

My intention throughout this thesis is also to bring anthropology closer to the society in which I live and closer to the changes taking place in our society. As stated earlier, there is a shift in state-society relations and part of that shift is informed by a re-arranging of roles and commitments. New actors have gained authority over issues where we did not expect them to have power, including issues related to the environment. Thirty years ago, it would have probably come as a surprise to see private companies playing a key role in decision-making processes related to the environment – on how it ought to be managed and protected for instance. But, as it will be argued in this thesis, it seems that we are now moving towards a new policy cycle, a new transition phase guided by the word “sustainability”. Even though such a shift has sparked debate in the press, discussions among scholars, and discontentment from sceptical NGOs, it is important to move away from judgments and analyse this change with caution and objectivity. It is equally important that anthropology, as a social science field of study, brings its contribution to the debate – the number of anthropologists who conducted research on the topic remains relatively low. Such observations have left Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 15) wondering “why there has been so little anthropological work on the translocal aspects of transnational corporations”. For Rajak (2005), one of the most renowned and recent anthropologists to have written about Corporate Social Responsibility, there is a need for anthropology to move away from the rural picture and from its methodological commitment to the local.

“While anthropologists of development have long been concerned with the way in which power is mediated through the dominance of ‘Western’, technocratic forms of knowledge, and the discursive practices of powerful institutions, the relationship between the construction of

knowledge and power within corporations has, to a large extent, remained veiled behind the elevation of the 'local' in anthropological writing. The corridors of power within transnational companies (TNC) and international agencies have, for the most part, remained hidden," the author argues (Rajak, 2005).

The author also calls for a return of anthropology to questions, issues and changes that affect our society. "The disciplinary preoccupation with the subaltern," she argues, has resulted in

"the marginalisation of anthropology in the public mind as a source of knowledge about the society in which we live. In turning the anthropological lens towards transnational processes of corporate capitalism, we are faced with new challenges of conducting ethnography on such a scale; and new problems in attempting to explore the corridors of corporate power-diffuse embedded and pervasive as they are. At the same time, the scope of anthropology cannot be confined to only those arenas in which traditional anthropological methods of localised participant observation are possible" (Rajak, 2011: 1).

A significant part of my thesis is devoted to the "rural", that is, how the project I have studied was translated and accepted in a "small-scale locality" situated ten thousand kilometres away from the offices where the ideas of that very project were developed. But while it is useful to bring attention to this specific aspect, it is equally important to link the "rural" analysis with the study of the transnational networks and strategies put in place to enable such a project to exist. To do so, I have opted for a multi-sited fieldwork. Such a methodology enabled me to receive access to various sources of information and, most importantly, provided me with an opportunity to "look behind the curtain". Conducting fieldwork in Paris, for instance, enabled me to look at the people I interviewed in Paris, the elite of environmental politics, as "locals" situated in a specific context and confined to a sometimes restrictive, yet poorly acknowledged, structure. From Madagascar to Paris and Switzerland, multi-sited fieldwork allowed me to "find in-roads and entries into this giant of a corporation from a variety of angles and points across the geographical and social space" in which transnational companies and NGOs operate (Rajak, 2005). As Rajak suggests, the "rigid vertical hierarchy makes a multi-sited approach not merely a choice but a necessity" (ibid).

This study is therefore about tracking the concept of sustainability, from a village in South-East Madagascar to the offices of Air France headquarters in Paris. As such, conducting multi-sited fieldwork was a way to access the 'partners' themselves, from the corporation to the NGOs, the international institutions to government agencies and forest users. This

methodology strongly echoes Rajak's line of thinking in *In Good Company* (2011), in which she argues that the global dynamics of environmental politics "demand a multi-sited approach that engages with the multiple locations in which socio-economic development policies" and sustainability are "articulated and enacted".

Data collection

Aldin, my research assistant, and I worked together in Antanmamo during my two fieldwork periods. In Antanmamo, a specific Malagasy dialect was spoken. I therefore entirely relied on Aldin's translations from Malagasy to French for more than 70 interviews conducted inside the protected area. The remaining 40 interviews and informal conversations, which took place in Fort-Dauphin, Antananarivo and Paris, were conducted by myself and in my mother tongue, French. Aldin is originally from a village close to Fort-Dauphin and is Antanosy, an ethnic group considered to have very good relationships with the Antandroy, the ethnic group living in Antanmamo. This affiliation greatly facilitated communication, trust and good relations between us and our respondents.

In addition to the methodological difficulty of translating interviews from one language to another, I shall also acknowledge that considerable challenges appeared when trying to use specific research methods. The principal methods for data collection were unstructured and semi-structured interviews. To engage in discussions with my respondents, I decided to organise focus groups in the village where I was conducting my first case study, in the second week of my fieldwork. Soon enough, however, I realised that influential power structures existed at the village-level. This hierarchy was not obvious to the eyes but having read the work of Fauroux (2002: 10-17), who developed the method A+ which acknowledges micro-local power structures, I could progressively make sense of the situation I was confronted with: while seating with 10 women from this specific village to discuss conservation, the rules of the protected area, their use of forest resources, I was actively trying to hear everybody's opinion on such matters. Yet, only one woman would reply to my questions. The others would stay silent and even if I would ask the question to someone else, the same lady would speak. She was one of the oldest women in the village. Later on, I also noticed that a man was seating in the back of the women group, whispering answers. I am still not sure if he was there out of curiosity, like the dozens of children seating around us, or if this was something Fauroux would have also described as an illustration of the "numerous and intertwined

powers that confront each other within complex structures and render any local decision-making mechanism completely opaque” (ibid: 9).

Such methodological difficulties occurred several times in the beginning of my fieldwork and I quickly realised that certain research tools promoted in the books I had been reading before my departure to Madagascar, such as focus groups or “community mapping exercises” to research land use patterns, proved to be rather unreliable in my fieldwork setting. Creating trust with my respondents and understanding what silence or humour could mean in specific situations became crucial when trying to go beyond the methodological difficulties encountered in the first two weeks of my research. It is through a lot of participant observations and by staying with Aldin in the villages where our respondents lived that informal conversations and confidences progressively opened up and that the zones of translation which will be detailed throughout this thesis became explicit.

Conducting social science research in settings where people constantly translate meanings, symbols and messages surely wasn’t something an academic book on research methods could have prepared me to. The role of the researcher, specifically in the setting of Antanmamo, was a difficult “hat” to wear because people living in Antanmamo had grown accustomed to interacting with only three different types of foreigners: the *vazaha* working for WWF, the *vazaha* coming in 4 wheel drives working for development and conservation NGOs such as ASOS, PAM or CARE, and, last but not least, the *vazaha* studying biology or ecology and interested in endemic animals and endemic plants. As a result, forest users became familiar with the expectations such *vazaha* had in mind when coming to Antanmamo: they were either looking for a guide in the forest to show them plants and animals or looking for local consultation to set up another development or conservation project in the area. Most forest users also knew what the *vazaha* wanted to hear. In this context, trying to explain to my respondents that I was neither a WWF agent nor a student in ecology became a lengthy process. In some villages, being seen as a “researcher” meant people would never tell you they ever did *hatsake* (slash and burn agriculture), even though they would take you to their *hatsake* fields the week after to pick up firewood; in the village at the top of the protected area, being a “researcher” meant a lot of distrust and fear from the villagers. According to them, if I was a *vazaha* I was necessarily working for WWF, in one way or another. My only remedy to those methodological difficulties was time and patience to gain their trust. Participant observation was probably the most useful research method to bridge this “trust”

gap and I sometimes got the impression that they were too busy making fun of my bizarre Western habits while dressing up, cooking or planting sweet potatoes that they had almost forgotten I was a “researcher” collecting information. Another important aspect that enabled me to go beyond my role and perceived identity as a researcher, which probably does not feature in academic books about anthropological research yet, was to return to my fieldwork sites. Six months after my first fieldwork in Madagascar, I went back to Antanmamo. One of my teachers who had himself been back to his fieldwork site a year after his initial visit advised us to do the same: “if you go back, people will think you respected your promise and their trust in you will grow. I can assure you that you will get very different information” he said. By coincidence or not, when I went back to the village located at the top of the protected area six months after my last visit, I was told by one of my key informants that they were “honoured Aldin and the *vazaha* walked all the way to our village because even people from Antanmamo [name of the main village located south of the protected area, where the local school, hospital and office of the mayor are located] do not come all the way here to visit us, even though we share the same blood and come from the same ethnic group”. Of course, collecting reliable data does not only simply require walking to a remote location to show your honesty and commitment to others. But when faced with a context with significant tensions and influential power structures, doing so greatly helped me in overcoming a number of methodological barriers.

Outside Antanmamo, it is not my role as a researcher that seemed to slow down the process of data collection with Air France, WWF and GoodPlanet’s spokespersons but, rather, the fact that I was studying anthropology and had lived in one of the PHCF intervention sites for two months. My only remedy to overcome those methodological barriers was, in this case not time and patience but, instead, a lot of desk research to know my topic well and a significant amount of literature review to learn how to speak the same language as my respondents during interviews. In a sense, being a researcher in those different spatial and cultural settings also made me joined the zones of translation I will be analysing throughout this study.

Thesis outline

Broadly speaking, this thesis is divided into three main parts. The first one, “partnership”, focuses on NGO-private companies relations analysed through elite actor narratives and

practices. The second and third parts of this study focus on how elite actors' ideas and actions are translated into practice, across distances.

Background

The project I studied for the purpose of this research is a Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) pilot project funded by Air France, supervised by a French NGO called GoodPlanet and implemented in Madagascar by the international and Malagasy branches of the environmental NGO World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The project is called *Programme Holistique de la Conservation des Forêts* (PHCF) or Holistic Program for Forests Conservation. There are 5 sites of intervention in Madagascar and, taken as a whole, the project covers 500,000 hectares of land. The objective of the PHCF is to create protected areas and subsequently transfer the management of those areas to forest users. Once forest management is transferred to the community, WWF helps forest users to set up reforestation programs and develop income-generating activities that are alternative to slash and burn agriculture. Simultaneously, WWF and GoodPlanet agents conduct scientific research to calculate the amount of carbon retained in the forests where the project is implemented. In the long-term, all partners of the PHCF – and most particularly Air France – hope that enough carbon will be stocked in those protected forests to potentially enter a carbon market. My case study was conducted in a site project located in the South-East region of the island, 150 km from the city of Fort-Dauphin, in the protected area of Antanmamo².

Relevance

The question of environmental management and biodiversity conservation has found echoes in many African countries. In the past two centuries, I would argue that the matter has greatly affected local politics and, in some cases, everyday life in a number of countries on the continent. The greening of institutions a number of authors refer to has not been limited to international organisations (Watts, 2002). In various African countries, and especially those with high rates of endemic species and considerable forest resources, there has also been a greening of local institutions, grassroots organisations and movements. So why focus on Madagascar to research environmental politics? Two main reasons will be advanced to justify the case study of this thesis.

² To protect the privacy of villagers, names of places and individuals in this thesis are fictional.

First of all, I decided to work on Madagascar because it is a country that has been branded as “special” and “unique” by a variety of actors in the past two centuries. One reason for such branding is, of course, the geographical isolation of Madagascar from the rest of the African continent. Another reason, and probably the most influential, is the ecological uniqueness of the island – mainly due to its historical and geographical separation from the African continent. If I decided to choose Madagascar for my case study, it is because the island has attracted specific actors who have talked about Madagascar in a specific way: an Eden for biologists, a place for men to reunite with Nature, “a Promised Land for naturalists”, and a “world apart”. In other terms, a number of actors throughout history, from colonial missionaries to 20th century naturalists and contemporary international NGOs have branded Madagascar as a unique place in the world, an environmental jewel with a biodiversity nowhere to be found, not even in the rest of Africa. This branding has, in turn, greatly influenced local politics to the extent that authors like Goedefroit and Revéret (2007) argue Madagascar has become the receiver of a considerable amount of development and conservation projects based on its “biodiversity” uniqueness and, as a result, given a central place to an ideology of biodiversity conservation in its public policies. Choosing Madagascar to research environmental politics in Africa therefore appeared as a relevant case study choice. What I intend to look at throughout this thesis is a direct result of such branding of the island: two foreign environmental NGOs and one airplane private company teaming up to access Madagascar using specific messages. In other terms, I intend to analyse what the consequences of such branding are and how those messages are translated in Madagascar. An in-depth justification for this case study as well as an analysis of the historical and contemporary processes of branding Madagascar will be given detailed emphasis in the second part of this thesis (starting from page 71).

Second, the research locations, Paris and Madagascar, were of crucial relevance because a central term analysed throughout this study is the notion of “translation”: how messages, symbols, definitions and values are communicated and received from one place to another. Choosing the PHCF as a case study for my research was therefore relevant in the sense that it is a project that links Paris – and in a broader sense France – with Madagascar. Yet, those two places already have a history of connections, exchanges, mediation and translation. As it will be argued in the second part of this thesis, the majority of those exchanges and translation processes started three centuries ago, before Madagascar became a French colony. But they still exist today, 50 years after the independence of Madagascar.

Part 1.

PARTNERSHIP

Partner. /'pɑ:tnə/ *noun*. a person who takes part in an undertaking with another or others, especially in a business or firm with shared risks and profits³.

1.1. Private companies and NGOs : from foes to partners

The PHCF is a project funded by Air France, mediated by GoodPlanet and implemented locally by WWF-International and WWF-Madagascar. In this regard, the PHCF is a great example of what I witnessed during the conference I attended in Paris: a private company teaming up with a French foundation and an international environmental NGO in the name of environmental sustainability.

As we will see in this chapter, Air France, WWF and GoodPlanet's incentives to engage in a project in Madagascar are rooted in multiple factors, the most notable being Corporate Social Responsibility. This demonstration of "transnational" responsibility under the form of the PHCF, however, does not happen in a vacuum. A growing number of NGOs have developed corporate partnership strategies and programs to guide private companies on the path towards "sustainable development". Similarly, many transnational companies now incorporate social and ecological responsibility into their business plans and, as part of such frameworks, invest in conservation programs around the world. Conservation International seems to have been an avant-garde in this trend. The US-based environmental NGO partners with Monsanto in Brazil, Ebay in Mexico and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Toyota in the Philippines, Exxon Mobil Corporation in Papua New Guinea, Chevron in Indonesia, Cathay Pacific in rural China, Total in New Caledonia, and Dell in Madagascar. The list of Conservation International's corporate partners includes more than 59 transnational companies. The same observation applies to WWF, one of the most renowned conservation organisations campaigning for wildlife protection. Corporate partners of WWF include Bank of America

³ Oxford Dictionaries definition. See <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/partner>

(see pictures below), which now offers WWF credit cards to its customers, Lafarge, the world leader in construction materials that also invests in reforestation programs in 11 countries around the world, and Coca-Cola, which now campaigns for the safeguard of polar bears in the Arctic.



WWF representative with Lafarge spokesperson



Bank of America

Since April 2009 Bank of America has offered a World Wildlife Fund Visa® credit card and checking account to support our global conservation efforts. - Bank of America, N.A. Member FDIC. ©2012 Bank of America Corporation [Learn More](#)



WWF partnership with Bank of America, as promoted on WWF Website



List of WWF corporate partners in 2011.

Collaborations between NGOs and private companies are not new. As Rajak suggests (2011: 13), similarities exist when looking comparing old regimes of corporate paternalism led by philanthropic industrialists in Victorian Britain with the contemporary framework of Corporate Social Responsibility. The difference between those two eras, however, embeds in in the word “partnership”. Today, investing in a development project is no longer just about philanthropy. Instead, it has become an integral part of a company’s business strategy: it is business to be sustainable. In other terms, corporations no longer simply provide funds to charity or environmental organisations, they also share logos, strategies, image, network and skills.

Those relatively recent partnerships between NGOs and transnational companies have sparked debate within the NGO community and beyond. If there seems to be a trend in environmental politics, this does not necessarily mean that such a shift has found complete unanimity among all. Many environmental organisations still refuse to partner with corporations on the basis that such alliances are “pacts with the devil” and “greenwashing”. According to a team of journalists who investigated on a newly-established partnership between an international environmental NGO and a French bank – which, as part of its investment activities, provides funds to oil companies –, collaborations between NGOs and the corporate world reflect a wider “value crisis” in society (*France 2*, May 2012⁴). Within academia, considerable scepticism has been raised as to the real changes brought by such partnerships over management systems: do companies really change their practices once they have entered into a partnership with an environmental NGO? According to Utting (quoted in Hamann & Acutt, 2003: 258), using voluntary frameworks such as Corporate Social Responsibility when creating NGO-private companies' partnerships allows a company to simply make partial, superficial or image-related changes to give the impression that it is accommodating social interests despite a fairly minimalist agenda. For others, such partnerships between civil society groups and the private sector bridge numerous gaps (Dahan et al., 2010). By joining forces, NGOs and private companies can complement each other skills, make use of each other’s network and, on the NGO’s side, private companies represent an important source of income that may not be found elsewhere (ibid).

⁴ According to the information collected during the journalists’ investigation, the environmental NGO receives 400.000 Euros per year from the French bank for the partnership they have agreed upon. Full video on: <http://www.pluzz.fr/cash-investigation-2012-05-04-22h25.html>

One reason why the topic is generating so much discussion within different sectors of society is because this shift in business-NGOs relations increasingly questions our expectations, as researchers, anthropologists, consumers, or citizens. Can NGOs still protect our planet if they now partner with the actors they were fighting against a few years ago? Can I really trust that the product I am buying is sustainable because of the green logo on its package? If transnational corporations become the main source of funding for NGOs, do NGOs still have enough power and influence to compel their own donors to reduce their carbon footprint? For a very long time, private companies were seen as the source of the problem and NGOs, in most cases, as the solution to the problem.

NGOs, as part of civil society, are perceived as opinion leaders. As such, the majority of society expects NGOs to raise awareness about issues that affect the general public but also to pressure groups, companies and governments to bring about change. In fact, NGOs and private companies seem to have mutually incompatible goals. Their balance of power somewhat recalls a David versus Goliath battle. So how can their objectives and practices be reconciled? A look at the academic literature published on this topic illustrates well the expectations and presumptions the majority of us have when looking at the changing relations between NGOs and transnational corporations: *Strange Attractor* (SustainAbility, 1996), *A Strange Affair?* (Enderle and Peters, 1998), and *Strange Bedfellows* (Wieland, 2009). The relationship between private companies and NGOs has much very changed over the years. So what does this mean? If the characteristics of NGOs and private companies are changing, so should our expectations? Or should we continue to believe that NGOs will remain the young David who defeats the all-powerful Goliath? Conventional definitions of NGOs, as watchdogs keeping their eyes on profit-making corporations that are taking power away from the state, are challenged.

As explained earlier, NGOs are engaging in new ways with the private sector. Yet, the relationship between NGOs and the business world remains weakly researched. For the purpose of this chapter, we will therefore try to understand the changes that have taken place between transnational companies and international NGOs, analyse how such alliances are created and negotiated, and situate power in those relations. It shall be noted that the purpose of this thesis is neither to assess nor to judge whether those partnerships are desirable. Instead, this study seeks to understand *why* and *how* did two hitherto disconnected registers reconnect?

The first part of this chapter will elaborate on the “why” question: why do certain NGOs such as GoodPlanet and WWF and private companies such as Air France decide to team up in the name of sustainable development? How has the relationship between private companies and NGOs moved from confrontation to collaboration, alliance and partnership?

The second part of this chapter will track processes of negotiations. How do Air France, WWF, and GoodPlanet negotiate the “terms of the contract”? What are the obstacles to such collaborations? Are all partners equal? How is the language of partnership created, enacted and maintained? We will see that as the relationship between the different actors evolves, there is a shift from learning the language of the other to mimicking the other, that is, tapping into each other’s registers, discourses, organisational practices, formats, and codes.

In the third and last section of this chapter, we will discuss the reliability of those alliances between NGOs and corporations. It will be argued that such partnerships should be seen as “phenomenologies” in the sense that demarcating lines of responsibility between the different stakeholders remain. Even though one may describe translocal schemes such as the PHCF as collaborative ventures “that subsume diverse projects and potentially divergent interests and values – communal and commercial, ecological and social – within a collective project”, it is important to question the very term of “partnership”, that is, how and when it is used by the different actors implicated in the project.

A chronology of private companies-NGOs relations

The following section will serve as an analytical exercise to understand the changes that have occurred over the past years between NGOs and private companies. As explained earlier, there is a shift in contemporary environmental politics. Previously seen as foes with antithetical practices and aspirations, NGOs and transnational corporations increasingly tend to look at each other as potential partners. I have witnessed such a trend on various occasions during my fieldwork, be it at a conference about tropical forests, in the office of Air France Director for Sustainable Development or while engaging with NGO workers in Paris, Antananarivo and Fort-Dauphin. It is this very trend that I aim to describe and explain here. As stated earlier, the PHCF does not happen in a vacuum. One cannot understand the factors that have driven Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF to partner for an environmental project in Madagascar without situating the PHCF in a wider shift in environmental governance. In

other terms, it is important to analyse the project studied here as embedded into and framed by historically constituted structural relations.

The following section intends to answer the “why” question: why do companies, such as Air France, create alliances with NGOs, such as GoodPlanet and WWF – and *vice versa*?

GLOBALISATION, GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY

The story of the multi-scales and multi-actor partnerships described in this thesis is inextricably linked to the story of globalisation and neoliberalism. Some even suggest that alliances between NGOs and private companies are direct products of globalisation and neoliberalism combined (Watts, 2002). Globalisation forces, let them be political, economic, social or cultural, have changed the spatial localisation of practices of governance and considerably altered Westphalian sovereignty. In this sense, the story of NGO-private companies partnership is also about governance: why are private companies and NGOs increasingly taking the lead in tasks that were conventionally assigned to the state, including development schemes and environmental protection? The changing role of the modern state in a context of rapid globalisation has generated a long-lasting debate within academia. Concerns have been raised in anthropology as to how much power the state actually has when it comes to allowing – or blocking – the continuous flow of capital, ideas and goods produced under neoliberalism? According to Ferguson (2005: 379), neoliberalism significantly decreased modern state’s capacity to manage the adverse consequences of globalisation. The result of such a shift in power balance, the author argues, is the creation of a governance gap whereby the state’s capacity to govern is outsourced (ibid). For Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 982), one of the most renowned academics involved in this debate, “an increasingly transnational political economy today poses new challenges to familiar forms of state spatialisation”. The state, they claim, no longer has the monopoly on improvement and social order schemes. The arguments advanced above strongly differ with Scott’s line of thinking in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). The difference between Scott’s (1998) and Ferguson and Gupta’s (2005; 2002) analysis embeds in their distinctive definitions of globalisation: Scott sees it as a compressing process leading to homogenisation whereas Ferguson and Gupta define globalisation as a synonym of distanciation, denationalisation and decentralisation. In other terms, the latter two authors argue that globalisation has linked distant localities, distant actors, distant discourses and distant practices. Lewis and Mosse (2006: 2) share a similar line

of thinking when affirming that neoliberalism tendency for decentralisation has multiplied the number of organisations and intermediary networks and strongly diversified sources of influence and power.

The limit in Scott's argumentation was pointed out by Li in *Beyond 'the State' and Failed Schemes* (2005). In her article, Li suggests that "rather than emerging fully formed from a single source, many improvement schemes are formed through an assemblage of objectives, knowledge, techniques, and practices of diverse provenances," and all pursue different agendas (2005: 386). Because the state is no longer the exclusive actor in the creation and management of social order projects, an increasing number of anonymous and distant actors have engaged in the practice of governance. Going beyond Scott's analysis, Li therefore stresses the importance of acknowledging all the

"missionaries, social reformers, scientists, political activists, ethnographers, and other experts who routinely diagnose deficiencies in the population or some segment of it, and who propose calculated schemes of improvement. Today they are joined by the misnamed 'nongovernmental' organisations, both national and transnational, which are involved in arenas such as public health, welfare, agricultural extension, conservation, human rights, good governance, and, increasingly, peace building— all elements of the hydra-headed endeavour we have come to know as "development" (Li, 2005 : 386).

Globalisation has indeed significantly reconfigured the interconnections between the global and the local.

FROM A GOVERNANCE GAP TO TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNMENTALITY

To describe this new form of governance that bypasses national borders and encompasses different modes and scales of governing, Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 989) use the concept of "transnational governmentality" as an extension of the idea of "governmentality" first introduced by Foucault in 1991. Such a formulation, the two authors claim, describes not only "new strategies of discipline and regulation, exemplified by the WTO and the structural adjustment programs implemented by IMF, but also transnational alliances forged by activists and grassroots organisations and the proliferation of voluntary organisations supported by complex networks of international and transnational funding and personnel" (ibid: 990). In this context, it no longer comes as a surprise to see that a number of international institutions including the IMF now enjoy almost as much power to govern as most nation states do. But while it is important to stress the influence of new players in global governance, it is equally

important to stress that “transnational governmentality” does not necessarily mean less governance. Instead, the concept equals to the profusion of new modes of governance. Placed back in relation to the role of the state, “transnational governmentality” also means that the modern state as an apparatus of power has not completely vanished from the spheres of governance. As Elyachar (2003: 591; 597) points out in her analysis of the term “governmentality”, which she conceives more as “a practice than a concept”, “the lines between the state, international organisations, and civil society that is assumed to lie outside the state are far fuzzier than we often realise [...] power is not located in specific structures or institutions; rather, it is diffused throughout society and thus dissolved as a specific form of power”. In other terms, international organisations and civil groups still need to enter into negotiations with the state to access power. The modern state, in a context of power reconfiguration, has therefore become a vehicle through which transnational entities seek to expand authority and influence. In this analysis of the emerging modality of power, it is thus important to go beyond a Foucauldian approach that would restrict our localisation of power to binary scales such as state versus NGO, global versus state and local versus global. One way to go beyond such a limited approach, Elychar continues (ibid: 598), is to look at transnational governmentality as a set of hybrid forms of governance emerging at the “interstice” of the state, international organisations and NGOs.

The shift in the spatialisation of governance triggered a parallel change in the spatialisation of accountability. Because the state was becoming less capable of meeting its citizens’ demands and calls for responsibility, civil society started to look for accountability elsewhere. And if not nationally, the answer was to be found internationally. In other terms, if the causes behind protests were becoming global, so should the actions and solutions developed against such problems. Along a similar line of observation, Elyachar (2003: 596-7) argues that

“the modern state appears as but one moment in a longer historical process of the evolution of forms of governmentality, and ceases to figure as the sole, or even most important, container of power. In political protest actions at the turn of the millennium such as the anti-globalisation movement, it is often not the state, but rather the World Trade Organization and the World Bank — international or global organisations — that may be ‘overvalued’. The state often disappears from view as the object of political protest. Likewise, when world leaders of states and business gathered in Okinawa in July 2000 to discuss the most pressing problems of the global era, they, too, called for new forms of ‘global governance — new, cooperative, though as yet largely

unspecified way of running world affairs in response to the massive changes wrought by globalisation and rapid technological change”.

One of the most “pressing problems of the global era” discussed when international state and business leaders gathered in Okinawa was the environment. Biodiversity, climate change, and environmental degradation all became top-priority issues on world leaders’ agenda. Images of ice glaciers melting in Antarctica and forests being cut down in the Amazon rainforest become symbols of an increasingly powerful discourse about a *globally*-shaped but *globally*-harmed environment. Human actions, and most importantly, industrial activities led by transnational corporations were identified as the main causes of environmental degradation. As a result of the states’ decreasing capacities to manage the adverse consequences of globalisation, including environmental repercussions of transnational corporations’ activities within state borders, new actors started to take the lead in the fight for environmental protection. The deepening of the reach of transnational capital had as its counterpoint a proliferation of social movements and actors linking economic justice with environmental causes. Such actors included non-governmental organisations, quasi-autonomous entities with extended networks across national boundaries. As Tsing explains (2000: 331), “beginning most intensely in the 1980s, social movements – including environmentalism, human rights, indigenous rights, and feminist causes – extended themselves through NGOs; they sought to work around the restrictions of nation-states by forging transnational lines of financial, scientific, and political support”. For this reason, Tsing continues, “global environmentalism participated in building another image of the global, in which globality represented the goal of a process of building transnational political and cultural ties [...] The global here is an ever-ending process of ‘networking’ and building lines of support” (ibid).

Because of the emphasis placed on the *global* characteristic of climate change, emerging social movements and NGOs have strongly pushed for the creation – or reinforcement – of global institutions and regulations as a way to bridge the accountability gap. New social movements therefore took part in “an effort by national and global civil society”, through social networks and transnational coalitions, “to create some sort of control over transnational corporations and rogue states,” Watts explains (2002: 1315). This call for greater accountability has brought numerous changes to environmental politics in the last three decades. The most notable change, Foster (2005: 1314) points out, is the “greening” of multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations, which central development agendas revolve around “the need for a new multilateral

environmental agency to regulate the global commons”. Calls for global accountability have also led to the creation of worldwide awareness-raising events reinforcing the centrality and urgency of environmental action, starting with the first Earth Day as early as 1970 and the Rio Summit in 1992.

In *The Will to Improve* (2007), Li analyses the Indonesian’s government attempts to improve landscapes and livelihoods through national and international institutions. The author argues that “the will to improve”, increasingly expressed by the transnational actors identified earlier, materialises once a situation is problematised and deficiencies are identified. “The identification of a problem,” she continues, “is intimately linked to the availability of a solution” (2007: 7). Li’s analysis is very helpful when trying to deconstruct environmental politics and understanding the major shifts and realignments in environmental governance since the 1970s. When applying Li’s formula to the object of our study here, namely sustainable development, we see that a problem has been identified, i.e. global climate change, and so have deficiencies, i.e. the lack of accountability. “The availability of a solution”, however, is yet to be identified. In fact, the question has been a continuous source of debate at both the international and national levels. Who should be responsible for tackling environmental problems and how should this responsibility be translated?

NEGOTIATING ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: COMPANIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS

“Long-standing enemies must shift from
mutual subversion to new forms of symbiosis”
Elkington, 1998: 37

As explained earlier, new actors progressively made their way into environmental governance as a direct result of the “governance gap” created by globalisation and neoliberalism. In their quests for accountability, those new actors, instead of going to the state, started going directly to the entities they identified as the root causes of their problems: transnational private companies. Transnational companies became one of the primary targets of environmental campaigns and movements denouncing the industrial exploitation of natural resources – and the economic, social and ecological consequences linked to it – and the ecological footprint of such corporations. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund, Sierra Club, the

Rainforest Alliance ... the list of transnational environmental organisations which actively campaigned against the adverse consequences of private companies' activities worldwide is extensive. Over the years, their lobbying power at the level of international institutions and state governments also considerably increased.



Greenpeace campaign against Indian car manufacturer Tata, 2008

Considering private companies often were NGOs' first targets for campaign and action, one can imagine that the relationship between the two entities must have been rather tense. Images of civil society groups protesting against Shell oil-extraction activities in Nigeria are one of the many illustrations of the conflicting relationship between NGOs and transnational corporations (see picture below). Taking into account the distinctive organisational cultures and expectations raised by each entity, it does indeed seem like private companies and NGOs have mutually incompatible goals. On the one hand, private companies are often portrayed as corporations guided by the accumulation of short-term profit, while NGOs, on the other hand, are seen as organisations focusing primarily on improvement and development schemes that require long-term commitments to the well-being of communities or ecosystems. Yet, looking at contemporary environmental politics, one realises that an important shift has occurred between private companies and NGOs since their first interactions.



Members of the Nigeria's Ogoni community protest against Shell in New York. Associated Press, 2009

Despite a number of differences, NGOs and private companies are starting to make space for each other in their internal strategies and developments: while transnational corporations are more and more concerned with their public image and reputation, a growing number of NGOs are calling for increased cooperation with the corporate world on the basis that “if you want to change the system, you have to work within the system”. In this context, affirming that a private company only aims at maximising its profits seems to be an invalid statement. Corporate performance is no longer based solely on productivity, sales and benefits but also on the involvement and investment a company is ready to make to demonstrate its commitment to the well-being of society. NGOs and the private sector have recently initiated a remarkable, though precarious, movement away from confrontation towards dialogue and cooperation. In the words of Elkington (1998: 38), “it is clear that we now stand on the threshold of a new era in the relationships between business and its many stakeholders”.

But while it is essential to acknowledge the scale and importance of this trend towards partnership, it is equally important to bear in mind that alliances between NGOs and the corporate world do not make complete unanimity. Only a small number of NGOs have taken a cohesive position within their organisation regarding partnerships with transnational private companies. NGOs’ directors, managers and employees may often have diverging positions on the question. Sharing similar concerns, Elkington (1998: 38) explains that while

“some will succeed in attracting powerful partners, some will not. But the terms and conditions of these partnerships will have changed profoundly. In the old order, very few campaigning

groups, or NGOs as they are better known, were prepared to work directly with industry. Some never will, but longer term they will probably turn out to be in the minority. What is different today, however, is that the NGOs are increasingly in a position of power – and some are preparing to use it in novel ways, working with business and through markets”.

For this reason, it is judicious to frame the debate on NGO-private companies partnership as a discussion about unfixed modes of green governance defined here as “the forms of calculated practice at different scales directing categories of social agents in a particular manner for particular ends” (Watts, 2002: 1315). Environmental governance remains open to changes and contests.

CREATING RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

“...the twenty-first century will be the age of alliances where collaboration between non-profit and corporations will grow in frequency and strategic importance emigrating from the traditional philanthropy toward deeper, strategic alliances”

James Austin, 2001.

If experts all agree that there is a shift in NGO-private companies relations, their explanations of it somewhat varies. For Heap (2000), a researcher at the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) who has written extensively on NGOs’ reconciliation with the private sector, the shift towards partnership is rooted in globalisation, that is, “the increasingly multinational nature of business”. The author argues that globalisation has reduced the power of nation states to affect development while simultaneously increasing the power of the private sector in the same field. “Multinational corporations,” he continues, “account for over one quarter of the world’s Gross National Product (GNP) and with such massive resources at their disposal, there is increasing recognition that with global influence comes global responsibility” (ibid). In Heap’s words, “the welfare state has giving way to business welfare” (ibid). Watts (2002: 1315), renowned for his concepts of “green capitalism” and “green governmentality”, argues that the shift towards partnership embeds in

“the restructuring of world capitalism and its multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF who have now entered, with the assistance of the Internet, the popular lexicon of green politics [...] ‘Command-and-control’ regulatory approaches have been under assault since

the neoliberal counterrevolution of the late 1970s, and market- and civic-driven economic approaches – eco-taxes, “best practices” environmental management, green consumer activism, community-driven environmental regulation, and more collaborative models of environmental governance – have assumed a new visibility,” he explains.

One of the most recent illustrations of “market- and civic-driven” economic approaches is the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR, also referred to as “corporate citizenship”, is a self-regulating mechanism that emerged in the 1970s and was developed by multinational corporations as a response to civil society’s request for accountability. Applying CSR allows a company to ensure its business strategies embrace responsibility, comply with ethical standards and international norms, and invest in programs that have a positive impact on the environment and communities affected by the company’s activities. CSR is synonym with accommodation in the sense that it derives directly from the way companies choose to respond to the economic, political and structural drivers of change. Representatives from the business sector themselves affirm that CSR is as a response to changed social expectations and an adaptation to new global circumstances (Hamann and Acutt, 2003: 258). Placed back in the context of the PHCF, Air France Director for Sustainable Development Pierre Caussade clearly sees his company’s financial investment in the project as a response to long-lasting calls from civil society for accountability [interview, January 19, 2012]. For Air France,

"accepting to be part of this project was a way for us to respond to the challenges raised by public interpellations about our sector and field of activity concerning the issue of climate change. This task was the assignment I was given by the general director when I first came into office, we communicated internally and externally about this and we decided to call our business plan for sustainable development the ‘climate plan’.

[...] Our implication in Madagascar is not linked at all to any governmental obligations or any regulation from Europe or elsewhere, it is purely a willingness from our side to say 'we want to engage and we want to act concretely'. So there are actions that are proper to our business like the reduction of fuel consumption, which is part of our business, the modernisation of our fleet, which is also part of our business, and then ... well we considered that this was not enough. The political vision and engagement brought forward by our former president was a long-term vision. He thought that it was necessary to demonstrate our willingness through other actions than modernising our fleet and reducing our emissions, to show that we really want to be involved. It is at this same moment that the project in Madagascar was brought up, and then we thought 'wow, this is exactly what we need'! It is a very ambitious project that is coming just

right on time, it is coherent on the scientific level, it is coherent on the local level because Malagasy are implicated locally so ... let's go!," Pierre Caussade explains [ibid].

As stated by Pierre Caussade, it is Air France's CSR agenda that encouraged the airplane company to partner with two environmental NGOs for an anti-deforestation project in Madagascar. The shift in environmental governance, Hamann and Acutt argue (2003: 256), took place when large transnational companies which had chosen the path towards CSR started to present themselves – and became seen – as potentially important rural development agents. Responsibility became an integral part of everyday business. Along a similar line of thinking, Rajak (2011: 2-3) affirms that NGOs and private companies have managed to find common grounds and buried the hatch as a result of the “disenchantment with the rampant free market fetishism and hard-line neoliberalism of the 1980s”. Such a disenchantment, which she qualifies as “the happy confluence of economic value and ethical values packaged together in the new human (or humane) face of capitalism”, has given way to the “(re)birth of an era of compassionate capitalism with corporate citizens as its midwives offering, it appears, moral and perhaps even spiritual revitalisation of the ‘Market’”.

According to Rajak's analysis, one of the very few studies published on the anthropology of CSR, it is at the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 that transnational corporations became firmly established at the vanguard of the global development and environmental agenda. The most illustrative image of the latter statement is an article Rajak read in the British newspaper *The Guardian* about the event in 2002. The article, she continues, explains that “seating next to Tony Blair on his flight to the summit was Sir Robert Wilson, the then CEO of the world's largest mining company, Rio Tinto [...] Surely, this symbolised the extent to which big business has been embraced as both a partner and advisor in international development planning” (quoted in Rajak, 2011: 10-11). But what could the agenda of such key representatives from multinational corporations be about? For Rajak, the answer is sustainable development. “CSR has a powerful capacity to adapt, incorporate and offer itself up as the answer to an apparently limitless range of global concerns within the all-encompassing commitment to sustainable development: from good governance, anti-corruption and responsible payment of revenues to governments, to environmental stewardship, biodiversity and climate change [...] At the start of the 21st century, few goals have appeared so persuasive in their capacity to recruit support from diverse corners as that of sustainable development,” the author argues (Rajak, 2011: 12). Sustainable development, as

ambiguous as the term might be, has the capacity to connect diverging and previously conflicting actors, discourses and practices. The term has been used repeatedly, by different actors and to pursue different agendas, to the extent that some argue its very definition has become void and porous. For Watts (2002: 1314-5),

“these struggles over the global commons and corporate responsibility may strike us as wholly commonplace and pedestrian, but it is precisely their quotidian character that marks the extent to which governing nature is now so deeply embedded in our early 21st century political identities. The new lexicon [of sustainable development] is so endemic that it appears with as much frequency in the frothy promotional literature of the World Bank as in the rhetoric of the Sierra Club, the US military, or the myriads of Third World grassroots environmental and community movements. Whatever its semantic ambiguity, sustainability has the effect of linking three hitherto relatively disconnected discourses”.

As Watts clearly illustrates in the above statements, the rhetoric of sustainable development did indeed manage to make entities as different as international institutions regulating trade, environmental NGOs fighting for biodiversity protection but also nation states and community organisations all speak the same language of “sustainability”. The rhetoric of sustainable development, by bringing “hitherto relatively disconnected discourses” together, has in turn created a new language and practice, namely, partnership (ibid). In other terms, the formalisation of previously conflicting exchanges between NGOs and private companies has materialised under the form of partnership. According to Mosse (2004), who has written extensively on how development projects work – rather than whether they work –, concepts such as “sustainable development” or “partnership” are purposely porous and ambiguous. The author, who emphasises the value and power of vague words, argues that “partnership” is one of the “mobilising metaphors” produced by policy-makers or project planners whose “vagueness, ambiguity and lack of conceptual precision is required to conceal ideological differences, to allow compromise and the enrolment of different interests, to build coalitions, to distribute agency and to multiply criteria of success within project systems” (2004: 663). In other words, such ambiguities in concepts serve to accommodate the distinctive interests and priorities of all the actors involved into one unique framework. Because “sustainable development” remains ambiguous, the use of the concept is accessible to all and everyone can use it for their own agenda.

GOING BEYOND PHILANTHROPY: NGO-PRIVATE COMPANIES' PARTNERSHIP

As illustrated earlier, companies have extended their hands to their former combatants through the language of sustainable development and CSR. "As big business is brought more closely into the development process – not only as an agent of empowerment but as its architect – novel regimes of local, national and global responsibility are emerging in which corporations are elevated as guardians of the social order and purveyors of a new global moral authority," Rajak argues (2011: 2). This shift in the politics of responsibility reminds us that relations between transnational companies and NGOs have evolved from a movement amongst campaigners calling for companies' accountability to a discourse and practice of partnership led, in most cases, by corporations themselves. Rajak (2011: 2) therefore notes it has become "commonplace to hear the language of commerce and that of community, of enterprise and the social coupled together where once they were seen as antithetical". Partnership seems to have become the most powerful narrative within the discourse of CSR. Air France Director for Sustainable Development is aware that such demonstrations of environmental engagement from a transnational corporation with a rather large carbon footprint may challenge conventional perceptions of business.

"I understand it might be surprising because, in the end, people may wonder how can a company invest so much money for a cause they wouldn't think Air France could be implicated in? But it is called sponsorship! The novelty, that no one would have ever thought about 5 or 6 years ago, is to say that we can enlarge our politics of sponsorship to actions that are more environmentally-friendly even though it remains actions linked to development. I mean, it is not just about the environment, we are not taking care of corals here, it is a project that enables Malagasy to have enough to eat. So we are still very close to the humanitarian aspect but I prefer to use the expression development aid to countries who really need it instead. I am not saying that we owe them a debt because Air France is not indebted to the Malagasy state, but we are a company from the North in a rich country. The status we have today in Madagascar, we inherit from history," Air France Director for Sustainable Development comments [interview, January 19, 2012].

As NGOs and private companies become partners, a whole new lexicon appears. In fact, a growing number of NGOs and private companies now refer to each other as "stakeholders", a term multinational corporations themselves started to use to identify the actors implicated in or affected by the corporation's activities, as illustrated by Pierre Caussade's description of Air France's stakeholders.

“It is since 2006 and 2007 that we thought about environmental matters. I mean, when you are establishing a sustainable development strategy you are interested in what we call 'stakeholders'. Those stakeholders are our customers, our supplies, sub-contractors, our neighbours and ... obviously when it comes to society matters and environmental ones, there are stakeholders that have a very very important role and those actors are NGOs. We started being implicated in environmental matters much earlier but today we can really tell that the most important stakeholders at the environmental level are NGOs, WWF being one of the top references in this sector,” he explains [interview, January 19, 2012].

But, in addition to private companies' growing determination to demonstrate responsibility, what other factors could encourage corporations to engage with “the most important stakeholders at the environmental level”, that is, NGOs? According to Dahan et al. (2010: 326), a group of researchers specialised in international business, strategy and management,

“multinational enterprises (MNEs) face a range of challenges when entering developing countries, including the need to adapt their business models to local markets' cultural, economic, institutional and geographic features. Where they lack the tangible resources or intangible knowledge needed to address these challenges, MNEs may consider collaborating NGOs to help facilitate new modes of value creation. In such cross-sector partnerships, parties contribute complementary capabilities along each stage of the value chain to develop products or services that neither could produce alone, creating and delivering value in novel ways while minimising costs and risks”.

And if we turn the question the other way round, what could encourage NGOs to engage with transnational corporations as stakeholders? This is a question worth asking as, in most cases, researchers tend to situate changes in operations and strategies only on the business side. A number of studies documenting NGO-private companies' relations suggest that the shift in environmental politics results from the adaptation of the business world to NGOs' demands – and not the other way around. However, it is important to realise that within the spheres of NGOs themselves, considerable transformations in the characteristics and paradigms of those non-government organisations are taking place. Heap (2000: 557) shares a similar line of argumentation when he notes that “even the language used to describe NGOs is changing and identities and boundaries are clearly shifting. We see certain NGOs run counter to the traditional spirit of voluntarism, commercial consultancy firms competing with established NGOs to operate programmes in former NGO territory, and NGOs setting up commercial consultancy wings”. Heap even takes his argument further by arguing that NGOs and private companies should no longer be studied as separate sectors because such an approach ignores

the “considerable blurring of the boundaries between some voluntary organisations and their counterparts in the statutory and private sectors” (ibid).

Looking at the chronology detailed earlier in this chapter, one realises that environmental politics has constantly changed since its defining moments in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of the most crucial differences with environmental governance forty years ago is that a growing number of transnational companies are moving away from conventional corporate philanthropy to engage in partnerships with civil society groups. As Heap (2000: 555) clearly explains, “relations have moved beyond the purely philanthropic, with corporations giving money to good causes, and the highly antagonistic, with organisations protesting a company's operations, to a situation where the two sectors often work in partnership to address core business issues such as environmental management”. The change, in other terms, is from a traditional sponsorship approach, whereby NGOs gathered funding to implement programs and raise awareness, to a partnership strategy which often implies lengthier negotiations and clearer commitments from either side. When I met with Air France Director for Sustainable Development Pierre Caussade in Paris – one of the key actors in the creation of the PHCF – I realised that the journey of sustainable development, from the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg to the offices – and language – of transnational corporations had successfully reached its final destination. For Pierre Caussade, partnerships between NGOs and private companies such as the PHCF represent

"a very powerful aspect of the evolution of our society in general, even if the PHCF remains a small project at the planet level. But there is a formula that I really like to use and it says: 'change one thing, change everything'. We know that one way of making things move in politics or in society in general is through little action that can have a sort of snowball effect. And here, we're talking about quite a big project so we hope that in the end, it will boost things a little, including maybe the organisation of life in Madagascar and, who knows, maybe it will boost things related to major climate issues and major international issues" [interview, January 19, 2012].

Air France's strategy to implement the PHCF is particularly illustrative of this move from mere corporate philanthropy, here assured by the humanitarian division of Air France known as Air France Foundation, to corporate social responsibility through partnerships, here with WWF and GoodPlanet. Because environmental responsibility now represents a business strategy in itself, Air France took the PHCF as an opportunity to make a distinction between

its twenty-year-old program for humanitarian actions under Air France Foundation and its newly-established “climate plan”, Air France’s translation of CSR.

“Until spring 2007, the only relation Air France had with NGOs was actually between Air France Foundation⁵ and NGOs, this relationship was limited to the humanitarian register. But the tradition of sponsorship is actually anchored in the genes of our company. So when it was decided that we would go along with this project, we, when I say we it means the direction of the company, we asked ourselves whether we should inscribe this project as part of Air France Foundation or not. And in order to avoid the confusion, and since here it was a very specific project focused on environmental preoccupations, namely the fight against deforestation, which has a very strong link with the problematic of climate change framed within the politics of REDD from the United Nations, we thought well it is definitely another register. There is a preoccupation linked to our activity, our work and actions in the environmental field and most particularly in the domain of climate change so we are here dealing with a different register so we concluded we should bring the project directly at the core of our business,” Air France Director for Sustainable Development explains [interview, January 19, 2012].

As illustrated throughout this chapter, relations between NGOs and transnational companies have significantly evolved over the years. From antithetic actors, sometimes involved in philanthropy, sometimes implicated in conflicting relations, NGOs and private companies increasingly refer to each other as fundamental “stakeholders” and partners. This is not to say that partnerships between civil society groups and the corporate world are exceptionally new, unanimous and modern. As early as the 18th century, the private sector was already involved in corporate philanthropy much before concepts such as “corporate social responsibility” or “sustainable development” emerged (Rajak, 2011: 13). The difference, however, is in the relationship between both bodies and the characteristics of both entities. Transnational companies such as Air France now design and incorporate “climate plan” within their own business strategies while NGOs increasingly speak the language of the corporate world and compete with consultancy agencies when it comes to advising corporations on how to be “green(er)”. On the one hand, business has become responsibility. On the other hand, responsibility now means business.

Now that we have analysed the chronology of NGOs-private companies relations and identified the factors explaining such an evolution, we will focus on the “how” question: how

⁵ Air France Foundation was created in 1992 as the philanthropy branch of the French airline. The Foundation supports projects from organisations or Air France staff that can enable children, children with disabilities and children in great difficulty to have access to education, leisure and culture.

is this shift translated in practice? And how do NGOs and private companies negotiate the terms of their newly-established partnership?

1.2. Becoming partners: the creation of the PHCF

“Experience suggests that decision-making knowledge, including apparently hard economic facts and statistics, are the outcome of complex relationships including negotiations over status, access, disciplinary points of view, team leadership struggles, conflict management or compliance with client frameworks defining what counts as knowledge”.

Mosse, 2011: 10

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter, the factor that primarily drove Air France into a partnership with WWF and GoodPlanet was the company’s Corporate Social Responsibility agenda. Air France “climate plan” was developed by the company itself as a way to demonstrate its responsiveness to environmental challenges. As an engagement to support the fight against global climate change, Air France’s “climate plan” was intended to facilitate the company’s “participation in programs concerned with environmental protection conducted by NGOs, the project in Madagascar being one illustration of that plan,” Pierre Caussade explains while reading his “climate plan “ document aloud during our interview [interview, January 19, 2012]. In parallel, we have seen earlier that a growing number of NGOs are extending their hands to their former “foes” and “targets” through partnerships on the basis that “we cannot change things if we are always located outside the system, we need to work inside the system,” a former Communication Officer at WWF-International states [interview, January 16, 2012].

Now that we have analysed the factors that drove Air France, WWF-International and GoodPlanet into a partnership for environmental protection in Madagascar, let us look at *how* the process of creating and maintaining the partnership took place. How did the different actors manage to reach a consensus, if any, on the “terms of the contract”? What is negotiated when actors with distinctive organisational structures, directives, interests and, very often, diverging agendas team up under the form of a partnership? And what is the level of risk involved in such alliances?

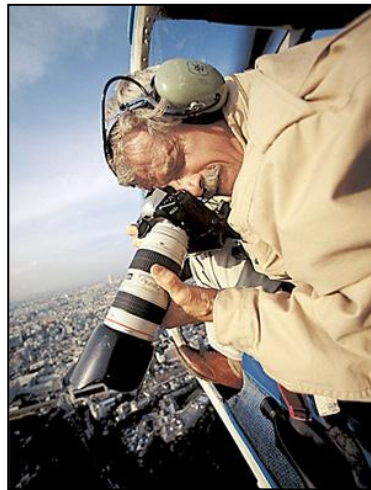
The objective of this thesis as a whole is to take a specific case study of an anti-deforestation project and track the latter from the day of its creation to its implementation. Doing so is a rather classical method for analysis, even though it shall be noted that most studies published on this topic focus on the implementation of a project – and its consequences – while avoiding in-depth analysis of the project’s creation. Similarly, most research findings focus on the political, social and cultural contexts that reinforced the legitimacy of the project. The project is therefore seen as just another scheme to further advance a “global environmental knowledge” mainly shaped by Western actors. In fact, I also look at the PHCF as an idea based on a somewhat “global” environmental knowledge and interpretation of what good natural management should be. Yet, what needs to be stressed here is that putting such types of projects into the “global” box blinds us to all the dynamics at play when an idea like the PHCF is created. It blinds us to the disagreements that take place when different stakeholders try to agree on a concept like “protected area”, it blinds us to the power relations existing between actors who should be “partners”, it blinds us to all the rules that regulate such partnerships, and, last but not least, it blinds us to the difficulty and complexity of creating a project like the PHCF. It is important to realise that decision-makers are not necessarily a homogenous group: when an idea like the PHCF is being discussed, a multiplicity of interests are at stakes and not every “stakeholder” gets the same level of authority.

As Tsing (2000) suggests, the connections operating under neoliberalism are not just spheres of exchange where elements travel from one place to another. There are also spaces where ideas and actions are constantly being negotiated, contested and mediated. “The universal is at the heart of contemporary humanist projects: scientists, economic reformers, and social justice advocates all appeal to the universal. Yet, universals, taken at their face value, erase the making of global connections,” the author maintains (2005: 6). In fact the “global” is in many studies assimilated with a homogeneity that is too often taken for granted. For the purpose of this thesis, I will therefore intend to demonstrate that the PHCF is the result of multiple connections, disagreements and negotiations.

CONNECTIONS

The story of the PHCF starts with one person: Yann Arthus-Bertrand. Outside France, his name probably doesn’t ring any bell. But, in “The Hexagon”, he is the 14th most appreciated

personality⁶. Following an agreement with UNESCO, Yann Arthus Bertrand travelled the globe to take pictures of the earth from a helicopter. Most families – including mine – have his photography book *The Earth from above* (2005) on their coffee table and all of them have watched *Home*, his poignant documentary on climate change. An acclaimed photographer, he is now better known as an ecologist who received several awards for his work, including the title of *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur* in 2005 and *Officier de l'Ordre national du Mérite* from the French President three years later.



Photographer Yann Arthus Bertrand

But if the splendour of his pictures has made global unanimity, the same cannot be said about his working method. According to French economics magazine *Challenges*, Yann Arthus Bertrand spent more than 2300 hours aboard his helicopter or the equivalent of 1667 tons of carbon⁷ to accomplish his ten-year-long assignment. So when the photographer takes his ecologist-activist hat to lecture the French Parliament and a group of industrialists about the actions they should take against climate change, criticisms of this contradictory “heli-cologist” arise. To confront those critiques, the photographer decided to reduce – or at least compensate – his own carbon footprint by financing projects ranging from renewable energies to reforestation.

“I am always astonished to see that customers do not compensate more for their carbon emissions. When someone takes a plane, he or she has the duty to find a system to compensate for the trip. Really, I am always surprise that customers don’t do it, that they are not capable of investing 10 or 5 euros for carbon compensation. People criticise me because I took planes to

⁶ See <http://www.lejdd.fr/Societe/Images/Le-Top-50-du-JDD/Top-50-JDD-personnalite-preferee-des-Francais-Yann-Arthus-Bertrand-211680/#highlight>

⁷ See *Challenges*, July 2008 on <http://www.challenges.fr/magazine/20080207.CHA7112/fertile.html>

take my pictures, but the only person who tried to find a way to compensate for his own emissions, it's me. So, that's it, because people were blaming me for polluting the Earth while taking my photos, I got the idea of this project as a way to start compensating for my own emissions, to show that I care," Yann Arthus Bertrand explains [interview, January 18, 2012].

In 2005, his foundation GoodPlanet was created. A year after, Action Carbone, the program that would enable companies, institutions, or individuals to reduce their carbon footprints by participating – and investing – in a voluntary carbon compensation system in return for fiscal reduction was launched. Voluntary carbon compensation here means calculating one's emission of carbon during a flight from Paris to New York, for instance, and choosing how much to compensate through financial donation. 85 percent of the payment goes to the financing of sustainable development projects, such as reforestation programs in Madagascar or the construction of biogas reservoirs in China; and the remaining 15 percent cover the “functioning cost of the program”⁸. So how did Yann Arthus Bertrand's original idea of compensating for his own helicopter's carbon emissions grow from a personal engagement for “responsibility” to the PHCF, “the world most important program of its kind funded by one private company”⁹?



GoodPlanet President Yann Arthus Bertrand

Once again, the answer takes us back to the same actor: Yann Arthus Bertrand. Before a partnership was created between Air France and his foundation, Yann Arthus-Bertrand was working independently for Air France as a photographer. Many of the pictures he captured for *The Earth from Above* (2002) were published in Air France Magazine. And since 2000, Yann Arthus Bertrand frequently contributes to the airline's magazine edition in which he even has his own column to write articles about the environment and honour charity projects.

⁸ See GoodPlanet website on <http://www.actioncarbone.org/airfrance/>

⁹ See GoodPlanet website on <http://www.actioncarbone.org/index.php/fr/partenaires/103-air-france>

According to a number of my respondents in Paris, who were either friends or professional relations of the photographer, Yann Arthus Bertrand's close tie with Air France goes beyond the professional level. Yann, they said, is also a close friend of Jean-Cyril Spinetta, Air France former general director [interview, January 13, 2012]. As one journalist explained,

“Yann is the one who got the idea for this PHCF project. And because he is a personal and close friend of Spinetta, Yann told Spinetta that Air France should do something ... that the company should get involved in an environmental project. I mean basically, he convinced him to support the project ... you know, Yann is very convincing, he knows how to present himself as a sort of saviour of the planet. He told Spinetta ‘you have to do something about this, you’ll have to invest millions of euros, but we will find the right place for you to do it’” [interview, January 13, 2012].

Interestingly, Yann Arthus-Bertrand does not hide his personal ties with the company's top managers and, instead, prefers to see such relations as connections leading to opportunities. “Considering the close relation I have with Air France, I have met several times with Mr Spinetta and one day I told him: it is necessary to do something. He replied ‘ok, just find me a project,” the photographer states [interview, January 18, 2012].

The argument developed by Mosse in one of his most acclaimed work *Cultivating Development* (2005), in which he argues that the success of a development project can be measured by the number of networks it relies on, seems very relevant when looking at the PHCF and the important role played by specific actors in its creation. According to Mosse (2005: 172) a project can only be successful if “there is an imperative to connect, to link or network” because a development scheme requires “strong institutional links and extended networks to build its reputation”. Based on his observations of the creation and implementation of a British project in rural India, the author concludes that such improvement schemes rely on “a widening circle of individuals and institutions who would underpin the project as a ‘system of representations’ [...] and constitute a reliable interpretive community, a group of ‘believers’” (ibid). It is this very group of “believers” that Yann Arthus-Bertrand seems to have found among Air France leaders, WWF-International and WWF Madagascar representatives and ... himself, Yann being possibly the most faithful believer in the PHCF. Interestingly, the reliability of the newly-established “interpretive community” partly relies on the fact that each actor stresses the “belief” and “faith” of the other in the project. For GoodPlanet officer, who acknowledges that the PHCF came into being because “there was a privileged gate open and privileged ties” to facilitate the process, Air France is

“a company that made sense to finance a project against climate change, which really is the angle of the project. And Air France didn’t include the PHCF into its Foundation but, instead, they made it separate and incorporated it as a program part of Air France environmental politics. So, in a way, it’s really part of their business strategy, it’s not a foundation-type project” [interview with Action Carbone Officer, January 17, 2012].



Air France-KLM Director Jean-Cyril Spinetta with Yann Arthus-Bertrand at a press conference

But how was this community of believers created in the first place? Were all actors “believers” from the start of the project? As it will be argued in the following section, constructing a community of partners and believers is a lengthy process during which image, objectives and organisational practices need to be negotiated and, in some cases, adjusted.

FROM LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF THE OTHER...

A partnership between a private company and two NGOs is, in a way or another, about image. It is mainly about improving the public image of a company that carries a significant carbon footprint record. But it is also about two NGOs reassessing their image. On the one hand, a partnership might help a company improve its image and, in the longer run, improve additional aspects of its organisation, including productivity and profits. On the other hand, going into a partnership with a transnational corporation for an environmental NGO is a complex process that may greatly compromise the organisation’s public image. So what happens when those two dynamics come together? According to Pierre Caussade, who

experienced the difficulties of reconciling different interests and organisational practices in the initial stage of the program, working with a NGO is a rather “particular” experience.

“I will give you a bit of an insight into the atmosphere when we decided to hold a press conference in Madagascar to launch the project: at the beginning, WWF refused to participate in the conference. They were actually inside the conference room but they did not want to speak. Well this didn’t last for long and now we are three into this partnership and everything is going well [...] But I think they were uncomfortable and probably embarrassed by the very mediatic side of Yann Arthus Bertrand. And the fact that they are working with a big business and, what’s more, an airline company ... well I guess they were being cautious,” Air France Director for Sustainable Development explains [interview, January 19, 2012].

A former Communication Officer at WWF-International who was very much implicated in communicating about the project to the general public on WWF website shared the same observation.

“I think that WWF was also a bit reluctant to partner with GoodPlanet because of the mediatic aspect of Yann Arthus Bertrand. WWF feared it would undermine its credibility. So, for example, when the first press conference was launched in Madagascar in 2008, WWF refused to speak. They listened to GoodPlanet and Air France’s presentations but they were all seating in the back, discretely,” he said [interview, January 16, 2012].

Such observations are particularly interesting given the increasing scrutiny paid to NGO-private companies relations. It is often assumed that a number of NGOs engage in such partnerships with closed eyes because of the financial gain they receive when forging such alliances¹⁰. What is far less explained, however, is that in this transitional phase of environmental politics, NGOs, and in this particular case WWF, are left caught in between. On the one hand, there is a growing demand from the corporate sector to receive assistance from NGOs on how to become both green and corporate. Such demands often come with financial means that the majority of NGOS could not expect to find elsewhere. On the other hand, NGOs that intend to team up with private companies are confronted with the very expectations they initially raised: being opinion leaders fighting against corporate greed. As a result, there is a growing apprehension from various sectors of society that NGOs will be less and less capable of defending the general public’s rights given conventional “opinion leaders”

¹⁰ The amount of money transferred from Air France to WWF and GoodPlanet as part of the PHCF was not communicated to me. However, a look at other partnerships between WWF and private companies can provide an estimation of the financial gain involved in such partnerships. When WWF France partnered with Credit Agricole, a French bank, it was agreed that WWF would receive 400,000 Euros per year (*France 2*, May 2012).

have become linked with one of the root causes of the public's problem, namely corporations' activities. Simultaneously, corporations themselves increasingly expect NGOs to support their sustainable development agenda.

The transition in NGO-corporations relations often leads to situations where non-for-profit organisations need to mediate directives, objectives and expectations with their multiple official and unofficial partners. As stated earlier, the shift in environmental politics is, above all, a shift in expectations. Expectations as to who can be the authority regulating environmental governance, who is sustainable and who isn't, who fights for environmental protection and who is responsible for the lack of environmental protection. For WWF, translating such a shift in expectations remains a difficult task because it implies balancing risks and opportunities: risk of compromising their public image, opportunity to answer corporations' demands for sustainable development. The result of such mediations is a change in definition: who can be considered as a partner and benefit from WWF image – and logo – and who can't? As former WWF-International Communication Officer explains,

“to be eligible for a partnership with WWF [here referring to WWF-International], meaning that the private company can use our logo for instance, the company must have internal sustainable initiatives such as waste management for example within its own policy. So if it is a company using wood, we look at what type of wood they use, etc. These are the criterion we often look at when considering working with ‘big polluters’. However, there are certain sectors with whom we refuse to partner. For instance, we will never work with a company that works in the tobacco, oil, weapon or car industry. For us, those are taboo sectors. When it comes to the airline sector ... let's say that it is a grey sector, even though we know that many NGOs consider the activities of aerial companies to be way too polluting. At WWF, the first partnership we created with the aviation sector was developed by WWF Holland with KLM. And because WWF considers it a grey sector, the partnership could happen and this decision was never questioned. For the PHCF partnership ... it is a different story. It wasn't made as official as other partnerships we have, like the one with Lafarge for instance. With Lafarge, there was an exchange of logo quite rapidly. Here, in the case of the PHCF, everything goes through GoodPlanet. Also, Air France has no obligation under this project or any other to reduce its carbon emission. So it is a little more complicated” [interview, January 16, 2012].

We see that as the idea and practice of partnership grows within the NGO, a whole new set of regulations with categories of “good” versus “bad” companies, or “black” versus “white” – and grey – sectors is established. However, as the network of the NGO develops and becomes

more and more global, different frameworks are implemented and each national or regional agency of the global NGO can adapt its corporate partnership strategy. This “re-localisation” of WWF means that WWF-Holland might consider a company sustainable and, as such, a potential partner, while WWF-France might not. The definition of who can be a partner and who cannot therefore becomes even more contested within the same network. A clear illustration of the latter statement occurred in the initial phase of the PHCF, when GoodPlanet first approached WWF-France to set up a partnership for a project in Madagascar with Air France. Besides the fact that GoodPlanet is located inside WWF-France office, GoodPlanet contacted WWF-France specifically because WWF has a policy of “respect of territoriality”, former WWF-International Communication Officer explains [interview, January 16, 2012]. WWF’s policy of territoriality implies that “a NGO which would like to work with us should contact WWF local agency first, if both parties are located in the same country. So the reason why GoodPlanet initially approached WWF-France is most probably because Air France is the exclusive financial sponsor of the project and it is a French company,” he added [ibid]. However, WWF-France refused the offer of a partnership for the PHCF and redirected GoodPlanet to WWF-International, based in Switzerland.

But what could explain such a reaction from WWF-France – a branch of the global network which, one of my respondents affirmed, very often has more power than the headquarter office itself? WWF-International Communication Officer does not know the answer. But, according to him, “it is possible that WWF-France thought that the project was too big. They probably regret their decision today. WWF-International, on the contrary, can decide by itself whether it should follow a project or not, and judge whether a project is too big or if it is feasible. Their margin of manoeuvre to take that kind of decision is much bigger than WWF-France for instance” [ibid]. Despite my attempts to meet with representatives from WWF France while in Paris, I was never given an official answer about WWF-France’s decision to reject GoodPlanet’s proposal for the PHCF. In the words of Air France Director for Sustainable Development and GoodPlanet Officer, WWF-France’s reaction remains a “mystery”. Interestingly, a few months after I conducted my interviews in Paris, I was watching a documentary called *Cash Investigation* on French TV exploring WWF and its relationship with its new corporate partners (*France 2*, May 2012). While reading a paper that the journalists had handed over to her showing the name of private companies which were investing in “green funds”, including Air France, a WWF-France spokesperson said she was surprised the plane company was on the list considering “they were very big polluters”. “We

could never do such a thing with Air France because ... well, I mean considering their carbon footprint it wouldn't make sense" (ibid). Many questions arise when realising that the same NGO doesn't react the same way when confronted with the same project, situation or potential partner. Undeniably, part of the answer embeds in the issue of "image". Could it be that WWF-France redirected GoodPlanet to WWF-International knowing that, when a proposition for a partnership with a "big polluter" from a "grey sector" is made, an international organisation has less risk of compromising its public image than the national branch of the same NGO, which is far more attached to national directives and far more accessible to the French public for accountability? As the reaction of WWF-France towards the PHCF illustrates, NGOs are very cautious about maintaining their public image. Maintaining territorial flexibility in regulations and strategies related to corporate partnership is, in this regard, a way for NGOs to balance between their public's expectations and the private sector's demand. As WWF Director for the Indian Ocean region explains,

"there are many different criteria, we're a complicated network because we have many branches around the world and it's impossible to have everybody agree on the top so there are different processes and sort of standards in terms of real partnership. Partnership is not always a contractual relation it's actually coming together saying we both want to do something and work together. Teams are on different terms and different strengths to do it. So pure funding from private sector that comes as a grant or a proposal is one thing but when you enter a partnership say with a private sector partner it's different. We've got partners with a couple of private sector producers here in Madagascar and we partner with them for a variety of reasons first and foremost because their practices are at the leading edge of business when it comes to good quality sustainable management practices [Interview with Richard Hughes, 5 March 2012].

But, as we have seen in the formation phase of the PHCF, being at the leading edge of business when it comes to sustainable management practices is not always enough to convince NGOs to forge alliances. NGOs now represent a very extensive network with different organisational practices, some being more open to partnerships with private companies, others a bit less. In this context, becoming partners has become a highly regulated – yet flexible – process. NGOs establish sets of rules that, in the first place, define who can be a partner and who can't and, secondly, regulate the extent of the partnership.

One of the most important aspects of that extent is image: if a private company becomes a partner, can the company use the logo of the NGO as a publicity strategy to boost the

corporation's image? If NGOs and transnational corporations seem to increasingly talk the same language, to which extent do they share image? The example of the PHCF seems to show that, when all actors start working together within the framework of a partnership, NGOs and transnational corporations only share image to a limited extent. One of the most explicit illustrations of the latter statement is that, even though WWF-International accepted to take part in the project proposed by GoodPlanet, WWF did not welcome the idea of having an official and direct partnership with Air France. As a consequence, two separate partnerships were established. GoodPlanet would partner with Air France, and in parallel, GoodPlanet would partner with WWF-International. But, interestingly, the PHCF did not start as a tri-party partnership. As former WWF-International Communication Officer testifies,

“there were a lot of discussions and exchanges going on because here at WWF we have a very clear policy when it comes to partnerships with the private sector. So at the beginning, there were two partnerships: one between GoodPlanet and WWF and one between GoodPlanet and Air France, but there was never one that directly linked WWF to Air France. When the project first started and brochures started to be published, WWF did not agree that Air France could use their logo on any of their communication materials. This was written in and strictly regulated by a Communication Protocol, a paper that GoodPlanet officer, Air France Communication spokesperson and I wrote to facilitate communication between all the actors implicated in the project,” he added [interview, January 16, 2012].

Even though I did not receive access to that document during my fieldwork, all of my respondents implicated in the creation and management of the PHCF referred to it when asked about “the difficulties of being partners”. GoodPlanet Officer remembers that the process of creating the project “was complicated because there were discussions regarding the protocol of communication as WWF did not want to be linked to an airplane company” [interview, January 17, 2012]. In the “Communication Protocol”, it was therefore emphasised that Air France could not use the logo of WWF in any of its communication materials. The existence of such a document demonstrates that NGOs-private companies partnership are highly regulated contracts. As Air France Director for Sustainable Development explains, “when you invest this amount of money, it is necessary to write down in black and white the engagements, rights and duties of everyone involved in this project” [interview, January 19, 2012]. Communication is controlled and so is image: not everyone deserves the black and white panda on their brochure. More than a year after the first negotiations had started, it was finally decided that, mainly for logistical reasons, a tri-party partnership should be created between Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF. And only a few months after the PHCF was

officially launched could Air France legally use WWF panda on its communication materials – and *vice versa*. But WWF Communication Officer adds: “in the facts we do talk about a tri-partnership but on paper there is no direct contract between WWF and Air France” [interview, January 16, 2012]. Looking at all the negotiations that took place between the different actors, the issue of the logo is particularly interesting given the importance of image in any marketing strategy. A NGO’s logo, just like an environmental label, is usually perceived as the key to legitimacy and trust: if a customer sees the image of a renowned NGO on the advertising or brochure of a private company, the image of the logo is likely to give the customer an ethical, ecologically-friendly and trustworthy vision of the product, advertising, brochure, or website he or she is looking at.

This latter observation was demonstrated by a team of researchers from Dauphine University who examined the influence of “greenwashing”, here referring to “communication operations intended to valorise environmental engagements despite the absence of actions taken to justify that level of communication”, on the ecological image of a product and advertiser (Laveneux, Benoit-Moreau & Parguel, 2009: 8). Based on surveys conducted with 640 respondents, Laveneux, Benoit-Moreau and Parguel (*ibid*) concluded that out of the green colour, the word ‘sustainable’ and an auto-proclaimed label, only the label has a positive impact on the formation of an ecological image in the eyes of participants. Research findings also point out that a label – in most cases, identified by a logo – is the most credible element for respondents to make a diagnostic as to the ecological characteristic of the product and the advertiser. What this research clearly illustrates is that putting a green colour or using ambiguous words such as “sustainable” in communication materials have become obsolete advertising strategies to convince the public – and customers – of a company’s true commitment to the environment. Taking these factors into account, one can understand why a growing number of private companies have sought assistance from external sustainable development experts, including NGOs, on this matter. In fact, private companies are increasingly aware of a rising form of scepticism towards ecology. According to a survey conducted by the French Communication and Information Association for Sustainable Development (Acidd) and the Corporate Communication Association (Ujjef), 31 percent of all companies interviewed for the research – 106 in total – identify being accused of “greenwashing” by the public and the media as the highest risk involved in corporate sustainable development, before cost or maturity of the market (2010: 9). One way of overcoming this risk is to partner with an institution that

already enjoys a fair deal of legitimacy among the company's primary targets: namely customers, the general public, journalists and internal staff (ibid).

As previously mentioned in this thesis, the organisations with a fair – yet increasingly challenged – deal of legitimacy are (environmental) NGOs. Like WWF with its black and white panda, most NGOs have symbolic images that the general public commonly identifies with the organisation. For popular NGOs with renowned activities around the world, the logo often fosters trust and credibility in the eyes of the public. And for private companies struggling to find a balance between the risk of greenwashing accusations and the danger of being confronted with eco-scepticism, adding the logo of a world-famous NGO to the company's communication materials may come as an effective strategy to convince customers, internal staff and the general public of their true corporate commitment to the environment. At WWF, the use of the panda's logo is formalised under a "license agreement" that is available even to companies with whom WWF does not wish to sign a partnership with, even though such agreements come with a financial cost for the company. What is interesting to note, however, is that NGOs are not the primary targets of private companies in their communication actions. According to the research conducted by Ujjef and Acidd mentioned earlier, the principal targets of companies promoting their sustainable development actions are customers, internal staff, journalists and the general public (2010: 11).



Greenwashing the Emissions? source: Cartoon Movement

What this tells us is that even though companies do not seem to be targeting NGOs in their communication materials, they do seem to be the direct intermediaries for corporations to reach their primary target. A partnership between a NGO and a private company can therefore

also be seen as a communication tool: it is a company's way of communicating its public, staff and customers about its internal change of paradigm. Similarly, it is the NGO's way of communicating its public, staff, network and other NGOs about its own shift in paradigm too. The encounter of those different organisational and regulatory practices is best illustrated in Air France Director for Sustainable Development's description of the initial phase of the project:

"What I discovered is that working with a NGO is very particular, especially when you are implementing a partnership of such a size. We were not simply giving 50,000 euros, it was 5 million euros, so we had to know what we were putting ourselves into. The interface between the NGO world and the business world are two completely different worlds that do not work with the same rules, the same usages. This applies even more when you talk about a partnership that involves two NGOs ... well even three NGOs actually since both WWF-International and the local branch in Madagascar are involved. At the beginning it was very complicated to the extent that it almost took us a year to sign the convention that was finally signed in May or June 2008" [interview, 19 January, 2012].

In the case of the PHCF, we have seen that finding the right balance between NGOs' directives and Air France's demand for green assistance – even when that means assistance in image – was a lengthy process of negotiations. Creating a partnership is a set of complex relations between entities with distinctive prerogatives and sometimes opposing definitions of concepts yet located at the chore of their alliance, such as "sustainability": who is viewed as sustainable, who isn't? What can a company do to be seen as sustainable? But, despite the complexity of learning the language and practice of the other, the increased use of the term "partnership" to describe NGO-private companies evolving relations suggests that NGOs and private companies are gathering efforts to put differences aside.

... TO MIMICKING THE OTHER

As outlined in this thesis, a number of NGOs and private companies have sought to formalise their relationships through partnerships. Throughout this process, both entities have learned to speak the same language in order to forge alliances and shape a homogenous line of action. Such a statement is supported by a research conducted by Ujjef and Acidd (2010: 12) which concludes that 86 percent of the 106 companies participating in the survey identify "speaking the same language" as a top priority when they collaborate with third party agents or consultants, including NGOs (2010: 12). The direct result of such a trend is a growing

tendency from both entities to mimic one another: through partnerships, NGOs and transnational private companies tap into each other's registers, organisational formats and characteristics. The process of mimicking NGOs' registers started at Air France in early 2000s when the plane company created its internal Sustainable Development division. Within ten years, Air France had written its first "Environment Report", signed the United Nations Global Compact, integrated the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, published its first CSR report, developed a "Climate Action Plan" – mentioned by Pierre Caussade earlier – and identified Corporate Social Responsibility as one of its top four priorities for the company's strategic plan. Research by Ujjef and Acidd research reports that 72 percent of the corporations interviewed for the study have a separate branch within their company dedicated to sustainable development, and 84 percent have elaborated products or services linked to sustainable development (2010: 15). Sustainable development, in other words, is becoming an integral part of business models.

The same way private companies are opening their business strategies to environmentally-friendly policies, discourses and actions, NGOs are increasingly opening their doors to business-oriented practices. The establishment of a rather recent "Corporate Partnership" branch at WWF is one illustration of the latter statement. In addition to Project Manager or Campaign Officer, new positions such as Director of Corporate Relations or Vice President of Business and Industry were created to reflect the NGO's shift in organisational practices. Business talks and strategies progressively became embedded in NGOs' format. As Elkington (1998: 39-40) suggests,

"a few leading NGOs, particularly those dedicated to wildlife conservation, developed huge corporate sponsorship departments dedicated solely to hunting down deep-pocketed corporate donors [...] In any event, the conditions in which such partnerships were pursued changed dramatically when two things happened in parallel. First, companies, inevitably, became more discriminating. They began to insist on a bigger PR bang for their sponsorship buck. And they wanted their benefits in the form of an enhanced reputation with selected audiences. As 'cause-related marketing' evolved, some of those NGOs corporate sponsorship departments became almost indistinguishable from mainstream advertising or PR agencies. The second shift was driven by NGOs' needs. They found themselves managing increasingly large projects and budgets. Their staffs mushroomed and demanded better employment conditions. They found they needed people, and project and financial management skills which, they noted, business was also rich in. So we saw downsizing companies seconding managers to NGOs, often as a

way of easing them into retirement. And we also saw NGOs appointing people from business to their boards and top management posts,” he argues (1998: 39-40).

For Baruah (2007: 243), whose research focuses on water and sanitation services in slums provided through NGO-private companies’ partnership in India, the growing demand from the corporate sector for assistance in “sustainable development strategies” has led to a rising professionalisation of experts and civil society groups – NGOs included. NGOs, moving away from their role as corporate greed fighters are now approached by 50 percent of private companies for being “external experts” with consultancy advice on CSR policies. NGOs also increasingly present themselves as institutions which can assist private companies in investing in sustainable projects in Brazil, Nepal or Madagascar. WWF even published an “ideal Corporate Responsibility report” on its website, a document filled with recommendations for private companies on how to best present one’s CSR policies and results.

NGOs’ move towards corporate-style professionalism also resulted in NGOs hiring a growing number of consultants and experts who share a common language with donors and private companies and who master the use of words such as sustainability, participation and empowerment, Baruah explains (ibid). Newly recruited NGOs’ spokespersons can therefore facilitate communication between NGOs and private companies. The words of Emily Kelton, WWF-US Director for Corporate Relations, illustrate well this mutual process of mimicking one another once NGOs and private companies team up: “you’re big, we’re big, so we understand each other [...] there is a sense of kinship in being multinationals with global brands,” she explains (quoted in Jayawickrama, 2011: 2). When talking to WWF Regional Director for the Indian Ocean in his office in Madagascar, who said he had purposely worked in the business industry for a while in order to understand it, I noticed that his use of words strongly recalled corporate language [interview, March 5, 2012]. “Economic values and benefits”, “management”, “market perspective”, “risks”, “better value on the market” ... I also noticed that he was very much aware of the reasons why corporations decide to go into “green partnerships” and what their expectations are in this regard. “If companies have good sound environmental practices, it may help their business, they may be able to obtain certifications or higher standards or get better value on the market. Then you’ve got companies that are extracting resources but maybe they are not benefiting from the conservation themselves. So there is a conservation investment that they make but they do it either out of industry pressure or industry standards, public image or personal commitment of the company,” WWF Regional Director for the Indian Ocean said [interview, March 5, 2012].

NGOs' growing corporate-style professionalism and willingness to maximize "efficiency" was also illustrated to me when I asked WWF Regional Director for the Indian Ocean whether the PHCF was a difficult project to manage, considering its intervention sites represented 500,000 hectares of land across Madagascar. He responded that

"from a management standpoint, we're much better off with bigger projects. This is actually one of the biggest challenges that WWF globally faces, not just here but in almost all of the countries where we implement projects: we have too many small projects. The amount of management time you have to put in small projects is not that much compared to a big project. You have to put an awful lot for a big project but in relative terms, with a fifty or sixty thousand euros project, you need to have all the management in place, write the reports and do financial management ... and you have to make sure it's actually guided properly. Whereas if you have a five million dollars grant, that management is bigger but you're much more efficient on how you do it. If you have a one year project or a project funded for a year, then you are just waiting for the funding for the next year. It's also very distractive. It's hard to make it strategic and make it very long-term. So with a big project, your cost of management per project on the whole is less [interview, March 5, 2012].

In contrast to a number of grassroots organisations that operate with a small number of people in order to promote contact, communication and small-scale achievement, NGOs like WWF favour big projects with higher grants, higher efficiency, less management requirements, less reports to write, and reduced management costs. Interestingly, this language and such practices seem to echo those of a familiar sector...

To understand the process of becoming partners – and mimicking one another – it is useful to go back to Mosse's description of contemporary partnerships. According to Mosse (2005: 172), partnerships are maintained by "a widening circle of individuals and institutions who underpin the project as a 'system of representations' and constitute a reliable interpretive community [...] a group of 'believers'". The strength of this "interpretive community of believers" is reinforced through various media: on a brochure published by WWF but displayed in Air France's sales offices, on the walls of Air France Director for Sustainable Development's office where Yann Arthus Bertrand's photographs are hanging, or in a press release in which GoodPlanet and WWF take the defence of Air France to respond to an article about the PHCF which claims that Air France is buying itself "a right to pollute in

Madagascar”¹¹. Creating a partnership means forging alliances by activating networks and connections across different sectors and, as Benedict Anderson (1983) would argue, constructing an imagined community. In this particular case, we see that the “community of believers” is created by the actors who perceive themselves as being part of that very partnership. The difference between the socially constructed community that Anderson described in 1991, namely the nation state, and the community of “believers” implicated in the PHCF embeds in the social connections linking one partner to another. In contrast to the first, which “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”, members of the PHCF do know each other very well, developed personal ties over time and regularly meet and interact with each other (ibid: 224). And even when “partners” do not engage with each other over a long period of time, they still know that the partnership exists – and therefore, that their community of believers remains – thanks to the communication materials published to promote the partnership: brochures, website pages, video footages, internal and external reports, press conferences, attendance of international events, etc. In other terms, the partnership becomes materialised and maintained not only through personal interactions but also by extending networks of communication. The believers hold in their mind a mental image of their partnership that is reinforced by various media.

But, personal connections and extending networks of communication are not the only factors reinforcing the community of believers. As outlined earlier, the use of a similar language and the increasing convergence of organisational practices reinforce the uniformity of this community. In fact, when people speak the same language, it becomes easier to communicate and, therefore, to make concessions. As Air France Director for Sustainable Development explains,

“back in 2008, it was unthinkable to do a brochure for the wider public with the triple logo. But it is WWF who suggested the idea. Now we are three and everything is going fine, it is even WWF who proposed the logo when we did a conference in Paris and when the brochure was designed. That would have been unlikely to happen in the beginning. But now there is really a good atmosphere, of respect and trust, we are now the best friends in the word, honestly, it is not just a formula, we really are the best friends in the world!” [interview, January 19, 2012]

¹¹ Article published on Rue89, December 2010. See <http://www.rue89.com/planete89/2010/12/20/non-planter-des-forets-nest-pas-acheter-un-droit-a-polluer-181599>.

Interestingly, there seems to be an additional shift in private companies' discourse: actors and partners are no longer referred to as institutions or corporations but, instead, as people. By doing so, the corporation, just like the NGOs, is placed back into a social and living body. The private company is de-institutionalised and, in turn, personified. The way actors speak about companies progressively changes. This process, whether deliberate or unintentional, serves to change the image of the corporation into a person that anybody could become "best friends" with, to recall Pierre Caussade's description above. The community of believers then appears to be so strong that even the reluctance of the past has faded away, most particularly when it comes to image. So when Yann Arthus-Bertrand noticed in one of Air France's brochures about the PHCF that his foundation's logo was smaller than Air France's emblem, he immediately called Air France to ask for a bigger GoodPlanet logo: because both partners were equal, so should the size of their logos on the website (see images below)¹². Interestingly, a few months after the partnership was launched, it was the NGO that was asking the private company for a bigger logo on their common brochures, and not the other way around.

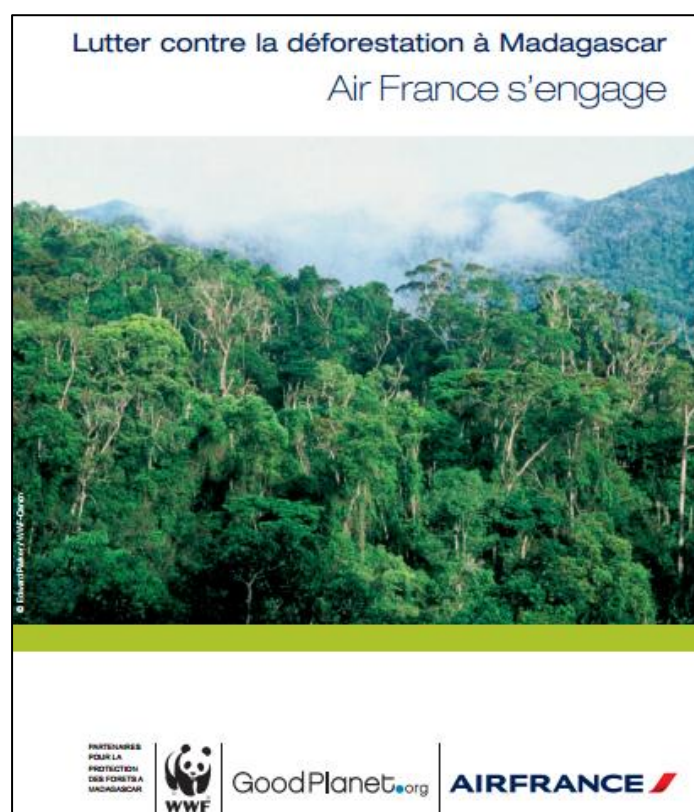
From a bi-partnership



Logo of Air France and Actioncarbone (GoodPlanet's program) on Air France corporate website

¹² See *Challenges*, July 2008 on <http://www.challenges.fr/magazine/20080207.CHA7112/fertile.html>

To a tri-party partnership



Air France brochure on the PHCF with WWF, GoodPlanet and Air France logo at the bottom

ASSESSING RISK(S)

But what happens to people who don't speak the same language or do not share the same organisational practices? Even though the term partnership enrolls a group of different actors, the word itself gives the impression that all actors go the same way when, in reality, they often understand things differently, as Mosse argues in *Cultivating Development* (2005). In fact, my fieldwork observations brought me to the conclusion that even though the use of the word "partnership" is powerful and effective in illustrating a shift in NGO-private companies relations, considerable frictions remain when the two entities interact with one another. In *Friction*, Tsing (2005: 1) explains that the title of her book defines the "aspirations for global connection and how they come to life in friction, the grip of worldly encounter". Friction, she continues, "shows us where the rubber meets the road. Roads are a good image for conceptualising how friction works: roads create pathways that make motion easier and more efficient, but in doing so they limit where we go. The ease of travel they facilitate is also a structure of confinement," the author adds (2005: 6). Tsing's analysis of global forces'

encounter is particularly relevant when looking at the PHCF. Despite the opportunities opened by the creation of a partnership between two NGOs and a private company, the example of the PHCF shows that as connections grow and alliances are forged, “the ease of travel” becomes reduced. In other words, partners are left with very little room for manoeuvre and backtrack once they are engaged on the road towards partnership because the term “partnership” itself confines all actors to speak the same language and use similar organisational practices. If partners do not understand one another, through language or through action, the idea of a partnership becomes fragile.

Let us take Tsing’s metaphor further. Let’s consider that language and practice stand for the rubber, the partnership stands for the road and the two cars represent the NGO and the private company. For actors to remain partners, both cars need to be gripped by the same base and drive on the same road. In this process, it is the friction of the rubber with the road that allows the two cars to keep going and, eventually, reach the same destination – that is, reach the same goal. But what happens when one of the two drivers decide to change direction and go off the road? As Tsing reminds us, “a wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air, it goes nowhere” (2005: 5). The car is left without any grip to hold on to and the wheel, with no smooth road for its rubber to roll on, is motionless. This metaphor applies well to a situation GoodPlanet Officer was confronted with in the initial phase of the PHCF. When approaching Air France as a potential financial sponsor for the project, he remembers that

“we [GoodPlanet and WWF] made a first proposition to Air France but the former director of the company more or less insinuated to us that if there was no return on investment under the form of carbon credit, he was not interested. This particularly irritated the person from WWF who came along with me at the meeting. Later on, that same person got side-lined. So then we had to present to the new team for the project to Air France and there were a lot of exchanges, especially about the fact that the project would be pure sponsorship and there would be no carbon compensation involved. After that, there was the Grenelle de l’Environnement¹³, so Air France did not really know how to position itself anymore and they even considered stopping everything because of a potential taxation on kerosene. But finally that didn’t happen. In the

¹³ Le Grenelle de l’Environnement is a series of political meetings organised in France in 2007 to take long-term decisions about the environment and sustainable development, in particular to restore biodiversity through regional schemes, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ameliorate energetic efficiency. This conference was also one of the first times the French government reunited civil society groups, private companies and the government to open rooms for talks and partnerships. Many NGOs heavily criticised the Grenelle de l’Environnement and the organisations who participated in it for engaging with the source of environmental problems, namely, corporations.

end, everybody agreed to say that it would be sponsorship and not carbon compensation so, after the discussion in May, the project was officially launched in September 2008” [interview with GoodPlanet Action Carbone officer, 17 January 2012].

The question that such a statement raises is the following: can NGOs and private companies really overcome their differences and, in some cases, conflicting interests? Is it really possible for a NGO to cross its conventional line? And, the other way around, it is really possible for a private company to put economic profits and “return on investment” aside in the name of sustainability? According to Elkington (1998: 37), many actors from the corporate world and environmental activists continue to see the relationship between companies and campaigners as “an unending battle between the forces of good and evil, of light and darkness, right and wrong”. Even though the term “partnership” gives the impression that NGO-business alliances are trouble-free – especially when members of those partnerships use words such as “stakeholders” to reinforce that impression – GoodPlanet program officer’s testimony reminds us that NGOs and corporate actors tend to understand things differently. When each interpretation becomes confronted with one another, disconnection occurs: some people get side-lined for not sharing the same language and others, in the most extreme cases, lose their job¹⁴.

Interestingly, we also see that there is a strong willingness from both sectors to reinforce that a company is not a civil society group and *vice versa*, despite all the efforts gathered to create alliances. There is an inclination on the side of the corporate sector, for instance, to draw the line between what a company is and what it is not. Air France Director for Sustainable Development repeated several times during my interview with him that, even though the plane company is investing 5 million Euros in the PHCF, “at Air France, we do not do environmental activism” [interview, January 19, 2012]. “I receive a lot of CVs from candidates who would like to work for my division [Sustainable Development] and they often stress how ‘committed’ and ‘engaged’ they are. But what we do here is enabling a company to

¹⁴ One of my respondents, a journalist working in Paris, informed me that a former steward working at Air France contacted him so the journalist would write an article about his story: according to what the steward told him, the steward had made a proposition to Air France to fund a project he had in mind in Madagascar. It is a common practice, as part of Air France Foundation, to have internal staff submits project ideas to the Foundation. Air France did not accept his offer and, when a few months later he heard that his company would invest 5 million euros for a project of 500,000 hectares with WWF and Yann Arthus Bertrand’s foundation, he started to speak publicly about his discontentment. A few weeks later, he was fired. According to the steward, the reason why Air France fired him is because the company became scared of his intention and he was creating trouble for the image of Air France, and the PHCF. The journalist never wrote a story about this. Unfortunately, the journalist who informed me about this could not provide me with the contact information of the steward and I never managed to get in touch with that person. Air France never confirmed the veracity of this story but, based on the journalist’s declarations, I believe this aspect was worth mentioning.

better understand the challenges ahead. We are not doing humanitarian work,” he added [interview, January 19, 2012]. For Air France Director for Sustainable Development, there are lines not to be crossed and there is a difference to make between CSR and humanitarian action, the first one having a direct impact on business and becoming, more and more, a key component of it, the second being part of the register of a different kind of organisation. The same observation applies when looking at NGOs. To the question “do you think people’s perceptions of private companies are changing considering corporations are increasingly involved in development projects?” GoodPlanet officer replied: “no, the reason why we work with companies like Air France is because, essentially, they are donors, a source of finance” [interview, January 17, 2012]. WWF Regional Director for the Indian Ocean is even clearer about it: “No one should ever believe a company invests in something for nothing ... because they don’t!” [interview, March 5, 2012]. For him, the most valuable aspect of working with companies is

“to understand why they are doing it and what are they gaining from it. It can be defined, understood and potentially measured. I know a couple of companies who invest in particular programs to create a better and more positive feeling among their workers and that may translate into more productive and more dedicated workers. Even some things that appear to be purely a gift ... it usually isn’t. If a company is smart about it and does it in the right way, they can still benefit from it [interview, March 5, 2012].

As we have seen earlier, there is a tendency from the different actors involved in the partnership to tap into each other’s register. This tendency is reinforced by all the communication materials that give a visual support to the alliance, such as the green colour displayed on all partners’ websites, or a brochure with the logo of each organisations. Because all actors involved in the partnership share logos, language and practices, one could easily be under the impression that roles and responsibilities become blurred. For instance, the fact that WWF and GoodPlanet joined forces to defend Air France in response to a very critical press article¹⁵ published about the company’s involvement in the PHCF – instead of Air France Communication division doing it – suggests that the lines between each sector have become obsolete: it is not a NGO defending a private company, it is a partner defending its own partner. However, what the declarations from the respondents quoted above show is that, when it comes to roles, responsibilities and, most importantly, interests, there are still demarcated lines that exist. The private company, for instance, does not want its public to

¹⁵ See <http://www.rue89.com/planete89/2010/12/20/non-planter-des-forets-nest-pas-acheter-un-droit-a-polluer-181599>

think it has converted to humanitarian action. Similarly, GoodPlanet and WWF do not want their campaigners and followers to see private companies as a new development agent. The core belief within NGOs like WWF in this transition phase of environmental politics is that corporations remain institutions with whom NGOs should engage with in order to “improve the system” and with financial resources they can no longer hope to find elsewhere [interview with former WWF-International Communication Officer, January 16, 2012].

Transnational companies are presented as more and more development-oriented entities. Some even argue they are increasingly powerful actors in the development world (Rajak, 2005). But, since the issue of roles is raised here, it is important to ask another question: how much of a steady actor are companies as development and environmental partners? Can those private companies stick to the plan agreed upon earlier with NGOs in this particular neoliberal moment? During her research, Rajak (ibid) noticed that “at the operational level, managers expressed feelings of impotence and uncertainty trapped under the weight of the company’s rigid hierarchy and opaque bureaucracy. Many local level managers spoke of budgets suddenly cut, projects prematurely curtailed, and having to creatively negotiate ways to fulfil commitments to their beneficiaries and sustain relationships that they had personally built up”. The new dimension to consider when looking at NGO-business partnerships is the economic crisis of 2008 that has affected many corporations, even the ones with “good” CSR reports and renowned sustainability awards on their office desks. Financial resources have become limited and the succession of budget cuts raises a lot of questions as to the role companies will or will not play in the future of development and environmental politics. Transnational corporations have been approached by a number of NGOs for partnerships principally because of their environmentally unsound activities but also because of their financial capacities to tackle the environmental damages they caused. But now that this financial capacity is at stake, will NGOs continue to perceive companies as needed partners? Similarly, will companies continue to play a role in the “sustainability transition”? The answer from Air France Director for Sustainable Development gives a very interesting insight into a company’s perception of the issue – even though his declaration cannot be generalised to the whole corporate sector.

“There is something we insisted on even though it was a long challenge. In the convention we signed with WWF and GoodPlanet we demanded a clause of exclusivity that stipulated that all partners should reserve the exclusivity of the project for Air France and that, if things were to go in a different way, they could only change this with our exclusive agreement. The clause also

said that, in case of economic reversal and deficit at Air France, Air France had the right to interrupt the project with a six-month notice. This clause was added to the Convention a month before we actually signed it, and ... well, it was our financial management who suggested including it in case of reversal. But you know, back then, there was no premise of an economic crisis because we signed in 2007. On the contrary, at that time, we were making profits! That's why we could get the money. But within the first year of the project, Air France's budget turned red, economically speaking. So at the end of 2008, we could have used that clause. We would like to continue investing in the project despite our financial difficulties but we are no longer capable of supporting this project by ourselves. So we told WWF and GoodPlanet to start looking for new partners [...] It is not our vocation to give millions of euros continuously. And, what's more, the economic situation of the company has significantly deteriorated," he explained [interview, January 19, 2012].

What we learn from Air France Director for Sustainable Development is that companies are in a very complex situation in this particular time of neoliberalism. On the one hand, economic "risks" encourage companies to present themselves as "cautious" partners confined to a restricting structure – i.e., the market. On the other hand, responsible communication and other strategies on the CSR agenda have enabled companies to create attention about their action and, undoubtedly, improve their image in the eyes of their customers, their staff and the general public. As we see, economic prerogatives and sustainability directives become, in this time of economic difficulties, difficult to reconcile.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in the beginning of this chapter, a number of NGOs are increasingly abandoning the legislative process when campaigning for accountability and, instead, favour direct engagement with corporations. According to Lyon and Maxwell (2008: 243), this shift in environmental politics is part of a policy life cycle that is progressively changing. Rather than using legislation as a tool for advocacy and a means for accountability, civil society groups and NGOs directly ask corporations to improve their social or environmental records. The new phase environmental politics is now entering, Lyon and Maxwell argue, is "private politics" (ibid). Private, in the sense that politics is no longer managed by the public body known as the state.

A handful of new actors have emerged on the global scene and considerably reshaped state-society relations. In this transitional phase, improvement and development schemes are no longer the monopoly of the state. Certain authors attribute this change to a governance gap created by globalisation while others point to a broader shift in governance, whereby a whole new range of actors, including the state, negotiate power and authority. What this chapter intended to outline was *why* and *how* this transition towards “transgovernmentality” translated into environmental politics.

The example of the PHCF also shows that this new cycle in global environmental politics has formalised under the form of partnerships between NGOs and private companies. Partnerships are, as we have seen throughout this section, a rearrangement of tasks and commitments between the state, companies and civil society. With increasing power and legitimacy, NGOs and private companies progressively act as the authorising institutions when it comes to “sustainability”: what does it mean to be sustainable? Who can be considered as sustainable and who cannot? As authorising agents, NGOs and private companies also become the entities with unequivocal power to define the problems that need to be solved and the best ways to solve them. Incontestably, there is a mutual shift in paradigm: NGOs are increasingly willing to engage with the corporate sector while transnational companies seek more and more assistance from external actors on how to become “greener”. But looking at the interactions between NGOs and private companies in the particular setting of the PHCF we have seen that this change of paradigm requires a lengthy process of learning the language and practice of the other(s).

The result of such an exercise is that NGOs and private companies end up mimicking one another, tapping into each other’s linguistic and organisational registers. Yet, such a trend also comes with contingencies, frictions, risks and disconnections that continue to exist between the non-governmental world and the corporate sector. Placed back in the context of a broader re-organisation of state-society relations, those observations bring us to the following conclusion: through partnerships, NGOs and private companies imitate the state. By taking the lead in development or environmental schemes and defining the problems and solutions needed for the “sustainability transition”, NGOs and private companies are tapping into the register of the state. Interestingly, and as demonstrated above, both entities insist that they have not replaced the statutory body by demarcating their own line of

responsibility: the private company declares it is “not involved in humanitarian action” while the NGO stresses it is only trying to “improve the system” within which it operates. Yet, even though the work of international NGOs and transnational corporations very often transcend national boundaries, the practices, tasks and commitments accomplished by both organisations remind us of the contrary.

Now that we have analysed *why* and *how* the partnership for the PHCF was created – looking at the structural changes, connections, disconnections, negotiations and strategies that have enabled its creation – the next chapter of this thesis will consist in studying how actors involved in the PHCF have justified and successfully received access to Madagascar and, most particularly, its forest resources. The question that this next chapter will seek to answer therefore is: before the project was concretely implemented in the different intervention sites in Madagascar, what were the strategies put in place by the different actors of the PHCF to legitimise the project locally?

Part 2.

ACCESS



ACCESSING THE ISLAND: BRANDING MADAGASCAR

The second part of this thesis is devoted to the question of access. Partnerships, after all, are created to access something in particular, let it be a product, an object, a location, or an audience. In fact, partnerships are very often created to render access even more legitimate: actors from different sectors all gather efforts, strength and skills to facilitate access to the desired element. When talking about access in relation to the PHCF, one question comes to mind: why was the PHCF implemented in Madagascar, and not somewhere else? And how is this choice justified?

Before going any further into this chapter, it is crucial to define what is here meant by “access”. The most suitable definition of the term, in the context of this thesis, is the one suggested by Ribot and Peluso (2003). Access is, according to the authors, “the ability to

derive benefits from things” and not just the right to benefit from things (2003: 153). Access is about a bundle of powers rather than a bundle of rights. The reason why Ribot and Peluso favour the concept of “access” over the term “property” when looking at acquisition for benefits is because the former allows us to “look at a wider range of social relationships, means and processes that constrain or enable benefits from resource use” (ibid). Here, one point needs to be stressed: access is tied to benefits. If a plurality of actors decided to team up for the PHCF, it is because they all expect to get some sort of benefits from it. The main benefit one can think of is usually monetary but it can also take the form of knowledge, authority, power or image. “Benefits,” the authors continue, “are important because people, institutions and societies live on and for them and clash and cooperate over them” (2003: 155). This chapter intends to map the mechanisms by which access is justified, gained and maintained.

A man to my research assistant: “There is something we don’t understand. You have wanted to know for a long time. Maybe if you ask the *vazaha* [foreigner], she will know. Every time we, *gasy* [Malagasy], see a lemur in the forest, the lemur sees us and then immediately starts running away. But when all the *vazaha* come near Berenty, the lemurs they run towards the *vazaha*. It’s like the lemurs are not afraid of the *vazaha*. But why do the lemurs start running when Malagasy are around? Can you ask her why the lemurs like the *vazaha* but they don’t like us?”

A biologist: “If I am here, it is for the animals, not for the people. I know it is not really nice to say this but, really, this is how I feel: I’m only here for the animals.”

A Malagasy ecology student: “You know, it’s very strange the way the *vazaha* behave here sometimes. We are here in Madagascar, so it is my country. So, logically, I know it better, I know the plants because I am from here but, yet, it feels like we have to listen to the *vazaha*. They tell us what to do, and when we do it ourselves, they don’t trust us. And what is this fascination with lemurs? Why do they like them so much? You know, I heard a joke one day; apparently it is quite famous around Madagascar and I think it’s funny. The joke says that if the *vazaha* like the lemurs so much, I mean if the *vazaha* like the lemurs more than the Malagasy, then the lemurs should all go and work at the airport to welcome the *vazaha* who arrive in Madagascar. Maybe the *vazaha* would like this better, no?”

As I quickly discovered during my fieldwork in Madagascar, there seemed to be different ways of speaking about the island's forests. On the one hand, the people I talked to in the protected area of Antanmamo said the forest was like "a parent" because "it gives you water and food to feed your family. The forest takes care of you just like your mother or your father" [interview with the *rondria* of case-study village A, June 28, 2011]. The forest is also the place to look for medicinal plants and fuel woods, to consult the *kokolampo* (spirit), and a place to take care of since it is the home of the ancestors. But I have also met with a number of Malagasy who told me the forests should be protected for the sake of "future generations", a message which strongly echoed local NGO representatives' discourses. But when I listened to natural scientists and NGO workers, let them be Malagasy or foreigners, I realised that more than any other person I encountered in Madagascar, they clearly had two distinctive ways of speaking about the island's forests: a green Eden with a unique biodiversity and a global heritage increasingly threatened by human activities. The reason why I think it is important to discuss those representations here, in reference to access, is because both images serve to justify intervention to Madagascar's forests. As explained earlier, the objective of this section is to understand why the PHCF was implemented in Madagascar specifically, instead of Brazil, Congo or Indonesia for example?

The second part of this thesis also serves as a justification for my decision to choose Madagascar as a case study for my research on environmental politics. More than any other country in Africa, there has been a special way of talking about Madagascar and its forests. This specific language has attracted a number of actors to the island, from French colonial missionaries to foreign naturalists, ecologists and, most recently, global environmental NGOs. Inside Madagascar, this powerful language has attracted local interests too, in a country which still strongly relies on foreign aid for social and environmental schemes.

When looking at the messages communicated through the PHCF and based on the interviews I conducted with various actors of the project, I realised that Madagascar was highly "branded". It is branded as a verdant place where endemic species live. Yet, it is also branded as a "global heritage" belonging to the world's biodiversity which, nevertheless, is increasingly degraded by human activities – hence the choice for an "anti-deforestation" project for the PHCF. Such dual brandings, I shall argue, highlight a simultaneous yet paradoxical process of "localisation" and "delocalisation". To the question, how do Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF justify and legitimise access to Madagascar, there seems to be

three answers. The first one, in relation to Air France, is that the French company has privileged ties with the island because Air France has been flying to Madagascar since the 1960s, the island being one of their first destinations in Africa.

“Why should we support this project? Why Madagascar? The two questions are intertwined of course. Madagascar has historical links with France, well, to be clear, colonial links with France and Air France also has historical links with the island, we fly there since 50 or 60 years. In the context of our politics to support environmental or development programs, we have a special affinity with Madagascar because it is a country where we fly to and it is a very appealing place that faces incontestable development obstacles, it is a beautiful country with considerable assets but also great difficulties”, Air France Director for Sustainable Development Pierre Caussade explains [interview, January 19, 2012].

The following two reasons will be the focus of my analysis here. On the one hand, Madagascar is unique so the project is exclusive and exemplary, but at the same time, the island is a world’s biodiversity hotspot and, thus, deserves global attention and protection. Making something global – hence belonging to everyone – renders it accessible to all.

Accessing Madagascar as a foreign company or an international NGO is about playing with space. One may wonder what Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF are trying to access through the PHCF: a unique place or a global, hence delocalised, space? The answer, as disappointing as it may sound, is both. But this observation is, in itself, a major finding: the legitimacy of the project entirely relies on this paradox of representations: making Madagascar spatially unique while simultaneously representing the island as part of wider environmental “holism” – hence the name “Programme *Holistique* de Conservation des Forêts” (PHCF). It is because the PHCF presents Madagascar as both a localised place and a globalised space that intervention can be justified and access granted.

2.1. ACCESSING NATURE: “LOCALISING” THE ISLAND

The objective of this section is to understand how a specific element has been accessed by a multiplicity of actors. Here, this element is Nature and, more precisely, forest areas in Madagascar. When talking about access, from acquisition to legitimisation, it is important to realise that a fundamental part of that process relies on representation. In other terms, before accessing something, one needs to identify it, name it, and represent it through various means.

When looking at the brochures and messages published about the PHCF, the forests of Madagascar appear as “unique”. “Unique biodiversity”, “unique fauna and flora of the world’s fourth island” ... Nature seems to be highly localised. “Localisation” here refers to the process of attributing specific features to a definite place and, by doing so, making the place exceptional. This process of localisation effectuated through the PHCF, however, is not done in a vacuum. Whether inside or outside Madagascar, the stories I heard about the island from foreigners – and sometimes from Malagasy themselves – very often emphasised the word “unique”. The same observation applied when I looked at tourist brochures, mostly displaying lemurs and baobabs, travellers’ books inviting their readers on a journey to an isolated “living Eden”, and conservation NGOs’ websites that emphasised the ecological diversity of “the hottest [biodiversity] hotspots”¹⁶. Being from an island myself, I understood how much of a role geographical isolation could play in arising the curiosity and admiration of land-locked foreigners. What I did not understand, however, was the reason why Madagascar’s ecosystem generated so much admiration. Surely, Madagascar was not the only place on Earth to have endemic species, tropical forests, stunning flowers, entertaining animals, and national parks. Then why did a number of ecologists told me they were “only here for the animals”? Why did many Malagasy repeatedly ask me: “why do the *vazaha* think there are only lemurs living here?” Why were foreign tourists travelling all the way to the Indian Ocean to, I quote, “be alone with Nature”? Why not Mauritius, the Comoros, the Seychelles or Reunion Island for instance? Why would they want to be “alone with Nature” in Madagascar in particular? Thinking he was probably the most suitable person to answer that question, I asked WWF Regional Director for Madagascar and the Western Indian Ocean for his opinion on the matter.

“Each country [Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles and Madagascar] does have a degree of unique endemism and they all have values ... the reality though is that the size of Madagascar and the amount of terrain and the number of species are much greater than any of the other islands. It depends on the area, but just because of its unique nature and size combined, Madagascar is really the core of our terrestrial work here but we also have marine work. Madagascar is a unique place, it really has to do with the diversity of the endemic biodiversity and a lot of that has to do with values over biodiversity conservation and potential future value of that level of biodiversity. What Madagascar has that the Congo or other countries don’t is this unique ecosystem of plants, animals, birds and fish. Everything here is so unique. [...] In terms of size,

¹⁶ Quote from Russell Mittermeier, a renowned primatologist and president of the U.S NGO Conservation International on <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1844474,00.html>

economic importance and other things like that it's a different equation. I mean Madagascar is still 20 million people, it's not small ... but the amount of forests when it comes to carbon sequestration is not comparable to the big forest basins elsewhere. The Congo Basin well ... it has its unique features but it's not entirely unique. Some of that biodiversity is also protected in other places. Whereas Madagascar ... it's unique. And if you lose it here, it's not anywhere else," he said [interview with WWF Regional Director for the Indian Ocean, March 5, 2012].

The answer from WWF's Madagascar-based Regional Director echoes many articles and publications I came across before. He and other promoters of the island's uniqueness are right: Madagascar does possess a high rate of endemic species.

The reason for such uniqueness is mainly geological and historical. For this reason, it is important to situate the project in a historical trend and context. 160 million years ago, when the Gondwana supercontinent started to dismantle, Madagascar was separated from Africa and India and ultimately became an island of its own. As a result of geological separation, many plants and animals originally considered to be Gondwana relicts started to evolve and grow in complete isolation on the island and, eventually, became endemic to Madagascar. For anyone passionate about biology, ecology or natural sciences in general, Madagascar's endemism rate truly is a blessing.

"Madagascar's privileged position in terms of biodiversity is based on its geological history and geographic placement [...] Madagascar is situated largely in the tropics and also has very high species richness, especially given its relatively small size (587,041 km²). For example, although Madagascar occupies only about 1.9% of the land area of the African region, it has more orchids than all of mainland Africa, and indeed is home to perhaps as much as a third of all African plant species. Overall, about 83% of Madagascar's plant species are endemic, and for animals the proportion is usually even higher, the best example being the primates, which are 100% endemic. While Madagascar's species richness and endemism is impressive, it excels in endemism at higher taxonomic levels. As a country, Madagascar's numbers of endemic plant and animal families and genera are rivalled only by Australia, which is 13 times larger. As a hotspot, Madagascar is simply unmatched in these categories," Russell et al. argue (2005).

But can geological history entirely explain why Madagascar is considered by many as unique? While reading colonial accounts of the island, I realised that there was a strong similarity between what people said about Nature on the island three centuries ago, and the way several actors describe it today. Past representations echo present ones. But did past representations influence present ones? As we will see in this section, the representation of Madagascar as a

unique place – and the process of “localisation” of the island associated with it – is a construct from a foreign gaze. The creation of and emphasis on an imagery of Madagascar as isolated and unique dates back to colonial times. As such, the historical foreign gaze cannot be entirely separated from contemporary representations of the island. To understand the latter, one needs to be aware of the former. Looking back at history in this specific section is therefore crucial because one cannot comprehend the factors that brought the PHCF to Madagascar without understanding how a multiplicity of foreign actors have talked about, written about and represented the island in the last 300 years.

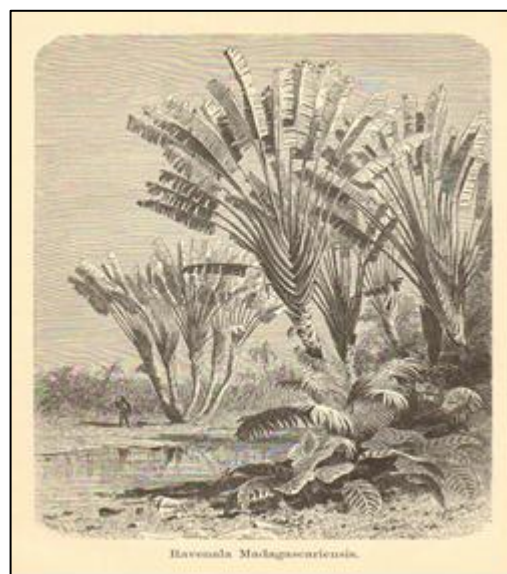
THE MYTH OF THE ISOLATED EDEN: A COLONIAL ARTEFACT?

European contact in Madagascar dates back to 1500. The French had established trading posts along the east coast of the island around the 17th century. Expansion of the French regime in the Indian Ocean was primarily based on economic and mercantile interests but, as McClanahan and Young argue (1996: 27), colonial rule also led to several non-economic changes. The process of colonisation did not simply consist in trade and exploitation of natural resources: to control Madagascar, the French colonial power first needed to discover the island in order to understand its population, fauna and flora. In the beginning of the 1660s, French naturalists were sent from Paris to the Indian Ocean to start listing the plant and animal wonders of the new colony (Feeley-Harnik, 2001: 37). Ecologists and botanists followed. As naturalists submitted reports on their findings, increasing correspondence started to develop between Paris and Madagascar. Letters from botanists and notebooks of missionaries became the first source of representation and knowledge about Madagascar's ecology. Etienne de Flacourt, who was part of the first French expedition to Madagascar in 1661 and in charge of creating the first colony on the island, played an important role in providing francophone readers with a thorough account of animal and plant uses for alimentary, medicinal and spiritual purposes in south-eastern Madagascar (Feeley-Harnik, 2001: 38). In personal notebooks, academic literature and official letters, most foreigners who had been to or lived in Madagascar depicted the island as an isolated paradise where an idyllic natural Eden long gone at home could be found and recreated. In a letter written after his visit to Fort-Dauphin in 1771 and addressed to French historian of science Joseph Jérôme Lefrançois de Lalande, Commerson wrote:

“What an admirable country is Madagascar! It is the authentic Promised Land for naturalists. It is there that Nature seems to have retired as into a special sanctuary, to work there on other

models than those to which she enslaved herself in other countries. The Dioscoride of the North [Linnaeus] would find there the stuff of ten revised and enlarged editions of his *Systema Naturae* and would doubtless finish by avowing that merely a corner of the veil that covers the scattered productions of nature have been lifted” (quoted in Feeley-Harnik, 2001: 38).

According to Goedefroit and Revéret (2007: 14), the island’s high levels of biodiversity and species endemism were seen by French settlers as a sort of “fantasy” that might explain much of the geopolitical philosophies and practices associated with French environmentalist visions during and after colonial times. Along the same line of thinking, Feeley-Harnik (2001: 37) explains that European interests in Malagasy endemic species such as the *ravenala*, also known as the traveller’s tree, can be traced back to the origins of environmentalism and French explorations in the western Indian Ocean in the 17th and 18th centuries. So when French naturalists started listing the plant and animal wonders of eastern Madagascar, “they began to see the singular *ravenala* as the sign of a promised land for naturalists and utopians, including missionaries, and they were soon joined by others” (ibid).



Antique engraving of the *Ravenala Madagascariensis*, the traveller’s tree, 1897

While analysing documents written by French settlers, naturalists, missionaries and botanists, Feeley-Harnik (2001: 38) noticed that the colonial vision of Madagascar was a “convergence between physiocracy and climatic insular Romanticism. His study of the origins of environmentalism in the Indian Ocean has brought him to the conclusion that “early western environmentalism was, to a great extent, born out of marriage between physiocracy and the mid-eighteenth-century French obsession with the island as the speculative and Utopian

location for the atavistic ‘discovery’ of idyllic societies or the construction of new European societies” (ibid). Pierre de la Bâthie, one of the fathers of environmental conservation in Madagascar, was a botanist who also leaned towards romanticism. In a 1912 essay, he wrote that before humans began migrating to Madagascar,

“the island lived, thus, isolated by immense seas of all human contact. Everything – climate, land, plants, and animals, adapted to each other after centuries of isolation – formed there a biological entity of an admirable perfection, whose tenacious wonderfully balanced elements served as a common purpose: life, this strange and mysterious phenomenon (...) Malagasy species are not organised to withstand living beside man. Their ways of life, acquired during centuries of isolation, oppose them” (Bâthie, 1912a: 206 quoted in Kaufmann, 2001: 99, 209).

15 years after the publication of de la Bâthie’s essay, Madagascar became one of the first African countries to protect its ecosystem through the creation of a protected area covering 500,000 hectares of land (Moreau, 2007: 58).

But before elaborating on the island’s Nature and its foreign representation, it shall be stressed that what is considered here as constructed by foreigners is not the idea of environmental protection itself but the representation of Madagascar’s ecosystem as unique and isolated – that is, the process of “localising” Madagascar. A key historical element that is very often omitted in publications about Madagascar’s environmental history is that the desire to protect Malagasy forests is neither recent nor entirely rooted in colonial ideology. As early as the 18th century, the kings and queens of Madagascar highly condemned the practice of burning for agricultural purposes. In 1794, King Andrianampoinimerina implemented the first national decree against “slash and burn” forestry, as Wright explains (1997: 384). In 1881, Queen Ranaivalona II imposed the “code of the 305 articles” to prohibit tree burning or cutting and, by doing so, prioritised forest conservation. According to Goedefroit and Revéret (2007: 17), such policies were implemented to develop an economy based on rice production rather than agriculture and livestock production, two activities deemed as harmful to the environment.

As stated in the paragraph above, the narrative about Madagascar and its environment is not new, it has a local legacy. Knowing this, the idea of studying colonialism as the starting phase of the process of “localisation” of Madagascar might seem problematic and misleading. But what is understood here as a colonial product is not the idea of forest conservation itself but the promotion and representation of Madagascar as “the Promised Land for naturalists”. Put differently, the creation of an imagery of Madagascar as a pristine, unique and isolated Eden

is a *vestige* of French colonial rule. What outsiders have created over time is a vision of Nature as a primary value, so primary that it is understood as holistic. This representation resurfaces in the post-colonial context through a narrative presenting Madagascar as a biodiversity hotspot with endemic species.

IDENTIFYING FLAGSHIP SPECIES

[Flagship species: a species chosen to represent an environmental cause, such as an ecosystem in need of conservation. These species are chosen for their vulnerability, attractiveness or distinctiveness in order to engender support and acknowledgment from the public at large]

I was once asked: “why is it that so many people have not been to Madagascar yet they all know about it, they all know there is something unique about its fauna and flora?” Part of the answer probably has to do with *Madagascar*, DreamWorks Animation movie. But, Hollywood fame put aside, it seems that the primary reason why people know about Madagascar’s biodiversity without having necessarily put their foot on Malagasy soil is because the island has been highly branded. It was branded centuries ago by colonial settlers and it continues to be branded today through the messages of environmental NGOs. A powerful branding of the island involves Madagascar’s fauna. Images of endemic animals that live on the island are the preferred communication tools of many conservation NGOs, including WWF, when launching advertising campaigns to generate awareness about the urgency to protect the island’s biodiversity. In other terms, certain animal species have been “branded” to reinforce the local and unique characteristic of Madagascar. The idea that the majority of the island’s fauna and flora cannot be found anywhere else on Earth has become a convincing and effective argument when it comes to advocating for the protection of Madagascar’s endemic species. This focus on the exclusive character of Madagascar as a unique and isolated “place” is mainly achieved through the identification of flagship species. Flagship species are flora or fauna species chosen by natural scientists and conservation NGOs to become conservation symbols, that is, the most important images that will be attributed to a specific biodiversity hotspot. In Madagascar, two main flagship species have served this task and reinforced the unique characteristic of the island. The point here is not to contest the fact that Madagascar has a very high rate of endemism. Instead, the purpose of this section is to understand how a geological fact has been used over the years and for which reason.

The Lemur Factor

The Filipino crocodile for the Philippines, the panda for China, the orang-utans for Malaysia, the kangaroo for Australia, the Amur leopard in Russia ... each country is known for being the home of one specific animal species. For Madagascar, the charismatic animal that seems to be commonly associated with the island is the lemur. In *Wilderness Conservation in a Biodiversity Hotspot*, Russell et al. (2005) explain that Madagascar's endemism rate for animals is higher than for plants, "the best example being the primates, which are 100% endemic". The evolutionary history of Madagascar, the authors continues, "is demonstrated by lemurs that are the nonhuman primate radiation in Madagascar, arguably the single highest primate conservation priority on Earth" (ibid). More than any other Malagasy endemic species, lemurs have attracted the attention of foreigners for a very long time. This fascination for the primate, and the consequences related to it, is what I shall call "the lemur factor".



A lemur in Antanmamo Protected Area conservation zone

A number of private and state reserves were created in different parts of the island for tourists and researchers to contemplate the intriguing animals. Berenty Reserve, a small private reserve of gallery forest located in the far south of the island and owned by the De Heaulme family¹⁷, illustrates well the fascination cultivated by foreigners for the endemic primate. Since the 1960s, researchers from Japan, the U.S. and England have visited and stayed in the reserve to report on the daily life of the primates – not to mention the 8,000 tourists who visit

¹⁷ The De Heaulme family, aside from having created the Berenty Reserve, is known in the South of Madagascar for owning large plots of land for sisal plantation. They are probably the most renowned colonial family in the region. One friend even told me that people say the De Heaulme family owns Fort-Dauphin. For a closer look at Berenty's history, see Jolly, A. 2004. *Lords and lemurs: mad scientists, kings with spears, and the survival of diversity in Madagascar*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Berenty each year. In 1864 already, zoologist and bio-geographer Philip Sclater expressed his interest for the mammals in an article for the *Quarterly Journal of Science*. Based on the discovery of lemur fossils in Madagascar and India only, Sclater concluded that both countries must have been part of a unified continent that, he suggested, should be called “Lemuria”¹⁸. Today, many conservation NGOs continue to use the lemur as a symbolic image to “localise” the island and raise awareness about Madagascar’s rich yet fragile biodiversity.

FROM PIERRE DE LA BÂTHIE TO PRINCE PHILIP: FACILITATING ACCESS TO NATURE

We have just seen how literature, personal letters, and settlers’ accounts of Madagascar have created an imagery of the island as a *place* with a unique yet isolated biodiversity. But how has this construct evolved in the last 50 years? How did such ideas about Nature travel? And how is the idea of “uniqueness” being reinforced today?

Creating “local” legitimacy

Before the 1940s, “Madagascar was to British and even to East African ears, an island off the coast of Africa, and very little else. A few geographically minded persons knew that the French possessed it, a few zoologically minded persons knew that there was something strange about its fauna, but its products, its potentialities, and its strategic value meant nothing whatever to ordinary men,” British explorer Kenneth Gandar-Dower wrote in *Into Madagascar* when he arrived in the city of Mahajunga aboard the King’s African Rifles in 1943 (quoted in Feeley-Harnik, 2001: 59). 30 years later, in a context of nature-for-debt swap and structural adjustment programs, the “island off the coast of Africa” rapidly became a “biodiversity hotspot” attracting exponential numbers of development workers and NGOs (Adger et al. 2001: 689). But for NGOs and development programs to access and intervene on the island, legitimacy needed to be built locally. In a country like Madagascar, where colonial rule lasted for more than 65 years, foreign intervention has very often been welcomed with scepticism and suspicion. During my stay in Antanmamo for example, I was told that a number of villagers refuted the creation of a protected area because the vision of *vazaha* coming to Antanmamo reminded them of colonial times when the French took away their land [interview with KIOMBA representative, July 20, 2011]. Similarly, a friend of mine who

¹⁸For more explanation on the “Lemuria” myth, see Moore, J.H. 1933. *Savage Survivals*. Watts & Co., London and Sclater, P.L. 1864. “The mammals of Madagascar”. *The Quarterly Journal of Science*, vol. 1, pp. 213–219.

was also an ecology student in Fort-Dauphin told me that, according to her, “the English and Americans *vazaha* are like the new colons in Madagascar today”. So how could a project like the PHCF be legitimised and accepted in a place where such sentiments existed?

Despite the favourable economic and political environment set up by international institutions and their adjustment programs, how could foreign NGOs access Madagascar’s forests? Surely, creating an imagery of Madagascar as a unique island with extraordinary features was not sufficient to legitimise access to it. Malagasy themselves also needed to be convinced. If people within Madagascar could agree that, indeed, Madagascar is a unique place in the world, then access would be facilitated. If foreign actors and local ones could share the same perception of the island, legitimacy for access would no longer be an obstacle. The description provided by renowned American primatologist Wright about a conference she attended in the United States seems to confirm the latter hypothesis.

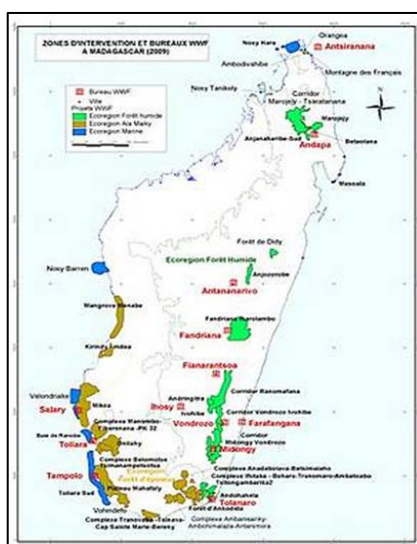
“In 1985, an international conservation conference suggested that the government of Madagascar and international organisations needed to cooperate to create new policies linking conservation and development. The participation in the meeting by international conservationists, including Prince Philip, made the Malagasy aware of world interest in their national treasure of wildlife and biodiversity. To a country isolated from the western world for over a decade, this was an impressive surprise [...] In May 1987, a meeting on St. Catherine’s Island, South Carolina, was attended by representatives of the key international groups interested in field research and captive breeding programs, including the World Wildlife Fund, the New York Zoological Society (Wildlife Conservation Society), the Duke University Primate Center, the San Diego ZOO, the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and Yale University. These agencies met with the three Malagasy ministries – the Ministry of Water and Forests, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Applied Research – to create a collaborative plan. This was the first trip to the United States for the Malagasy decision makers, and in their two-week visit to San Diego, Durham, New Haven, New York, and St. Louis, they began to understand how special the Malagasy flora and fauna were to the international community. They saw the degree of Western enthusiasm, motivation, and expertise. By 1988 the international community was willing to fund conservation projects, and infrastructure was needed to expedite major projects,” Wright explains (1997: 384-5).

In this context, it seems relevant to go back to Ribot and Peluso’s emphasis on “access” which they define as “the ability and capacity of some actors to affect the practices and ideas of others” (2003: 158). If there is one thing to remember from Wright’s description of those events is that, as she clearly states, it is only through foreign eyes that the delegation of

Malagasy – who all held important positions in local environmental politics – realised how unique and special their island was. This also proves that the process of “localising” Madagascar is a foreign process. According to the author, the encounter of Malagasy with international conservationists in South Carolina led, a few years later, to the elaboration of Madagascar’s National Environmental Action Plan, the first and most ambitious environmental program of its kind in Africa (Wright, 1997: 384-5). A year later, The Environmental Charter was created to “reiterates the government’s concern over environmental issues” including management of “the national heritage of biodiversity in protected areas, in conjunction with sustainable development of surrounding area,” Razafindralambo and Gaylord explain (2005: 76). And when the new Constitution was written in 2007, its preamble indicated that the Republic of Madagascar¹⁹ was

“conscious, for the sake of humanism, of the necessity to reconcile man with his Creator and his fellows as much as with Nature and its environment (...) and of the importance to preserve the exceptional natural wealth and vegetal, animal and mining resources that Nature has endowed Madagascar with for future generations”.

The implementation of an environmental policy framework at the local level, in a context marked by nature-for-debt-swap programs funded by international organisations, ultimately facilitated access for environmental NGOs that sought to develop conservation projects on the island, including the PHCF. A picture of WWF’s zones of intervention illustrates well the “rapid spread” of conservation programs in Madagascar.



Zone of intervention and offices of WWF in Madagascar. Source: WWF Madagascar, 2009

¹⁹ See <http://www.la-constitution-en-afrique.org/article-12939901.html>

Foreign access through local policies

As explained in the section above, the establishment of environmental policies and laws at the local level set up the adequate conditions for foreign NGOs and conservation organisations to further develop their activities on the island. Such a finding tells us a lot about travelling ideas and messages: conservation projects do not simply rely on discourses. When an idea that is derived from a so-called “global environmental knowledge” travels from a conference room in South Carolina to a Ministry office in Madagascar, it is no longer a “discourse”. Instead, it becomes a reality turned into practices. Practices can here refer to a public decree about environmental management or a national law allowing foreign NGOs to guide communities into natural resources management for instance. What is particularly interesting in the case of Madagascar, and the PHCF more specifically, is that studying the project takes us beyond the conventional discourse analysis. In Madagascar, probably more than in any other country in African, a whole set of structures and policies related to the environment have been put in place in the last thirty years. The exchange of ideas between foreign and local actors ultimately led to the “localisation” of the global – a phenomenon that some refer to as “glocalisation”. “Global” ideas and discourses travelled and, after several changes and rearrangements, became formal national policies shaping a certain reality. The implementation of a project like the PHCF in Madagascar is thus facilitated by the fact that most of the structures and legal frameworks required to implement such a project already exist. If ideas have become practices, it is necessary to conduct a practice – rather than discourse – analysis to analyse the practices actors from the PHCF have used to obtain and legitimise access to Madagascar.

On brochures and communication documents published for the promotion of the PHCF, it is stated that the project is implemented *thanks to* existing local policies. “It is about contributing, on the one hand, to the creation of new Protected Areas with communities to help the Malagasy government face the challenge of increasing the surface of Protected Areas to 6 million hectares in 2012 and, on the other hand, contributing to the sustainable management of natural forests through a transfer of natural resources management,” a document co-written by WWF and GoodPlanet explains (2009: 4). Interestingly, local policies are presented as “opportunities” for the project. The document quoted above, for instance, has a specific section titled “opportunities linked to the implementation of the project” to describe the local policies that will be used to develop the PHCF. Most importantly, the document also

clearly states that the PHCF is a “contribution” to the Malagasy state’s effort. With such a statement, Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF position themselves as embedded in the local setting: the project helps the government achieve its goal and, therefore, is integrally part of a national effort. As such, the PHCF is no longer presented as a project conducted by foreign actors in Madagascar and progressively loses its foreign facet: partners of the project are no longer the “other”. In parallel, the ideas on which the project is based are presented as reflective of local and official standpoints. One illustration of the latter statement can be found in the document co-written by WWF and GoodPlanet which refers to the “relevant policies” the Malagasy government has equipped itself with including the 7th engagement of “Madagascar Action Plan” which stipulates that

“the loss of one hectare of forest in Madagascar has a much serious effect on the world’s biodiversity than one hectare of forest elsewhere because, on the one hand, it means the extinction of several thousand species that exist nowhere else on earth, and on the other hand, it represents the disappearance of a source of carbon stock (WWF & GoodPlanet, 2009: 7)”.

Seeing how Nature is placed back and advertised as embedded in the Malagasy context, one may argue that Nature is “instrumentalised” for local politics. This also shows that the strategy of “de-foreignising” the PHCF contributes to the process of “localisation” of the island.

In the following section, specific cases of national “environmental” policies implemented by the Malagasy government and used by the actors of the PHCF to “localise” the project will be highlighted. As Ribot and Peluso argue (2003: 158), “locating access in a political-economic framework provides a theoretical model of change. Social relations and differentiation emerge from cooperation and conflict over benefits within particular political-economic moments. Laws may be formed from these relations or precede them”. In order to locate access in a specific political-economic framework through empirical analysis, as suggested by the Ribot and Peluso, three specific examples will be studied.

Durban Vision

One of the six objectives of the PHCF is to “contribute to achieving the Durban Vision by creating new Protected Areas in WWF’s zones of intervention” (WWF & GoodPlanet, 2009: 7). The Durban Vision is a plan that former President Ravalomanana presented at the World Parks Congress conference in Durban in 2003. Speaking to world leaders, President Ravalomanana declared:

"we can no longer afford to let our forests go up in smoke, to see the lakes, marshes and ponds of our country dry and drain our marine resources unwisely. Today I want to express our resolution to increase the surface of our protected areas from 1.7 million hectares to 6 million hectares in five years, in line with the IUCN classification of protected areas. This extension will include the reinforcement of the existing national network as well as the implementation of a new mechanism to create conservation sites" (quoted in Goedefroit and Revéret, 2007: 183).

Following his speech, a national initiative was launched to triple the amount of protected areas on the island. One way of doing so, considering the number of conservation projects running in Madagascar, was to rely on local and foreign NGOs' participation in the plan. Existing zones of intervention with high levels of biodiversity would become protected areas while new priority zones would be identified to become "new protected areas". Antanmamo, the site where I conducted the majority of my fieldwork, is one of the many "new protected areas" created by the Malagasy state with the help of WWF in the southern region of the island. For government forest services with limited financial resources, the presence of foreign NGOs – financially supported by international donors – in the country is very practical: in most cases, new protected areas are created where NGOs are already operating. For NGOs, the Durban Vision represents a much-awaited opportunity: their willingness to expand their scope of activities on the island now fits into a government-supported plan. According to Duffy (2007: 742), Ravalomanana's decision to triple the number of protected areas on the island was influenced by the lobbying force of two influential NGOs, Conservation International and the World Conservation Society. Their power, she continues, is rooted in "their ability to influence two other donors, USAID and the World Bank" (ibid). For the author, the Durban Vision exemplifies well how Nature and local politics can be used by foreign actors for specific purposes. Knowing how dependent on foreign aid Madagascar has become since the 1970s, one can imagine the influence of certain NGOs on local environmental politics.

"Concerns were raised that the two wildlife-orientated conservation NGOs had pressured the new Malagasy president into agreeing to the Durban Vision Initiative when they met with him at the World Parks Congress in 2003. Because Ravalomanana was a new president who was looking towards the United States to replace France as the major external donor, critics suggested that he had felt obliged to agree because of threats from the NGOs that they could lobby effectively in Washington to reduce support to the new president; it was clear to their opponents that the environmental NGOs had a great deal of power in Malagasy politics," Duffy explains (2007: 742).

In this sense, I shall argue that the Durban Vision has further helped NGOs such as WWF, CI or WCS to embed themselves in and bound their activities to a “local” context.

Transfer of Management

The fourth objective of the PHCF is to transfer the management of natural resources to the communities who live on the land where the new protected areas will be created. In Antanmamo, this transfer of management was signed in 2005. The transfer of natural resources management to communities, which is part of a national policy of decentralisation, was implemented through a law issued in 1996 as part of the National Charter of the Environment. The law indicates that once the transfer is signed between the community – represented by a newly-elected forest association named CoBa or *Communauté de Base* – and the Forest Service, a third body can intervene to provide the community with technical support. In most cases, NGOs provide this support. What this policy also implies, since the community is now responsible for forest management, is that NGOs can reallocate their tasks to community members, the newly-appointed “conservationists”, while remaining “technical advisers”. In the case of Antanmamo, villagers were assigned new roles either by WWF itself or through a vote at the commune level. The vacant positions ranged from reforestation agents to *polisyn’ala* (police forest) agent, tree nursery supervisor and president of the forest association. However, my observations during fieldwork brought me to the conclusion that despite the creation of a forest association responsible for natural resources management, in most cases, logistical decisions about forest management were taken by local WWF agents living either in Antanmamo or in Fort-Dauphin and financial ones by employees at WWF-Madagascar headquarters in Antananarivo. Nevertheless, the process of embedding the PHCF in a local framework which reinforces decentralisation and “community empowerment” remains powerful when it comes to “localising” and legitimising the project.

WWF presence in Madagascar

During the interviews I conducted with representatives from Air France, GoodPlanet or WWF-International, many respondents repeatedly stressed how “exemplary and successful” the PHCF was. The reason for such a success, they argued, was the fact that the project was conducted by WWF, a NGO that has been present in Madagascar for almost 50 years. Former WWF-International Communication officer, for instance, explained that Air France agreed to partner up with WWF for the PHCF because “WWF has been there for more than 45 years, it has a long experience in Madagascar and has maintained good relationships with all the

successive governments in place. Also, their staff is principally composed of Malagasy nationals” [interview, January 16, 2012]. Indeed, all the people I encountered during my research in Madagascar who were working for WWF were Malagasy. During interviews, the “local” characteristic of the staff was presented as the main asset of the PHCF. For instance, Pierre Caussade, Air France Director for Sustainable Development, said his company accepted to finance the project because it is “locally conducted by a NGO with excellent references that has the capacity to intervene while respecting Malagasy politics, Malagasy culture and Malagasy people everywhere where the project is being implemented” [interview, January 19, 2012]. Nanie, Flavien, Apollinaire, Maminiaina ... Pierre Caussade can name all the WWF employees he has met in Madagascar. “Their expertise in the subject really is admirable. For this project to work, in my opinion it was a prerequisite to have only Malagasy involved,” he added. There are social differences between many of the Malagasy working for WWF. Some, who have studied in Europe or in the United States, may be considered to be part of the national “elite” while others come from smaller cities with a less prestigious academic background. In most cases, all of them have worked for local NGOs or government offices related to the environment before being employed at WWF. The fact that 100 percent of WWF’s staff for the PHCF is Malagasy gives a significant “comparative advantage” to the project. The PHCF, despite being a foreign project in Madagascar, travels all the way to the island and is being implemented by Malagasy themselves. This process of “local appropriation”, I shall argue, also corresponds to a process of “foreignisation” of space: WWF, which after all is a foreign NGO, becomes the “self” and no longer the “other”. As the idea of the project travels to Madagascar, the PHCF changes from an imported idea to a locally accepted and legitimated project supported by Malagasy. The fact that WWF is a foreign NGO does no longer seem to be problematic considering WWF has a long history of working on the island and 100 percent of its staff for the PHCF is Malagasy. In other terms, the intervention of WWF is no longer problematic because the NGO is presented as “local”.

Looking at the environmental practices developed in Madagascar tells us something important about access. The policies and structures put in place in Madagascar, including the Durban Vision and the transfer of natural resources management, were implemented in a specific context. The environment has become a top priority on the agenda of many world institutions. And so have deforestation and climate change. The political environment developed in the last thirty years makes initiatives such as the Durban Vision legitimate policies to be

implemented today. But would they have been granted the same level of legitimacy at a different epoch? It seems very unlikely that the government of Madagascar would have passed such laws forty years ago just like it is uncertain whether such practices could be established in twenty years' time: the context tomorrow might not be as favourable as it is today. The same observation applies to the PHCF: Air France, GoodPlanet and WWF would probably not have benefited from such a "facilitated" environment to implement the project thirty years ago: the structures, ideas, practices and policies did not exist yet. At that time, access to Madagascar would have been far more limited. For this reason, I shall argue that access relations are highly contextual.

"Generally, people have more power in some relationships than in others, or at some historical moments, and not others. Different political-economic circumstances change the terms of access and may therefore change the specific individuals or groups most able to benefit from a set of resources [...] We see access relations as always changing, depending on an individual's or group's position and power within various social relationships. Benefits can be redistributed and captured in the course of changing social relations and legal frameworks as new conflicts and cooperative arrangements emerge," Ribot and Peluso argue (2003: 158).

It is therefore useful to conceptualise access patterns as constantly changing and, hence, highly unpredictable processes. The process of "localisation" of Madagascar reinforced by the partners of the PHCF strongly relies on both national and international specific socio-political relations and a favourable legal and political framework. In this sense, access can be rather insecure because actors constantly need to develop new types of relations depending on the context they are working in. As Ribot and Peluso (2003: 164) explain, "a shift in the broader political economy can make some kinds of access obsolete by creating new types of social relations that need to be developed to gain and maintain access to resources". A good illustration of the latter statement can be found in GoodPlanet and WWF's official document (2009) quoted earlier which indicates that the success of the PHCF is based on the assumption that "state policy as regards to the possibility for private entities or organisms to co-manage new protected areas will not change".

2.2. GLOBALISING NATURE

"When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe"
John Muir, American conservationist

We have just seen how a number of practices have been put in place to embed the PHCF in the local context and, thus, facilitate access to a distant location for decision-makers. For the purpose of this section, we will look at a completely different strategy aimed at gaining access. This strategy is the process of delocalising, and hence, globalising “Madagascar” and its environment. Interestingly, it seems that the processes of localisation, on the one hand, and delocalisation, on the other hand, are simultaneous - even though this might sound paradoxical. The project is embedded in a local context while, at the same time, Madagascar is delocalised from its geographical limits to become part of a wider global biodiversity hotspot. There is no doubt that what makes Madagascar a global hotspot is its ecological uniqueness and high rate of species endemism. But what we seek to point out here is that it is this same ecological uniqueness that is used to embed Madagascar into a “global” setting. The result of such a dichotomous representation is the following narrative: even though Madagascar has unique features, it remains a world’s heritage that ought to be protected by all, including a foreign company and two foreign NGOs. An element which is presented as global becomes legitimately accessible to all – but not necessarily accessible by all. This process of delocalisation, that is, the practice of “globalising” Madagascar, will be the focus of the following section.

HOLISM AND SEMANTICS

Holism. ολος (holos) : totality, whole.

A system of thought for which the characteristics of a body or a whole can only be known when considered and apprehended as a whole [a whole designates a multitude that can be comprised as an ensemble] in its totality, and not when one studying each part separately. Therefore, a being is entirely or strongly determined by the whole to which it belongs²⁰.

As explained in the first section of this chapter, there seems to be different ways of speaking about Nature in Madagascar. One discourse that is gaining significant importance in the present context of globalisation is a universal interpretation of Nature. Nature is increasingly portrayed as an element we should all feel concerned about. The phenomenon of climate change, emerging in a context where national boundaries are increasingly obsolete and in which environmental problems are framed as affecting all of us, has significantly reinforced the universality of Nature. Along a similar line of argumentation, Tsing suggests to look back

²⁰ See <http://www.techno-science.net/?onglet=glossaire&definition=277> for a definition of holism.

at the advent of the environmentalist movement which was “based on the idea that recognised problems such as climate change could not be contained to a single country” and therefore advocated for the implementation of “common standards” (2005: 7). In other terms, if the problem is global it requires global solutions; if Nature is threatened by *global* climate change, Nature needs to be protected in its globality. This specific language which depicts Nature as a global artefact has led to the delocalisation of Nature from its geographical milieu. In other terms, defining environmental problems as global reinforces the holism into which Nature is now placed: environments bound to countries are increasingly taken out of their spatial context for the sake of universal environmentalism. Delocalisation here refers to the process of encompassing the local in the global, to render the object of access global and, thus, more accessible. Seeing how Nature is branded as global, one can understand the influence of the world “holistique” in “Programme Holistique de Conservation des Forêts” (PHCF) or *Holistic Program for Forest Conservation*. I asked GoodPlanet program officer why the term “holistic” had been chosen to name the project. His response was the following:

“holistic means something which ‘encompasses different dimensions or all dimensions’ ... because we do not want to do forest protection just for the sake of forest protection. We want the PHCF to be a project that takes problems at their roots. In the case of Madagascar it is slash and burn agriculture and the conversion of forests into agricultural terrains, so we want to offer alternatives, educate communities, structure them, make them think, sensibilise them, raise their awareness about biodiversity ... so it really is multidimensional, which is why we called it holistic” [interview, January 17, 2012].

For Pierre Caussade, Air France General Director was “seduced by the scientific approach because the project is called ‘holistic’ but ... very often, the term is not very well understood. It is the Holistic Program for Forest Conservation, the infamous PHCF, and here the word holistic refers to a variety of approaches, techniques and methods. We approach this project with different angles” [interview, January 19, 2012]. Interestingly, Air France Director for Sustainable Development points out himself that “very often, the term is not very well understood”. His statement strongly echoes the argument developed by Mosse and further explained in the first chapter of this thesis about the power of using “vague” words. Mosse (2004: 663) argues that popularly used concepts such as sustainable development or, in this case, holistic, are “mobilising metaphors” produced by policy-makers or project planners who use such terms because their “vagueness, ambiguity and lack of conceptual precision is required to conceal ideological differences, to allow compromise and the enrolment of

different interests, to build coalitions, to distribute agency and to multiply criteria of success within project systems”. As it will be explained in the following paragraph, the term holistic has a different meaning than “multidisciplinary”. But the fact that my respondents defined it as such enables them to show that while there is a sectorial activity called environmental conservation, the project is holistic and can therefore be linked to other sectors such as development, science, research, and humanitarian action. By integrating the word holistic in its name, the PHCF appears to encompass all top-priority issues on the global agenda.

Holistic, as explained earlier, also refers to “a system of thought for which the characteristics of a body or a whole can only be known when considered and apprehended as a whole”. In certain cosmologies, the term might also endorse other implications. But what shall be stressed here is that even though the term “holistic” was chosen by partners of the PHCF for reasons that go beyond its primary definition, the term still conveys a powerful – yet potentially misleading – message in the context of this project. Using the word “holistic” allows GoodPlanet, WWF and Air France to do something very specific: linking particular hotspots to the world at large. When tied to the environment, the word holistic also suggests that Madagascar, with its forests, its fauna and its flora, should not be understood as a separate unit of the world but, instead, as one of the numerous particles that, altogether, form a whole. Because global interconnections have taken the environment beyond conventional boundaries, the focus is no longer on preserving specific landscapes but, rather, about protecting all life-support systems on the planet. This rhetoric has been particularly strong when talking about countries with a high level of biodiversity and a high rate of endemism, including Madagascar. Why? First, because the holistic view of Nature portrays endemic species as global commons belonging to a universal whole. As WWF Director for Madagascar reminds us, 80 percent of the island’s fauna and flora is unique so “if you lose it here, it’s not anywhere else” [interview, March 5, 2012]. The second reason why the universal narrative about Nature has been so strong in countries like Madagascar is because such places are increasingly presented as potential “global sinks” in a context of “rapid climate change”. The urgency to protect such environments thus appears to be legitimate: they house species that could go extinct if climate change continues while, at the same time, the forests of such countries have the capacity to retain enormous quantities of carbon and, by doing so, significantly reduce the impact of climate change. Considering the PHCF is a REDD-pilot project that is considering the idea of creating a carbon compensation mechanism by stocking

a maximum of carbon in Malagasy's forests, it might actually be in the partners' best interest to present the island as such, that is, as a unique carbon sink.

DELOCALISING THE RED ISLAND

In *The Global Situation*, Tsing (2000) provides an interesting explanation of the origin of global environmental science and how the discipline shaped what is today known as “universal environmental knowledge”:

“the imperial placement of scientists in botanical gardens and research stations across the European colonies inspired continent-crossing correspondence in the late 18th century. Through this correspondence, informed by widespread fears of climate change caused by colonial deforestation, colonial scientists formulated notions of a "global" climate. This commitment to planet-wide environmental process allowed further developments in imagining both science and policy on a global scale,” she argues (2000: 348).

The formulation of “widespread fears” about climate change informed by messages of “urgency” still persists in contemporary NGOs’ messages. The articles, images, graphs and statistics accessible to the general public about environmental degradation in Madagascar do indeed look alarming. According to Harper et al. (2007: 325), 90 percent of Madagascar’s forest cover is gone and 200,000 hectares of the island’s primary forests are disappearing each year. For Hannah et al. (2008) the majority of Madagascar’s endemic species, which represent 80 percent of all mammals, reptiles, plants and amphibians on the island, are living on ‘borrowed time’. But how have those messages been communicated through the PHCF? As previously explained, access to Madagascar and most particularly to its ecosystem was legitimised through a simultaneous – yet paradoxical – process of localising and globalising the island. In the following section, a second paradox will be highlighted: the Green versus Red contradiction. Photographs portraying a verdant island have often been juxtaposed to images of Madagascar “bleeding into the sea”. Pictures can tell us a lot about access strategies developed by certain actors. Looking at communication materials published by WWF, it will be argued that images of a threatened island serve to reinforce the idea that Madagascar’s ecosystem is “living under borrowed time” because of human-induced environmentally damaging activities. This process, in turn, serves to justify the intervention of a transnational anti-deforestation project.

With its tropical forests, endemic species and lush landscapes, Madagascar is often referred to as the “Green Island”. Yet, the island also has a second nickname: the “Red Island”. According to scientists, the red colour stands for the heavy erosion which has exposed the laterite and iron-rich soil of the island²¹. In fact, one of the first things catching travellers’ attention when flying over or driving through Madagascar is the orange dust and red clay emanating from the soil. This colour-based contradiction illustrates well the dichotomous representation of the island: on the one hand Madagascar is one of the world’s most verdant Edens but, on the other hand, it is also extremely fragile and “threatened by the traditions of its inhabitants”. In 1987, French photographer Jacques Hannebique published a book called *Madagascar: mon île au bout du monde* (1987). In his introduction, one can read:

“At 10,000 meters of altitude, in the plane which, from Europe, takes you toward Madagascar, well before seeing its shores, you are suddenly intrigued by an immense reddish spot, which stands out sharply against the blue water of the Mozambique, without mingling in it. ... That red water, spurting out from everywhere like a fatal haemorrhage whose power forces the sea waves beyond the horizon, is the blood of the Earth”.

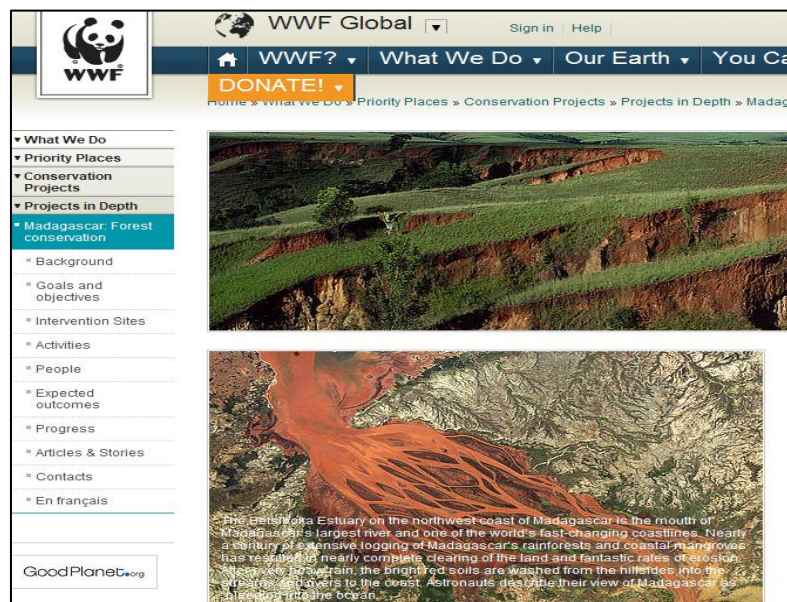
The first images of erosion and forest degradation in Madagascar dates back to airline flights operated in the mid-1930s. Even though deforestation had already caught the attention of French naturalists such as Grandidier, Bougainville or Commerson in the 19th century, the phenomenon only became problematic much later, Goedefroit and Revéret argue (2007: 16). According to Jaffe (2009: 322), “the notion of discovering the Garden of Eden and the fear of losing it again is a recurrent theme in fuelling conservation, and it extends from colonial times to the present”. What is today perceived as “environmental degradation” includes slash and burn agriculture and the commercial and intensive exploitation of forest areas. Looking at the dual representation of the island, one may wonder: isn’t it contradictory that Madagascar is both named the Green and the Red island? The response is: not necessarily. In fact, it seems that both images are complementary. By depicting Madagascar as green while simultaneously finger pointing at Malagasy farmers or forest users for degrading the island’s environment, a clear message is being communicated: Madagascar used to be green but now it is turning red, so it is extremely urgent to gather global efforts to make it green again. In other terms, the green is presented as relying on the red. WWF, for instance, describes Madagascar as “a Great Red Island with a touch of Green” on its website. The Betsiboka River, the largest river on the island located in Northern Madagascar, seems to have been a reference point for “red vs.

²¹ See <http://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/EarthObservatory/BetsibokaEstuaryMadagascar.htm>

green” imagery. In 1972, French zoologist and botanist Jacques Millot described his findings on the biogeography and ecology of Madagascar collected since the 1920s with these words:

“destructive human activities can sometimes create spectacles of diabolical beauty. The Betsiboka in flood can be seen to tear from its denuded banks so much red earth that its waters become as though stained with blood. Again at the end of the dry season, the hills on the horizon of Tananarive are ornamented with an incandescent necklace of prairie fires which, for the sake of a slight seasonal advantage, prevent future regeneration. Educating the Malagasy peasant in the need for forest protection ought to be the permanent concern of government policy” (quoted in Feeley-Harnik, 2001: 32).

An image of the Betsiboka River taken by the NASA from the International Space Station in 2004 circulated widely on NGOs and conservation associations’ websites.



Green [on top] versus Red [bottom: Betsiboka Estuary] Source: WWF Madagascar.

On WWF’s website, a section about pioneer projects against deforestation displays a picture of the Betsiboka Estuary with the following text: “Nearly a century of extensive logging of Madagascar’s rainforests and coastal mangroves has resulted in nearly complete clearing of the land and fantastic rates of erosion. After every heavy rain, the bright red soils are washed from the hillsides into the streams and rivers to the coast. Astronauts [who took the picture] describe their view of Madagascar as ‘bleeding into the ocean’”²². Interestingly, what neither the text nor the website precises is that the picture was taken in the wake of tropical Cyclone Gafilo which strongly hit Northern Madagascar in March 2004. A comparative image, taken

²² See wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/project/projects_in_depth/conservation_program2/

in September 2003 (see picture below), shows “normal water levels,” according to the NASA, and a far less tragic colour than the picture displayed on WWF’s website.



Betsiboka Estuary, September 2003. Source: NASA

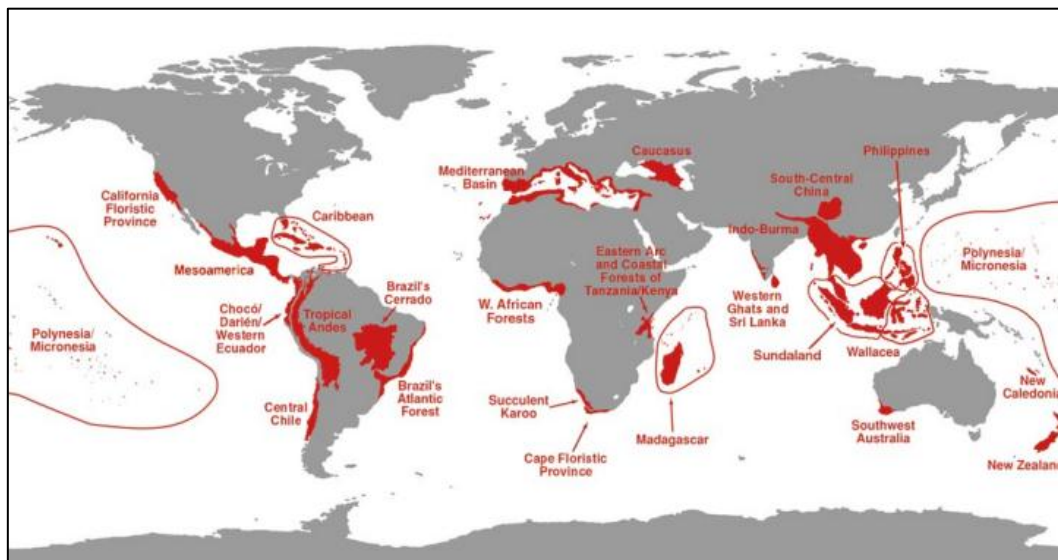
The use of images is neither trivial nor innocent, especially when it comes to gaining access and asserting legitimacy. So why did WWF use the picture of the Betsiboka Estuary following the 2004 cyclone and not the one taken 6 months before? Is it because tragic images related to climate change and environmental-related issues are more effective at convincing the public about the urgency to act than less-heartrending ones? It is important to question the messages that such images mediate. According to Fairhead and Leach (1998:175), the answer to the previous question is positive. “Asking forestry administrators to abandon narratives of decline and crisis would require them to undermine their resource access-control claims,” they argue. In fact, I would add that doing so also undermines their strategies to legitimate access.

MADAGASCAR: THE HOTTEST BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

A concept that was developed by conservationists over the years to mobilise the public around the need to “save certain species before it would be too late” is the label of “biodiversity hotspot”. The term “biodiversity hotspot” was first coined by Conservation International ecologist Norman Myers. Myers’ objective was to “map” biodiversity so as to identify high priority conservation zones and targets. The term hotspot stands for places rich in biodiversity but increasingly threatened by environmental degradation and, ultimately, species extinction. In *Biodiversity Hotspot for Conservation Priorities*, Myers et al. (2000: 853) explain the rationale behind the term:

“Conservationists are far from able to assist all species under threat, if only for lack of funding. This places a premium on priorities: how can we support the most species at the least cost? One way is to identify ‘biodiversity hotspots’ where exceptional concentrations of endemic species are undergoing exceptional loss of habitat. As many as 44% of all species of vascular plants and 35% of all species in four vertebrate groups are confined to 25 hotspots comprising only 1.4% of the land surface of the Earth. This opens the way for a ‘silver bullet’ strategy on the part of conservation planners, focusing on these hotspots in proportion to their share of the world’s species at risk,” the authors explain (ibid).

Originally, 10 regions with tropical forests were identified as biodiversity hotspots. But, since 2009, the term now encompasses 34 regions worldwide. In total, biodiversity hotspots represent 16 percent of the planet’s surface area and 50 percent of the world’s species endemism, Neimark and Schroeder note (2009).



The 25 Hotspots. Source: Myers et al. 2000

So where does Madagascar fit into this? The Eastern part of the island became a “hotspot” in 1988 but it is only ten years later that the totality of Madagascar’s territory became known as the “hottest of all biodiversity hotspots,” as Myers et al. (2000) suggest. The reason why I decided to analyse the concept of “biodiversity hotspot” in this chapter about “globalising” Madagascar is because the term itself represents one of the clearest illustrations of the process of “delocalisation”. The rationale behind labelling places as “biodiversity hotspots” is that global diversity needs to be mapped so as to facilitate global conservation and reduce the risk of species extinction. Therefore, biodiversity hotspots are identified and then categorised into groups based on their “biological commonalities” among the world’s ecosystem (Myers et al.

2000: 853). “Each of the areas features a separate biota or community of species that fits together as a biogeographic unit,” Myers et al. explain (ibid). Through this procedure, places like Madagascar are no longer countries or islands with national boundaries but, instead, become divided into priority conservation “regions” based on their biological commonalities. For example, WWF created a system called the “Global 200 Ecoregions” whereby a set of ecoregions are identified to be protected so that their “conservation would achieve the goal of saving a broad diversity of the Earth's ecosystems”²³. In Madagascar, WWF considers that there are 3 eco-regions: *Ala Maiky*, or Spiny Forest in the South, *Ala Atsinana*, or Rainforest in the East and the North, and the Marine ecoregion in the Southwest. “The Global 200 aims to represent all of the world's biodiversity by identifying outstanding ecoregions in all of the world's biomes and biogeographic realms,” WWF website indicates. Analysing the connotation of the term “biodiversity hotspot”, Jaffe (2009: 317) explains that environmental NGOs’ ways of seeing places like Jamaica or Curacao is restricted to the country’s biodiversity. This implies that “maintaining global biodiversity hinges on the protection of the exceptionally diverse ecosystems, and dozens of endangered and often endemic species the region harbours,” she continues (ibid). The effect of such a strategy, I shall argue, is the effective removal of national boundaries. While biodiversity hotspots are being identified and mapped, we see that geographical spaces are being reframed, adapted and reconstructed in the name of global environmentalism. All the “spots” transcend and de-politicise national boundaries by further delocalising the environment from its spatial grid. According to Neimark and Schroeder (2009), the de-politicisation of national boundaries through the practice of encompassing biodiversity hotspots into the global helps international organisations legitimise their claims over natural resources and, as a result, transform such organisations into key decision-makers in the management of biodiversity at the international level. In fact, promoting an object as global and universal through the language of biodiversity hotspot renders it accessible to everyone and, most particularly, to those who have the resources to access it.

2.3. TRIVIALISATION OF SPACE: HAVE NGOs BECOME SERVICE PROVIDERS?

Dis-locare.[latin]

Locare from locus, *lieu*.

To be expelled from a lieu, place.

Synonym: Disarticulate, dislocate, dismantle, disunify, disturb.

²³ See <http://www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/global200.html>

As argued in the previous section of this chapter, the space factor represents an important element in access strategies. To justify access, Madagascar is both presented as a unique place with a high rate of species endemism and as a global common part of a broader biodiversity hotspot network. We have also seen how the processes and practices which serve to “globalise” the island take Madagascar away from its spatial grid and encompass the country’s ecology into the “global”. But what does this tell us about the role of NGOs in the context of constantly shifting international environmental governance? And, in turn, what does this tell us about NGOs’ organisational practices? When I asked GoodPlanet’s Program Officer about the foundation’s strategy for choosing the country where the PHCF would be implemented, he replied that GoodPlanet

“asked Air France, with whom Yann Arthus Bertrand has very close ties, to team up for a tree plantation program that, very symbolically, would enable the plantation of one tree per plane ticket sold. But I quickly realised it wasn’t really feasible since Air France sells around 5 million tickets per year. So, instead of planting trees, I thought it might be wiser to protect trees that already existed. Air France, who was interested on the idea of ‘doing something’, asked us to think about a project. So, a bit naturally, I turned to WWF because there are our neighbours here in Paris [GoodPlanet office is located inside WWF-France headquarters]. They transferred me to WWF-International to whom I asked what their needs were in terms of forest protection projects ... and they came back to me with 3 propositions. The first one was about a big project in Brazil, another at the border between China and Nepal I think, and the last one in Madagascar. So ... why Madagascar? Well most importantly because it was a project that was going to be potentially exclusively funded by Air France and it’s also a historic destination for Air France. So we oriented ourselves in that direction: because it was an exclusive project in a very particular destination” [interview, January 17, 2012].

As GoodPlanet officer explains, the idea to implement the PHCF in Madagascar was suggested while talks between all partners of the PHCF had already started. GoodPlanet officer’s testimony also shows that even though the idea behind the project was developed by GoodPlanet itself, the task of looking for the “best spot” to conduct the PHCF was “sub-contracted” to a tertiary agent, namely, WWF-International. The interesting aspect that I would like to point out here is not the fact that GoodPlanet chose Madagascar over Nepal or Brazil but, instead, the fact that GoodPlanet commissioned the task to WWF-International and based its final decision on “WWF’s needs when it comes to forest protection projects”.

Taking this aspect into account, “localising” the island no longer seems to be a relevant strategy when trying to gain legitimate access to Madagascar. In fact, such a process appears to be contradictory: members of the partnership justify their intervention in Madagascar by highlighting the uniqueness of the island but, yet, they also show a strong willingness through communication materials to detach the country from its geographical characteristics. Given the fact that GoodPlanet did not initially plan to implement the project in Madagascar, we are under the impression that neither GoodPlanet nor Air France had a particular interest in the island beforehand. It also creates an impression that GoodPlanet went “project shopping” at WWF’s office when setting up the project and deciding the place where the PHCF should be conducted. For this reason, I shall ask the following question: have NGOs become service providers? To put it metaphorically, have NGOs become real estate agencies where people are given recommendations on where to invest and given the liberty to choose from a variety of different houses, based on their needs and financial resources? Can companies and civil society groups which seek to invest in sustainable development projects just commission NGOs such as WWF to provide them with “the right fit”?

The argument developed here strongly echoes Rajak’s line of thinking in her latest publication *In Good Company* (2011: 11). According to the author, who analyses mining companies’ CSR strategies in South Africa, “the emphasis of the global dimension of corporate citizenship [...] claims a capacity for de-contextualisation, abstraction and re-contextualisation in diverse local contexts, enabling TNCs [transnational corporations] to claim the ‘art of being local worldwide’” (Rajak, 2011: 11). It is this particular “art of being local worldwide”, mastered by both companies and NGOs and which consists in accessing a *global* heritage through the language of partnership, that is analysed here. This art, I shall argue, also raises a broader interrogation as to the notion of space in access to land deals, and most particularly the conventional link between economic and geographical realities.

If transnational companies are increasingly able to invest in sustainable programs in places where they have no activities or have never been, how can economic realities really be tackled? In other terms, is it enough for a private company to invest in sustainability in a place where it has no activity for its practices to be considered sustainable? And if economic activities progressively become distanced from their geographical realities because NGOs increasingly enable companies to do so, what does this tell us about the role of NGOs and their organisational practices? Are such observations an indication that NGOs’ role in society

is changing, from a civil society group fighting against corporate greed to an international network of experts helping companies follow their CSR agenda? According to Chouquer (2011), who wrote about foreign large scale acquisition and land deals in Africa, the direct consequence of “globalising” Madagascar is that “the place is no longer the link”. His analysis of access mechanisms brought him to the conclusion that further disconnections between places and “the link” were likely to generalise in the future and, as a result, growing distancing of economic realities from geographical realities should be expected.

“The delocalisation or dislocation is the new measure of the world, in its total break up with the ontological and geographical relationship that used to reconcile men with their milieu. Today, one of the new criteria for measurement is a virtualisation of the relationship with the lieu which enables flexible forms of redeployment [...] What can we say when commercial and financial institutions appropriate locations where their stakeholders and customers will never live while people who live there see themselves being dispossessed from a great part of what constitutes their relationship with the lieu, that is, the power to decide of their own future, a guarantee of land ownership” Chouquer explains (2011).

Delocalisation, mobility and detachment. These are the three words that increasingly characterise the work of NGOs that are confronted with, on the one hand, a planet whose conditions are, according to a number of scientists, deteriorating at a fast pace and, on the other hand, a growing number of private companies trying to “clean up their act” – with a significant financial gain linked to it but at a much slower pace. By trying to reach those two objectives at the same time, NGOs virtualise economic realities from geographical ones.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen throughout this chapter, access strategies are, above all, strategies to gain legitimacy. A translocal project is adapted to its local context in order to guarantee appropriate translation from the actors who created the PHCF to those who will take part in the project in Madagascar. We have also seen how the process of ensuring legitimacy consists in framing ideas and practices as being part of a “global” environmental network informed by the urgency to act. Such a narrative, in turn, becomes a justification for intervention: the PHCF is necessary because global climate change is threatening the survival of endemic species at the international level. Yet, we have also seen how playing with space in such a way that Madagascar is both “localised” and “globalised” can lead to a situation whereby the

environment becomes detached from the cultural and the spatial, that is, from people and land. When linked to the idea of a broader shift in state-society relations, such observations outline the contradictions of neoliberalism: on the one hand, the talk is about decentralising power and giving “local communities living in distant places” the authority to safeguard their natural resources. Yet, on the other hand, it is also about globalising those same natural resources by presenting certain institutions or actors, in most cases transnational organisations, as the most suitable actors to take care of that very process of decentralisation.

TRANSLATION



Board in front of the forest association (CoBa) office in Antanmamo
“tsy azo atao ny mandoro ala”: it is forbidden to burn forest; “arovy ny tontolo iainantsika”: protect our environment.

FROM PARIS TO ANTANMAMO: CONVEYING THE PROJECT TO A SMALL-SCALE LOCALITY

The purpose of this chapter is to follow the journey of the PHCF, a large-scale land acquisition project, and analyse its implementation in a “small-scale” locality. The question that I seek to answer here is the following: what happens when a translocal project is implemented in a “small-scale” locality? The PHCF covers 500,000 hectares of land spread over 5 sites of intervention across the island. It is funded by Air France, a foreign private company, and implemented in Madagascar by WWF, an international conservation NGO and GoodPlanet, a French foundation. As such, the PHCF is a good example of a transnational organisation investing in Madagascar and forging alliances to access land for a specific purpose: encouraging villagers to replant trees and end slash and burn agriculture to, ultimately, reduce national and global deforestation rates. The PHCF is also an illustrative

example of a broader shift occurring at the international level: transnational companies partnering up with international NGOs and governments in the name of environmental sustainability²⁴.

In the last 30 years, climate change and global warming have become top priorities on world leaders' agenda. As a result of such concerns, projects promoting environmental conservation and the safeguard of the world's unique biodiversity have exponentially increased. Forest users, identified as one of the primary causes of environmental degradation for practicing slash and burn agriculture, have become the first targets of many conservation-related schemes. In Madagascar, an island renowned for its endemic biodiversity and high level of poverty, international discourses about the environment have had a direct impact on national policies and strategies. The most notable one is the Durban Vision, a national policy analysed in the previous chapter and implemented by former President Ravalomanana for three objectives: tripling the number of protected areas in Madagascar to preserve the island's remaining biodiversity, reducing poverty and promoting rural development (Duffy, 2006: 742). As part of this vision, the government transfers the management of natural resources to communities living around protected areas and, with the support of environmental or development NGOs, the Malagasy state provides those communities with financial incentives to switch from slash and burn agriculture to more "sustainable" income-generating activities. The PHCF falls under the Durban Vision initiative. It aims at encouraging forest users to protect the natural resources located inside protected areas in order to reduce national and global deforestation rates. Following those objectives, new laws are set up to regulate access to natural resources and community members elected at the forest association are given the responsibility to monitor forest protection.

This chapter seeks to provide an insight into the shifts occurring at the village-level once the PHCF was implemented. In other terms, it is about following the *voyage* of the PHCF until

²⁴ This specific chapter of my thesis was highly influenced by the work of Sandra Evers and her research team as part of the NWO/Wotro programme entitled *Development as a Trojan Horse? Foreign Large-scale Land Acquisitions in Ethiopia, Madagascar and Uganda* (2011). The concept of "zone of intermediality" developed by the research team, which they define as "the ontological grids of (inter)national-local stakeholder encounters where diverse ideologies, discourses and practices of land use and valuation are mediated", greatly helped me during and after my fieldwork in making sense of the various situations I was confronted with. The theoretical model of "zones of intermediality" is, in many ways, very similar to the idea of "zones of translation" I am developing in this chapter. I was offered the opportunity to present my findings at several occasions to Sandra and her research team during discussions, conferences, and workshops and many of the feedbacks I received have been incorporated in this thesis. In addition to Sabine Luning's inputs in my research, I would therefore like to acknowledge the academic support received from Sandra Evers, Jan Abbink, Mijasoia Miandravola Andriamarovololona, Theodros Woldegiorgis Atreso, Josh Maiyo, Froukje Krijtenburg and Caroline Seagle.

the very last stage of the project's journey, that is, its implementation in Madagascar. The question that shall therefore be asked is: how is "sustainability" translated when the project is implemented in Antanmamo? If two NGOs and a private company teamed up together to create a project in tropical forests areas in the name of "environmental sustainability", how did the idea and practice of sustainability travelled to Madagascar? The painting on the board of the forest association (see picture on page 104) shows that the idea of "sustainability" translates into signs, boards and images that emphasise lemurs, forests, animals, and trees with messages such as "*tsy azo atao ny mandoro ala*" (it is forbidden to burn forest) and "*arovy ny tontolo iainantsika*" (protect our environment). During my fieldwork, different valuations of the environment were presented to me: "a parent feeding his or her children", "a reservoir of food during difficult times", "a sacred place to cherish the memory of the ancestors" ... there clearly seemed to be different ways of speaking about the forest and, more generally, about the environment. But why did some people think about the environment as a relevant referential category for action while others did not? And if the PHCF was a project combining international, national and local ideas, which practices and discourses did forest users choose to prioritise?

The purpose of analysing such shifts is not to evaluate the project but, instead, to answer questions about who frames his or her action in an environmental framework and who doesn't and, if so, when, how, and why. In this sense, this chapter intends to shed light on the power dynamics operating at the village-level and the influence of newly-created figures of power, namely, environmental mediators. It also outlines the extent to which strategies rooted in community-based management transform local power configurations. Forest users, with varying levels of involvement in the conservation project, position themselves in varied ways and actively contribute to this process of re-negotiation of power among villagers (Evers, 2011). It will be argued that the implementation of the project in a "small-scale" locality generates three main changes, namely, the restructuration of space, the creation of a hybrid regulatory framework – and the process of rulemaking and rule-breaking linked to it – and the re-negotiation of power among forest users.

3.1. THE CREATION OF LOCALITY

The first image I ever saw of Antanmamo was a map (see picture below). Before I left for Madagascar, I was in contact with a foreign ecologist who provided me with materials that could help me prepare my fieldwork. One of the first documents I received was a satellite map that featured yet another map displaying distinctive limits or borders and various coloured zones. I could not see any house but only a nameless river and extensive green and less green spaces. The only thing I was told about Antanmamo before my departure was that it was a protected area that included one main village, with a few hamlets here and there. Thinking back about the place which 6 years ago became known as Antanmamo Protected Area, I started to wonder: if nothing is and everything comes to be, how did Antanmamo come into being?

CREATING THE LOCALITY

As a project initially created in Paris but implemented thousands of kilometres away in Madagascar, the PHCF needs to be “legible”. Legible in the sense that it visually makes sense for the donors, decision-makers, NGO workers, conservationists, and scientists who work on or supervise the project from a distance. As Scott (1998: 78) reminds us, “an illegible society is a hindrance to any effective intervention”. According to the author of *Seeing like a State* (1998: 4), the process of rendering spaces legible and visible in contemporary improvement schemes can be referred to as “miniaturisation”. Miniaturisation, he argues, is “the creation of a more easily controlled micro-order in model cities, model villages, and model farms” (ibid). The process of miniaturisation goes hand in hand with identifying the space where the project will be implemented and transforming it into a “locality”. In this sense, a translocal project like the PHCF very often implies spatial transformations and, hence, a restructuration of space. The “locality” I looked at during my research is the “site” of Antanmamo, located in Southern Madagascar. This section seeks to elaborate on the spatial metaphor of “the locality” to understand how space is restructured along the process of site creation and representation, and finally, identify the implications of such spatial transformations.

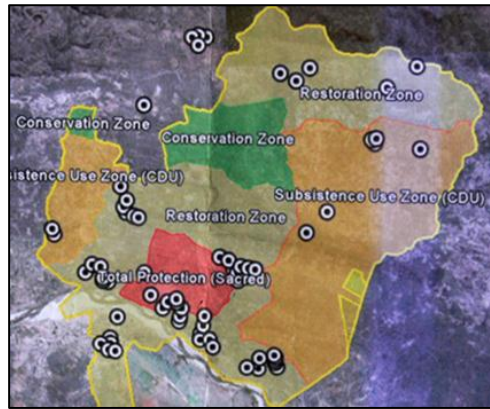
The reason why space restructuration is an integral part of many translocal projects is because even though “to the eye, the [spatial] pattern seems convoluted and irrational [...] to those familiar with it, it is simple enough and works admirably for their purposes” (Scott, 1998: 40). In other terms, spatial restructuration plays an important role because it allows conservation and development planners to fill space only with what they perceive to be “necessary”.

Because any kind of organisation maps its world according to the goal it seeks to achieve, mapping space and organising it based on one's objectives render the process of access simple and legible. When looking at the PHCF, we see that the element around which space is restructured is biodiversity because the objective of the PHCF is environmental: protecting the biodiversity of Madagascar, and most specifically its forests, to tackle deforestation and global warming. When looking at the creation and delimitation of the protected area in Antanmamo, we see that land was not spatially defined in terms of everyday use or identity value but in terms of forest cover. In other terms, the implementation of an environmental project leads to space being structured around biodiversity. Specific delimitations are made around areas with abundant biodiversity and high rates of fauna and flora while other delimitations are made around places marked by a lack of biodiversity, high rates of deforestation and "land degradation". When I asked one of the agents responsible for delimitation about how exactly the protected area of Antanmamo was created, he replied that the strategy of the consultants and technicians from the Forest Service was, first of all, to prioritise and "identify where *intact forests* were located" [interview of July 25, 2011]. This testimony shows that biodiversity becomes the most central element in the mapping process. In parallel, it also shows that the protected area becomes spatially structured around two kinds of places: the areas that need to be protected because of the high level of biodiversity and forest cover as opposed to the areas which require conservation action because of the high rate of deforestation. A direct result of creating a locality around biodiversity is that land valuation changes: land is not valued as an ancestral heritage or a means of subsistence but, instead, as an ecological asset. Biodiversity progressively takes a central role in the configuration of the protected area. The exercise of mapping therefore appears to be complex because it re-shapes the landscape in order to valorise certain aspects of the environment over others. For this reason, one can argue that space is always in the process of becoming something else. When looking at the restructuration of space as a result of global values flowing to "small-scale localities", it is important to remember that space is the product of interactions between people, histories, ideologies, discourses and imaginations (Evers, 2011). The way people talk about the environment, how it ought to be protected and what it represents, translates into something completely new through a map.

Restructuration of space also implies defining the limits and frontiers of the structure. To be legible and controllable, the protected area needs to be spatially delimited. In Antanmamo, space delimitation was a multi-stakeholder process in which a variety of actors with different

levels of power, valuations, and interests negotiated over land. Actors who participated in the demarcation included the international NGO WWF, KIOMBA – a local association based in Ambovombe working under a six-month contract with WWF to support the creation of the protected area – several Forest Service consultants, three *fokontany* chiefs and villagers. According to a KIOMBA representative, the delimitation of the protected area was mainly based on WWF and the Forest Service’s ecological assessment, that is, their scientific analysis of biodiversity levels in the area. “The villagers had to accept the decision of the Forest Service. For instance, the consultants from the Forest Service determined where exactly the untouched forests were located and where to delimitate the different zones ... but at least the villagers got to choose the names of each area!” he explained [interview, July 20, 2011]. But if the determining factor in structuring the protected area was biodiversity, the unit on which Antanmamo frontiers were demarcated was the *fokontany*. A *fokontany* is the equivalent of a district managed by an elected chief and, sometimes, incorporating several communes. In Antanmamo, I was told that a *fokontany* is based on ancestral borders and *malaso* frontiers. WWF-Madagascar Regional Director for the Anosy region explained that, in the delimitation process, WWF held a meeting to discuss “ancestral limits”. “Those limits are mainly based on zebu thievery because, when there is a zebu thief, the *fokontany* chief has to look for traces of the zebu until he reaches the ancestral border, that is until he reaches the *fokontany* border, and then he has to call neighbouring *fokontany* chiefs to show them the absence or presence of zebu traces in his own *fokontany*. So, when we delimited the protected area, we respected those traditional limits,” he explained [interview of July 25, 2011]. As a result, the borders of Antanmamo were based on the frontiers of three *fokontany*.

Now that the limits were demarcated, the division of the protected area into different zones with distinctive rules could be established. After negotiations with CoBa and neighbouring *fokontany*, it was decided that the protected area would be divided into 4 different zones to regulate access to and use of natural resources (see map below): a restoration zone to conduct reforestation programs; a subsistence use zone, or *ala’fampiasana*, to collect fuel wood and extract wood for house construction and zebu fences as long as they have bought a permit from the forest association; a conservation zone through which humans can walk but are prohibited from extracting any forest resource – wood, plants, animals, honey ; and a “sacred” zone, or *ala’fady*, where human activities are entirely forbidden... except for tourists and local guides.



Use zones in Antanmamo protected area

The creation of the “locality” of Antanmamo is a clear illustration of the interactions, negotiations and mediations occurring between translocal stakeholders. This process of creating the locality is, according to Tsing (2005: 57), a scale-making project that is necessary for the realisation of any type of development project. “A project that makes us imagine globality in order to see how it might succeed is one kind of ‘scale-making project’; similarly, projects that make us imagine locality, or the space of regions or nations, in order to see their success are also scale-making project,” Tsing argues (*ibid*). According to West (2006: 32), and based on her analysis of a conservation project in Papua New Guinea, the process of space restructuration, shows how culture, ideology, imagination and discourses progressively get tied to places. Ideas about the importance of biodiversity as an ecological and global asset confront valuations of land as an “ancestral” identity marker. In parallel, conservation NGOs with a politically and culturally specific set of commitments and practices need to take into account ancestral borders and zebu thieves’ *modus operandi*. For this reason, West (2006: 28) concludes that places like Antanmamo protected area did not only come into being with ecology and evolution but were also produced by social and material relations between people (2006: 28). The “people” West is referring to include local forest users, foreign and Malagasy ecologists and biologists, WWF agents, members of the forest association and representatives from the regional Forest Service. In this sense, Antanmamo represents an in-between milieu where local, national and global forces collude and engage with each other differently, a zone of transnational contact where a locality is created and new kinds of communities are built.

MAPPING THE INVISIBLE

But the act of restructuring space and rendering borders visual – especially when it refers to ancestral ones – never comes without friction. On the one hand, we see that the locality becomes visual. As borders are set up and usage zones delimited, maps, pictures and satellite

captions represent the end product of distinctive ideas interacting together. Through this visual support, the project becomes operational at the global level: it is now possible for donors, decision-makers and NGOs planners seating in Paris or Antananarivo to look at a miniaturisation of the PHCF. As Scott (1998: 87; 57) reminds us, the transformative power of maps does not reside in maps themselves but, instead, “in the power possessed by those who deploy the perspective of that particular map [...] this spatial fact is perhaps inherent in the process of urban or architectural planning itself [...] that involves miniaturisation and scale models upon which patron and planner gaze down, exactly as if they were in a helicopter”. Yet, and on the other hand, we see that as the locality becomes mapped so do ancestors (Evers, 2011). As ancestral borders become visually demarcated, a frontier line seems to be drawn between land inside the protected area and land outside the protected area. Paint, for instance, is used to mark the different usage zones.

The process of “mapping the ancestors” is strengthened by WWF and the Forest Service which both insist on “respecting traditional and ancestral borders” when setting up the delimitations [interview with WWF Regional Director for Anosy region, July 25, 2011]. By stressing the need to respect ancestral borders, WWF and the Forest Service also reinforce the idea that borders do exist and that the spatial location of ancestors can be mapped and negotiated. However, while trying to use “community mapping” methodology during my research, I quickly realised that ancestors – and ancestral borders – were seen by forest users as agents with capacity. When I asked my respondents where their ancestral lands were located, the majority of them had difficulties answering my question because, in most cases, they did not perceive ancestrality as a delimited and “delimitable” space. What this shows is that mapping is an abstract exercise and, by conducting such an exercise, the agency embedded in ancestors as acting agents is taken away (Evers, 2011). I asked a man who lived in the most remote village from Antanmamo what his first impression was when he saw paint on the trees for the first time [the paint that was used to delimitate the different use zones]. “If I find paint somewhere, it means that the land around it belongs to the *vazaha*. The *vazaha* goes there sometimes because they own this land with the paint on the tree. When I saw the paint I thought this must be for the *vazaha* and when I see you coming here for example, I think the land with the paint there belongs to you or to John²⁵,” he answered. Considering that

²⁵ John is an Irish ecologist who has been working in Antanmamo for 14 years. He started as a researcher in Antanmamo focusing on lemur ecology and later on started to become involved in projects with WWF and other associations in the commune. In the main village of Antanmamo as well as in surrounding villages, John is often seen as the “English *vazaha*” who brings foreign tourists and students to the area. He is very well respected and probably the most renown *vazaha* in town.

Antanmamo is a locality where local and transnational imaginations interact, it is interesting to notice how the divergent valuations of space create an environment within which misunderstanding seems to prevail: the more WWF and the Forest Service try to render ancestors visible, the less ancestral the land appears in the eyes of forest users. But the reaction of the forest user quoted above tells us something more important about how visual delimitations of land very often are interpreted as synonymous with “foreign”. Because ancestors are understood as agents who act, attempting to visually map their spatial localisation progressively “foreignises” space while emptying ancestors’ capacity as agents (Evers, 2011).

If there are flows in the journey of an idea influenced by international values to a small-scale “locality”, there are also strong blockages along the way – especially when the idea gets tied to a place. When members of the forest association were asked by WWF and KIOMBA to explain the new delimitation to villagers living inside and outside the protected area, they encountered difficulties accomplishing their tasks. Because the message did not seem to make sense to the villagers, CoBa members decided that the only way to mediate this situation was through *kabary*²⁶. “It was mainly the communities who asked us to make *kabary* in order to take decisions over the limits of the protected area,” a KIOMBA representative said. “They told us: ‘we are waiting for our ancestors to discuss the matter with neighbouring villagers’. This made the process extremely long for us because we were working under a six-month contract to do this transfer but we couldn’t move any further until the *kabary* had taken place!,” he added. In other villages, many forest users refused the delimitations proposed by WWF, KIOMBA and the Forest Service on the basis that the land where the protected area would be established was “ancestral”.

The biggest obstacle was the perception of villagers. It was very difficult to convince them to agree on ‘ancestral’ limits. There were conflicts between the different *fokontany* as to where the limit should be drawn. Even for just five meters, people were unhappy and couldn’t come to an agreement. So ... the biggest problem was definitely to put a frontier between the villages. One person would say ‘the limit is here’ and the other would reply ‘not it is there’

Because he has been so involved in the various conservation or development projects implemented in the last 10 years in Antanmamo, I was very often told by villagers that, according to them, the forest of the protected area belongs to John. Similarly, I was asked many times by villagers to go and ask John if he could send them a radio or build a road next to their village.

²⁶ *Kabary* is Malagasy word to describe a means of communication that was used when Madagascar was still a royal kingdom to inform the people about the ordinances of the king. *Kabary* used to be very rich in metaphors to captivate the attention of the population. Today, *kabary* refers to a speech pronounced during important celebrations. It is also commonly used as a conflict resolution tool enabling people to debate matters through speeches and, eventually, reach an agreement.

[pointing another direction]. So we decided to work with a GPS and put paint on trees every 100 meters. But I am telling you, just for two meters, you see, just two meters [he points a very small distance with his hands], the villagers refused to agree because they said they had ancestral rights in the forest and they kept repeating to us ‘in the past, if our ancestors had problems with the *malaso* they would bring the zebus there to keep them safe, so you cannot put a boundary here,” KIOMBA representative explained [interview of July 20, 2011].

If ancestors cannot be spatially located, they certainly are powerful mediators to enforce land claims and slow down the process of space restructuration. Responses to this process of “mapping the invisible” were various but all pointed to the same conclusion. As a response to space restructuration, there seemed to be a growing feeling of land dispossession and, as a result, increasing motivation to mediate land claims through unconventional brokers ... including the ancestors. Even though ancestors cannot be situated on a map, villagers use the ancestors as the basis of their claims to maintain access to land. These observations call into question the notion of authority: through those different forms of translation, where and who is the authority? Who can decide what is legal and what is not legal? Is it the state or is it the ancestors? Observations during fieldwork have led me to the conclusion that ancestors are seen as powerful agents who act and enable forests users to mediate their claims once space starts to be visually restructured and the sense of land ownership is at stake. The capacity of ancestors for agency was illustrated to me by a *rondria* who explained that it was important to maintain ancestral traditions and take care of the ancestors otherwise “we would receive no rain because the ancestors would want to punish us for not taking care of them [...] and if we don’t have rain, we cannot have any harvest. So we need to listen to them and take care of them”. His testimony proves that ancestors have an agency power and act as the authorising agents when it comes to legitimacy [interview, February 18, 2012].

3.2. RE-REGULATION: FOREST ACCESS REGULATED BY NEW AND OLD RULES

Antanmamo is legally recognised as a community-managed protected area. This characteristic defers with the Malagasy state’s national policy of decentralisation which became operative in 1996 as part of the second phase of the National Action Plan for the Environment. Under this legal framework, the management of natural resources of Antanmamo was transferred from the Malagasy state to the communities living inside the protected area in 2003. Once the contract was signed between the various parties, a number of local forest users were elected or, in some cases appointed, to represent the community into a forest association called CoBa.

According to Bérard (2012: 124), the decision to transfer the management of natural resources to communities was a significant shift: the Malagasy government could now link itself to the aspirations of the international community calling for sustainable development while claiming back a history respectful of the environment²⁷. The government's politics of decentralisation follows a broader shift in global environmental politics: based on past experiences, researchers and policy-makers came to the conclusion that biodiversity protection would not be successful as long as the communities living around protected areas were not directly involved in the management of the latter. This observation ultimately led to the advent of innovative concepts, ideologies and practices such as “integrated development and conservation,” “community-based forest management”, and “participative conservation”. Participation became the norm and a *sine qua non* requirement for any form of translocal conservation and development project, like the PHCF. Along those lines, efforts to enhance local capacity-building via the “participative” method provided project planners and donors with a great deal of legitimacy, at the national and international levels. The participation ideology is rooted in the belief that if communities are responsible for managing the natural resources surrounding them, they should also be decision-makers when it comes to the legal system regulating access to natural resources.

So when the idea of transferring the management of natural resources was discussed at the state-level, a consensus was reached that the *Dina* should become the national framework regulating all newly-established protected areas (Ratsirahonana, 1996). The *Dina* is one of the most legitimate “customary” structures regulating social life in Madagascar. Often referred to as a “social contract”, the *Dina* is according to Razanabahiny (1995: 67) a “convention or agreement between the members of a community in which each member shows his or her adhesion through vows or imprecations and in which sanctions or maledictions are reserved for those who do not respect the agreed terms”. In 1996, the *Dina* was officially incorporated into state legislation²⁸ through law 96-025 and later on through a simplified decree referred to as 2001-122²⁹ (Aubert, 2002: 113). In accordance with the newly-established legislation, all

²⁷ The annex on the genesis of the National Chart of the Environment states that « les souverains se sont préoccupés de la sauvegarde des forêts et de la terre ancestrale [...] depuis les *kabary* d'Andrianampoinimerina jusqu'au code de 305 articles de 1881, en passant par les traditions orales ayant valeur de loi, tous les souverains ont édicté des règles de protection des ressources naturelles et de limitation » (Bérard, 2010 : 124).

²⁸ Article 49 of law 96-025, 30 September 1996, stipulates that “the relationships between all members of the *communauté de base* are regulated by the *Dina*”.

²⁹ The legislation encouraging the transfer of management of certain renewable resources from the Malagasy state to communities was first elaborated in 1996 through the GELOSE law. However, actors from different sectors suggested improving the GELOSE legislation. In 2000, a simplified version of the legislation focusing on the transfer of forest resources was passed by the Malagasy government, and is now referred to as GCF (*Gestion Contractualisée des Forêts*).

parties involved in the transfer of forest resources management in Antanmamo – from the commune to CoBa, the Forest Service and WWF – agreed on a set of regulations formally codified as the *Dina*. But if Antanmamo is a place where international values and customary norms co-exist, are the laws legitimate and according to whose standards?

A HYBRID REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Implementing a national policy which places the *Dina* as the basis of a contract between villagers, the state and the commune – and unofficially NGOs that provide technical support to villagers – falls under a certain logic: combining the legal with the legitimate. It is interesting to look at how the notion of “contract” travels. On the one hand, we see that customary arrangements become recognised and formalised by the state: the national encompasses the local. In Antanmamo, for instance, a custom that prohibits the extraction of wood in a circumference of 70 meters near burials site was kept when the *Dina* was codified (see picture below).



A burial site surrounded by lush forests

On the other hand, rules that the community would not necessarily perceive as customary or traditional become codified as *Dina* in the regulatory framework of the protected area: the local encompasses the national – and, to take the argument further, the international. The prohibition of slash and burn is one of the clearest illustrations of the latter statement. The agricultural practice, known as *hatsake* in the Southern region of Madagascar, was not

considered to be part of the customary *Dina* before the creation of the protected area. At different times and under different regimes, state laws did prohibit the practice but no customary rule in Antanmamo sanctioned the agricultural method. But considering that the main objective of the PHCF is to reduce deforestation in Madagascar based on the internationally-supported idea that deforestation fastens *global* climate change and that the objective of the Malagasy government as part of the Durban Vision is to protect the nation's biodiversity, WWF and the Forest Service negotiated with CoBa that the new *Dina* should prohibit the practice of slash and burn in order to discourage people from cutting and burning trees. The practice, considered by most of my respondents and many academics³⁰ as a century-old “ancestral” method for subsistence and land acquisition, is now banned and referred to as *fady* by the majority of Antanmamo residents and WWF's local agents. *Fady* refers to local taboos and customary interdictions. The term has a highly sacred connotation and breaching *fady* comes with significant implications for the individual or community who doesn't respect it. A “customary” *fady* in Antanmamo ranged from eating goats to peeing near a burial site, cutting trees near ancestral tombs or eating lemurs and tortoises.



Field after *hatsake*

³⁰ See Keller, E. 2008. “The banana plant and the moon: Conservation and the Malagasy ethos of life in Masoala, Madagascar”. In *American Ethnologist*, vol. 35 (November, 4).



Picture of the same field, six months later, with maize cultivation

The product of such a convergence of international norms with national objectives and local values is, unarguably, re-regulation and changes (Evers, 2011). New rules are implemented and selected old rules are reinforced. As the new *Dina* requires Antanmamo residents to buy a permit from CoBa to extract wood or plants in the protected area, forest access becomes increasingly regulated – and limited. The authority in charge of making sure the *Dina* is respected is no longer the *fokonolona* (village council traditionally led by elders) but a villager with experience in development and conservation projects appointed by the *Comité de Suivi des Dina* (a committee comprised of the mayor, a representative from the commune, the gendarmerie, WWF and the Forest Service) and trained by WWF's office in Fort-Dauphin to best fulfil his role.

INSTRUMENTALISING TRADITIONS?

One can quickly see the criticisms arising from such a procedure. Bérard (2009:123-4), who conducted a two-year analysis of multiple transfer of management contracts across Madagascar, concluded that, from a customary structure regulating all aspects of life – rituals, health, solidarity, cattle thievery, conflict management – the *Dina* has become a regulatory system strictly concerned with the forest and its protection, setting up quotas and creating permits to regulate access (ibid: 284). The perception that the newly-established convention only has the name of *Dina* but not its customary value was also expressed at the village-level

in Antanmamo. According to a forest user living five kilometres away from Antanmamo, the *Dina* only reflects the interests of the state and environmental NGOs.

“When Zafy Albert³¹ was in power, there was a lot of rain for three years and the harvests were very good so it was possible to do *hatsake* and cultivate. Then, it was the era of Ratsiraka. During that time, there was less rain and less production. The harvests from *hatsake* were limited and very meagre. And after that, with Ravalomanana, *hatsake* became *fady*. We could no longer do *hatsake* because Ravalomanana declared it was necessary to increase the number of protected areas in Madagascar. It is at this precise moment that WWF arrived in the region to prohibit *hatsake* for peasants. The politics of Ravalomanana goes hand in hand with WWF, they took the decisions together. Since the ban on *hatsake*, the harvest is insufficient and living conditions have deteriorated,” he explained [interview, July 12, 2011].

Nevertheless, Bérard (2009: 138) reminds us that the process of encompassing the national into the local – and *vice versa* – is neither new nor foreign. Looking at the history of the *Dina* in Madagascar, one realises that from its first implementation among the Merina community in the High Plateaus to the French colonial regime and, later on, the Malagasy state, there has always been an attempt to influence and instrumentalise the *Dina*³². Razanabahiny (1995: 71) even considers the process of establishing the *Dina* as a rite of passage: “the ritual of the *Dina* consists in making a community or population transition towards a new situation,” he argues. Emphasising the fluid characteristic of the *Dina*, Bérard (2009: 130) argues that “the *Dina* is a traditional judicial institution that travelled across Malagasy history by constantly adapting and redefining itself based on the needs of the population and expectations of the state [...] [the *Dina*] has been encouraged, subjected, framed, idealised and instrumentalised by the different powers in place”. From the 17th century up to today, the *Dina* has very often been perceived as an effective and legitimate tool for customary regulation that could effectively be used and adapted to comply with the centralised government’s objectives³³.

³¹ Zafy Albert was the President of the Republic of Madagascar from 1993 to 1996; Ratsiraka held this position twice, once from 1975 to 1993, the second time from 1997 to 2002; followed by Ravalomanana from 2002 to 2009.

³² For a detailed history of the *Dina*, see Randrianarison, 2010.

³³ The *Dina* first started to be implemented among the Merina community within lineages and clans to give sanctions related to land tenure issues. Then, in the 17th century, the *Dina* was used to regulate life in villages and hamlets and later on to impose community work within such units and sanction those who did not participate in it. For more about the history of the *Dina*, see Randrianarison (2010: 55).

DEFINING LEGITIMACY IN A HYBRID REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Looking at a translocal project like the PHCF, one cannot help but wonder how legitimacy is defined in such a hybrid environment? Is legitimacy purely linked to the traditional and the customary? In other terms, is it sufficient for a regulatory framework to recognise the traditional structures and values of a community to be considered legitimate? Negotiating and agreeing on regulation, as we have seen throughout this section, comes with a double challenge: taking into account the divergent interests of the numerous actors involved in the project while, at the same time, making space for the different values and logics supported by the various institutions involved. But framing the process of re-regulation as a mere traditional versus foreign dichotomy closes a debate that, yet, deserves much more attention and discussion. It also blinds us to the dynamics and practices operating at the local level once the project is implemented and once regulations are redefined. The limitation in “community-based projects” like the PHCF is that they often define legitimacy as a natural result of “participation” and assume that the inclusion of community members in decision-making processes related to regulation guarantees the legitimacy of laws. However, it will be argued that additional factors need to be taken into account when assessing legitimacy.

One of them is power disparity at the village-level. During my fieldwork in Antanmamo, I noticed that the lack of legitimacy of the new *Dina* was not necessarily rooted in its “exogenous” characteristic but, instead, in power inequalities between the residents of Antanmamo. In the most remote village of the protected area, a forest user who had recently been penalised by CoBa for doing *hatsake* contested the fine on the basis that no one had informed him that the land he burnt for cultivation was *ala'fady* (sacred forest). The man, who had been taken to the gendarmerie for not paying the fine established by the *Dina*³⁴, explained that

³⁴ Members from the *Comité de Suivi des Dina* – including the gendarmerie, WWF field agent, and the member of *polisyn'ala* who had denounced the man to CoBa – came to his village two weeks before I met him to inform his and six other families that they had to pay a fine based on a report transferred to them by CoBa, who reported those seven families had done *hatsake* in protected areas. The man I met contested the sanction because he claimed that, nine years ago when the delimitation was done, WWF agent – a different one at that time – informed this village that only the forest in the mountain should not be burnt whereas today, WWF agent affirmed all forest areas were *ala'fady* and should therefore not be burnt at all, even for *hatsake*. Since those families refused to pay the *Dina* because they claimed to have been “ill-informed”, the *Comité de Suivi des Dina* brought them to the gendarmerie until an agreement could be reached. When I went back to Antanmamo six months later, the situation was still unresolved. It is important here to note that the fine established in the *Dina* for doing *hatsake* represents a lot of money and value for villagers: someone who is caught doing *hatsake* should pay 60,000 Ariary, approximately 20 Euros, and sacrifice a zebu – whose meat will be divided among the members of the *Comité de Suivi des Dina*. The sacrifice of a zebu as a fine formalised in the *Dina* is particularly strong, considering the sacred value attributed to the animal.

“It is the people from Antanmamo who elect CoBa members, but we are definitely not implicated in this decision, they don’t ask us for our opinion. The meetings are only held in Antanmamo and the people who organise those meetings never ask us to join, they only ask the people from Antanmamo who should take the decisions about the *Dina* and other things. And then, it is those exact same people who were elected by people from Antanmamo who come here to threaten us! It is like we have to listen to something we did not choose” [interview, July 15, 2011].

Along a similar line of observation, an *ambiasa* (traditional healer) from the neighbouring village explained that

“one day there was a meeting with all the villages to inform us that, very soon, people would come to make the delimitations of the protected area and choose the *ala’fady* area with everyone. At the end of this meeting, the representatives from the Forest Service and WWF left to go somewhere else, but they didn’t give us a date for the next meeting. So people were waiting. Finally, the representatives came back to Antanmamo, but no one informed us about this. So, only people from Antanmamo attended the meeting. And it is on that day that they decided which village would be part of the protected area, which one would be excluded, and what would be the new rules ... and that was it” [interview, July 18, 2011].

The lack of legitimacy of the new *Dina* can be explained by local power disparities but also embeds in what some authors refer to as the “illusion of participation” (Blanc-Pamard & Fauroux, 2004). Even though the word “community-based project” carries a high level of legitimacy at the global level, I realised that many NGO workers were acutely aware of the difficulties arising when trying to incorporate diverging interests and different levels of power into the concept of “a community”. Their scope for manoeuvre, however, was limited. In this sense, the predicament of the “participative” ideology is not only to assert the unity of a yet highly unequal society but also to frame the regulatory system of the protected area based on the assumption that all forest users are deeply anchored into customary structures and traditional beliefs when, in reality, those structures and beliefs are contested by an increasing part of the community.

Based on the suggestion of the *ambiasa*, who was warned by a foreign ecologist that if *hatsake* continued in Antanmamo he would no longer be able to find plants to heal people, it was decided that all areas inhabited by the *kokolampo* (natural spirit) would be considered *ala’fady*, or sacred areas, under the framework of the new *Dina* – the place where the *kokolampo* lived was also the place where the *ambiasa* performed healing rituals and

collected most of his medicinal plants. But despite the existence of a *Dina* prohibiting the extraction of resources in areas inhabited by the *kokolampo*, the *ambiasa* noticed that a growing number of people continued to practice *hatsake* in *ala'fady* areas. The reason for such behaviours, he explained, was that the people who had breached the *Dina* were

“Christians so they do slash and burn or cut trees even when the land they clear is very close to the *kokolampo*. They do this just to show their religious adversity, it is like a demonstration of strength and power, a provocation to us. Because for us, we are just too scared to clear the forests near the *kokolampo*, so we never cut trees there! [interview, July 18, 2011].

The “religious” factor shows yet another example of the local dynamics influencing legitimacy of legality. It also clearly illustrates the complexity of working in accordance with “tradition” when the definition of the latter is more and more challenged.

In a context in constant “reshuffling”, we see that laws become fluid and boundaries between the different legal systems become increasingly permeable. “We live in a time of porous legality or of legal porosity, of multiple networks of legal orders forcing us to constant transitions and trespassing,” Sousa Santos comments (1987: 297). Interestingly, alternative notions and conceptions of “legitimacy” start to fill in the void left by the hybridity and porosity of the new regulatory framework. A clear illustration of the latter statement can be found when looking at the use of the Malagasy term “*rariny*”, which the English language would translate as “fair” or “just” [conversation with Mija Andriamarivololona, PhD candidate in Anthropology at VU University Amsterdam, December 6, 2011]. *Rariny* entails a notion of justice not purely rooted in customary norms but also based on a “contextual” definition of fairness. When CoBa members accompanied me in the protected area and discovered a hundred carved wooden boards hiding in the forest, it is their interpretation of *rariny* that guided their decision and action as “environmental mediators”. When CoBa members came back from the neighbouring village to identify the “illegal logger”, we were informed by the vice-President of CoBa that the loggers would not be penalised even though they cut trees without a permit because the loggers intended to build a school with the carved wooden boards. “If trees are cut for the construction of a school, a church or a hospital, then it is not necessary to buy a permit from us,” CoBa vice-President explained [interview, June 20, 2011]. As far as I was aware, the *Dina* did not include such a “clause”. But according to CoBa, the logging was “*rariny*” because it was meant for the construction of a school that

would provide education to the children of the village [interview with CoBa vice-President, June 20, 2011]. This example clearly shows the complexity of setting up rules in a hybrid environment where “legality” starts to take on different meanings and, ultimately, “becomes fragmented to the extent that no legal system can benefit from absolute supremacy,” Bérard comments (2009: 20-21). In Antanmamo, the legal experience becomes a contextual practice and decision that is constantly being redefined through a never-ending search for legitimacy.



CoBa members standing in front of the piles of “illegal” wooden carved boards



CoBa members taking the carved boards to the neighbouring village to identify the “illegal logger”

3.3. The restructuration of the “local”: assigning new roles and creating new figures of power

New roles were created when CoBa was established. 11 people were elected by *fokontany* residents, or in some cases appointed by WWF, to become members of CoBa and fill in one of the following positions: president, vice-president, secretariat, treasurer and commissioner of accounts. A level down in the forest association hierarchy, a team of *polisyn'ala* (forest police) agents was set up to monitor surveillance in the forest, control forest permits and report to CoBa people who had cut or burned trees. In addition to the *polisyn'ala* president and his three agents in Antanmamo, 10 villagers were elected as *polisyn'ala* representatives in one to two hamlets each. Before becoming members of CoBa or *polisyn'ala*, those newly-elected villagers were cultivators, carpenters, sisal plantation workers, sapphire diggers, or members of the municipal council. Seeing the diverse backgrounds from which CoBa members were coming from and given their initial low enthusiasm towards their new profession, I couldn't help but wonder how the members of the forest association were dealing with their new status and power? Considering that one of the main tasks of a *polisyn'ala* agent is to denounce people who practice *hatsake* in a protected area that has a relatively small number of hamlets – usually inhabited by 30 to 70 people –, how did *polisyn'ala* agents manage to combine their role as “forest police” agents with their family and community status? Did their new profession as guardians of the environment impact on their relationship with the community?

The answer to those questions came when I asked my respondents about CoBa's effectiveness in protecting the forest. Beside the lack of financial resources to monitor forest management, all CoBa members agreed that their limited success in enforcing the Dina was rooted in the difficulty to enforce laws when their families were implicated in the infringement.

“The criterion to be elected at CoBa is to be capable of telling the truth about who is doing *hatsake* even if this person is the *rondria* (village elder) or a member of your family. The former President, for example, he had to leave his position because he was not applying the *Dina* properly when his family was practicing *hatsake*, he never made them pay a single fine!” [interview with CoBa vice-president, July 5, 2011]³⁵.

³⁵ A number of respondents informed me that the other reason why the previous President had to leave his position was because of financial mismanagement of CoBa funds under its direction.

The former President of CoBa himself affirmed that “they were conflicts between the members of CoBa because they couldn’t agree on how to apply the *Dina*” [interview with OPCI President and former CoBa President, July 7, 2011].

THE FIHAVANANA: BOOSTING OR SLOWING CONSERVATION?

Conscious of the dilemma faced by *polisyn’ala* agents, WWF decided to appoint “people with less community ties” to a committee responsible for enforcing the *Dina* when CoBa would be unable to do so, the *Comité de Suivi des Dina*. What WWF did not realise, however, was that affiliation very often went beyond kinship. Certain families were protected by their *fokontany* chief – who also has considerable influence in conservation-related matters³⁶ – because those families had voted for him when he ran for the *fokontany* election. As a payback for their vote, the *fokontany* chief demanded that their penalty should be cancelled [interview with CoBa vice-President and President of *polisyn’ala*, February 23, 2012]. The complexity of enforcing the *Dina* without compromising one’s legitimacy in the community lies in one word: “*fihavanana*”. In each conversation I had with villagers or CoBa members about the new role attributed to some residents, “*fihavanana*” was the term most referred to.

According to my respondents, *fihavanana* refers to the ties of mutual solidarity existing between all Malagasy. For Gannon and Sandron (2003: 4-5), who propose an in-depth analysis of the term while acknowledging the difficulty to define it, *fihavanana* is the “concretisation of the relations of solidarity relative to heritage, be it land, recognised ancestors, shared resources, etc [...] Peasants refer to it when a whole village gets together to celebrate family ceremonies such as wedding, circumcision, funeral or when mechanisms of mutual aid need to be activated for loans or agricultural help”. Considering the influence of the *fihavanana* in creating and maintaining a sense of solidarity within the community, Gannon and Sandron (ibid: 7) add that respecting the *fiahavanana* also implies “not to undertake innovative action that may harm or threaten the community”. The latter definition illustrates well the dilemma faced by those newly-appointed guardians of the forest. Between their assignments as “conservation agents”, which require them to denounce members of the community, and their reluctances to disrespect the *fihavanana*, CoBa members become brokers caught in between. According to a *polisyn’ala* agent living in one of the hamlets

³⁶ The *fokontany* chief plays an important role in the management of the protected area because he is the intermediary between CoBa and WWF. CoBa needs to submit its monthly report detailing the names of the people who did *hatsake* to the *fokontany* chief, who will, later on, hand it in to WWF.

inside the protected area, the biggest challenge when working as a *polisyn'ala* agent is to denounce other villagers

“because I am married to the daughter of the *rondria*. So, for me, it is very difficult to denounce the *rondria* if he does *hatsake* [interview with *polisyn'ala* agent in case-study village A, July 6, 2011].

For CoBa vice-president, his new role as a protector of the forest is a catch-22.

“My biggest problem is to give fines to my family when they practice *hatsake*. For me, it is not good to be part of CoBa because it is putting me in a very difficult situation towards my family. The work at CoBa creates *rakiny* (discord). Many people are scared of me now and I can no longer go in the forest by myself for security reasons, because of the risk of reprisals from people who were denounced in the past. In the villages, this situation has created a lot of tensions because villagers start accusing each other or accusing the *polisyn'ala* agent from the village of denouncing people to CoBa” [interview with vice-president of CoBa, July 5, 2011].

When I met him six months later, he and the *polisyn'ala* president expressed their desire to receive uniforms from WWF. “If we were wearing special clothes when going on forest surveillance missions, it would be *rarity* because then villagers could make the visual distinction between the moment when we do our job as members of the forest association and the moment when we are just normal villagers again, once we remove our uniform,” they said [interview, February 23, 2012]. What this clearly shows is that environmental mediators are strongly inclined to separate their duties from social relations so that they no longer have to choose between valuing and protecting the community and performing sanctioning tasks.

ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIATORS

Alike CoBa vice-president, other members of the forest association were reluctant to compromise their legitimacy in the community even though such a decision meant less credibility for CoBa and less authority to enforce the rules. But what happened to those CoBa members who embraced their new roles as guardians of the forest through discourses and practices? While staying in one of the villages inside the protected area, an informant told me that two men who had worked for CoBa and *polisyn'ala* in the past had recently been marginalised from the forest association. Their testimonies clearly illustrate the fact that being an environmental mediator can sometimes come at a high price.

“I used to write a lot of reports to CoBa to denounce the families who were doing *hatsake* but after a few years, villagers did not like me anymore because they thought I was denouncing people too much, that I was too honest. So the villagers asked CoBa to fire me. In 2009, CoBa did fire me because CoBa has the power to decide who can be part of the *polisyn'ala* team, this is how the hierarchy works. Today, I would like to become a *polisyn'ala* agent again but the population is refusing it, they voted ‘no’ against me” [interview with the first President of *polisyn'ala*, July 7, 2011].

“In 2009, 7 people did *hatsake* in one village. I reported this to the President of CoBa at that time but he did not react and refused to enforce the *Dina*. After a while, the penalty was finally given but it was reduced: instead of giving one zebu each, the families only had to do the *vonon'dina* (ceremony to proceed with the ruling) with one zebu for all of them. Because of this exception, people thought the penalty was not so bad so they continued doing *hatsake*. In 2010, there was a big rise in the number of *hatsake* so I decided to write a report about it again, but this time I gave it directly and personally to the WWF agent here. The reaction of CoBa was simple: they fired me and I had to leave *polisyn'ala*. You know if a family member of someone from CoBa or *polisyn'ala* does *hatsake*, he or she will not be punished because he or she has exclusive rights. And this is why CoBa members complained about my work, because I was doing my job without even receiving orders to do it. One day, for example, the brother of the president of CoBa asked him ‘why he is controlling me? Why is he asking for my permit?’ Even the agents of *polisyn'ala* themselves do *hatsake*! That’s why they do not denounce anyone in their report [...] But today, WWF is trying to place me back inside CoBa because I take my job very seriously and I always tell the truth. WWF also gave me a special authorisation for me and a former colleague, so we can continue our control and monitoring activities in the forest. It was like a way to reward us for our good work [...] I know the villagers don’t like me but WWF does, because I am not scared to denounce people” [interview with a former *polisyn'ala* agent, July 7, 2011].

After they left CoBa, the two men were rewarded by WWF for their honesty and given a special authorisation to continue reforestation and surveillance work in the protected area. Both of them were offered a paid-job³⁷ as reforestation agents and the ex-*polisyn'ala* agent now takes care of the tree nursery funded by WWF and located in Antanmamo. The story of

³⁷ The salary received by the reforestation agent and manager of the tree nursery is 700 000 Ariary per month, paid by WWF. This highly contrasts with the situation of CoBa or *polisyn'ala* agents who usually don’t get any income for their work. WWF does not pay for their salary because the strategy of the NGO is that CoBa, on the long-run, CoBa becomes a financial self-sufficient unit by accumulating finances through the money it receives from people who pay permits to extract wood. However, only 2 permits maximum are purchased each month, each worth 3000 Ariary. Also, CoBa usually sends 2 to 3 agents for forest monitoring mission (for security reasons) and each agent should normally be paid 6000 Ariary as an income for forest surveillance and reporting. But with only 6000 Ariary maximum arriving in CoBa funds, this is not enough to pay all agents who go on mission [interview with former *polisyn'ala* agent, February 23, 2012].

those two men illustrates well the problematic arising when power dynamics are reconfigured, when people are assigned tasks that have a good resonance in the ears of international donors but often spark distrust in the eyes of villagers. On the one hand, the two men who are acutely aware of WWF's aspirations embrace the idea and practice of conservation – and get rewarded for doing so. But on the other hand, they are marginalised by CoBa and villagers for doing their job too well and disregarding the *fihavanana*. The more they demonstrate their “environmentality”, the less trust they receive from the majority of villagers. In the following section of this chapter, it will be argued that, despite being torn between local conventions and global aspirations, the new figures of power created by the PHCF have become environmental mediators who reconcile different scales of legitimacy – local, national, and international.



Former polisyn'ala agent now reconverted into a reforestation agent/tree nursery caretaker

3.4. The convergence of the local, national and international in individuals

Looking at the actions and choices made by certain members of the forest association, one would be tempted to argue that a number of villagers, when embracing their new roles as environmental mediators, have become the eyes and ears of conservation NGOs in remote locations. But such a statement would blind us to the zones of translation that CoBa members constantly activate as environmental mediators. Agrawal (2005: 162), who made similar observations in his study of “environmental subjects” in India, suggests that

“these different justifications of personal transformation into someone who cares about protecting trees and situates his actions within a general framework of conservation are too resonant with prevailing environmentalist rhetorics to be original. But to dismiss them because they are being repeated by others would completely miss the enormously interesting, complex, and crucial but understudied relationship between changes [...] and related shifts in environmental practices and beliefs. When and for what reason do socially situated actors come to care about, act in relation to, and think about their actions in terms of something they identify as “the environment”?”



The reforestation agent who is “ready to kill his son for the forest”, on a reforestation site in the protected area

SWITCHING CODES AND COSTUMES

The actions of environmental mediators are not “either/or” choices. They are not limited to *either* bypassing the rules in order to respect the *fihavanana* or bypassing the *fihavanana* in order to respect the rules. As we have seen in the previous section, trying to categorise actors based on their “specific and distinctive” valuations of the environment is no longer relevant, especially in contexts of rapid change and transition. In practice, people switch codes and “attires” depending on the situation they are confronted with. For instance, when the former *polisyn’ala* agent guided me and my assistant to one of the most remote villages in the protected area he insisted on informing the villagers that he was not here for any conservation-related work. The conversation between him and two villagers illustrates well the perception of villagers towards environmental mediators and the capacity of the former *polisyn’ala* agent to act as a broker and change costumes when needed.

[villagers] – “Why are you here once again? Why did you come back to our village? And why did you bring the *vazaha* with you?”

[former *polisyn'ala* agent] – “No, I am a guide now. I did not come to make any control today. My role today with the *vazaha* is only to guide her and bring her here but I do not work for *polisyn'ala* anymore. The last time I came here, it was with WWF and the gendarmerie. But they forced me to come here with the *Comite de suivi des dina*, it wasn't voluntary, it was just my work. I was just doing what I was told to do. But now I don't do this anymore, now I am just a guide³⁸” [conversation between two villagers and a former *polisyn'ala* agent, February 22, 2012].

Interestingly, the day after our excursion, the former *polisyn'ala* agent was accomplishing his task as a WWF reforestation agent, preaching the virtue of conservation and reminding the 50 villagers planting trees under his supervision about the importance of trees for future generations. Along the same line of observation, James (2011: 331-2) argues that the flexibility of brokers embed in their capacity to withdraw from too precise an identification with the authority of the project when interacting with villagers, while winning the trust of the former by mastering the language and practice of environmental conservation. Conscious that a number of people and organisations have certain expectations of them, the majority of environmental mediators have learned how to juggle between their new role and their local legitimacy, Evers comments (2011). Environmental mediators know what to tell a WWF agent, how to behave when a *vazaha* is around, and how to gain the trust of sceptic villagers. While acknowledging the structural patterns that can limit brokers' scope for action and decision, James (2011: 335) claims it is necessary to go beyond a vision of brokers as “figures who stand between powerless people and externally imposed power” and, instead, look at environment mediators as actors “who activate the continuing interplay between apparently irreconcilable discourses and practices”. As a result of the implementation of the PHCF, the “local” is restructured: carpenters, sisal plantation workers and cultivators become figures of power who reconcile global, national and local aspirations to mediate action. Their very persona, as James suggests, is a “zone of translation” (ibid: 333).

³⁸ The day after, we met him again. He confessed that “the work as a reforestation agent and manager of the tree nursery is much better than *polisyn'ala* agent because working for *polisyn'ala* created a lot of tensions between me and people, it was too difficult in relation to the community, the relationship I had with them because of my role back then was very tense whereas now, when I work in the tree nursery, I don't even need to talk to people, I don't have to interact with them anymore. WWF was very unhappy when they heard I was fired from CoBa. And you know yesterday during our excursion in the forest, the other guide who also works for CoBa told me to come back and work with them again. I haven't made my mind yet but ... I think I will refuse his offer. Being a *polisyn'ala* agent is a very difficult role to adopt, and I don't want to take this responsibility anymore” [interview, 23 February, 2012].

MEDIATING LEGALITY

Those same zones of translation were also explicitly exposed when looking at forest users' mechanisms of adaptation and mediation when confronted with "legality". During my fieldwork, I found that many villagers were acutely aware of global expectations and norms, especially when related to the environment, and constantly adapted their meaning of tradition or ancestrality depending on the situation they were confronted with. The same observation applied when I looked at local NGO workers' *modus operandi*³⁹ in Antanmamo: many "local traditions" likely to contribute to the efforts of conservation became codified as part of the *Dina*. The NGO's argument to justify its support for pro-conservation customary laws in the *Dina* is that "old conservation practices and beliefs already existed in the law of the *fokonolona* before the project was implemented; the project only endorsed and reinforced those realities" [interview with WWF agent, February 13, 2012]. As a foreigner coming into this hybrid environment, where different interests interacted and distinctive values came into friction, predicting the verdict of CoBa when an "illegal" situation would occur was a gamble. Forest users adapted their discourses and practices to the situation they were confronted with while CoBa members adapted the rules depending on the people they had to deal with.

Walking past the *ala'fady* forest on a daily basis to go the village where I was conducting my first case study, I started to wonder why this specific area had such a strong sacred connotation in the *Dina* and why the law considered it to be a totally protected zone. Interestingly, I received different answers. A foreign ecologist, who had been working in the area for some time, told me that the forest was a sacred area because it was the location of burial sites belonging to families from Antanmamo. What seemed intriguing to me was that during my walks inside the protected area, I had come across many burial sites and tombs. Yet, the majority of them were not codified as *ala'fady* in the *Dina* despite their sacred value in the eyes of the community. So why did this specific forest, more than any other forest in the protected area with burial sites, deserve a sacred recognition and total protection? The former President of CoBa, who had taken part in the use zones delimitation process, admitted that even though there were a few burial sites and sacred trees inside this forest, the area was not "sacred" in its traditional sense [interview, July 7, 2011].

³⁹ The reason why I am solely referring to the NGOs operating in Antanmamo here, and not the Malagasy state or Forest Service, is because the Forest Service was not very present in Antanmamo as opposed to the conservation NGO, who had one agent living in the village of Antanmamo and one project supervisor also based in Antanmamo. This absence is mainly due to limited financial resources to employ more staff and operate more controls. For people living in the protected area, WWF was an authority much more visible to them than the state.

“This area is a zone of total protection but it’s not because it is sacred. It is because when we were doing the tracking for the delimitation of the use zones, we noticed that this zone had remained intact and that there were very few trees cut and no trace of slash and burn in this area. So it was decided that the area should become sacred, like a zone with total protection, to make sure it would remain intact, just as it is now. In the past, the ancestors were protecting this area because this is where they would find all the resources and especially food ... so this is why the forest has remained intact” [interview, July 7, 2011].

If the forest itself has remained intact, access to *ala’fady*, however, has changed: the new *Dina* stipulates that humans are not allowed to enter the sacred forest and neither are they allowed to extract resources from it – tourists, however, can enter with local guides. Puzzled by the different answers I was getting, I decided to ask the same question to another villager. According to him, everybody knew that “many animals lived there and many plants could be found in this forest, so over the years people kept it well-preserved to ensure that, when the *kéré* (food shortage) would come, they would know where to go to find food or medicinal plants [...] it is like a back-up reserve when the *kéré* comes. In this forest, you always find something” [interview, July 9, 2011].



The frontier zone between the *ala’fady* (on the left) and the usage zone (on the right) in the protected area.

It is interesting to note how “traditional beliefs” and “local culture” are used to advance two completely different objectives. On the one hand, local actors along with conservation planners give sacred names to places with a high conservation potential but no specific sacred connotation in the eye of the community. On the other hand, CoBa Vice-President tells me

that “if someone needs wood to build a tomb, that person doesn’t need to buy a permit to take the wood because this ritual is part of the Tandroy⁴⁰ culture. The person only needs to inform CoBa about this, but we don’t require them to have a permit because building tombs for ancestors is necessary in the Tandroy culture ... this ritual is for the safeguard of the Tandroy culture” [interview, July 18, 2011]. While in some cases it is the lack of belief in tradition that is used as a pretext to bypass rules, in other instances, it is tradition itself that is used to disregard legality. Respect of the ancestors and protection of the *kokolampo* are presented as central reasons to keep the forest preserved and intact. Yet, it this same respect of the ancestors and local culture that is advanced to make exemptions to the laws in order to maintain access to the forest and preserve one’s right to extract resources from it.

CONCLUSION

The convergence of the local, the national and the international in individuals could be interpreted as a rational strategy driven by opportunism. But isn’t such an interpretation misleading and simplistic? Along a similar line of thinking, Goedefroit (2002: 141) questions whether

“the procedures that we precisely conceived to best correspond to the ‘traditional structure’ really meet local realities? Is the generalised application of stale concepts [...] truly appropriate to vehicle new notions to people who, despite being traditional, have demonstrated a capacity to face the conjectural transformations of their environment by adopting adaptive and sometimes opportunistic behaviours which conservation planners all know so well?”

As explained throughout this chapter, the answer to Goedefroit’s interrogation is negative. The application of “stale concepts” and the categorisation of actors based on their valuations of the environment are no longer relevant methods because individuals transcend conventional scales of legality and legitimacy. In this sense, Goedefroit’s observations strongly echo the argument developed by Mosse (2004) and outlined earlier: the use of powerful yet extremely vague concepts. As Mosse reminds us (2004: 663), the use of stale words serves to “conceal ideological differences, allow compromise and the enrolment of different interests, build coalitions, distribute agency and multiply criteria of success within

⁴⁰ Tandroy is one of the ethnic groups living in the far South East of Madagascar, the semi-arid region of the island. Their land is known as “the Androy”, more commonly referred to as the “land of the thorny bush”. “Antandroy” is the name of the ethnic group, which translates as “those of the thorny bush.”

project systems”. Looking at the notion of legitimacy in the context of Antanmamo, there seemed to be a gap between project planners, donors, NGO workers, and researchers’ efforts to respect traditional structures and values in the name of “community-based management” and “empowerment” and what happened at the community-level in practice. In practice, a growing number of individuals in Antanmamo speak the language of the local, the national and the international. In settings where the local, the national and the international converge, the environmental broker becomes “the person who, in his daily life, is confronted in his behaviour with various, possibly conflicting, regulatory orders emanating from the various social networks of which he is, voluntarily or not, a member,” Vanderlinden suggests (1989: 153-154). Varying levels of involvement in the different regimes of environmental regulation not only generated new ways of understanding the environment but also enabled forest users to switch between those different ways of understanding the environment. While trying to find their ways through “old” rules and international expectations, many residents in Antanmamo made use of the complexity and hybridity of the new regulatory system to reach their objectives. For Sousa Santos (2002: 19), community members “do so now within/now without the limits of the modern official law, mobilising various scales of legality (local, national and global) and building translocal and even transnational alliances”. “Struggling against oppression, exclusion, discrimination and the destruction of the environment, these groups resort to law, or rather to different forms of law, as one more instrument of resistance,” he adds (*ibid*). Based on the observations outlined in this chapter, I shall conclude that the most pragmatic account of societies encountering rapid transition under translocal projects is one that portrays highly differentiated communities all engaged at different stages in a process of reshuffling.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

During my stay in Antanmamo, my assistant and I decided to visit a village, the most remote of all in the protected area, situated at the frontier of the protected zone. In the first days, people were not very responsive to us and I noticed that, very often, the village was empty. We asked the *rondria* of the village for his authorisation to let us come back to the village on a daily basis for two weeks, thinking people might get accustomed to us and open up progressively. A few days after, an informant that eventually became a very good friend of us explained that most villagers thought that, because I was a *vazaha*, I was working for WWF. He also explained that if the village looked empty, it was because the parents had told their children to run away in the forest as soon as they would see me arriving [interview, July 15, 2011]. The reason for being so suspicious about the *vazaha* – that is, myself – was because two weeks before our arrival, a group of people including a WWF representative, two *polisyn'ala* agents, and a person from the gendarmerie had come to this specific village with a list of families who were denounced by a *polisyn'ala* agent for doing *hatsake*. The issue, and reason for their impromptu visit to the village, was that those families had not paid the fine for infringing the *Dina*. The committee from Antanmamo therefore wanted explanation.

However, the families did not understand. 9 years ago, when WWF first and last came to the village, the NGO's agent informed the families living here that the mountain in front of their village would become *ala'fady*. But according to my respondents, the agent did not mention anything about the rest of the forests [interview, July 15, 2011]. In response to the families' declarations, WWF's agent explained that, in practice, all forest lands were under protection and therefore, no one was allowed to cut a tree or do *hatsake* anywhere [interview, July 15, 2011]. Conscious that the situation would not be resolved easily and rapidly, the gendarmerie decided that the families whose names were on the list should be brought to the gendarmerie in Antanmamo. Members of the seven families, including my respondent, were kept for 8 hours at the gendarmerie. Later on that day, the chief of the village was informed of the situation and walked to the gendarmerie to ask for their release.

As far as I knew, such a procedure was not part of the *Dina* and none of my informants from CoBa or *polisyn'ala* ever informed me that people could be brought to jail if they had done slash and burn agriculture and did not pay the fine. So was this just another illustration of

translation? Could this act possibly reflect WWF and *polisyn'ala* agents' interpretation and translation of what they thought "sustainability" meant, not necessarily in their own eyes but in those of the rest of the world?

Since the day those seven families were taken to the gendarmerie, anyone foreign or involved in conservation activities is seen as suspicious and a potential threat. I was even told that when people saw me in the village in the first days, they thought it was "WWF coming back here to take them back to jail" [interview, July 18, 2011]. Another man told me he did not feel comfortable talking to me because he feared I would use his information to "take away his land and his children" [interview, July 17, 2011]. The experience my assistant and I encountered in this village was one of the most challenging we had to deal with throughout the whole fieldwork. Not only because the data collection process was considerably slowed down by the circumstances, but also because Aldin and I started to realise the tensions and violence implicated in the travelling notion and practice of "sustainability". In the first days, it often happened that we would get shouted at by men holding guns who complained about people from Antanmamo who, they said, "think they have the authority to disturb the life of families who are simply trying to cultivate small plots of land to grow maize and feed their families" [interview, July 18, 2011]. The river bed that normally surrounded the village and provided families and cultivated land with water had been completely dried for months. The only source of water available was located a seventeen-kilometre walk away from the village – the village is not accessible by car as there is no road within the protected area – and the only source of food available for subsistence was a land known for being extremely rocky and definitely not fertile.

During my stay in the village, and even when I left, I was perceived as someone working for WWF – despite my numerous attempts to demonstrate the contrary. After time passed, I realised that, unbeknown to myself, I was seen by a number of my respondents as one of the partners of the PHCF. Even though the experience was, for my assistant, the villagers and myself very painful, it did give me an incredible insight into the world of environmental politics and clearly showed me what the journey of the idea and practice of "sustainability" can entail in some places of the globe.



The reason why I chose to outline this event as a concluding remark for this thesis is not to give my readers a general impression that, in every part of the world where “sustainable” projects are implemented through NGO-private companies’ partnerships, people suffer. Making such an assumption would be misleading and, most probably, inaccurate. Environmental projects or movements have had considerable effects and consequences throughout the world and particularly in what some refer to as “Southern” countries. But it is not part of this assignment to judge whether the results of such schemes were positive or negative.

If I decided to close this thesis with the story of seven families who were taken to the gendarmerie for having done *hatsake*, it is to remind us of the importance of research and the need for in-depth analysis of contemporary large-scale development and conservation projects. Through the lens of anthropology, my goal was to look behind the curtain and understand processes of translation at different scales.

When reading communication materials about the PHCF such as Air France’s CSR report which indicates that

“four years on from the start of the programme, Air France and its partners GoodPlanet and WWF can point out their first successes: nearly 350,000 hectares have been protected and secured, 29 natural resource management transfer contracts have been signed, reforestation targets have been reached in certain areas, 5,000 households have given up slash and burn cultivation in favour of alternative farming methods and 25,600 households have been informed about the effects of climate change⁴¹”,

⁴¹ See Air France CSR Report for 2011 on http://www.unglobalcompact.org/system/attachments/16963/original/Air_France_KLM_CSR_report_2011.pdf?1344434866

I cannot help myself from concluding that, from the creation of a translocal to its implementation, there is a significant gap in mutual awareness. People in Paris are probably not aware that seven families in one of the PHCF's intervention zones have to pay an enormous fine – one zebu cow and 20 Euros – for doing *hatsake*, an activity vital for subsistence. At the same time, it is also very likely that those seven families do not know that Air France refers to them as one of the “5,000 households who have given up slash and burn cultivation in favour of alternative farming methods”.

But was this not predictable considering the number of people involved voluntarily or involuntarily in the PHCF, given the size of the project and the distance that separates project creators from project receivers? The question of “sustainability” and its translation in different settings is inextricably linked to Chouquer's (2011) concerns regarding the link between economic realities and geographical ones. In this re-organisation of commitments, roles and responsibilities between the state, civil society and private companies, it is important to scrutinise the *voyage* of “sustainability”. From an idea that was initially put forward by civil society groups in international conferences, “sustainability” then became a practice formalised in the agenda of transnational companies under the name of Corporate Social Responsibility, and eventually concluded its travel as an experience creating opportunities for some and social tensions for others.

The stories collected in the villages that I visited and the discussions I had with different actors of the PHCF in Paris show that the two main terms referred to in this thesis, namely “partnership” and “sustainability”, have dual meanings. The concept of “partnership”, for instance, takes different connotations depending on the setting in which it is embedded and the actors it is used by. There are two sides to the word. In Paris, partnership is perceived as a difficult and lengthy process of learning the language of the other and, progressively, tapping into the register of the other. There is also a sense that compromises and choices have to be made, just like in Antanmamo where people have to switch hats and costumes. The other side of the term, which applies less when situated in the settings of Air France or GoodPlanet's offices for instance, is that in Antanmamo local “partners” who are involved in forest management have to apologise to their community for doing the tasks they have been assigned to because, in the wrong moral sense, they are “collaborating”. This was illustrated by the reaction of the *polisyn'ala* agent who insisted on justifying the purpose of his visit to the village where he had denounced families for doing *hatsake*. To protect himself and in

order to be accepted, the now former *polisyn'ala* agent switched hats and explained he was only here as a guide for the *vazaha* and apologised for his past acts as a forest police agent. The reason why he did so was because he knew that, in a way or another, he had been a partner of the institutions and actors who caused trouble to those families. So if there is one conclusion that should be made regarding this research, it is that any translation hinges on a rocky surface, a friction.

The question of who is local and who is global therefore becomes central: how does each actor involved, voluntarily or involuntarily, in the PHCF presents him or herself? How do they want to be perceived and by whom? When looking at the latter question, we see significant ruptures between people. The price to pay when presenting oneself as “global” can be high and painful, as the example of the *polisyn'ala* agent illustrates. But so is the price of being “local” and remaining as such: those who do not take part in the “sustainability” transition can considerably suffer from not being partners in the project, as demonstrated by the stories of the seven families who live in the most remote village of the protected area.

GLOSSARY

Ala'fady	Sacred forest
Ambiasa	Traditional healer
Dina	Customary rules
Fady	Taboo, interdiction
Fihavanana	Mutual solidarity
Fokonolona	Traditional village council
Fokontany	District
Hatsake	Slash and burn agriculture
Kéré	Famine, usually caused by drought
Kokolampo	Natural spirit(s)
Polisyn'ala	Forest police
Rakemba	Elder woman
Rakiny	Discord
Rariny	Fair, just
Vazaha	Foreigner
Vonon'dina	Ceremony to proceed with the ruling when a <i>dina</i> is not respected

ANNEX

CHRONOLOGY OF INTERVIEWS

Researchers in Land tenure and/or Carbon Trade

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Identification</i>
14.06.11	Université Antananarivo	B. Ramamonjisoa, ESA Eau et Foret
14.06.11	Université Antananarivo	P. Ranjatson, ESA Eau et Foret
14.06.11	Observatoire National Foncier	P. Bernaud, socio-economist CIRAD
15.06.11	Antananarivo	J. Ellis, consultant in carbon trade
13.02.12	Antananarivo	Pierre Montagne, CIRAD
15.02.12	Antananarivo	Cécile Bidaud, PhD candidate

Antanmamo protected area

<i>Date</i>	<i>Identification</i>
19.06.11	Forest user
19.06.11	Forest user who applied to CoBa for a permit to do slash and burn agriculture
20.06.11	Forest user and his family
20.06.11	<i>Polisyn'ala</i> agent of the village - East
20.06.11	Forest user
21.06.11	<i>Polisyn'ala</i> agent of the village - North
21.06.11	Two cultivators, village at the border/outside the protected area
21.06.11	Forest user with his family, village at the border/outside the protected area
18.07.11	<i>Ambiasa</i> , village at the border/outside the protected area

Members of the forest association (CoBa)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Identification</i>
19.06.11	CoBa vice-President
20.06.11	CoBa vice-President in his native village

22.06.11	Deputy mayor
23.06.11	CoBa vice- President with his family and the village chief
02.07.11	Chief of fokontany A
02.07.11	Chief of fokontany B
03.07.11	Chief of the gendarmerie of Antanmamo
04.07.11	CoBa vice-President at the eco-tourism bungalows
05.07.11	CoBa vice-President (follow-up)
06.07.11	<i>Polisyn'ala</i> agent
07.07.11	Former <i>posilyn'ala</i> agent fired by CoBa who now works for WWF as the manager for reforestation in Antanmamo
07.07.11	OPCI President, former CoBa President for 2 months
07.07.11	First <i>polisyn'ala</i> President from 2004-09 fired by CoBa
08.07.11	First CoBa President from 2002-2008
10.07.11	<i>Polisyn'ala</i> President since 7 months
12.07.11	Reforestation agent
18.07.11	CoBa vice-President
19.07.11	President of the <i>Comité des Dina</i>
19.07.11	Deputy mayor (follow-up)
20.07.11	WWF local agent in Antanmamo
21.02.12	CoBa President with a <i>polisyn'ala</i> agent
21.02.12	Discussions between former <i>polisyn'ala</i> agent now reconverted into a WWF reforestation manager and a group of forest users
23.02.12	CoBa vice-President with <i>polisyn'ala</i> President
23.02.12	WWF reforestation manager looking after the tree nursery

Case-study A in village East of the protected area

Date	Identification
24.06.11	Elder in the village
24.06.11	Focus group with 6 women
24.06.11	Worker at sisal plantation
25.06.11	Focus Group with 7 children
25.06.11	Two <i>rakemba</i>
28.06.11	<i>Rondria</i> , chief of the village

30.06.11	Inventory of land use and forest use with 10 families
01.07.11	Inventory of land use and forest use with 5 women
01.07.11	Man selling firewood at sisal plantation
01.07.11	Focus Group with 6 women
02.07.11	Inventory of land use and forest use with 2 families
02.07.11	<i>Rondria</i> , chief of the village (follow-up)
03.07.11	Elder in the village (follow-up)
05.07.11	Inventory natural resources use with 6 families
05.07.11	Forest user
06.07.11	Inventory natural resources use with 6 families
06.07.11	<i>Rondria</i> , chief the village (follow-up)
06.07.11	<i>Polisyn'ala</i> agent for this village, husband of the <i>rondria</i> 's daughter
08.07.11	<i>Rondria</i> and his son on land inheritance
09.07.11	Inventory natural resources use with 5 families
10.07.11	Two women on land inheritance
11.07.11	Elder from the village on land inheritance at the hospital
12.07.11	Son of the elder on the evolution of conservation in Madagascar
18.02.11	<i>Rondria</i> , chief of the village and his family
20.02.11	<i>Rondria</i> , chief of the village and his family
23.02.11	Elder in the village and his family
01.03.12	<i>Rondria</i> , chief of the village and his family

Case-study B in village North of the protected area

Date	Identification
15.07.11	Forest user who was denounced for having done slash and burn
15.07.11	Two cultivators
16.07.11	<i>Rondria</i> with his family
17.07.11	Focus group with forest users
18.07.11	Forest user who was denounced for having done slash and burn with his family
22.02.12	Forest user who was denounced for having done slash and burn
22.02.12	Discussions between former <i>polisyn'ala</i> agent guiding us to the village and a group of villagers he had denounced while doing his previous job

Government bodies & NGOs working in Antanmamo protected area

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Identification</i>
21.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	WWF Project manager Anosy region
21.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	WWF Coordinator for Anosy region
21.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Topographic services, Land Registry
21.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Land entitlement service, Land Registry
21.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Conservation Officer, Madagascar National Parks
22.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Environmental Officer, Forest Service
25.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	WWF Regional Director for Anosy region
25.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Forest Service agent, responsible for delimitation of Antanmamo protected area in 2002
25.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	Conservation Officer, Forest Service
25.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	CARE Coordinator for Anosy region
25.07.11	Fort-Dauphin	ASOS Coordinator for Anosy region
20.07.11	Antanmamo	KIOMBA representative who worked on the creation of the protected area in 2002.
13.02.12	Antananarivo	WWF Program Coordinator for the PHCF with GoodPlanet PHCF Coordinator
23.02.12	Antanmamo	WWF local agent in Antanmamo
02.03.12	Fort-Dauphin	WWF Project manager Anosy region
04.03.12	Fort-Dauphin	WWF local agent for several zones of intervention around Antanmamo

Decision-makers involved in the PHCF

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Identification</i>
16.01.12	Geneva (<i>skype conversation</i>)	Former Communication-Officer at WWF-International involved in the PHCF
17.01.12	Paris	Action Carbone Program Officer, GoodPlanet
18.01.12	Paris	Yann Arthus-Bertrand, President of GoodPlanet
19.01.12	Paris	Director for Sustainable Development, Air France
05.03.12	Madagascar	WWF Director for Indian Ocean region

Journalists who took part in the press visit organised by Air France in 2009 and 2011

<i>Date</i>	<i>Identification</i>
10.01.12	Journalist at Europe 1
11.01.12	Journalist at Radio France International
13.01.12	Journalist at Le Point
16.01.12	Journalist at Paris Match
17.01.12	Journalist at Le Point (<i>phone conversation</i>)
18.01.12	Journalist at Youphil (<i>phone conversation</i>)

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